

themelios

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

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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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REVIEWS

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

EDITORIAL

Fulfill Your Ministry

— Brian J. Tabb —

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

As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim 4:5)

There's a big difference between starting and finishing, but one word carries both meanings. The word commencement is used in two common ways: the ceremony where degrees are conferred on graduates, and the beginning of a process.¹ Each year in May, schools hold commencement or graduation services. Commencement is the finish line for which students labor and toil—some for many years—in hopes of donning an awkward robe and funny hat and walking across the stage to shake hands with the president or dean, pose for a photo, and receive their coveted diploma. However, graduation is not—or at least should not be—the ultimate goal of students' studies. It is rather the conclusion of their academic *preparation* for something else. Those who enroll in seminary typically do so in order to be equipped for ministry. At Christian institutions, a commencement service celebrates the faithfulness of God, recognizes the achievement of those students who have “fulfilled” all of the requirements for their degrees, and then commissions them to carry out the good works to which God has called them. While commencement looks back and marks the close of one chapter, it also marks the beginning of a new one. Thus, I frequently charge seminarians who have fulfilled the requirements of their degree programs to “fulfill your ministry.”

Not everyone who begins seminary fulfills the requirements of their degree. Financial difficulties, health crises, family pressures, academic challenges, personal burnout, changes in calling, moral failings, or other factors may lead seminarians to withdraw before completing their program. Similarly, not all seminary graduates continue in faithful ministry. One study, *Pastors in Transition*, surveys seven motivating factors for why pastors leave their local churches:

1. they preferred another kind of ministry;
2. they need to care for children or family;
3. they had conflict in the congregation;
4. they had conflict with denominational leaders;
5. they were burned out or discouraged;
6. they left due to sexual sin;

¹ “Commencement,” *English Oxford Living Dictionary*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/commencement>.

7. they left due to divorce or marriage problems.²

A recent Lifeway study cites change in calling (37%) and conflict in the church (26%) as the top reasons for pastoral attrition, followed by family issues (17%), moral or ethical issues (13%), poor fit (13%), burnout (10%), personal finances (8%), and illness (5%).³

Paul David Tripp cautions that “what we often call ‘ministry burnout’ ... is often the result of pastors’ seeking in their own ministry what cannot be found there”—namely, one’s true security, identity, and heart rest.⁴ Ironically, multiple prominent Christian leaders who endorsed Tripp’s excellent book on the dangers confronting pastors have resigned or been removed from their pastorates in the past several years, illustrating the need for all of us to examine ourselves and take heed, lest we fall.

Some pressures and pitfalls are unique to pastoral ministry, such as the constant anxiety for the spiritual well-being of others and the great responsibility of teaching God’s Word (2 Cor 11:28; Jas 3:1). Others are intensified versions of the challenges facing every would-be disciple who must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Christ (Luke 9:23). Is our commitment to Christ even deeper than our commitment to our family (Luke 14:26)? Do we love and cling to Christ more than to possessions and the pleasures of this life (Luke 8:14; 18:22–25)? Do we crave the approval of others more than the reward of God, who sees in secret (Matt 6:1–6)? The Lord summons us to “sit down and count the cost” of being his disciple lest our lives resemble an unfinished tower that workers abandoned due to lack of planning (Luke 14:28–30). Those who apply to seminary and who interview for pastoral positions and other ministry positions should “count the cost,” lest they fail to continue in faithful discipleship and gospel ministry.

As one well acquainted with the trials of ministry, the apostle Paul regularly encouraged other gospel workers. Near the end of his life, Paul writes from prison to Timothy, his faithful ministry partner and beloved spiritual child. In his final charge in 2 Timothy 3:10–4:8, the apostle urges his protégé to follow his own example and carry out the duties of his ministry.⁵ He writes, “As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (4:5). Yarbrough observes that the final three commands “serve to restate or summarize what Paul’s own life in ministry has exemplified, as well as what he has already commended to Timothy in this epistle.”⁶ Indeed, in the very next verses the apostle offers a further rationale for these admonitions: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” The shift from *you* to *I* is significant in vv. 5–6. Paul and Timothy have run together for many years as comrades and coworkers in gospel ministry. Now the apostle signals that his own race is over, so he is passing the baton to Timothy, who must faithfully carry out his own ministry. Paul’s charge to Timothy also anticipates his final summary of his own ministry career at the letter’s close by the repetition of the Greek verb πληροφωρέω (“fulfill”):

² Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 38.

³ Lisa Cannon Green, “Despite Stresses, Few Pastors Give Up on Ministry,” *LifeWay Research*, 1 September 2015, <https://tinyurl.com/y629dhh9>.

⁴ Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 203.

⁵ For a similar analysis, see Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 417.

⁶ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 441.

Fulfill [πληροφόρησον] your ministry. (4:5)

But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message *might be fully proclaimed* [πληροφορηθῆ] and all the Gentiles might hear it. (4:17)

Paul gives a similar command to a lesser-known disciple named Archippus. In Colossians 4:17, he writes, “And say to Archippus, ‘See that you *fulfill* [πληροῖς] the ministry that you have received in the Lord.’”⁷ Archippus is mentioned elsewhere in the NT only once in Philemon 2, where Paul names him as one of the recipients of that letter, along with Philemon, Apphia, and the church in Philemon’s house. It is possible that Archippus was Philemon’s son, but the title “our fellow soldier”—used elsewhere for Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25)—emphasizes Archippus’s significant partnership with Paul in gospel ministry. We do not know the precise nature of the “ministry” Archippus must fulfill—it may be a specific act of service (e.g., a financial collection) or a more sustained assignment (e.g., pastoring a church). However, “in the Lord” signals that this has to do with gospel work, and the appeal echoes Paul’s description of his own calling as “a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God *fully known* [πληρῶσαι]” (Col 1:25). These considerations, in addition to the parallel with 2 Timothy 4:5, suggest that Archippus’s service is “an arm of Paul’s own work of ministry.”⁸ Perhaps this “fellow soldier” was discouraged or wavering in some way—one cannot be sure of the details. Regardless, it is striking that the apostle singles out Archippus here at the close of this letter to offer a direct, personal, pastoral word of encouragement to him.

In his final letter, Paul presents his own life and ministry as an example for Timothy to emulate: “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings” (2 Tim 3:10–11). Few observers would confuse Paul’s ambition to fulfill his ministry with a quest for self-fulfillment or self-actualization. In city after city, the apostle was badmouthed, blacklisted, beaten, bound, bruised, and booted out of town for preaching that Jesus was the crucified Savior and the risen Lord (cf. 2 Cor 11:23–29).⁹ Paul’s message matched his manner of life. He suffered like his Lord, and his sufferings personally and vividly illustrated his preaching about salvation through Christ’s suffering. For Paul, fulfilling his gospel ministry entailed “filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” to fully proclaim God’s word and “present everyone mature in Christ” (Col 1:24–29)

What then does it mean to “fulfill your ministry” (ESV)? *The servant of Christ must fully carry out the assignment he has received from the Lord in a way that is biblically faithful and spiritually fruitful.* “Fulfill your ministry” includes carrying out specific duties, such as Barnabas and Paul’s mission to bring funds from Antioch to the Judean church (Acts 12:25). More generally, it includes following Christ and discharging his assignments until he says, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:21).

Not all Paul’s associates followed in his footsteps. It is instructive and sobering to contrast Timothy and Archippus with one of Paul’s other ministry partners: Demas. The apostle includes Demas among his “fellow workers” (Phlm 23) and mentions him alongside the likes of Epaphras and Luke in Colossians

⁷ The syntax of this verse in Greek is challenging; for discussion of interpretive options, see Murray J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, EGGNT (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010), 183–84.

⁸ G. K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 362.

⁹ This sentence is adapted from Brian J. Tabb, “It’s a Hard Knock Life: Paul and Seneca on Suffering,” in *Paul and the Giants of Philosophy: Reading the Apostle in Greco-Roman Context*, ed. Joseph R. Dodson and David E. Briones (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 146.

4:14. However, several years later Paul writes to Timothy, “Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica” (2 Tim 4:9–10). Perhaps Demas distanced himself from Paul during his imprisonment due to fear or social pressure. Perhaps he grew weary with pressures and difficulties of ministry on the road and longed for the comforts of home. However, Paul states that Demas left him “because he loved the world” (4:10 NIV). His example contrasts sharply with those who have loved Christ’s appearing (v. 8). As one of Paul’s co-workers, Demas likely assisted and accompanied the apostle in his ministry. He would have proclaimed the gospel, explained sound doctrine to new believers, and encouraged and prayed with the churches. Yet Demas did not fulfill his ministry. He left Paul—and probably Christ as well—because he sought his true security, identity, and heart rest in what this world offers rather than seeking the reward that Christ promises those who long for his return.

What lessons might we glean from Paul’s exhortations to Timothy and Archippus and his personal example of fulfilling his ministry?

(1) *Fulfill your ministry by pursuing faithfulness and fruitfulness, not numbers or notoriety.* Beware the siren song of “success.” Our ministries are not defined by the number of people we baptize or the size of our loyal following (1 Cor 1:11–17). Rather, Christian ministers are servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries, and “it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor 4:1–2). In today’s terms, this means that one’s Twitter audience, book sales, and podcast subscribers are unreliable guides for assessing true ministry success. God may grant some faithful gospel ministers prominent platforms through their publications and speaking engagements. However, this is probably the exception rather than the rule. Most seminary graduates—and those in full-time or bivocational ministry who did not attend seminary—will labor as “ordinary” pastors, elders, missionaries, counselors, etc.¹⁰ They will not write best-selling books or speak at well attended conferences. Instead, they will fulfill their ministry out of the spotlight in relative obscurity as they share the gospel with friends and neighbors, disciple believers, teach the Bible, encouraging the fainthearted, and shepherd the people of God. As Robert Murray McCheyne said, “It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus.”¹¹ Seek to receive commendation from God more than success in the eyes of others.

(2) *Be content in fulfilling the ministry you have received, not the one you wish you had.* In the command, “Fulfill *your* ministry,” the personal pronoun is significant. *Your* ministry does not imply that the ministry is *for* you or determined *by* you. Rather, it means that you have received an assignment from Christ for the sake of his name and his kingdom purposes. Pastors are often tempted to compare their ministry to others that seemingly have greater kingdom impact, stronger giving, greater unity and support from the leadership and congregation, etc. Rather than measuring your worth as a minister against the yardstick of other people’s successes or desiring a more comfortable or prominent position, seek to be content with the situation God has placed you (Phil 4:11). As Jesus said to Peter when he inquired about John’s ministry, “What is that to you? You follow me” (John 21:22).¹²

¹⁰ See, for example, D. A. Carson, *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor: The Life and Reflections of Tom Carson* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

¹¹ McCheyne to W. C. Burns, Dundee, 2 October 1840, in *The Works of Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne: Complete in One Volume*, reprint ed. (Miami: HardPress, 2017), Kindle loc. 4597.

¹² For a similar point, see Ed Moore, “Should I Stay or Should I Go? Practical Considerations for the Burnt-Out Servant,” Bethlehem Conference for Pastors and Church Leaders, 28 January 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/y6tbsrv5>.

(3) *Encourage others to fulfill their ministry.* The apostle Paul was deeply invested in the spiritual well-being of other people. He called the Thessalonian saints “our glory and joy” (1 Thess 2:20). He yearned for the Philippian believers “with the affection of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:8). He labored as though in childbirth to see Christ formed in the Galatian Christians (Gal 4:19). He acknowledged his daily “anxiety for all the churches” (2 Cor 11:28). Paul also commends his coworkers like Timothy and Archippus and encourages them in their ministries. Many pastors feel significantly discouraged and weary in their ministries. They receive constant criticism from church members. They are disappointed by the lack of visible fruit in their ministries and saddened by the sin and immaturity of their congregation and in their own lives. Pastors also feel isolated without true friendships and are burdened by the church’s unrealistic expectations.¹³ Pastors need mentors and friends who will listen well, speak the truth, and encourage them to fulfill their ministry, especially in the darkest days. For example, Pastor Mark Vroegop recounts the devastating loss of his daughter and the timely encouragement he received through an email from John Piper that concluded, “Keep trusting the One who keeps you trusting.”¹⁴

Commencements mark the beginning and point to the end. Paul’s exhortation in 2 Timothy 4:5 offers encouragement and orientation for seminarians training for future ministry and for seasoned pastors, who may be tempted to grow proud or complacent in their ministry successes or who are discouraged by criticism and present challenges. Let us head toward the greatest commencement, when we graduate to glory. Until our ministry as church leaders is ended by the beginning of Christ’s consummated kingdom, let us heed Paul’s words: fulfill your ministry.

¹³ Richard J. Krejcir, “Statistics on Pastors: 2016 Update,” *Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development*, <https://tinyurl.com/yxt4l7dv>.

¹⁴ Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 85.

STRANGE TIMES

Never Say ‘the Phones Are Quiet’

— 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.

When you believe in things
That you don't understand,
Then you suffer,
Superstition ain't the way. (Stevie Wonder)¹

Well Stevie, you may sing that, but I want to tell you about a mystery I've been trying to unravel that leads me to conclude that, for many, superstition really *is* the way. Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin...

It all started one drab overcast London afternoon, a few months back. I was in my study preparing to do some teaching based on the theological anthropology of my hero, the Reformed missiologist J. H. Bavinck. Drawing from a life's observations on the mission field together with a profound theological insight, Bavinck developed what he called the 'magnetic points.'² This refers to 'a sort of framework within which the religious thought of humankind must move.... There appear to be certain intersections around which all sorts of ideas crystallize ... [or] magnetic points to which the religious thinking of mankind is irresistibly attracted.'³ In short, although grounded in creation, these points are our perennial human *idolatrous* responses (our suppression of truth and replacement of created things) to God's manifestation of his 'eternal power' and 'divine nature' (Rom 1:20) which, for Bavinck, pertain to our creaturely dependence and accountability to our Creator. The magnetic points provide a morphology to the messy mix in which sinful image bearers who know God and don't know him and who are running to and running away from him, *at the same time*. These points make up the religious consciousness of humankind throughout history.⁴ I've renamed these points as 'Totality', 'Norm', 'Deliverance', 'Destiny' and 'Higher Power'.

I am of the opinion that these 'points' are a tremendous analytical and heuristic tool for our times, and my task was to describe these points, give contemporary cultural examples of where we see them, and to show how in terms of our apologetics and discipleship (surprise, surprise!) Jesus Christ both

¹ Stevie Wonder, 'Superstition' (Motown Records, 1972).

² See J. H. Bavinck, *The Church Between Temple and Mosque* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 32.

³ Paul Visser, *Heart for the Gospel, Heart for the World: The Life and Thought of a Reformed Pioneer Missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck (1895–1964)* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 157.

⁴ J. H. Bavinck, 'Religious Consciousness and Christian Faith', in *The J. H. Bavinck Reader*, ed. John Bolt, James D. Bratt, and Paul J. Visser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 143–299.

subverts and fulfils them. I decided to reach out to some current Oak Hill students and alumni to source me examples of the 'points' they had come across in their lives and ministry. Examples began to come in, but one in particular piqued my interest. The 'magnetic point' in question was 'Destiny', which deals with the riddle human beings wrestle with concerning the interplay of fate and freedom.

Throughout the history of philosophy and the great world religions this tension has been evidenced in the most sublime and sophisticated ways. I could easily reference a Greek tragedy, discuss the concepts of *qadar* in Islam, or *karma* in Hinduism. Maybe I could impress you with a memorized quotation from Spinoza or Schiller. However, let's get real. Let's talk your average Brit in 2019. Here's the example of 'Destiny' that I received:

You must *never* say 'the phones are quiet' in the office. When I first started, I thought this was a bit of a joke, but it is considered deadly serious. You Do Not Say That. I've been interested in trying to talk it out with some colleagues, because they are clear that they have no belief in any sort of higher power, and are 'perfectly rational' people. At the same time, saying 'the phones are quiet' will result in (something/someone?) making said phones busy and unbearable. We simultaneously have no control over how our phone shifts are going to go – 'you'll just have a day like that', and are responsible for our own/others' bad shifts 'because you said it was quiet and that made it busy'. There is a level of discomfort around breaking this rule that goes beyond amusement, or social discomfort and, especially since only one or two people are working on the phones at any time, does result in real tension when someone 'curses' another person's shift. One of the interesting things about this power behind phone calls is that it is clearly malevolent. There's no good power responsible for quiet shifts or pleasant customers, just bad ones.⁵

Thus my investigation began. At the conference at which I was speaking, of all the examples I gave, this one received the warmest laughter of recognition. 'You must *never* say "the phones are quiet"' resonated. I was onto something. Back in college, I recounted the experience to a class I was teaching. A student who was an ex-policeman immediately pointed out that this really was 'a thing'. And then the floodgates seemed to open. Even a cursory search started to unearth what can only be called a 'Quiet' conspiracy. Working day and night, I started to pin reports on my wall noting dates, scribbling notes and highlighting in red pen dates, times and connections ... okay I didn't really do this, but I did keep a lot of tabs open on my browser.

Here's what I found – I found that professionals can't keep quiet about this perplexing phenomenon. A local news reporter following a UK police patrol on New Year's Eve in 2017 writes,

It's 'q'. It's the unwritten rule of policing that you never, ever, ever say it's 'quiet'. It is the curse of all curses which just invites trouble. It's like saying Macbeth on stage among a group of superstitious luvvies. I post a tweet saying it's 'too "q"'. I so want to tempt fate but am aware that one of the officers in the van is 'monitoring' my Tweets.⁶

A blogging doctor notes:

⁵ Personal correspondence.

⁶ Carl Eve, 'Why Police Say "Q" not "Quiet" and Other Eye-Openers on New Year's Eve Night Out with Officers', *Plymouth Live*, 5 January 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/yylj8hmf>. See also 'He Said the "Q" Word', *Constable Chaos*, 10 April 2012, <https://tinyurl.com/y3y97uxn>.

'Wow, it sure is quiet today.' No phrase is more likely to strike terror in the heart of a physician than that innocent comment, made by a patient, a nurse, or, even worse, another physician. Saying a shift is 'quiet' is believed by many in health care to be the surest way to bring destruction on your head. Most patients don't know it, but there is no breed of human more superstitious than a doctor doing shift-work. Perhaps it is the randomness of being on-call. Some days are an out-of-control, taking the corners-on-two-wheels disaster, narrowly avoiding endless crisis after crisis like a really bad computer game where no one gets extra lives. In contrast, some days are ... well, let's not use the Q word.⁷

Interesting you may say, maybe 'Q' is 'a thing', but this is pretty superficial detective work, let alone proper research. But wait. The plot thickens. In my quest for truth I stumbled upon a co-authored research paper from the *Bulletin of the Royal College of Surgeons* at the beginning of April 2017: 'Does the word "quiet" really make things busier?'⁸ This study claims to 'make important developments in the field of superstition within modern medicine.'⁹ Noting that due to under-staffing, NHS staff are the most stressed in any public sector, and so are always looking to reduce workload 'natural intrigue often leads hospital staff to use superstitious reasoning to infer meaning in situations we do not truly understand.'¹⁰ The study deploys a multicentre, single blind, randomised control trial where one registrar would say 'Have a quiet night' and another would say 'have a good night'. After analysing the results, the authors state,

This study has shown that when the word 'quiet' was used, a significantly higher number of admissions occurred during a night on-call period. It is the first of its kind to demonstrate a cost neutral, clinician-focused method of reducing workload in hospital. One can also conclude that avoiding the word 'quiet' may even reduce the incidence of traumatic injuries and orthopaedic emergencies within a hospital catchment area. The mechanism by which using the word 'quiet' causes an increase in workload is unclear. It is likely that the supernatural forces at work are beyond the grasp of even the most skilled orthopaedic researchers. It is possible that such mechanisms might entail mythical microparticles such as 'interleukins' and 'prions', which may or may not exist in the real world. The ability to test such particles on the vast array of hospital investigations available has been noted but this testing has been avoided to prevent confusion. The true mechanism for our findings requires further work.¹¹

While cautioning against other practices ('covering yourself in bird poo, carrying a rabbit's foot on your lanyard or taping your fingers crossed'), when it comes to Q they make a number of recommendations.¹² Senior management might re-enforce to staff that saying Q will make things busier;

⁷ 'Superstitious Doctors – Part I', *Doc Gurley*, 13 September 2007, <https://tinyurl.com/y3wuq9y4>.

⁸ Jonathan Lamb et al., 'Does the Word 'Quiet' Really Make Things Busier? Statistics vs Superstition: Taking a Look at Medicine's "Macbeth"', *The Bulletin of the Royal College of Surgeons of England* 99.4 (2017): 133–36, doi:10.1308/rcsbull.2017.133.

⁹ Lamb et al., 'Does the Word 'Quiet' Really Make Things Busier?', 135.

¹⁰ Lamb et al., 'Does the Word 'Quiet' Really Make Things Busier?', 134.

¹¹ Lamb et al., 'Does the Word 'Quiet' Really Make Things Busier?', 135.

¹² Lamb et al., 'Does the Word 'Quiet' Really Make Things Busier?', 135.

'the appointment of a "Q" word specialist manager to oversee implementation of a "Q" word eradication policy'; and the establishment of a nation-wide public health initiative 'to reduce the use of the word quiet in the public domain.' They even proffer a ritual for reversing the effects of Q if said in error based on the 'cure' when an actor says 'Macbeth' – 'the effect can be negated if the individual turns three times and utters certain incantations.'¹³

Now at this point, and before you contact the general editor of *Themelios* to say that Dr Strange has finally lost the plot, I recognise that this has all the makings of an elaborate and brilliant spoof. Yes, and before you point it out to me, I too spotted the date of publication of the article. I have even contacted one of the authors, with no response forthcoming. However, I also note the following. First, and admittedly anecdotal, I've sent this paper round to a number of medical professionals and while the majority seem to think it is a spoof, they were not completely sure. One believed it wasn't a spoof but simply dodgy research. *All* recognised the Q-thing. For example:

The whole 'quiet' thing is interesting, though. Ask any healthcare professional and intellectually we all know what we say makes no difference, but on a gut/instinct level don't like to say it. I guess it would feel like if all hell broke loose you had somehow 'jinxed' things, like others would frown on you – all completely light-hearted, and yet... Even I would hesitate, and would say something like it's been a calm shift so far, etc. Not as I believe it but to respect colleagues I guess. Or so I say....¹⁴

Second, the article does refer to a number of what look like serious studies on the impact of Friday the 13th, lunar phases, and zodiac signs on various medical procedures. Third, I have come across at least one more recent paper in the world of Veterinary Science ("The Influence of Quotations Uttered in Emergency Service Triage Traffic and Hospitalisation (Quiet)'), which not only tackles the same subject, but references our Royal College of Surgeons paper together with its findings. It does so with seemingly no hint of irony or recognition it is probably a spoof.¹⁵

How are we to interpret phenomena like the proliferation of determined non-utterances of 'Quiet'? Is there a way of solving the mystery of the 'Q-thing'? A good place to start would be to relate it to broader cultural stories that do their best to out-narrate the other.

For myself, the Q-thing serves as additional confirmation that superficial and simplistic accounts of, on the one hand, secularization and disenchantment, and on the other, sacralisation and enchantment, are precisely that. The genealogy is complicated and messy. Even as I write, today has seen the publication of the interim findings of *Understanding Unbelief: Across Disciplines and Across Cultures* programme,¹⁶ led by a number of scholars in British Universities, which has interviewed thousands of people who

¹³ Lamb et al., 'Does the Word 'Quiet' Really Make Things Busier?', 135.

¹⁴ Personal Correspondence.

¹⁵ Christopher L. Norkus, Amy L. Butler, and Sean D. Smarick, 'The Influence of Quotations Uttered in Emergency Service Triage Traffic and Hospitalization (Quiet)', *Open Veterinary Journal* 9.1 (2019): 99–101, doi: 10.4314/ovj.v9i1.17. See also another earlier paper referenced: G. Johnson, 'The Q**** Study – basic Randomised Evaluation of Attendance at a Children's Emergency Department', *Emergency Medicine Journal* 27/1 (2010): A11, https://emj.bmj.com/content/27/Suppl_1/A11.2.

¹⁶ 'Understanding Unbelief: Advancing Scientific Understanding of "Unbelief" around the World' *University of Kent*, <https://research.kent.ac.uk/understandingunbelief/>.

identified as atheists and agnostics in six countries – Britain, the United States, Brazil, China, Denmark and Japan. Two of the key findings are relevant to the proliferation of superstitious practices:

5. Unbelief in God doesn't necessarily entail unbelief in other supernatural phenomena. Atheists and (less so) agnostics exhibit lower levels of supernatural belief than do the wider populations. However, only minorities of atheists or agnostics in each of our countries appear to be thoroughgoing naturalists. (2.2, 2.3)

6. Another common supposition – that of the purposeless unbeliever, lacking anything to ascribe ultimate meaning to the universe – also does not bear scrutiny. While atheists and agnostics are disproportionately likely to affirm that the universe is 'ultimately meaningless' in five of our countries, it still remains a minority view among unbelievers in all six countries. (2.4)¹⁷

Such findings would seem to bolster the analysis of scholars such as Rodney Stark in his *The Triumph of Faith: Why the World is more Religious than Ever*.¹⁸ Stark takes as the 'empirical backbone' of his research the Gallup World Polls which by now has conducted over a million interviews, and argues vociferously that 'quite simply, that a massive religious awakening is taking place around the world.'¹⁹ Importantly, Stark's definition of religion includes churched and unchurchd religions and supernaturalisms (which can be unchurchd or churchd). For Stark, and on this definition, it seems that not only the triumph of secularization but any theory of secularization should be receiving short shrift. While Charles Taylor argues that Europeans, Canadians and Americans 'are immune to deep, religious experiences, being only in tune with 'naturalistic materialism' which is scientific understanding of reality', Stark responds by quoting the 2007 Baylor National Survey of Religion, conducted by Gallup which showed that 55 % claimed they had been protected from harm by a guardian angel.²⁰ He continues:

Nor has Europe become disenchantd.... Multitudes of Europeans believe in ghosts, lucky charms, occult healers, wizards, fortune tellers, *huldufolk*, and a huge array of other aspects of that enchanted world that Taylor believes has long since vanished. What Taylor really demonstrates is that from nowhere is one's vision of modern times so distortd as from the confines of the faculty lounge.²¹

Ouch.

However, I wonder whether such dismissals are a little too easy. Those who have attempted to grasp Taylor's delineation of the secular will know that he is dealing not simply what is believed, but what it believable. This takes us from sociological and historical analyses into the inter-disciplinary realm of critical theory, the discipline which "takes a critical view of society and adopts an ideological focus, typically associated with an emphasis on the analytical importance of sociological contexts, an

¹⁷ Stephen Bullivant et al., 'Understanding Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics around the World' (St Mary's University, Twickenham, 2019), 3, <https://tinyurl.com/y27u4nep>.

¹⁸ Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Faith: Why the World is More Religious Than Ever* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2015).

¹⁹ Stark, *The Triumph of Faith*, 2.

²⁰ Stark, *The Triumph of Faith*, 186.

²¹ Stark, *The Triumph of Faith*, 187.

emancipatory agenda, and reflexivity.²² Here we go meta: meta-narratives, meta-moods, and meta-myths. One scholar who attempts to engage with someone like Taylor at this level is Jason Å. Josephson-Storm in his important study, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of Human Sciences*.²³ While referring to same sociological data as Stark, Josephson-Storm's project is one of genealogy and what he calls 'reflexive religious studies.'²⁴ He writes:

The single most familiar story in the history of science is the tale of disenchantment — of magic's exit from the henceforth law-governed world. I am here to tell you that as broad cultural history, this narrative is wrong. Attempts to suppress magic have historically failed more often than they've succeeded. It is unclear to me that science necessarily deanimates nature. In fact, I will argue à la Bruno Latour that we have never been disenchanting.²⁵

Since the publication of Josephson-Storm's study, there has been an ongoing and illuminating discussion and debate as to whether, and even how, more subtle analyses of the secular and disenchantment, à la Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, corresponds to a myth of disenchantment thesis. While appreciative of Josephson-Storm's work, there those like Alan Jacobs and Doug Sikkema who argue for retaining a Taylorian narrative of a disenchantment mood due to the default ascendancy of 'scientism' in which examples of enchantment and its believability are to be framed.²⁶

This is a very complex area where I quickly feel out of my depth and so find myself scrabbling for a side to cling onto. But which side? From the safety of the shallow end let me make some comments.

First, I agree with Josephson-Storm that "For most people (elite and popular) the choice is not one between disenchantment and enchantment, science and religion, or myth and mythless rationality, but rather between different competing enchanted life worlds – even if people do not always recognize them as such."²⁷ If I'm in a Taylor mood and want to say that the secular is haunted, then it's appears to be *really* haunted. More seriously, while as a Reformed Protestant I may have (should have) serious questions about aspects of Taylor's understanding and analysis of the Reformation, and to make my own point on genealogy, Reformation theology did have profound historical and cultural consequences. Kirsty Birkett contends that magic declined in the English Reformation because 'the English Reformers presented a damning critique of magical practices, and moreover put together an alternative worldview which

²² Daniel Chandler and Rod Munday, 'Critical Theory', in *A Dictionary of Media and Communication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 81. Quoted in Christopher Watkin, *Thinking Through Creation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 8.

²³ Jason Å. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2017.

²⁴ Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment*, 11.

²⁵ Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment*, 3.

²⁶ 'Why Do We Think We Are Disenchanted?' Debating *The Myth of Disenchantment* by Jason Å. Josephson-Storm, in *The New Atlantis* 56 (Summer/Fall 2018), 3–12, <https://tinyurl.com/yyz2atcy>.

²⁷ 'Why Do We Think We Are Disenchanted?', 6.

made magic not only ineffective but redundant.²⁸ As she states, ‘essentially the Reformer’s demystified the world.’²⁹

In place of the medieval framework, the Reformers presented a worldview in which God was to be relied upon directly, *without technique*. It was a positive attitude towards the world. Trust in God was not obedience to an oppressive command, but a disposition to hope. God was presented as a defence against evil.³⁰

Certainly, it seems evident that terms like religion, superstition, magic, science, occulture, and technology cannot be compartmentalised but are all highly contested and closely connected concepts.³¹ This results in the forging of what might seem some strange allegiances. In what Peter Kreeft calls ‘the single most illuminating three sentences I have ever read about our civilization’,³² C. S. Lewis wrote the following in his *Abolition of Man*:

There is something which unites magic and applied science [i.e. technology] while separating both from the ‘wisdom’ of earlier ages. For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men; the solution is a technique.³³

Perhaps the appearance of the ‘Q-thing’ in a medical science journal is not all that strange after all? In other spheres of life this blurring of categories is evident. Sport is a well-known breeding ground of superstition.³⁴ The Tottenham Hotspurs manager, Maurizio Pochettino, has been open about his belief since childhood in ‘energía universal,’

a sort of aura that powers the world and everyone and everything in it. People have an energy, but so do places, and so do moments and situations. “Decisions, personal relationships and absolutely everything else are a matter of energy,” he writes in his book *Brave New World*. “Since those early days, I’ve had the ability to notice something powerful that you can’t see, but does exist.”³⁵

²⁸ Kirsten Birkett, ‘Early English Reformers and Magical Healing’, in *1543 and All That: Image and Word, Change and Continuity in the Proto-Scientific Revolution*, ed. Guy Freeland and Anthony Coronos, Studies in History and Philosophy of Science 13 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000), 357.

²⁹ Birkett, ‘Early English Reformers and Magical Healing’, 371.

³⁰ Birkett, ‘Early English Reformers and Magical Healing’, 370, italics added.

³¹ See Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment*, 11–16; Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternate Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture*, 2 vols. (London: T&T Clark, 2004). On the definition of ‘magic’, see Kirsten R Birkett, *Spells, Sorcerers and Spirits: Magic and Occult in the Bible* (London: Latimer Trust, 2015), 6–16.

³² Peter Kreeft, *C. S. Lewis for the Third Millennium: Six Essays on the Abolition of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011), 135.

³³ C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, reprint ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 77

³⁴ See Stuart Vyse, ‘How Superstition Works’, *The Atlantic* 22 October 2013, <https://tinyurl.com/y3xtvg8z>.

³⁵ Jonathan Liew, ‘No Stadium, No Transfers and Injured Players: Can Mauricio Pochettino’s “Energia Universal” Hold Out at Spurs?’, *The Independent*, 23 November 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/y5fo3etf>.

“I believe in *energía universal*.... It is connected. Nothing happens for causality. It is always a consequence [of something else]. Maybe, it is one of the reasons that Harry always scores in derbies. I believe in that energy. For me, it exists.”³⁶

Think of the amount of sophisticated sports science, minute planning and detail, and massive amounts of money and personnel that go into the running of a Premier League professional club. Then add in that Pochettino keeps a bowl of lemons in his office because he believes they absorb negative energy from the room and that every three or four days he has to change them because they become ugly.³⁷ This juxtaposition, in full view of the public and media, is striking.

Second, if the history, sociology and critical theory side of things is all a bit disorientating, then a return to Bavinck’s religious consciousness gives us a *theological* compass not simply for reorientation but for moving forwards with our own ‘biblical theory’ which will be able to out-narrate all other stories. My biblical anthropology tells me that we are creatures made in the *imago Dei*, made for transcendence. Although we suppress the truth of our existence by arguing that ‘life under the sun’ is all that there is, we can never eradicate our *sensus divinitatis*, it always has and will always pop up in all that we fashion. The reality of the ‘magnetic points’ tell us that ‘self’ has been shaped before it attempts to shape itself. It’s never been easy to be a materialist or nihilist, but conversely, it’s never been good to be a superstitious pagan, however supernaturalist. ‘The ‘Q-thing’ is plausibly explainable by the ‘magnetic point’ I have called ‘Destiny’. Although humans know themselves to be active players in the world, there is a nagging feeling that they are also passive participants in somebody else’s world. This creates an existential tension between human freedom and boundedness. Life courses between action and fate, like actors on a stage, aware that though they act out their part, they are working from someone else’s script. There is a providential power at work behind all things, but what or who is it? Bavinck puts it thus:

A person is only master of his or her life up to a certain point. A power exists that repeatedly reaches into a person’s existence, that pushes him or her forward with compelling force, and from whose grip the person finds it impossible to struggle loose. Sometimes people can despair that they can lead their own life. Sometimes they gradually achieve the insight, in the school of life’s hard knocks, that it is more appropriate to say that they suffer or undergo events that develop in and around them.³⁸

³⁶ David Hytner, ‘Energía Universal: How Pochettino has Driven the Tottenham Revolution’, *The Guardian*, 29 April 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y5qgwlw5>.

³⁷ Given how I will conclude this editorial, I can’t resist mentioning here *The Times* article on the Christian faith of Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp on the day of the Champions League final against Pochettino’s Tottenham (a game Liverpool would win): ‘Explaining the impact of his upbringing in a Lutheran home, [Klopp] says: “There is nothing so important to me that I can not bear to lose it, and that is why I find I have no reason to fear. But the most important point is that this lust for life is actually connected to my faith. I am a Christian and so I see life as a gift that should be enjoyed sensibly.” ... One result is the “lust for life” — he laughs more than any manager in the history of the Premier League. A further result is freedom from fear, and liberating teams to play confidently, joyously and positively.’ John Root, ‘Credo: Why Jürgen Klopp Keeps Smiling through Triumph and Disaster’, *The Times*, 1 June 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/y3b7a8p9>. ‘Gift’ has the same root as ‘grace’, the most central word in Christian vocabulary, while other words that flow from it — such as trust, freedom, confidence, generosity and abundance — are marks of Klopp’s approach to football.

³⁸ Bavinck, ‘Religious Consciousness and Christian Faith’, 192–93.

Superstition is the fruit of this root. The silence of not uttering ‘Quiet’ is a cry for help, of a need for control and meaning in what is believed to be a chaotic and meaningless world.

Finally, how are we then to engage with these prevalent superstitious practices? This calls for a wholistic all of life approach in terms of our discipleship, mission and evangelism. We must recognise, embrace, inhabit and teach a wholistic Reformational worldview that explains reality in such a way that diagonalises³⁹ enchantment and disenchantment, and diagonalises, the ‘porous’ self and the ‘buffered’ self.⁴⁰ While in no way wanting to dismiss or flatten historical contingency, genealogy, or the granularity of lived ethnographic particularity, it is to state a confessional theological anthropological ‘givenness’. This is maybe why I am so attracted by the work of J. H Bavinck, who for me is a wonderful of example of what *theological* religious studies looks like.

Although written way back in 1982, Paul Hiebert’s seminal article, ‘The Flaw of the Excluded Middle’,⁴¹ is a reminder that without a cosmology that includes a ‘middle’ tier of the supernatural, we will not be able to connect to and confront with the gospel. Rather we will become a secularising force that cannot give answers to those enchanted by enchantment. We are not those who deny the supernatural realm, but those who proclaim Christ’s supremacy over it.⁴² Practically, as Derek Rishmawy points out,

you really need to be aware about this when it comes to dealing with the spiritual challenges in your congregation. The threat of syncretism isn’t just metaphorical in the West right now. You probably have folks in you congregation who come to hear you preach on Sunday, but seriously check their horoscopes on Monday, and get worried about Mercury going into retrograde, talk about a sense of their energy being off, and so forth. It’s probably time to start reading up on apologetics against new age spirituality, astrology, issuing serious warnings about witchcraft, etc.... Which is to say, when it comes to preaching out of Colossians or Corinthians, talking about Christ’s defeat of the powers, not being captive to empty philosophy, or participating in pagan feasts, you may not need to find ‘modern,’ metaphorical analogies for your applications. All of a sudden, Augustine’s sections in *The Confessions* refuting astrology are worth quoting from the pulpit.⁴³

This is not simply ‘niche’ application, and we must not be naïve. There is dark margin of ‘enchantment’ which Scripture makes clear and which is having increased public and political significance.⁴⁴

³⁹ ‘Diagonalization’ is an analytical tool developed by Christopher Watkin, ‘to diagonalize a choice... is to refuse the two (or more) alternatives it offers and elaborate a position that is neither reducible nor utterly unrelated to them.’ *Thinking Through Creation*, 28.

⁴⁰ Charles Taylor, ‘Buffered and Porous Selves,’ *Social Science Research Council*, 2 September 2008, <https://tif.ssrc.org/2008/09/02/buffered-and-porous-selves/>.

⁴¹ Paul G. Hiebert, ‘The Flaw of the Excluded Middle,’ *Missiology* 10.1 (1982): 35–47.

⁴² Hiebert, ‘The Flaw of the Excluded Middle,’ 44.

⁴³ Derek Rishmawy, ‘When You Sort of Miss Disenchantment,’ *Reformedish*, 29 December 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/y4ahq565>.

⁴⁴ As Tara Isabella Burton notes, ‘For an increasing number of left-leaning millennials—more and more of whom do not belong to any organized religion—occult spirituality isn’t just a form of personal practice, self-care with more sage. Rather, it’s a metaphysical canvas for the American culture wars in the post-Trump era: pitting the self-identified Davids of seemingly secular progressivism against the Goliath of nationalist evangelical Christianity.’ In ‘The Rise of Progress Occultism,’ *The American Interest*, 7 June 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/yxjyvw3j>.

In addition, to counter the fate versus freedom dilemma that the magnetic point of 'Destiny' reveals, and which leads to something like the Q-thing, we need to be preaching, teaching and catechizing a doctrine of concursus when it comes to providence enabling a more analogical understanding of divine and human agency. We must helping people see that there is a qualitative difference between created and Creator. Superstition is futile because it can only attempt to manipulate forces within the same ontological order, whereas prayer to and trust in God who is both transcendent and immanent is of wholly other order.

Pastorally, the recognition of the middle must not lead ourselves being falsely or 'overly' enchanted with the result that we become fearful. Fear of created things, natural or supernatural, is ultimately idolatrous given the only one we should fear is God himself.⁴⁵ This is true wisdom. As Calvin writes, 'We are superstitiously timid, I say, if whenever creatures threaten us or forcibly terrorize us we become as fearful as if they had some intrinsic power to harm us, or might wound us inadvertently and accidentally, or there were not enough help in God against their harmful acts.'⁴⁶ As Birkett notes, 'The Reformers' God was a loving father who looked after his children. Someone who believed that would have the confidence to put aside fear of suffering of death or of evil spirits, and look boldly at the world that his God had made.'⁴⁷

As Stevie Wonder sings in 'Superstition', there do seem to be things in this world and experiences people have, that are mysterious and that we 'don't understand'. However, by God's Spirit, Scriptural revelation *does* give us enough understanding and direction concerning what both godly *and* ungodly engagement with such phenomena consists of.⁴⁸

The apostle Peter exhorts us, 'Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened. But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord' (1 Pet 3:14–15). Contrary to not saying Quiet (yes, I've said it!), our Christian witness must be loud as we live with a bold freedom and not in fear. We don't resign ourselves to blind fate or have to ward off powerful malevolent forces – 'Superstition ain't the way.' Rather we call upon the name of our Sovereign God, Father, Son and Spirit.

⁴⁵ See Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 168.

⁴⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes* 1.XVI.3.

⁴⁷ Birkett, 'Early English Reformers and Magical Healing', 372.

⁴⁸ See Birkett, *Spells, Sorcerers and Spirits*, 88–96.

The Mystery Revealed: A Biblical Case for Christ-Centered Old Testament Interpretation

— Jason S. DeRouchie —

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Abstract: This study provides a biblical-theological foundation for a Christ-centered hermeneutic. It overviews both Old and New Testament texts that identify how the primary audience that would receive blessing and not condemnation from OT instruction would be Christians enjoying the benefits of Christ’s eschatological, redemptive work. Jesus himself provides both the light for enabling us to see and savor what is in the OT and the necessary lens that influences and guides our reading by filling out the meaning—at times by supplying unknown interpretation and other times by clarifying, expanding, and deepening the human authors’ implications. For us to grasp the full meaning of the OT’s history, laws, poems, and prophecies, we must read them through the light and lens of Christ.

This study supplies an initial framework for a biblical theology of hermeneutics.¹ My thesis is twofold. First, I will argue that the OT is Christian Scripture, that God originally gave it to instruct Christians, and that the OT authors had a sense that at least some of their words would be more meaningful for those living this side of the cross than for those living before it, whether believer or non-believer. As such, the OT message is in many ways more clear and relevant for Christians today than it ever was for those before Christ. Second, I will argue that faith in Christ alone supplies the necessary light for seeing and savoring God’s revelation in the OT and that Jesus’s appearing in salvation history supplies the necessary lens for more fully understanding and appropriating the divine author’s intended meaning in the OT.

¹ I presented an earlier version of this paper at the 2017 “Eureka!” Conference at Bethlehem College & Seminary and the 2018 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Denver, CO. I am grateful to the many students and fellow academics who interacted thoughtfully with the study, which has been made better through these conversations. I also thank my TA Josh Bremerman for his careful editing of the whole.

1. New Testament Reflections on the Audience of Old Testament Instruction

Paul believed that God gave the OT for *new* covenant believers. Referring to the statement in Genesis 15:6 that Abram's faith was "counted to him as righteousness," Paul asserted that "the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also" (Rom 4:23–24). Similarly, just after identifying Christ as the referent in Psalm 69, the apostle emphasized, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (15:4).² Furthermore, upon recalling Israel's history in the wilderness, Paul said, "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11). In each of these three texts, Paul used third singular verbs to stress that the OT author wrote his text intentionally for the benefit of believers living this side of the cross. The apostle's use of the passive does not clarify whether this was only God's intent as the ultimate author, or whether this was also the OT human authors' intention. What is clear, however, is that for Paul, the OT was *Christian* Scripture and fully applicable to believers when read in light of Christ.

He said this much to Timothy, who was raised on the OT by his Jewish mother and grandmother (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim 1:5). Paul wrote that the "sacred writings" of Timothy's upbringing—what we would tag the OT Scriptures, "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15). People today can get saved from God's wrath and from the enslavement of sin by reading the OT through the lens of Christ! Thus, Paul then asserts, "All Scripture is ... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (3:16–17). Within this context of elevating the lasting relevance of the OT, Paul then called his young protégé to "preach the word!" (4:2). God gave the OT for Christians. It's part of our Christian Scriptures, and we should use it to know God and savor Christ.

Based on this fact, NT authors regularly used the OT as the basis for Christian exhortation, assuming its relevance for believers today. For example, Paul, as a new covenant preacher, drew from a series of execution texts in Deuteronomy when arguing for the excommunication of the sexually immoral man in 1 Corinthians 5:13 (cf. Deut 13:5[6]; 17:7, 12; 21:21; 22:21, 22, 24; 24:7).³ The apostle also had no problem drawing from the Ten Commandments, when in Ephesians 6:2–3 he charged children, "'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land" (cf. Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16). Similarly, Paul told the young pastor in 1 Timothy 5:17–18, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain'" (cf. Deut 25:4; 1 Cor 9:8–12). Similarly, Peter recalls the refrain in Leviticus when he wrote in 1 Peter 1:15–16, "Be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (cf. Lev 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:26). Because we are now part of the new covenant and not the old, there are natural questions that rise regarding how exactly the Christian should relate to specific old

² For a careful supporting analysis of Paul's claim in Rom 15:4, see George W. Knight III, "The Scriptures Were Written for Our Instruction," *JETS* 39 (1996): 3–13.

³ Knight rightly notes, "Here the apostle takes account of the difference that fulfillment [through Jesus] has brought about and at the same time maintains the principle continuity for the instruction as it relates to the Church, and in doing so he also has 'written for our instruction'" (Knight, "The Scriptures Were Written for Our Instruction," 10).

covenant laws.⁴ Nevertheless, the point stands that the OT, while not written *to* Christians, was still written *for* our instruction.

Now, as I noted, when Paul stated that the OT “was written” for our instruction, he was not explicit as to whether the OT human authors understood this. Peter, however, made this clear when he wrote that the OT prophets “*were serving not themselves but you*, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look” (1 Pet 1:12). The apostle emphasized that the inspired human authors themselves knew that their words revealed in the OT were principally *not for them* but for those living after the arrival of the Christ. Therefore, far from being not applicable for believers, the OT is actually *more relevant* to Christians today than it was for the majority in the old covenant era. Let’s consider a number of OT texts that stress this very fact. We will look at citations from Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel.

2. Old Testament Reflections on the Audience of Old Testament Instruction

First, *Moses’s* three favorite words to characterize Israel were “stubborn” (Deut 9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27), “unbelieving” (1:32; 9:23; cf. 28:66), and “rebellious” (9:7, 24; 31:27; cf. 1:26, 43; 9:23). His audience was wicked (9:4–6, 27), and God promised that after the prophet’s death, the people’s defiance would only continue, resulting in God’s pouring out his curses upon them:

This people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with

⁴ In my view, the best approach to the OT law and the Christian is a redemptive-historical one that sees Christ as the lens for grasping how any old covenant law relates to believers, this side of the cross. See especially Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 427–59. See also David A. Dorsey, “The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise,” *JETS* 34 (1991): 321–34; Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1991), 251–86; Douglas J. Moo, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View,” in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 319–76 (also 83–90, 165–73, 218–25, 309–15); Tom Wells and Fred G. Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002), 77–160, esp. 126–27, 157–60; Daniel M. Doriani, “A Redemptive-Historical Model,” in *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Gary T. Meadors, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 51–56, 75–121, 205–9, 255–61; Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009); Jason C. Meyer, “The Mosaic Law, Theological Systems, and the Glory of Christ,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 66–99; Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 40; Jason S. DeRouchie, “Making the Ten Count: Reflections on the Lasting Message of the Decalogue,” in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 415–40; Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 31 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013); William W. Combs, “Paul, the Law, and Dispensationalism,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 18 (2013): 19–39; Stephen J. Wellum, “Progressive Covenantalism and Doing Ethics,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 215–33.

them. Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and they will be devoured. (31:16–17)

Similarly, Moses would later say,

I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much more after my death! ... I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands. (31:27, 29; cf. 4:25–28; 28:15–68)

Deuteronomy 29 tells the ultimate reason why Moses’s audience would not heed his words: “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt.... But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear” (Deut 29:2, 4[1, 3]). Israel was spiritually ignorant of God’s ways, blind to his glories, and deaf to his word. They had been rebellious from the day Moses first met them (9:24), and their stubbornness both continued in the present and would continue into the future, ultimately resulting in their death (9:6; 31:27, 29).⁵ Why? Because God had not overcome the resistance of the majority’s hearts and because, in alignment with his sovereign purposes for salvation history, he created an old covenant that bore a “ministry of death” and a “ministry of condemnation,” all in order that through Christ a superior new covenant might bear a “ministry of righteousness” (2 Cor 3:7, 9).⁶ God determined that he would not overcome Israel’s crookedness and twistedness (Deut 32:5; Acts 2:40; Phil 2:15) until the prophet like Moses would rise to whom they should and could listen (Deut 18:15; 30:8; cf. Matt 17:5). In the age of restoration, God would change the remnant’s hearts and enable their love. “The LORD your God will circumcise your heart ... so that you will love the LORD your God with all” (Deut 30:6). In this eschatological day, the day we now identify with the new covenant and church age (cf. Rom 2:29; 2 Cor 3:6), Moses’s message in Deuteronomy

⁵ Block believes that Deut 29:4[3] teaches that, “whereas the exodus generation as a whole did not grasp the revelatory, redemptive, and covenantal significance of Yahweh’s actions (9:1–24; cf. 1:19–46), this generation knows; through Moses’ final pastoral addresses Yahweh has given Israel a heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear” (Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 676). This reading, however, fails to account for many factors: (1) Elsewhere in the book the phrase “until this day” never implies change (Deut 2:22; 3:14; 10:8; 11:4; 34:6; see Paul A Barker, *Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy: Faithless Israel, Faithful Yahweh in Deuteronomy* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007], 118–19). (2) Moses explicitly identifies elsewhere that Israel’s stubbornness persists in the present and will continue (31:21, 27), thus forcing Block himself to admit that “Moses shares Yahweh’s pessimistic view of the spiritual state the people” (Block, *Deuteronomy*, 734). (3) Both Isa 6:10 and Jer 5:21 stress that the triad of spiritual disability in “heart, eyes, and ears” continued in their days, and Paul alludes to Deut 29:4[3]’s “until this day” in both Rom 11:8 and 2 Cor 3:14, showing that Israel hardness continued into the NT era. (4) The prophets believed that God would only reverse the majority’s disability related to “heart, eyes, ears” in the day when the messianic “king will reign in righteousness” (Isa 32:1, 3–4). Recognizably, the remnant, which would have included the prophets, had “hearts, eyes, and ears” that were responsive to God (Ezek 40:4), already having “the eyes of [their] hearts enlightened” (Eph 1:18). For an extended survey of interpretations of Deut 29:4[3], see Michael A. Grisanti, “Was Israel Unable to Respond to God? A Study of Deuteronomy 29:2–4,” *BSac* 163 (2006): 176–96. Grisanti’s own proposal rightly affirms the presence of a remnant in the OT who had their “hearts, eyes, and ears” enabled, but he fails to identify that the triad of metaphors refers to regeneration, which gives rise to faith rather than follows it (see John 3:3, 8).

⁶ Jason S. DeRouchie, “From Condemnation to Righteousness: A Christian Reading of Deuteronomy,” *SBJT* 18.3 (2014): 87–118.

would finally be heard and heeded: “And you will turn and you will hear the voice of the LORD and do all his commandments that I am commanding you today” (30:8, author’s translation). Moses believed that his law in Deuteronomy would serve those in the age of heart circumcision far more than the rebels of his own day.⁷

Second, Israel’s triadic spiritual disability continued in the days of *Isaiah*, whom YHWH called to “make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes” (Isa 6:10; cf. Deut 29:4[3]). Thus, the prophet was to preach, “Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive” (Isa 6:9). This would be the prophet’s judgment cry until his land was laid waste, his people

⁷ I do not believe that Deut 30:11–14 can be used as a counter-argument to my claim. While contemporary English versions and most commentators treat Deut 30:11–14 as expressing Israel’s present ability to keep God’s law, the greater context of the book does not support this reading (29:4[3]; cf. 4:25–28; 9:6; 10:16; 30:1; 31:16–18, 27–29). Moreover, the subordinate connection ׀ is Deut 30:11 most naturally serves as a ground (“for, because”) for the *preceding* future predictions, thus suggesting that the verbless clauses in 30:11–14 should all be translated as futures and that Moses’s statement that all he commanded “today” in 30:11 would align with the similar statements in 30:2 and 8. Thus Deut 30:11–14 *predictively* clarifies why Israel will “listen” to Yahweh’s voice (30:2, 8, 10; cf. 30:12, 13) and “do” (30:8, 10; cf. 30:12, 13, 14) his word in the future when they were not able to do so in the present. On this reading, Paul in Rom 10:6–8 would be identifying the fulfillment of this prediction in Christ, and his contrast between Lev 18:5 in Rom 10:5 and Deut 30:11–14 in Rom 10:6–8 would be between texts addressing two different eras in redemption history. In support of this exegetical conclusion, see John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, Library of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 473; J. Gary Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 94, 174–75; Steven R. Coxhead, “Deuteronomy 30:11–14 as a Prophecy of the New Covenant in Christ,” *WTJ* 68 (2006): 305–20; Barker, *Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy*, 168–90; Bryan D. Estelle, “Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1–14 in Biblical Theological Development: Entitlement to Heaven Foreclosed and Proffered,” in *The Law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 123–37; Colin James Smothers, “In Your Mouth and in Your Heart: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul’s Letter to the Romans in Canonical Context” (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018). While Moo chooses to render Deut 30:11–14 as present time, he does admit, “I wish I could interpret Deut 30:11–14 in this way: it would, indeed, considerably diminish the apparent dissonance between this text and Paul’s application.” Douglas Moo, “Paul’s Reading of Deuteronomy: Law and Grace,” in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 408. Significantly, the only reason that keeps Moo from this reading is that “most interpreters of Deuteronomy argue that the characteristic language of ‘today’ in v. 11 suggests that the implied tense in vv. 11–14 shifts back to the present,” but this understanding fails to account for the uses of “today” in the immediate future contexts of 30:2 and 8 and for the most natural rendering of ׀ in v. 11. Furthermore, Moo himself notes that “most commentators do not even mention the [future] alternative” (p. 408n56), suggesting that they likely were simply following the majority of English versions and did not wrestle in detail with the text itself. Using Paul’s words, the overwhelming view of Deuteronomy is that the function of the old covenant in redemptive history was to bear “a ministry of death” and “a ministry of condemnation” (2 Cor 3:7, 9), all so that “God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory” (Rom 9:22–23).

were destroyed, and all that remained was a “stump” or “holy seed” (6:11–13; cf. 11:1; 53:2).⁸ Speaking of God’s servant-nation, Isaiah later said, “He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear” (42:20). “Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears!” (43:8). “They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand” (44:18). YHWH purposed that Israel’s history would be characterized by “deep sleep” and the inability to “read” the Word. It was as if Isaiah’s words and the rest of the Scriptures were a sealed book to the bulk of the prophet’s contemporaries. As Isaiah states in 29:9–11,

Astonish yourselves and be astonished; blind yourselves and be blind! ... For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers). And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, “Read this,” he says, “I cannot, for it is sealed.”

Isaiah’s audience could neither comprehend nor appropriate God’s Word, because the Lord had hardened them. Paul stressed this point when he brought together Isaiah 29:10 with Deuteronomy 29:4[3] in Romans 11:7–8: “Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.’” Similarly, when Paul turned away from the recalcitrant Jews in Rome to preach to the Gentiles, he identified the lasting impact of Isaiah’s mission to harden in Isaiah 6:9–10 (Acts 28:26–27).

We can rejoice that salvation history did not end in darkness and silence. For Isaiah further noted that YHWH promised a day when “the deaf shall hear the words of a book ... and the eyes of the blind see” (29:18). Because God instructed Isaiah to write his words in a book for a perpetual witness and because the majority of his own audience could not grasp these words, his book-writing was principally for a later generation that would have hearts to know and eyes to see and ears to hear.

And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever.... Your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it.” (30:8, 20–21)

Similarly, we are told that in the day when the messianic “king will reign in righteousness ... then the eyes of those who see will not be closed, and the ears of those who hear will give attention. The heart of the hasty will understand and know” (Isa 32:1, 3–4; cf. 35:5). And again, of the Spirit-empowered, royal servant, God would declare, “I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness” (42:6–7).

There was a small remnant of Isaiah’s contemporaries who, at least at some level, understood his message: “Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples [lit., my taught ones]” (8:16). Nevertheless, God promised that one day there would be a democratization of such knowledge: “My people shall know my name” and “shall know that it is I who speak” (52:6). “All your children shall be

⁸ For more on this text, see Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive Isaiah 6.9–10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989); cf. Craig A. Evans, “Isa 6:9–13 in the Context of Isaiah’s Theology,” *JETS* 29 (1986): 139–46.

taught by the LORD” (54:13). YHWH’s law would go forth in “the latter days,” and its recipients would include many from the “nations/peoples” (2:3; 51:4–5). That is, while most Israelites from Isaiah to Jesus and the early church did not believe what they heard but rebelled, having their spiritual senses dull (Isa 53:1 with John 12:38; Rom 10:16; Isa 65:2 with Rom 10:21), the prophet envisioned that God would one day disclose himself to many who never sought him (Isa 65:1 with Rom 10:20) and that kings from many nations would see “that which had not been told them” and understand “that which they have not heard” (Isa 52:15 with Rom 15:21). Isaiah associates the proclamation of this end-times law with the teaching and rule of the royal Servant (42:1, 4), who would “sustain with a word him who is weary” (50:4; cf. Matt 11:28–30; 28:20).⁹

Building on this OT context, Jesus identified that through his own teaching God was fulfilling these promises by drawing a multi-ethnic people to himself. Jesus declared, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me” (John 6:44–45). Christ’s sheep would include some not from the Jewish fold (10:16), yet all his sheep would “believe,” “hear” his voice, and follow (10:27). To these awakened and responsive believers, the Lord would supply “the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that ‘they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven’” (Mark 4:11–12; citing Isa 6:9–10). Isaiah himself saw that his writings would benefit a future transformed multi-ethnic generation more than they would the spiritually disabled of his own day. In short, Isaiah would have agreed with Paul that he wrote his book for Christians.

Now, we here, living on this side of the cross, are the ones who can enter with Isaiah into the throne room and tremble upon the sound of, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD” (Isa 6:3). We are the ones who can testify that a people walking “in darkness have seen a great light” (9:2)—a light emanating from a person whose very identity is “God with us” (7:14) and whose characterization through his eternal and universal reign is “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6). We Christians are the ones who can truly begin to celebrate the portrait of YHWH’s incomparability in Isaiah 40. And we are the ones—Jews and Gentiles in Christ, whom God’s righteous royal Servant has accounted righteous through his substitutionary atoning work portrayed in Isaiah 53. To the majority in Israel, the prophecies of Isaiah were like a sealed book until YHWH’s Spirit came upon this servant-hearted, royal God-man, and he began to proclaim the good news of provision to the poor, of healing to the sick, of freedom to the captives, and of comfort and joy—full joy—to those who mourn (61:1–2; cf. Luke 4:18–19).

Third, as with Isaiah (Isa 30:8), YHWH told *Jeremiah* that his writing was specifically intended for a future, post-exilic, restored community of God.

Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. For behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it. (Jer 30:2–3)

⁹ Cf. Charles E. Hill, “God’s Speech in These Last Days: The New Testament Canon as an Eschatological Phenomenon,” in *Resurrection and Eschatology: Theology in Service of the Church; Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin Jr.*, ed. Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 203–54.

While there was the potential that some of Jeremiah's contemporaries would repent upon hearing his words read (36:2–3), God told Jeremiah's that most would not heed his voice, retaining the same stubbornness that characterized previous generations (7:23–28; cf. 22:21). Moreover, 30:2–3 stress that the reason Jeremiah needed to write his words in a book (cf. 36:2, 4, 17–18, 28–32) was because the *future* generations would need them. While his verbal sermons condemned those in his days, his written words were less for his present generation and more for the generations of the restored community.

The prophet further noted that only in the latter days would full understanding of his writings come. “The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intentions of his mind. *In the latter days you will understand this.* At that time, declares the LORD, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people” (Jer 30:24–31:1; cf. 23:19–20). The “you” in this passage is masculine plural and refers to the members of the restored new covenant community in the latter days.¹⁰ This is the most natural referent because it is the group to which Jeremiah was just prophesying about (30:18–22), and because YHWH next declares that “at that time” of understanding, “I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people” (31:1), a phrase that both recalls 30:22 and anticipates the restatement of the same a little later in the chapter with direct connection to the “new covenant”: “For this is the [new] covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (31:33).

In the immediate context, Jeremiah associates the “latter days” of “understanding” with Israel/Judah’s restoration from exile and reconciliation with God (30:10–11, 17, 18–22; ch. 31; cf. 23:6–7), with God’s punishment of the enemy nations (30:11, 16), with the rise of a ruler from the people’s midst (30:21; cf. 23:5), and with the incorporation of foreigners into the one people of God who too will be surrendered to “the LORD their God and David their king” (30:8–9; cf. 3:16–18; 12:14–17; Hos 3:5).¹¹ This period of Jeremiah’s “new covenant,” which is now being realized through Christ and his church (Luke 22:20; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:13; 9:15), would find every covenant member enjoying forgiveness of sins (cf. Heb 10:12–18), which in turn would result in the democratization of a new knowledge: “No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (31:34). This new knowledge aligns with the earlier promise of “understanding” (30:24) and

¹⁰ Lundbom notes that the Medieval Jewish rabbi Joseph Kimḥi (AD 1105–1170) identified the time of “understanding” in Jer 30:24 with the messianic era (see Hos 3:5; Dan 2:28; cf. Gen 49:1, 8–9; Num 24:14, 17–19; Deut 4:30–31; 31:29; Isa 2:2; Mal 4:1; Jer 23:20; 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 38:16; Dan 10:14), but Lundbom himself follows the majority critical view that “eschatological meaning is not present in the pre-exilic use of this expression” (Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004], 198; cf. Horst Seebass, “אַחֲרֵיתָ” *ach’rith*,” *TDOT* 1:210–11; Ernst Jenni, “אַחֲרָ” *hr* after,” *TLOT* 1:87–88). Even the conservative Thompson says Jeremiah’s day of understanding “is in the not too distant future; it is not an eschatological concept” (J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 563). However, Jeremiah’s association of the following phrase “at that time” with the covenant formula (“I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people,” 31:1) links the period of understanding with the “new covenant,” which is when the reinstated covenant relationship will be realized (31:31, 33). Cf. G. K. Beale, “Eschatology,” *DLNT* 330–31.

¹¹ For my interpretation Jeremiah’s portrayal of Gentile incorporation into the one people of God, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets: New Covenant Ecclesiology in OT Perspective,” *JETS* 58 (2015): 462–65.

recalls Isaiah's promise that, following the work of the suffering royal Servant, "all your children shall be taught by the LORD" (Isa 54:13; cf. John 6:45).

Ignorance prevailed in Jeremiah's day, but true knowledge of God and understanding of his OT teaching would characterize the new covenant community. In Jeremiah, knowledge of God relates to an experiential involvement in the Lord's commitment to steadfast love, justice, and righteousness (Jer 9:24; 22:15–16). John later stressed how the knowledge for which Jeremiah longed is now enjoyed by *all* who are in Christ. "You all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:20–21; cf. 2:27–29).

Fourth, the book of *Daniel* is filled with symbolic dreams, visions, and declarations—"mysteries" (Dan 2:18–19, 27–30, 47; 4:9[H 4:6]) of which God reveals some to Daniel, so that we are told "he understood the word and had understanding of the vision" (10:1; cf. 10:11–14). Indeed, Daniel grasped something of both the person and time of the Messiah's ministry (9:25; cf. 1 Pet 1:10–11).¹² Still there are elaborations on these latter day prophecies related to the kingdoms of God and mankind that Daniel asserts, "I heard, but I did not understand" (Dan 12:8) and that the Lord tells his prophet to "shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end" (12:4)—the appointed period in salvation history when God would fully disclose his purposes to the wise.¹³

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." ... And someone said ..., "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" And I heard the man ... [say] that it would be for a time, times, and a half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. I heard, but *I did not understand*. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?" He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.... But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days. (12:2–4, 6–10, 13).

Daniel envisioned that only at "the time of the end"—which the Septuagint in the rest of Daniel identifies as the last "hour" (Dan 8:17, 19; 10:14; 11:35, 40; 12:1)—would people grasp the full meaning

¹² For me, the most satisfying interpretation of Dan 9:24–27 is found in "The New Covenant in Daniel's Seventy Weeks," in Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 599–643. Gentry's discussion in this second edition is a substantial advance on his previous studies. See also Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 71–133.

¹³ For more on "mystery" in Daniel and its implications for our understanding of continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments, see G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 29–46. Cf. Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians*, BZNW 160 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008).

of his revelations regarding God's kingdom. From a NT perspective, the first coming of Christ has inaugurated this period of eschatological realization when people can both hear and understand God's words in this book. We see this in Matthew's Gospel, where, after speaking of "the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel" (cf. 11:31; 12:11), there appears an intrusive parenthetical comment, "*Let the reader understand*" (Matt 24:15). Similarly, echoing Daniel 12:1 and its context, Jesus would note, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.... Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:25, 28–29).¹⁴

In summary, these OT texts from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel all suggest that the OT prophets knew, as Peter would say, "that they were serving not themselves" but us, believers upon whom the end of the ages has come and with that the revelation of mysteries through Christ (1 Cor 10:11; 1 Pet 1:11). With these OT texts we see God withholding the full meaning of his intended message in at least two ways.

First, God's prophets were convinced that the rebel majority among their contemporaries would neither hear nor heed their messages due to God's hardening judgment (Deut 29:4[3]; Isa 6:9–10; 29:11), but they also envisioned a day when the Lord would overcome spiritual disability, thus enabling a sensory, life-changing encounter with the living God (Deut 30:6, 8; Isa 29:18). Most in the OT period were spiritually disabled—blind to the beauties of God, deaf to his laws, and ignorant of both their sin and its remedy. They didn't grieve over their rebellion; they didn't lean on the Lord or long for his Messiah, because they thought they were okay. But at the rise of the child-king (Isa 9:6–7), "the people who walked in darkness" would see "a great light" (Isa 9:2; cf. Matt 4:15–16).

Second, YHWH's prophets themselves did not fully grasp the meaning of all their predictions and declarations. As such, Daniel could both "understand" some words and visions (Dan 10:1) while not "understanding" others (12:8). The remnant of faithful would only fully comprehend God's intended meaning in the latter days (Jer 30:24; Dan 12:4, 9–10). "Many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Luke 10:24; cf. Matt 13:17). We see more clearly today what the righteous ones of old longed to see but could not. While they understood partial mysteries, the full revelation is only disclosed through Christ. He is the necessary lens for grasping all the meaning the divine author intended in his OT revelation.

So even to the prophets there were some mysteries that remained hidden, and to their listeners there was even more withheld, for their spiritual disability made them completely unresponsive to the voice of God, completely incapable to see and savor the beauty of the Lord, completely unable to follow God's ways. As Paul would later say, "The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot" (Rom 8:7). And again, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). A supernatural healing and revelation would be required to create fresh responsiveness to the Lord, thus awakening the heart to God's intended meaning of the OT Scriptures. "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God" (2:12).

¹⁴ Cf. Mark 13:11; John 4:23; 12:23; 16:32; 17:1; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 10:11; Heb 1:2; 9:26; 1 Pet 1:20; 1 John 2:18. See G. K. Beale, "The Old Testament Background of the 'Last Hour' in 1 John 2,18," *Bib* 92 (2011): 231–54.

3. New Testament Reflections on the Rebels' Inability to Understand the Old Testament

The NT is clear that the blindness associated with the rebel majority continued into Christ's day. We see this incapacity, for example, in the religious leaders, whom Jesus confronted numerous times. "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life" (John 5:39–40). "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31). The Jewish leaders were blind to seeing how the OT itself pointed to Christ.

Matthew highlights a number of episodes in Jesus's life where he treats those who were supposed to be masters of the Scriptures as though they didn't know how to read them.

Have you not read what David did when he was hungry? ... Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ... If you had known what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless." (Matt 12:3, 5, 7)

The Pharisees could not understand their own Scriptures. Jesus further said, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?" (19:4). "Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?'" (21:16). "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?'" (21:42). "And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God?" (22:31).

In the Gospels we find a number of statements that identify the roots of such blindness. For example, in Matthew 16:3–4, Jesus again addresses the Pharisees and Sadducees, asserting, "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation!" So at the core, their inability to interpret rightly was related to their innate evil and adultery against God. Similarly, Mark highlights that the leaders refused to celebrate his coming because of their "hardness": "And [Jesus] looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart" (Mark 3:5). John further records Jesus's assertion, "Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires" (John 8:42–44). Earlier John recalled Jesus's statement:

The Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard.... I know that you do not have the love of God within you.... How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? (5:37, 42–47)

In these texts we read of innate wickedness that stands hostile to God, of a heart hardness, of desires that are not submitted to God but that are aligned with the devil, and of a passion for man's praise over the glory that comes from God. The religious leaders of Christ's day loved being noticed in the public square and getting the best seats in the synagogues and at feasts (Matt 23:6; Luke 11:43; 20:46). They were more concerned with their own exaltation rather than God's. And the result was that they could not hear God's voice or savor God's beauty in the Scriptures. Thus, Jesus bemoaned over Jerusalem, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now

they are hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:42). It was as if these leaders were living in the dark, unable to see the beauty of God in the face of Christ to which the OT pointed.

And where the leaders went, the rest of the nation went also. Speaking of the broader crowd that followed Jesus yet failed to exert saving faith, John wrote,

Though [Jesus] had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, “He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I will heal them.” Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. (John 12:37–41)

Note that Isaiah stresses that the people’s deafness and blindness was “that the word spoken by the prophet [Isaiah] might be fulfilled.” God intended that the word of God through his prophets would be like a closed book until the time when the revealer of mysteries would come. Thus, Jesus, quoting Isaiah 6:9–10, disclosed to his disciples the meaning of his teaching, declaring, “To you has been given the secret [i.e., mystery] of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that ‘they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven’” (Mark 4:12).

Paul echoed the realities we’ve seen thus far when he wrote in Rom 11:7–8, “Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.’” The apostle appears to draw the “to this very day” from Moses’s words in Deut 29:4[3] that “to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear,” whereas the rest of the citation is drawn from Isaiah’s stress that “the LORD has poured out upon you [Israel] a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes” (Isa 29:10).

In 2 Cor 3:14, the apostle similarly emphasizes, “The [Jews’] minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.” In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul says that Moses’s veil that he wore after encountering the divine presence served as a parable of the people’s spiritual emptiness. Apart from Jesus, the Jews could not fully see and savor the beauty of God bound up in the Scriptures, resulting in the old covenant bearing “a ministry of condemnation” (3:9). Nevertheless, with the coming of Christ, the veil is lifted as God begins to disclose his glory in Christ that was always part of the OT. The OT age was one of ignorance and hardness (Acts 17:30; Eph 4:18; 1 Pet 1:14) with the devil keeping most of the world blind to the beauties of God. “If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:3–4). But in Jesus new creation dawns, with gospel light breaking over the horizon and dispersing darkness and shadow. “God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6).

Why would God purpose to extend such a season of hardness, ignorance, and blindness where his Word was not understood, his precepts were not treasured, his commands were not celebrated, and his promises were not hoped in? Paul tells us that it was so that we as Christians could celebrate all the more the mercy that comes through Christ. “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to

make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?” (Rom 9:22–24). The Lord made the darkness so deep and the night so long, so that we upon whom the light has dawned may be able to savor all the more the warmth, brilliance, and merciful glory of God bound up in his gift of Christ.

4. New Testament Reflections on the Remnant’s Inability to Fully Understand the Old Testament

Along with highlighting his enemies’ inability to read the OT rightly, Jesus also reprimanded his own disciples for failing to recognize fully who he was and all that their Scriptures anticipated about him. After noting that he was now revealing “the secret [μυστήριον] of the kingdom of God” to them (Mark 4:11), Jesus queried, “Do you not understand this parable” (4:13). Later, following both Jesus’s feeding of the five thousand and his calming of the storm, Mark tells us that his disciples still “did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened” (6:52). Rather than recognizing that Jesus controlled creation, that Jesus was their satisfier and supply, they still failed to see him for who he was. Jesus regularly charged the crowds “hear” and “understand” (e.g., 4:9, 23; 7:14), but he remained astonished that his closest followers did not grasp his meaning: “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see?” (7:18). And again, “Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?” (8:17; cf. 8:21). We then read, “But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him” (9:32).

Significantly, Mark uses two parallel healing accounts to highlight the progressive growth of the disciples’ understanding. Mark first compares Jesus’s two-stage healing of the blind man (Mark 8:22–26) with Peter’s partial understanding of Jesus’ identity and mission. Peter rightfully confesses that Jesus is the Christ (8:27–30), but then Jesus immediately has to castigate him (“Get behind me Satan!” [8:31–33]) because Peter’s mind was not yet fully in alignment with God’s purposes. Jesus’s death and resurrection in the holy city, however, would bring understanding, as is anticipated through Jesus’s instantaneous and complete healing of blind Bartimaeus during Jesus’s journey to death at Jerusalem (10:46–52).

Luke too emphasized the disciples’ lack of knowledge of the OT. After Jesus’s resurrection, he challenged the two on the road to Emmaus, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:25–26). Even the closest followers of Jesus were culpable for failing to see. What a mercy, then, is shown by Christ in disclosing himself, in opening the OT Word to minds once closed. Christ’s two students recalled following their encounter with the resurrected Christ, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while *he opened to us the Scriptures?*” (Luke 24:32). Christ made them wise to the OT’s meaning, thus fulfilling what both Isaiah and Daniel said would come to pass—that after a season of ignorance “the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see” (Isa 29:18); that “those who are wise shall understand” (Dan 12:10).

Luke further unpacks what the resurrected Christ enables with respect to the initial three-fourths of the Bible. After his encounter with the two men, he appeared to a group that included the eleven remaining apostles. We read, “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while

I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled! Then *he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures*” (Luke 24:44–45). The resurrected Christ now allows the community associated with him to see things in the biblical text that were there all along but ungraspable without the correct light and lens. Jesus is here revealing a “mystery” that is not totally new revelation (their gaining understanding of *the Scriptures*), but its full disclosure was to a significant extent hidden.¹⁵ In Christ, God “enlightens” the eyes of our hearts (Eph 1:18). He shines into our once darkened hearts “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). He grants “strength to comprehend” the love of God (Eph 3:18–19), “revealing” Jesus to us (Matt 13:16) and “giving us understanding” (2 Tim 2:7).

5. *New Testament Reflections on the Old Testament’s Mystery Revealed*

I have argued that the OT prophets and righteous men understood in part but only in part what they were testifying to when the Spirit of Christ in them was “predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories” (1 Pet 1:11). As was declared of Daniel, “He understood the word and had understanding of the vision” (Dan 10:1), whereas in other instances he admitted, “I heard, but I did not understand” (12:8). And when he asked for clarity, God responded, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end” (12:9).

On the one hand, we read Jesus declare, “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). Reflecting on Psalm 16:8–11, Peter too tagged King David a “prophet,” who, “knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ” (Acts 2:30–31; cf. Luke 18:31–33; Acts 3:18, 24; 10:43). Similarly, the writer of Hebrews stressed, “These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar” (Heb 11:13). The OT remnant, therefore, enjoyed some level of light, wherein they could see clearly and understand rightly many of the things God used them to declare; they themselves wrote of the Christ and hoped in him. On the other hand, we also read, “I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Luke 10:24; cf. Matt 13:17). It seems that we should understand YHWH’s prophets of old as truly seeing something of the beauties that would come and the hope that awaited them, while also affirming that they did not see all. Full disclosure of the meaning of everything that they were declaring awaited a later day.¹⁶

Peter captured both sides of the interpretive framework when he wrote in 1 Peter 1:10–12:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the

¹⁵ Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 30.

¹⁶ For similar conclusions, see Robert L. Plummer, “Righteousness and Peace Kiss: The Reconciliation of Authorial Intent and Biblical Typology,” *SBJT* 14.2 (2010): 54–61; Beale, “The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of Biblical Authors,” 263–93. Beale writes, “There is always a related range of meaning that appropriately is an expansion of the explicit meaning that is expressed.... OT authors may have had some inkling of how the meaning of their texts would be later interpreted in what would appear to us surprising interpretations” (pp. 265, 283); cf. Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 343, 359.

things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Here the apostle identified that the OT prophets were themselves studiers of earlier revelation. And under the guiding hand of the Spirit (2 Pet 1:21), they “searched and inquired carefully” to know both *who* the Messiah would be and *when* he would appear, thus predicting Christ’s sufferings and the days of the church. They may not have known Jesus’s name, but they had a general sense of the type of person he would be and of when he would come. From this perspective, we can say that the OT authors themselves (though not most of their contemporaries) already visualized something of the nature of the fulfillment that the NT identifies as culminating in Christ. This is not to deny the progress of revelation, but it is to stress that the progress can simply be between conscious, prospective prediction (whether direct or typological) and fulfillment (as opposed to a prediction of which only God was originally aware but that we now identify retrospectively).

This understanding of OT texts is fueled when we allow our grammatical-historical exegesis to consider how previous Scripture¹⁷—of which the prophets were searching and inquiring carefully—and the patterns in Israel’s redemptive-story¹⁸ inform our reading, filling out implications of a text’s meaning along with that which is explicitly stated. By “implications” I mean those subsidiary or implicit meanings that we can show fall within the author’s cognitive peripheral vision, though he may not have been conscious of them.¹⁹ A proper reading of the OT requires that we, for example, appreciate how Genesis 3:15 or 22:17b–18 shape and inform messianic hope in all the rest of the Bible, how associations between YHWH and his Messiah (e.g., Hos 3:5) may influence later readings that only include mention of YHWH (e.g., Hos 11:10–11), or how past types like sacrifice may guide a messianic reading within later texts (e.g., of the day of the Lord as sacrifice in Zeph 2:7). The OT prophets and NT authors seem to have read their Scriptures in this way.

These things stated, when Peter says that “it was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced” (1 Pet 1:12), he is highlighting that the OT prophets were very aware that their words were for us more than them. That is, they saw the things that God promised but merely “greeted them from afar,” convinced “that apart from us they should

¹⁷ On this point, I agree with Walter C. Kaiser Jr., who stresses that before considering how subsequent revelation handles our passage we must first use “all the divine revelation found in the books that *preceded* [historically] the selected text we are reading or studying as the context and ‘informing theology’ that could have the first input to ‘thicken’ the meaning” (“Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, Counterpoints [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 53; cf. 72, 75). Similarly, though rightfully allowing for interaction with historically later works as well, Beale writes, “When a NT writer refers to an OT passage, both the explicit and subsidiary understanding of the OT author’s meaning compose what we would call the NT writer’s respect for the OT contextual meaning. In addition to the explicit meaning from the specific text quoted and explicitly attended to by the NT author, this contextual meaning may include ideas from the immediate or nearby OT context that are in mind, as well as ideas from other OT books that are related to the meaning of the focus text” (“The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of Biblical Authors,” 273; cf. Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 349).

¹⁸ See Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 96–102.

¹⁹ See especially Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 30–38; Stein, “The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,” 451–66; Beale, “The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of Biblical Authors,” 263–93, esp. 266–70; Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 344–47.

not be made perfect” (Heb 11:13, 39). Jesus testified that the Scriptures “bear witness about me” (John 5:39),²⁰ but only in his coming do we gain proper perspective in order to receive this witness. As Philip declared to Nathanael, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth” (1:45; cf. 5:46).

The ultimate divine intent of OT texts (with respect to both sense and referent) can and likely often does legitimately transcend any given human author’s immediate written speech, while still organically growing out of it and never contradicting it (see John 11:51).²¹ This is so because God’s purposes often far exceed human understanding (Deut 29:29; Isa 55:8–9; Eccl 8:16–17) and because he was authoring not simply books but a book (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21) whose parts were “incomplete” until Jesus “fulfilled” them by his coming (Matt 5:17; 11:13; Rom 10:4).²²

John’s Gospel in particular highlights how Christ’s resurrection and glorification marks a turning point in our understanding of Scripture, providing us a lens for reading rightly.²³

The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But [Jesus] was speaking about the temple of his body. When

²⁰ John frequently uses this statement to speak of a verbal testimony after a visible encounter (e.g., John 1:34; 3:11, 32; 19:35).

²¹ Since E. D. Hirsch’s landmark volume *Validity and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), scholars have often limited meaning to human authorial intent, and I am highly sympathetic to this view. Numerous scholars, however, have offered fair critique of this perspective, seeing as one of Scripture’s authors is God, whose purpose was not simply to write books but a book (see Philip B. Payne, “The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author’s Intention,” *JETS* 20 [1977]: 243–52; Raju D. Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture—Critical Examination of a Theological Construct,” *Grace Theological Journal* 7 [1986]: 81–110; Peter Enns, “Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse,” *WTJ* 65 [2003]: 263–87; Jared M. Compton, “Shared Intentions? Reflections on Inspiration and Interpretation in Light of Scripture’s Dual Authorship,” *Them* 33 [2008]: 23–33; Vern S. Poythress, “The Presence of God Qualifying Our Notions of Grammatical-Historical Interpretation: Genesis 3:15 as a Test Case,” *JETS* 50 (2007): 87–103; Vern S. Poythress, “Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning: Gains and Losses from Focusing on the Human Author, Illustrated by Zephaniah 1:2–3,” *JETS* 57 [2014]: 481–99; Moo and Naselli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” 702–46). Significantly, Hirsch himself has refined his statements, affirming that his original line between “meaning” (which is textually bound) and “significance” (which is fluid) is not as fixed as he once thought (E. D. Hirsch, “Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted,” *Critical Inquiry* 11 [1984]: 202–24; E. D. Hirsch, “Transhistorical Intentions and the Persistence of Allegory,” *New Literary History* 25 [1994]: 549–67; cited in Darrell L. Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old*, ed. Kenneth Berdin and Jonathan Lunde, Counterpoints [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 123 n. 15). On the question of the NT’s use of the OT, Walter C. Kaiser Jr. is perhaps the strongest voice arguing that human authorial intent *exhausts* the full meaning of every OT text, so that the NT authors are in *every instance* simply identifying what the OT authors already meant in full (*The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* [Chicago: Moody, 1985]; Kaiser, “Single Meaning, Unified Referents,” 45–89). Another following this basic approach to biblical interpretation is Robert Stein (see “The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,” 451–66; *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*).

²² So too, Moo and Naselli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” 735.

²³ See especially D. A. Carson, “Understanding Misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel,” *TynBul* 33 (1982): 59–91; Ardel Caneday, “The Word Made Flesh as Mystery Incarnate: Revealing and Concealing Dramatized by Jesus as Portrayed in John’s Gospel,” *JETS* 60 (2017): 751–65. Caneday notes the difference between the two articles as follows: “While Carson’s focuses on the disciples’ *reception* of Christ’s revelation, my thesis accents Christ’s revelatory *impartment*” (“The Word Made Flesh as Mystery Incarnate,” 753).

therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. (John 2:20–22)

Jesus’s resurrection moved the disciples to embrace in a fresh way both “the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.”

They took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. (John 12:13–16)

Only when the Father glorified his Son did Christ’s followers connect how the OT Scriptures testified to Christ’s triumphal entry.

In the NT, Jesus, Paul, and John speak of God’s revealing a “mystery” (μυστήριον) in order to capture the idea of how in Christ we gain full disclosure of things that were somewhat if not significantly hidden in the meaning of the OT.²⁴ This is the language that stands behind Jesus’s statement to his disciples in Mark 4:11: “To you has been given the *secret* of the kingdom of God” (cf. Matt 13:11; Luke 8:10). So too in Rom 16:25–26 Paul speaks of the “mystery” of the good news of Christ that he preached: “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith.” The gospel bound up in the preaching of Jesus Christ is in many respects a revelation of a mystery that for centuries was not understood and not appreciated, yet it is the very OT books—the prophetic writings—that make it known.

Jesus’s appointment as the Son of God in power (Rom 1:4) gives fuller insight for our OT interpretation, for through him we gain the OT’s fullest meaning. Prior to Jesus’s arrival, the OT was still “a messianic document written from messianic perspective and designed to instill messianic hope.”²⁵ The OT prophets grasped some of the meaning, seeing patterns in history, celebrating promises of hope, and anticipating that God’s blessing would overcome global curse only through a male deliver who would gain victory over the evil one through substitutionary sacrifice. Nevertheless, in many respects the OT was still a mystery hidden through the ages—an acorn waiting to become a mighty oak. But when the offspring of the woman, the seed of Abraham, and the son of David appeared, Jesus’s own

²⁴ See Matt 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Rom 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor 2:1, 7; 4:1; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26–27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7; 1 Tim 3:9, 16; Rev 1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7. The most thorough assessment of all of these texts is Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*; cf. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 393–436. Beale and Gladd write, “The revelation of the mystery is not a totally new revelation but the full disclosure of something that was to a significant extent hidden” (*Hidden but Now Revealed*, 30). Similarly, writing with respect to John’s Gospel, Carson elsewhere asserts, “Thus we come by another route to something analogous to the dominant notion of μυστήριον in the Pauline corpus: the gospel is simultaneously said to be hidden in times past but now disclosed, and prophesied in times past and now fulfilled” (D. A. Carson, “Reflections on a Johannine Pilgrimage,” in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007], 91–92).

²⁵ From personal correspondence with James M. Hamilton Jr., Professor of Biblical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

person and work provided both the spiritual light to see and savor the OT's author's intent, and the interpretive lens for properly understanding and applying the OT itself in a way that most completely magnifies God in Christ.

6. *The Centrality of Christ for Interpreting the Old Testament*²⁶

I believe the Scripture is calling us to see both an organic unity and a progressive development between the Old and New Testaments. The move from Old to New is a shift neither from apple seed to oak tree nor from oak tree to oak tree but from acorn to oak tree. There is an organic connection between what the OT human authors intended and what the NT human authors saw fulfilled in the person of Jesus, but the OT meaning is now often fuller, expanded, or deepened because through Christ God reveals the mystery. Often the OT prophets fully grasped both the shadow and substance of their writings (e.g., John 8:56; Dan 10:1; Acts 2:30–31), but at times we can assume their awareness was like one who plants an acorn that he knows will grow into a mighty oak, but who has little grasp of how glorious that oak would indeed be that you and I now visualize. In still other instances, though probably not too often, the OT authors may not have even recognized that the person, event, or thing that they were recounting actually foreshadowed something greater.²⁷ While a type's predictive nature was innately present from the beginning (see 1 Cor 10:6, 11), we may at times only recognize the anticipatory elements in retrospect.²⁸

The OT is filled with declarations, characters, events, and institutions that bear meaning in themselves but that also find that meaning enhanced and clarified in the coming of Christ. It is as if the OT often gives us the start of a pattern in which we read “2” followed by “4,” but we need the NT to clarify what comes next (2, 4, ?). If the NT identifies that the OT finds its fulfillment in Christ as the digit “6,” then we know not only the final answer but also that the OT problem was “2 + 4.” If, however, the NT establishes that the next digit is “8,” then we know both the answer and that the OT problem was “2

²⁶ My focus in this paper has been on the need to interpret the OT through the light and lens of Christ's coming and not on how to properly see and savor the divine Son in the OT. For this, see DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 481–89; Jason S. DeRouchie, “Lifting the Veil: Reading and Preaching Jesus's Bible through the Light and Lens of the Divine Son,” *SBJT* 22.3 (2018): 157–79. The former volume includes a host of further sources on the topic, to which I would now add Dennis E. Johnson, *Journeys with Jesus: Every Path in the Bible Leads Us to Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018). You also can view a recent lecture I gave related to the issue titled “Thinking How to See and Savor the Divine Son in All of Scripture,” Bethlehem College & Seminary, 20 October 2019, <https://jasonderouchie.com/how-to-see-and-savor-the-divine-son-in-all-of-scripture/>.

²⁷ While I believe the norm was that the OT prophets grasped at least the seed of what they were proclaiming, we know that they did not always understand (Dan 12:8)—much like the disciples themselves failed to grasp Christ's statements about his passion until after his death and resurrection (Mark 6:51–52; Luke 2:50; 9:45; 18:31–34; 24:16; John 12:16). In other instances, the prophet could have been fully unaware that he was predicting anything (specifically with respect to typological predictions). We see a comparable example when we read, “Caiaphas ... said to them, ‘... It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.’ He did not say this of his own accord, by being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11:50–52).

²⁸ For an example of typology that is viewed to be primarily retrospective and not prospective, see Andrew David Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology: Paul's Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34–35* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012).

x 4.”²⁹ The coming of Christ supplies both the answer key and the algorithm that clarify how the divine author desired all along for us to read the OT.³⁰

In this respect, some have helpfully compared Scripture to “double narratives” like detective stories. Leithart writes,

Detective novels tell two stories at once: the story on the surface and the real story unveiled to the gathered suspects in the final chapter. Once the detective gives his solution to the crime, the reader cannot go back to the first narrative; the second completely overshadows it.... Under the circumstances, reading backwards is not merely a preferred reading strategy; it is the only sensible course of action for a reasonable person.³¹

The Bible’s last “chapter” (the NT) supplies us the necessary lens for reading the initial three-fourths the way God intends us to read it. Through Christ we can see and savor elements in the OT’s plotline, content, and structure that were there all along but that were not clear apart from him.

In regard to these matters, Darrell Bock writes, “Later revelation can complete and fill meaning that was initially, but not comprehensively, revealed in the original setting, so that once the progress of revelation emerges, the earlier passage is better and more comprehensively understood.”³² He continues, “The force of earlier passages in God’s plan becomes clearer and more developed as more of the plan is revealed in later events and texts. This increase in clarity often involves the identification of new referents, to which the initial referents typologically point forward.”³³ Similarly, G. K. Beale notes,

It is quite possible that the OT authors did not exhaustively understand the meaning, implications, and possible applications of all that they wrote. Subsequently, the NT Scripture interprets the OT Scripture by expanding its meaning, seeing new implications in it and giving it new applications.... This expansion does not contravene the integrity of the earlier texts but rather develops them in a way which is consistent with the OT

²⁹ We could also find in the NT “-2” (2 – 4), “16” (2², 4²), etc.

³⁰ Moo and Naselli assert, “The most basic of all NT ‘hermeneutical axioms’ ... is the authors’ conviction that the God who had spoken in the OT continued to speak to them and that it was this final divine context for all of Scripture that determines the meaning of any particular text” (“The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” 737).

³¹ Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 66, following historian David Steinmetz. Reckoning with how later realities in space and time can influence and inform the meaning of earlier realities, Leithart cites Arthur C. Danto as follows: “The whole truth concerning an event can only be known after, and sometimes only *long* after the event itself has taken place, and this part of the story historians can only tell.” Leithart then later adds, “The event is brought into relation with subsequent events and acquires new properties that change the very thing that it is.” Leithart, *Deep Exegesis*, 40, 43. With respect to the biblical text, I am more comfortable speaking about layers of meaning and how later interpreted events or messages *illuminate*, *enhance*, and *extend* the single meaning God intended from the beginning but which was only realized progressively through greater revelation and realized fully with tribulation and triumph of Jesus Christ. Such a view alone maintains the organic link between type and antitype and the unified, omniscient, and omnipotent working of the single divine author.

³² Darrell L. Bock, “Response to Kaiser,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old*, ed. Kenneth Berdin and Jonathan Lunde, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 92.

³³ Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents,” 114.

author's understanding of the way in which God interacts with his people--which is the unifying factor between the Testaments.³⁴

What these authors are stressing is that even if the OT authors were not always *fully* aware of all that God was speaking through them, they at least retrospectively would have affirmed the trajectories defined by the later biblical authors.³⁵ As Beale states,

When there is a divine understanding that transcends the conscious intention of the human author, the divine understanding is still organically related to the human author's understanding or "willed type." What God knew more fully than the prophet consciously knew would be an interpretive implication that would fit within the human author's "willed type," and, if asked later, the prophet would say, "Yes, I see how that is the wider, thicker meaning of what I intended originally to say." We must say that in every case God had a more exhaustive understanding than biblical authors had of what they wrote.³⁶

Figure 1 tries to unpack how I see what is happening with respect to Scripture's progressive revealing of OT meaning. The horizontal axis represents the progress of revelation from the OT to the NT eras through Christ, and the vertical axis distinguishes the unregenerate from the regenerate in both periods. In the OT age, the remnant of faithful (like Abraham and Moses, Rahab and Hannah, David and Isaiah) had light for seeing and savoring God's purposes that would climax in Christ, but they did not have the full lens for discerning the ultimate significance of what they saw. In contrast, the unregenerate, which included the majority of Israel, had neither light nor lens due to their hardness of heart and spiritual disability. Now, with Christ's coming, God is enlightening more eyes and has supplied the full lens for reading the OT faithfully, but the unregenerate continue to live in the dark, having the lens of Christ available but not the light of Christ to see. The "mystery," therefore, remained permanently hidden for some (cf. 1 Cor 2:8–9 with Isa 64:4; Eph 1:17–18) but was only temporarily hidden for others (see Dan 12:8–9, 12; Matt 11:25).³⁷

³⁴ Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?" 394.

³⁵ LaSor once stated, "An ordinary seed contains in itself everything that will develop in the plant or tree to which it is organically related: every branch, every leaf, every flower. Yet no amount of examination by available scientific methods will disclose to us what is in that seed. However, once the seed has developed to its fullness, we can see how the seed has been fulfilled" (William Sanford LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and Sensus Plenior," *Tyn-Bul* 29 [1978]: 55–56). I appreciate here the stress on the organic connection between an acorn and oak, or apple seed and apple tree. However, while not true in every instance, the OT authors do often appear to have known a lot both about both the organic trajectory and its ultimate fulfillment.

³⁶ Beale, "The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of Biblical Authors," 283; cf. Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 358.

³⁷ Gladd notes, "Temporary hiddenness operates on a redemptive-historical plane and concerns the unveiling of end-times events, whereas permanent hiddenness refers to the persistent inability to understand revelation even after the mystery has been revealed." Benjamin L. Gladd, "Mystery," in *Dictionary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, forthcoming); cf. D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and New," in *The Paradoxes of Paul. Vol. 2 of Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, 2 vols., WUNT 2/181 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 432; Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 60–63.

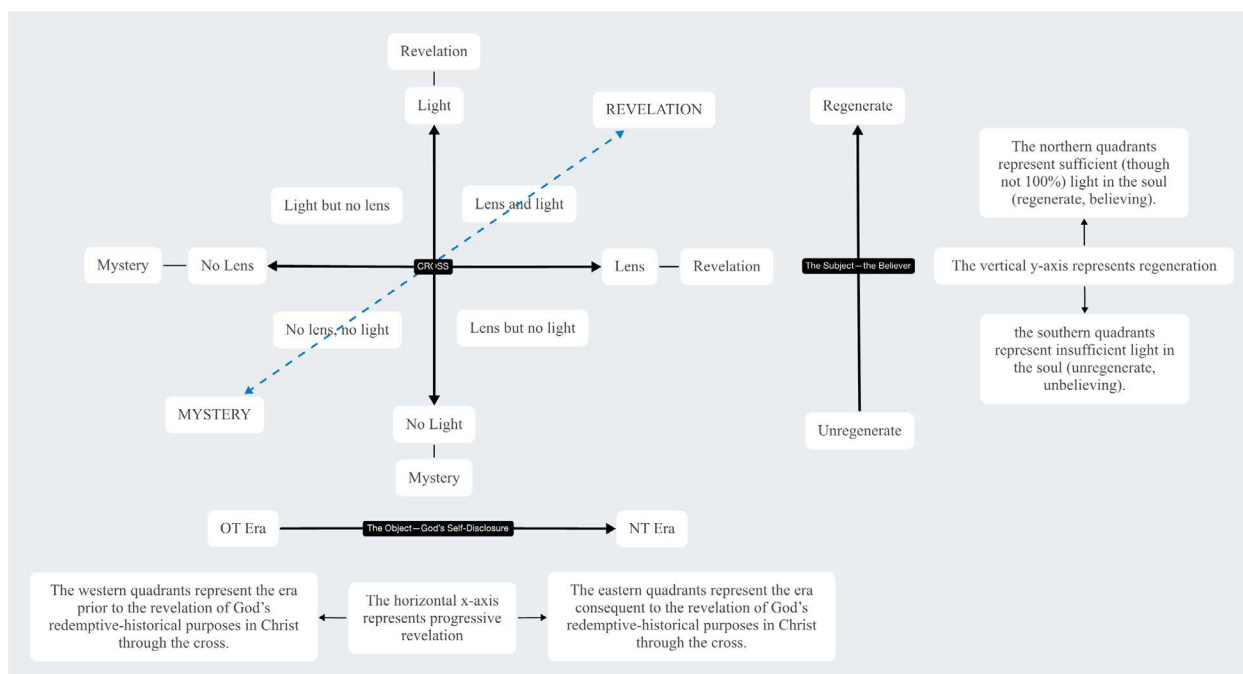


Figure 1. The Bible's Progressive Revelation of OT Mystery³⁸

Figure 2 unpacks further the way Christ operates as a lens, supplying us a developed understanding of the OT's meaning. The NT in Christ more fully interprets and clarifies OT visions and declarations; it identifies the realization or fulfillment of the OT's direct promises and predictions; it gives substance to the various types or shadows (persons, events, things; cf. Col 2:17; Heb 8:5; 10:1); and it identifies the ultimate *telos* of the law of Moses in Christ and the law associated with him.

When Saul encountered the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus, the murderer became a missionary, the blind man gained sight, and Jewish Pharisee became an apostle of Jesus to the Gentiles who from that point forward only read the OT through the light and lens of Christ. By means of the resurrected Jesus's appearing, a veil was lifted that now allowed Paul to read the old covenant materials with fresh eyes (2 Cor 3:14–16), and in them he found a clear message of the Messiah and the mission he would spark (Acts 26:22–23; cf. Luke 24:47). This OT preacher could now assert, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2; cf. 1:23). Because he also identified that the gospel was of "first importance" (15:3) and not *sole* importance, we know he found more in the OT than the gospel. However, the death and resurrection of Jesus now supplied the apostle with an unparalleled lens for reading the OT as God intended.

³⁸ I thank my student Joey Karrigan for helpfully capturing in this image what he heard me teach in class.

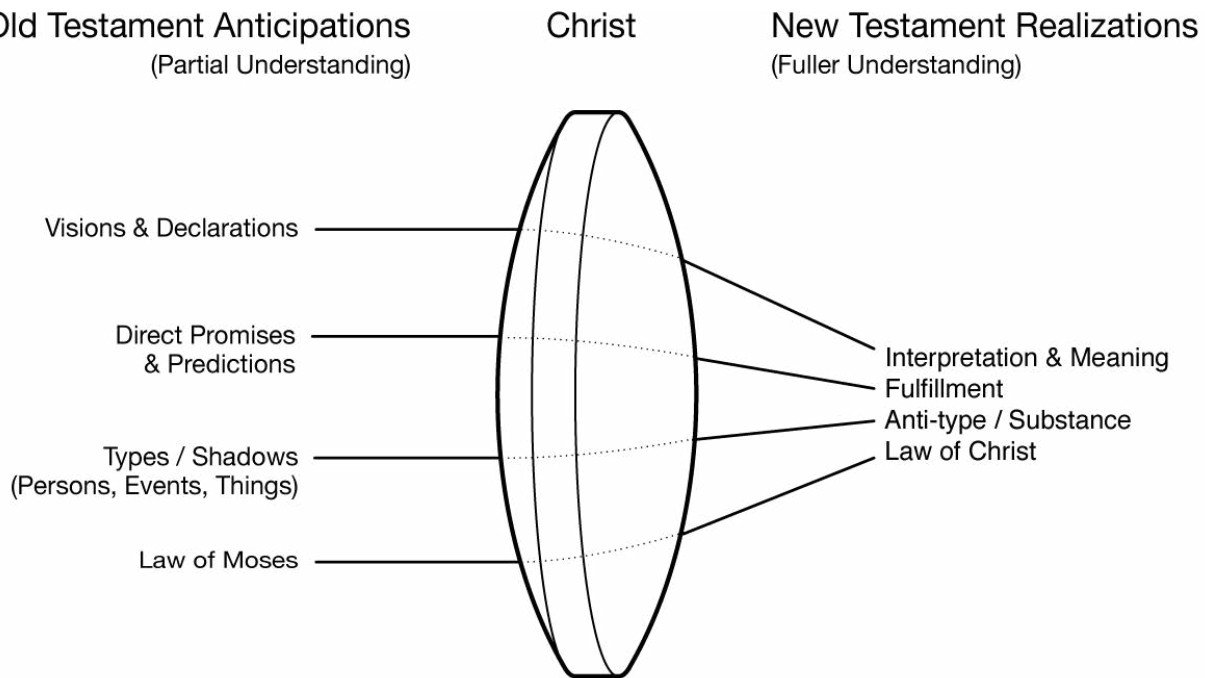


Figure 2. Interpreting the OT through the Lens of Christ³⁹

The NT church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph 2:20). In light of Paul’s earlier statements that the OT “prophetic writings” are the very means by which God *through Christ* is today making known the revelation of his mystery to the nations (Rom 16:25–26; cf. 1:1–3), the “prophets” in Eph 2:20 may actually be the OT prophets, whom we should now encounter only through the guidance of the NT apostles.⁴⁰ Regardless, it is “the apostles’ teaching” that is to ground the church’s proclamation (Acts 2:42). And because the OT was their Bible, we must seek to understand and follow the apostle’s pattern of interpreting the OT in the light of Christ’s appearing, which will in turn enable us to see better the divine author’s intent in Scripture. It also gives us protective guides for keeping our interpretations grounded and not overly subjective.

We must read the OT as Christians and not as if Christ has not come, for this is how the divine author intended us to read his book. We must read the Scripture forward, then backward, and then forward again. Moses anticipated that during the restoration, post-exile, those who once had no ears to hear his words would now be able to listen and obey all his teaching (Deut 29:4[3]; 30:8). Isaiah foresaw an age far beyond his own when his words would matter and when those who were spiritually deaf and for whom his words were sealed would now be able to hear and see, being taught by the Lord (Isa 29:10–11, 18; 30:8; 54:13). Jeremiah, too, wrote his book for a future generation living in the latter days

³⁹ I thank my former students Joel Dougherty and Ryan Eagy for helping me prepare this image.

⁴⁰ So Chrysostom; see Philip Schaff, ed., *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), s.v. Eph 2:20. Against this reading of Eph 2:20, however, is that these OT “prophets” would be different than the NT “prophets” mentioned in 3:5 and 4:11.

of the new covenant who would now fully understand (Jer 30:2–3, 24; 31:1, 33). Finally, God told Daniel that he would not fully understand all that was revealed to him, but the Lord also said that he would remove his book’s “seals” and give understanding “at the time of the end” (Dan 12:8–10). Thus, Paul declared that the details of the OT “were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11; cf. Rom 15:4), and Peter noted, “It was revealed to [the OT authors] that they were serving not themselves but [us]” (1 Pet 1:12).

As interpreters of the OT, we must recognize that bound up in the gospel of Jesus Christ is the revelation of a “mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations” (Rom 16:25–26). As we seek to see and to savor the beauties of God and his purposes, we must do so through the light and lens of Christ. The light of Christ supplies us the needed spiritual sight for understanding the things of God (1 Cor 2:12–13; 2 Cor 3:14), and the lens of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection provides the needed perspective for reading the OT meaning to its fullness (Matt 5:17–18; Mark 4:11; Rom 16:25–26). God wrote the OT for Christians, and it is Christians who are enabled more than any others to fully grasp both the meaning and intended effect of the initial three-fourths of the Christian Scriptures.

The Gospel as Interpretive Key to 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:16: On Christian Worship, Head Coverings, and the Trinity

— Peter R. Schemm and Andreas J. Köstenberger —

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Abstract: God’s good design for man and woman is to be practiced in all of life, especially in the worship of the church. Apparently, the behavior of some women in the Corinthian church was dishonoring both to God and their husbands. Whatever the exact nature of the problem, it had now become a gospel matter in public worship. Therefore, Paul seeks to apply the gospel—especially the idea of giving glory and honor to God, as Christ did—directly to the issue at hand. The purpose of the article is to show how the gospel itself is the interpretive key to this particular section of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (10:31–11:16).

It is widely acknowledged that the gospel was preeminent in Paul’s thought and practice.¹ Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians brings the gospel to bear on the many problems that were disrupting the God-given unity and sanctity of the church: divisions (1:10), pride (1:29–31; 5:2), sexual immorality (5:1), a shameful case of litigation (6:1–11), a disparagement of human sexuality (7:1–40), abuses of Christian freedoms (8:1–13), idolatry (10:1–30), and improprieties in corporate worship (11:2–14:40).

Paul signals his intent to apply the gospel to each of these matters early in the letter when he states concerning the emerging factions in the Corinthian church, “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its

¹ See, e.g., L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson, eds., *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans for Richard N. Longenecker*, JSNTSup 108 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

power” (1:17). The core message of the gospel—“the word of the cross”—is foolishness to unbelievers but has power to transform those who believe (1:18). As Gordon Fee observes, “This paragraph (1:18–25) is crucial not only to the present argument ... but to the entire letter as well. Indeed, it is one of the truly great moments in the apostle Paul.”²

Paul confirms the importance of the gospel for the entire letter in his programmatic statement toward the end of the epistle: “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you ... that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures” (15:1–4). Beginning and ending the epistle with the gospel is not merely a literary device. Paul intends to set forth the gospel as the solution to every problem in the church. At times the gospel solution is direct and explicit. At other times, it is less direct but transformative nonetheless.

In keeping with the preeminence of the gospel in Paul’s writings in general, and in 1 Corinthians in particular, our interest in this present essay is to revisit the text of 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:16 with the gospel as the interpretive key to Paul’s argument. As will become evident, seeing the explicit manner in which Paul appeals to the gospel in this passage serves to strengthen the standard evangelical reading of 1 Corinthians 11 while putting it in its larger gospel context.³ Here is how the gospel can be shown to provide the integrative glue for Paul’s argument:

1. The gospel itself is the interpretive key to this entire section of the letter (10:31–11:2). In fact, it is Paul’s primary concern for the believers in Corinth.
2. Jesus Christ, and his willing submission to God, is at the heart of the gospel and Paul’s present instruction (11:3). Among the appeals made in this passage, the appeal to Christ and his relationship with God carries the most weight.
3. The behavior of some Corinthian women was dishonoring and disgraceful, both to God and their husbands. Whatever the exact nature of the problem was, it has now become a gospel matter in public worship (11:4–6).
4. Paul’s solution—what we may call a “gospel recovery” of God’s design for glory and honor among man and woman—assumes that no one ever keeps glory for oneself (11:7–12).
5. The passage finds gospel resolution in Paul’s appeal to wisdom and humility. Both wise judgment and humility are practical expressions of what it looks like when the gospel prevails in the life of believers (11:13–16).

1. The Gospel as Interpretive Key (10:31–11:2)

Paul’s main purpose in 10:31–11:16 is to bring the gospel to bear on the behavior of the Corinthian women in public worship.⁴ Apparently, many of the women in the Corinthian church were praying and

² Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 70.

³ For the standard evangelical treatment of 1 Cor 11:2–16, see Thomas R. Schreiner, “Head Coverings,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 124–39. The argument in the present essay seeks to build on the many valid insights found in Schreiner’s article.

⁴ In the broader context of 11:2–14:40, Paul addresses three issues of division in corporate worship: (1) head coverings and worship; (2) social snobbery at the Lord’s Table; and (3) the misuse of spiritual gifts (especially speaking in tongues). For a helpful treatment of these matters, see David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT

prophesying in a way that hindered the gospel. It is never good for us, or the gathered church, when we draw attention to ourselves. Nor is it ever good for us, or the gathered church, when we pray, sing, preach, or give testimony in ways that undermine the gospel. Every aspect of our lives ought to bring glory to God. Here Paul seems to be most interested in the humble disposition of the worshipper. Whether you eat or drink, pray or prophesy, “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (10:31). Seek not your own advantage but in humility imitate Christ: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (11:1).

Exactly what did Paul learn from Christ? What is he trying to model for the Corinthian church to imitate? In a word, he wants them to embody the humility of Christ in every aspect of life—including worship. Worship is our humble and grateful response to what God has done for us in Christ. Therefore, our worship habits ought to reflect a gospel-formed humility. Paul is calling the church to compare their present worship habits to Jesus Christ himself—to the humble embodiment of the gospel *par excellence*.

Verse 2 confirms that the gospel is the key to Paul’s argument. Here he commends the Corinthians for receiving the message of the gospel that he personally “delivered” (παράδιδωμι) to them in the past. The traditions (παράδοσις) he has in mind are not early church liturgical traditions.⁵ Rather, he is talking about the gospel itself—the core of the gospel story rightly interpreted according to the Scriptures. We know this because later in the letter he is explicit about what he “delivered” to the Corinthians. Paul writes,

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered [παρέδωκα] to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. (1 Cor 15:1–4)

If the gospel itself is what Paul has in mind in verse 2, this clears up the question of why he appears to move so quickly from a general commendation (“I commend you ..”) to the topics of headship and authority that immediately follow. He is not just saying something positive before he corrects the Corinthians for their dishonoring worship practices. Instead, we read verse 2 as a direct appeal to the gospel which ought to define the worship practices of both men and women in the Corinthian church—especially as Christ modeled for them the value of headship, authority, and humility. A biblical understanding of God’s good design for headship, authority, and submission is always grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is it about Christ that Paul wants these believers to imitate? He wants them to follow Jesus’s example of bringing honor and glory to God. He wants them to apply the concept of gospel-formed humility to the man-woman relationship in the context of the church gathered for worship. He wants them to embrace God’s good design for authority in divinely-ordered relationships. Jesus Christ is *the* perfect example of how one relates to God-given headship and authority. That is where Paul takes us next.

(Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003). See also Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*; and Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

⁵ For similar language, see 11:23 and 15:3; see also 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6. See D. H. Williams, ed., *Tradition, Scripture, and Interpretation: A Sourcebook of the Ancient Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), esp. 19–21; Stephen O. Stout, *Preach the Word: A Pauline Theology of Preaching Based on 2 Timothy 4:1–5* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 44–46.

2. *The Triune God and His Gospel (11:3)*

Verse 3 is the theological center of Paul's argument. Jesus Christ, and his submission to God the Father, is the ultimate example behind Paul's instruction for the Corinthian church. He perfectly embodies love and humility in order to accomplish the will of another. His submission to the will of the Father is the very thing that made our salvation possible (cf. John 5:18–47; cf. Phil 2:5–11). His voluntary submission to the authority of God the Father is precisely what Paul is calling all believers to imitate.⁶

Paul writes, “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (11:3). Each of these three couplets—Christ/man; husband/wife; God/Christ—assumes a gospel-oriented submission to the corresponding authority:

1. Christ/man: every person, man or woman, submits to Jesus Christ as Lord;
2. Husband/wife: a wife's voluntary submission displays the beauty of the gospel;
3. God/Christ: Jesus's submission to the Father's will makes the gospel possible.

The act of submission ties each of these three relationships together. And in each case, Paul makes a broad appeal to the assumed goodness of God's design for these ordered relationships. It is God's desire that every person in the world submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ: “The head of every man is Christ.” The only way to truly flourish in life is to yield to the authority of the Son of God. In the same way, the only way to truly flourish in the marriage relationship is for both husband and wife to live according to God's design for each of them. The wife's voluntary submission to her husband, as her God-given authority, beautifully displays the humility that is characteristic of the kingdom of Christ. And the husband's call to live a life of sacrifice on his wife's behalf is only possible if his life is grounded in the crucified Christ (cf. Eph 5:25).

This brings us to the third and most important relationship of verse 3: “The head of Christ is God.” What Paul means by this statement is developed further in 1 Corinthians 15 near the end of the letter. The submission of Christ to the will of the Father not only made our salvation possible but is also tied to the glory and honor of God the Father as the ultimate end of all things. As the final qualifier, Paul states that “all things are from God” (v. 12b), which puts verses 7–9 into proper perspective—both the man and the woman are from God. Paul's command is not grounded merely in social or cultural norms but is deeply rooted in theology. He wants his readers to see the relationship between men and women as analogous to that of Christ the Son and God the Father.⁷ As Schreiner argues, “We have an analogy between the Trinity and male-female relationships, but not an exact parallel.”⁸

⁶ We believe that Scripture teaches an eternal, relational order of subordination that characterizes the relationship of the Son to the Father (John 5:18–23; 1 Cor 11:3; 15:24–28; Phil 2:5–11). This subordination is eternal, relational, and voluntary—somehow grounded in the eternal generation of the Son from the Father (he was “begotten,” not made; John 1:18; 3:16). It is emphatically not a subordination of essence (ontological subordination) and in no way diminishes the true and full divinity of the Son (Col 1:15–20).

⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 224. Schreiner adds, “We are not surprised to discover that there is discontinuity because the relationship of the incarnate Son (the second person of the Trinity) to his Father cannot be completely analogous to any human relationship, given the uniqueness of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Still, an analogy is drawn” (p. 227).

⁸ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 227.

If each of these three relationships demonstrate how submission works in the divine order of things, then, suggests Paul, it follows that our worship gatherings should also display the gospel accordingly. When the gospel is not at work in our worship gatherings, it is to our dishonor and shame. Verses 4–6 describe the dishonor and disgrace that come with a departure from God’s good design.

3. The Problem: Authority, Shame, and Dishonor in Worship (11:4–6)

In verses 4–6, Paul applies the gospel directly to the deportment and adornment of these women in gathered worship, especially in prayer and prophecy. Richard Hays writes, “The problem was that some of the Corinthian women were acting in ways that brought shame on the community by blurring the traditional lines of gender distinction and/or by appearing to act in a disgraceful or disorderly manner.”⁹ Their conduct brought shame on the men of the church by discrediting man’s natural, God-given headship.¹⁰ But Christians should never bring shame on God or one another.

Paul addresses the men first. If a man prays or prophesies in the worship assembly with a head covering, he dishonors his “head,” that is, Christ (cf. 11:3). Such head coverings were likely commonly worn by men in pagan worship or as a showy display of social status.¹¹ Against the backdrop of an honor-shame culture, Paul states that such an act dishonors Christ. By way of contrast, Paul then addresses his central concern—women worshipping in the church at Corinth. If a woman prays or prophesies in the worship assembly without a head covering, she dishonors her “head,” that is, her husband.¹² In the woman’s case, the head covering most likely refers to a veil of some kind or perhaps a shawl.¹³ Paul

⁹ Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 186.

¹⁰ Hays, *First Corinthians*, 186. It is worth noting that Hays affirms the meaning of “head” (κεφαλή) as “ruler” or “authority,” not “source.” In his reading, Paul’s concept of headship in this passage is one of authority and hierarchy. “The covering or uncovering of the head,” he writes, “is not merely a sign of individual freedom, Paul insists; rather, it signifies either respect or disrespect for one’s superior in the hierarchy.” For Hays, however, the symbolic “gender distinctions” Paul clearly and strongly affirms here do not also entail the relational “subordination” of women to men (p. 184; cf. 183, 190–92).

¹¹ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 227.

¹² Paul is likely addressing wives in particular, and women more generally (Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 227).

¹³ Some scholars maintain that women did not wear a head-covering or veil and believe Paul is addressing women’s hairstyles (i.e., letting one’s hair down). However, a covering fits evidence from statues, grave reliefs, and coins. In addition, the verb “to cover” (κατακαλύπτω) occurs three times in vv. 6–7 along with related cognate words in vv. 5 and 13. These words most often refer to a covering of some kind. Moreover, v. 15 states that a woman’s “long hair” is “her glory,” which seems to favor the reading of a head-covering over hairstyle (see Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 228). Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 25–45, agrees that the covering was a veil but denies that “the veil symbolized a woman’s submission to her husband,” contending that “wearing the veil was not a private symbol, but rather a public practice regulated by law and custom” to which both genders were required to submit (p. 44). She argues that the veil “represented a woman’s honor, status, and protection” and that men, “who made the laws for veiling, ... thought it was in their interest to prevent certain classes of women from veiling” (p. 45). However, there is no evidence in the present passage that men sought to prevent certain classes of women from wearing a veil, as Westfall contends. More likely, “some women didn’t wear veils to signify their sexual liberation or to signal that they weren’t under male authority any longer.” So rightly Thomas R. Schreiner, who provides a thorough and convincing critique of Westfall, including her reading of 1 Cor 11:2–16; see “Paul and Gender: A Review Article,” *Them* 43 (2018): 178–92, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/paul-and-gender-a-review-article>. Bruce

elaborates on the theme of shame by likening a woman engaging in public prayer or prophecy to her shaving her head. Schreiner describes the problem as follows:

If women do not wear head coverings, their failure to be adorned properly would be shameful (11:5) because they would be dressing like men.... A woman's failure to wear a head covering is analogous to her having her hair cut short or shaved. Every woman in the culture of that day would have been ashamed of appearing in public with her head shaved or her hair cut short, because then she would have looked like a man.¹⁴

In the culture of the day, a woman's failure to wear a head covering sent a clear message as to how she was relating to male leadership, indicating her unwillingness to graciously submit. With this concern in mind, Paul instructs men and women on established practice in worship in order that they might not offend others. As Schreiner sums up,

I understand the major burden of 11:3–6, then, to be as follows: Women can pray and prophesy in public, but they must do so with a demeanor and attitude that supports male headship because in that culture wearing a head covering communicated a submissive demeanor and feminine adornment. Thus, Paul does not forbid women to participate in public worship, yet he does insist that in their participation they should evidence a demeanor that is humble and submissive to male leadership.¹⁵

4. A Cascade of Glory and Gospel Recovery (11:7–12)

Paul's solution for the dishonor and disgrace in the worship life of the church is "the glory of God" (vv. 7, 12b). If we are not careful, we can easily miss that. Whether you consider yourself an egalitarian, complementarian, or perhaps are still sorting things out, evangelicals agree that humanity's ultimate purpose is to bring glory to God. It is never right to bring glory to ourselves.

So, Paul makes a brilliant gospel move by appealing to the glory of God in the creation of man and woman. He seems to have something like a cascade of glory in mind—from God to man to woman. In this cascade, "glory" means the honor and dignity that one person freely awards to another. God freely bestows his glory on man in creation but man should never keep that glory for himself. He rightly and freely returns all honor and glory to the one from whom it came. Then, that same image-bearing sense of glory cascades from the man to the woman. When Paul says, "[Man] is the image and glory of God,

W. Winter similarly argues that both "husbands and wives veiled their heads in certain situations in Corinthian society" (*After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 121). Winter's argument is indebted to D. W. J. Gill, "The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head-coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:3–16," *TynB* 41 [1990]: 245–60). Winter contends that certain "men in pagan society covered their heads with their *togas*" while praying and that the reason why Paul required wives "to wear the sign of their marital status, i.e., a veil, because of the promiscuous conduct of the 'new' Roman wife who dressed 'unveiled' in the early empire" (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 245). Similar to Westfall's proposals, however, Winter's reading lacks adequate textual support. This illustrates the danger of background research supplanting the overt theological message of a given passage of Scripture. See Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Gender Passages in the NT: Hermeneutical Fallacies Critiqued," *WTJ* 56 (1994): 259–83, esp. IV. Improper Use of Background Data.

¹⁴ Schreiner, "Head Coverings," 130.

¹⁵ Schreiner, "Head Coverings," 132.

but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man” (11:7–8), he describes a beautiful continuity of God’s image spilling forward in the creation order.

Just as a man should never keep glory for himself, a woman should never keep glory for herself. No human being should be possessive of glory. The glory and honor described here are on their way to someone else, and ultimately, on their way back to God—since “all things are from God” (11:12b). This is in keeping with the biblical theme that all glory, honor, and dignity come from God who is transforming us from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). He is remaking us in the image of the Son, until fully and finally all things return to glorify God (1 Cor 15:28).¹⁶

Practically speaking, then, Paul is working out the way headship and glory—or authority and honor—ought to function in the husband-wife relationship. Man honors and glorifies God by not covering his head, since submission to another creature, including his wife, would dishonor God’s design for him (11:4). For the man to pray or prophesy with a symbol of authority on his head would undermine the God-given, relational order of creation.¹⁷ The woman, however, when praying or prophesying in public with her head covered, not only honors God and brings him glory but also gives honor to the man in that he gives joyful expression to her affirmation of the divinely created order. She honors God, affirming the goodness of God’s design, when she sees herself in relation to her husband as a “helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18, 20). As John Frame writes, “Unlike the man, then, she honors God best by displaying a symbol by which she honors her fellow-creature.”¹⁸

God made all of humanity to bear his image, refracting honor and glory onto all of creation. And yet, the way in which the man and the woman reflect God’s glory is also unique: “But woman is the glory of man” (v. 7). By God’s design, the woman’s beautiful and unique purpose is to give honor to her husband, not as an end in itself, but as a way of bringing glory to God. What is more, she does this not because she lacks anything as an image bearer but rather because she wants to freely give honor and dignity to another person rather than directing honor or glory to herself. While it is never right to bring glory to oneself, it is positively Christlike to bring glory to another (1 Cor 11:1).

The husband’s way of bringing glory and honor to his wife is no less difficult than her act of submission to him. In fact, it is perhaps even more challenging. He is called to voluntarily sacrifice himself on behalf of his wife “as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” in order to help her flourish in beauty and holiness (cf. Eph 5:25). He is called to take up his cross and follow Christ by loving his wife more than himself. In this way, just like Jesus, he brings glory and honor to another through the cross. No husband should ever keep glory for himself.

How can the Corinthian women bring an appropriate sense of honor to their husbands? By praying and prophesying with a head covering in gathered worship. This simple act of submission and humility

¹⁶ Paul does not mention children here, but it is easy to imagine how the cascade of image-bearing glory continues in the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve (Gen 1:26–28). Psalm 8, for example, says, “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor” (vv. 4–5). The same glory granted to man and woman cascades on through procreation in the lives of “babes and infants” (v. 2). And, most importantly, the glory of man is actually and perfectly embodied, and therefore recovered, in *the* Son of Man. Jesus alone can bring many sons to glory!

¹⁷ John M. Frame, “Men and Women in the Image of God,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 228.

¹⁸ Frame, “Men and Women in the Image of God,” 228.

reflects the goodness of God's design in the creation order and keeps glory moving away from oneself. Again, John Frame is helpful here: "It is often by submitting to others that we display the ethical components of the divine image. How better to demonstrate God's love, His patience, His gentleness, His self-control, than by submitting to others?"¹⁹ And what better place to do this than a worship gathering which has as its ultimate purpose the glory of God?

In the end, Paul's gospel-centered solution is the glory of God seen in gathered worship. Every single element of Christian worship—baptism, communion, Scripture reading, singing, praying, prophesying, preaching, collecting offerings, blessings and benedictions, etc.—ought to be for the glory of God. Our worship practices are ways to imitate Christ who never kept glory for himself. He was always in the habit of returning glory to the Father. Paul's solution for the Corinthian church, then, is a gospel recovery of God's glory as seen in God's good design for man and woman. Our worship gatherings are to be all about giving glory to God, and him alone! *Soli Deo gloria*.

5. Gospel Resolution: Wisdom and Humility (11:13–16)

The entire passage finds gospel resolution in Paul's appeal to two things: wisdom and humility. Both wise judgment and personal humility are practical expressions of what it looks like to imitate Jesus Christ (1 Cor 11:1). On the other hand, rejecting the wise, natural order of God's design for masculinity and femininity and, in addition to that, being contentious about it in the worship life of the church, was rightly seen by Paul as a departure from the gospel.

First, Paul appeals to wise judgment in vv. 13–15. He calls the church to practice discernment when he says, "Judge for yourselves" (v. 13). Then, in the form of two rhetorical questions, Paul seeks to engage with his readers culturally as to what is fitting for a man and a woman.²⁰ Does not the natural order of things teach us that there are distinctions between men and women (v. 14)? Most people seem to recognize masculinity and femininity when they see it. In this case, when a man wears his hair long, in the manner that women wear it, it is to his shame. A woman's long hair, on the other hand, is her "glory" (δόξα), which denotes both the image bearing glory she has as an individual and the honor she is intended to bring to the man (v. 7). What is more, a woman's long hair should be instructive as to what is appropriate in the assembly gathered for worship, namely covering one's head in prayer. Again, the ultimate point of a wife praying with her head covered is to honor God first and foremost, and to do so by honoring her husband in the process—both of which are beautiful expressions of a life changed by the gospel.

Second, Paul appeals to humility and the natural unity that flows from it (v. 16). When Paul says, "we have no such practice," he means that none of the other churches in their church-planting network practice worship in a disorderly manner.²¹ This is the third time out of four that Paul has corrected the Corinthians by appealing to what is commonly taught or practiced in other churches (cf. 4:17; 7:17; 14:33). So, the apostle is telling the Corinthians, if you are inclined to be contentious about this, realize that you are departing from the gospel pattern that was previously handed down to you. Moreover,

¹⁹ Frame, "Men and Women in the Image of God," 228.

²⁰ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 235.

²¹ Paul may be distinguishing between Pauline churches ("we") and other churches ("the churches of God").

those who are contentious—most likely a minority in the church—are advocating a divergent practice that is inappropriate by any measure and deviates from the greater universal body to which they belong.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this essay was to revisit the text of 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:16, keeping the gospel in view as the interpretive key to Paul's argument. The gospel reminds us that we should never seek our own advantage. Rather, we should imitate Christ in all that we do in order to bring glory to God (10:31–11:2). Jesus's willing submission to God the Father is at the heart of the gospel and Paul's present instruction (11:3).

Paul is not simply correcting the behavior of some of the Corinthian women who were dishonoring their husbands in gathered worship (11:4–6). He wants to bring the gospel, and its characteristic dispositions of dignity, humility, and grace to bear on the way in which all Christians worship.

Paul's solution—what we have called a “gospel recovery” of God's design for glory and honor among men and women—assumes that no human being ever keeps glory for oneself (11:7–12). Glory is always on its way to someone else, and ultimately, on its way back to God. No human being is truly worthy of glory, except one. Jesus Christ is *the* embodiment of both the glory of God and the glory of man. That is why he alone can bring many sons and daughters to glory!

A Review of the Christian Standard Bible

— Mark L. Strauss —

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Abstract: The Christian Standard Bible (CSB) is a 2017 revision and replacement of the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), first published in 2004. The Translation Oversight Committee was co-chaired by Thomas Schreiner and David Allen. The CSB follows the same basic translation philosophy as the HCSB, a mediating approach between formal and functional equivalence, similar to versions like the NIV, the NET Bible and the CEB. The CSB removes a number of the HCSB's idiosyncracies, such as the use of “Yahweh” for the tetragrammaton (YHWH). Most significantly, the CSB departs from its predecessor by positively embracing “gender-accurate” language, for example, by translating the Greek ἀδελφοί as “brothers and sisters” when the referent includes both men and women. In general, the CSB is a significant improvement over the HCSB in terms to both accuracy and style.

1. Introduction

The Christian Standard Bible (CSB), published in 2017, is a major revision and replacement of the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), which was first published as a full Bible in 2004 and revised in 2009.¹ This paper is a brief review of the CSB, especially as it compares to its predecessor and with special attention to its use of gender-inclusive language.

1.1. The Origin of the HCSB

The HCSB originally arose from a project initiated by Arthur Farstad, who had served as the general editor for the New King James Version. Farstad favored the Greek Majority Text (the Byzantine text type) and had published a Greek edition of it with coeditor Zane Hodges in 1982. His goal was to produce a modern English version based on the Majority Text. Together with Edwin Blum, a faculty member at Dallas Theological Seminary, Farstad produced some portions of a translation of the New Testament.

¹ This is a revised version of a paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (Denver, CO, 14 November 2018).

In 1998, Farstad and Blum were approached by representatives of Holman Bible Publishers and LifeWay Christian Resources, the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). For years the SBC had used the NIV in their curriculum. Yet they were now seeking an alternative because of the high cost of NIV royalties and the NIV's move toward gender-inclusive language. Farstad and Blum agreed to produce the version. Sadly, Farstad died just a few months into the project. While Farstad had envisioned a Majority Text version, without his influence on the project this was now shifted to the Critical Text—bringing it in line with all other modern versions except the New King James Version, which is based on the Textus Receptus.

The HCSB was produced by an interdenominational team of 100 scholars and proofreaders. It was published by Holman Bible publishers, an imprint of Broadman & Holman, the publishing wing of the SBC. The New Testament was published in 1999 and the full Bible in 2004. A second edition appeared in 2009.

The HCSB is generally more literal than the NIV but less so than most formal equivalent versions. According to its Introduction, the HCSB strives for neither formal nor functional equivalence, but “optimal equivalence”:

Optimal equivalence starts with an exhaustive analysis of the text at every level (word, phrase, clause, sentence, discourse) in the original language to determine its original meaning and intention (or purpose). Then relying on the latest and best language tools and experts, the nearest corresponding semantic and linguistic equivalents are used to convey as much of the information and intention of the original text with as much clarity and readability as possible. This process assures the maximum transfer of both the words and thoughts contained in the original.²

This description of using the “nearest corresponding semantic and linguistic equivalents” to convey the “intention of the original text with as much clarity and readability as possible” sounds a great deal like the goal of functional equivalence: striving to reproduce the *meaning* of the text as accurately and clearly as possible. Yet the statement is also a bit muddled. What is meant, for example, by a “maximum transfer” of “the words ... contained in the original”? It is not the words (which are in Greek and Hebrew) but the *meaning* of those words, phrases and clauses that must be transferred.

Though following the Greek Critical Text, the HCSB was unique among modern versions in supplying many alternative readings from the Textus Receptus and the Majority Text in its footnotes (cf. NKJV). We will cover these issues in more detail as we compare the CSB to the HCSB.

Some notable distinctions of the HCSB include the following:

- The use of the “Yahweh” for the tetragrammaton (YHWH) in select cases
- The rendering “Messiah” for Greek χριστός when the latter is used in a titular sense
- The rendering “instruction” instead of “law” for the Hebrew *Torah*
- Increased use of “slave” over “servant”
- Elimination of archaisms like “Behold” and the exclamation “O”
- The rendering “beer” for the traditional “strong drink”
- The rendering of John 3:16 as “For God loved the world **in this way** [οὕτως]: He gave His One and Only Son” instead of, “For God **so** loved the world...”

² “Introduction to the Holman Christian Standard Bible,” *Bible Researcher*, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csb-intro.html>.

1.2. Revising the HCSB: The Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

Though well-publicized and well-received in many circles, the HCSB never achieved a significant market share of Bible sales. In June 2016 B&H publishing announced a revision of the translation, dropping the name “Holman” and renaming it the Christian Standard Bible (CSB). The Translation Oversight Committee was co-chaired by Tom Schreiner, Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Biblical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and David Allen, Dean and Distinguished Professor of Preaching, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The remaining eight members included Dorian G. Coover-Cox of Dallas Theological Seminary, Iain M. Duguid of Westminster Theological Seminary, Andrew Das of Elmhurst College, Darian R. Lockett of Talbot School of Theology, Andrew Steinmann of Concordia University, Brian Rosner of Ridley in Melbourne, Michael Card (the English stylist), and Trevin Wax (the Bible Publisher with Holman). Of the 10 members, three specialize in OT, five mostly in NT (with theology and preaching emphases), with one stylist and the publisher. Denominationally, there are three from the Southern Baptist Convention, two Presbyterians, two Lutherans, one Anglican, and two non-denominational. All are from the conservative branches of these denominations. There are no members from Wesleyan, Methodist, Nazarene or Pentecostal traditions. There are nine men; one woman. Nine are white, one is Asian (Indian).

2. Translation Philosophy

The CSB, like its predecessor, claims to follow neither formal equivalence nor functional equivalence, but rather “optimal equivalence,” meaning (according to its preface), “the CSB places equal value on fidelity to the original and readability for a modern audience, resulting in a translation that achieves both goals.” The web site for the CSB says essentially the same thing. The version “captures the Bible’s original meaning without compromising readability.”³

Like the HCSB, the CSB stands approximately in the middle of the translation spectrum between formal equivalent and functional equivalent. It is significantly less formal than versions like the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and the English Standard Version (ESV). And it is less idiomatic than “natural language” functional equivalent versions like the New Living Translation (NLT), the New Century Version (NCV), God’s Word (GW), the Contemporary English Versions (CEV) and the Good News Translation (GNT). It is most similar in this regard to mediating versions like the New International Version (NIV), the Common English Bible (CEB), the New English Translation (NET), the New American Bible (NAB) and the Revised English Bible (REB). Below is my analysis of the translation spectrum.

Continuum of Versions

Formal		Mediating						Functional		
ASV	RV	NKJV	KJV	NRSV	NAB	NIV	JB	NEB	GNT	CEV
Youngs		RSV	ESV		HCSB	CEB	NJB	REB	NLT	LB
		NASB			NET				NCV	PME
					CSB				GW	M

³ “About the Christian Standard Bible,” <https://csbible.com/about-the-csb/>.

American Standard Version (ASV) Youngs Literal Revised Version (RV) King James Version (KJV) New King James Version (NKJV) New American Standard Bible (NASB) Revised Standard Version (RSV) English Standard Version (ESV) New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)	(Holman) Christian Standard (HCSB; CSB) New English Translation (NET) New American Bible (NAB) New International Version (NIV) Common English Bible (CEB) New English Bible (NEB) Revised English Bible (REB) Jerusalem Bible (JB) New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)	Good News Translation (GNT; TEV) New Living Translation (NLT) New Century Version (NCV) God's Word (GW) Contemporary English Version (CEV) Living Bible (LB) Phillip's Modern English (PME) The Message (M)
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Much of my writing has focused on defending meaning-based Bible translation. While encouraging and affirming the use of versions from across the translation spectrum, the most accurate versions are those that reproduce the *meaning* of the texts and so give priority to function over form.⁴

Because the (H)CSB recognizes the priority of meaning over form, I would give it high marks for accuracy. In 2008 I gave a paper at ETS critiquing the English Standard Version, called “Why the English Standard Version should not become the Standard English Version.”⁵ In that paper I pointed to hundreds of examples where the ESV’s “essentially literal” (formal-equivalent) methodology resulted in inaccurate or obscure translations. After the presentation Edwin Blum, general editor of the HCSB, found me and was delighted to report that in every case where the ESV had missed the mark, the HCSB had gotten it “right.”

This is especially the case with idiomatic language. By seeking to reproduce the form of the original, formal equivalent versions often remain obscure, awkward and inaccurate. Consider the following passages comparing various idioms in formal equivalent versions (RSV, NRSV, ESV, NASB, NKJV) with the NIV, the HCSB and the CSB.⁶

Joshua 10:6

- RSV Do not **relax your hand from** your servants.
- NIV Do not **abandon** your servants.
- HCSB Don't **abandon** your servants.
- CSB Don't **give up on** your servants.

2 Samuel 18:25

- NRSV The king said, “If he is alone, **there are tidings in his mouth.**”
- NIV The king said, “If he is alone, **he must have good news.**”
- (H)CSB The king said, “If he’s alone, **he bears good news.**”

⁴ See Gordon D. Fee and Mark L. Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth. A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007); Mark L. Strauss, “Form, Function and the Literal Meaning Fallacy in English Bible Translation,” *BT* 56 (2005), 153–68.

⁵ Available at <https://marklstrauss.com/articles>.

⁶ These examples are adapted from Mark L. Strauss, “Bible Translation and the Myth of ‘Literal Accuracy,’” *RevExp* 108 (2011): 169–94.

Amos 4:6

- NKJV Also I gave you **cleanness of teeth** in all your cities.
 NIV I gave you **empty stomachs** in every city.
 (H)CSB I gave you **absolutely nothing to eat** in all your cities.

Matthew 23:32

- ESV **Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.**
 NIV **Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!**
 HCSB **Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' sins!**
 CSB **Fill up, then, the measure of your ancestors' sins!**

Mark 1:2 (pars. Matt 11:10; Luke 7:27)

- RSV Behold, I send my messenger **before thy face.**
 NIV I will send my messenger **ahead of you.**
 HCSB Look, I am sending My messenger **ahead of You.**
 CSB See, I am sending My messenger **ahead of you.**

Acts 9:28 (cf. Acts 1:21)

- NRSV **So he went in and out among them** in Jerusalem.
 NIV **So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely** in Jerusalem.
 (H)CSB **Saul was coming and going with them** in Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 6:15

- ESV what **portion does a believer share** with an unbeliever?
 NIV what **does a believer have in common** with an unbeliever?
 (H)CSB what **does a believer have in common** with an unbeliever?

The mediating versions get the idioms right not by following the literal form, but by exegeting the text to determine the meaning, and then seeking the closest natural equivalent in the receptor language. To be “literal” is not to be accurate.⁷

The differences between the HCSB and the CSB are minor. Four passages have no change; there is one gender-language change (from “fathers” to “ancestors,” Matt 23:42), one change in idiom (Josh 10:6) and a small stylistic change (Mark 1:2).

While these examples illustrate the strength of the HCSB as a meaning-based version, at times I found the HCSB to be rather idiosyncratic and quirky. We will discuss some of these examples below. For the most part, the CSB retains the strength of the HCSB while removing its idiosyncrasies.

3. Significant Changes in the CSB

3.1. The Divine Name Yahweh

The tetragrammaton appears 6828 times in Hebrew Bible.⁸ Almost all English translations render the divine name as “LORD” (small caps). This was the pattern of the KJV and in some way mimics

⁷ See Strauss, “Myth of ‘Literal Accuracy,’” 176–77.

⁸ From a search of Biblia Hebraica in Accordance Bible Software.

the LXX, which rendered the divine name as κύριος, HCSB broke with this tradition, in many cases introducing “Yahweh.” In such cases, a footnote reads:

Or The LORD; it is the personal name of God in Hebrew; “Yah” is the shortened form. Yahweh is used in places where the personal name of God is discussed (Ps 68:4) or in places of His self-identification. (Isa 42:8).⁹

The HCSB touted this in advertisements depicting a serious-looking student of the Word announcing in large letters, “The name is Yahweh.” The small print announced:

God gave us his personal name, which is why you’ll see it in the Holman Christian Standard Bible. Accuracy, one of the reasons you’ll love reading any of the HCSB digital or print editions.¹⁰

The problem with this claim is that only a small percentage of the instances of the tetragrammaton are actually translated as “Yahweh.” According to Michael Marlowe, the first edition of the HCSB used the divine name only seventy-five times and the 2009 edition increased this to 476.¹¹ My Logos electronic 2009 version shows 654 instances and Accordance electronic version 656 times, still less than 10% of the total. The introduction explains this. While normally rendering YHWH (Yahweh) as “LORD,”



the HCSB OT uses Yahweh, the personal name of God in Hebrew, when a biblical text emphasizes Yahweh as a name: “His name is Yahweh” (Ps 68:4). Yahweh is also used in places of His self-identification as in “I am Yahweh” (Is 42:8). Yahweh is used more often in the HCSB than in most Bible translations because the word LORD in English is a title of God and does not accurately convey to modern readers the emphasis on God’s personal name in the original Hebrew.

The problem, of course, is deciding which instances should be rendered Yahweh and which LORD. Obviously, even the HCSB editors had trouble deciding, as evidenced by the variations in the different editions.

Because of these complications, the CSB returns to the traditional use of “LORD” for the tetragrammaton. Tom Schreiner gives four reasons for this change: (1) the inconsistency of usage in the HCSB; (2) fully consistent translation of יהוה as “Yahweh” would overwhelm readers; (3) the unfamiliarity of Yahweh trips up readers; (4) the pattern of the New Testament, like the LXX, is to use the title κύριος (“Lord”) rather than a personal name “Yahweh.”¹²

⁹ *The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Version* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2009).

¹⁰ The ad is included in Michael Marlowe, “The Holman Christian Standard Bible,” *Bible Researcher*, August 2011, www.bible-researcher.com/csb.html.

¹¹ Marlowe, “The Holman Christian Standard Bible.”

¹² Thomas R. Schreiner, “Q&A: Translation Decisions for the Christian Standard Bible,” January 2017, <https://csbible.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Translation-Decisions-QA.pdf>, p. 2.

3.2. Capitalization of Divine Pronouns

The HCSB followed the traditional practice of capitalizing pronouns for God. By contrast, the CSB uses lower case, following standard English grammar. Consider John 14:15–16, which refers to all three members of the Trinity:

John 14:15–17

HCSB If you love **Me**, you will keep **My** commands. And I will ask the Father, and **He** will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. **He** is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive **Him** because it doesn't see **Him** or know **Him**. But you do know **Him**, because **He** remains with you and will be in you.

CSB If you love **me**, you will keep **my** commands. And **I** will ask the Father, and **he** will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. **He** is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive **him** because it doesn't see **him** or know **him**. But you do know **him**, because **he** remains with you and will be in you.

Capitalizing pronouns referring to God is often viewed as a sign of reverence, yet the practice is a fairly recent one, arising first in the 19th century. None of the earliest English versions capitalized pronouns, including Wycliffe (1382), Tyndale (1530s), the Geneva Bible (1599) nor the King James Version (1611). Nor did well-known nineteenth-century versions like Darby (1867), Douay-Rheims (1899), and the American Standard Version (ASV; 1901). One of the first versions to do so was Young's Literal Translation (1862, 1898). Among the main contemporary versions, only the NASB (1971, 1995), NKJV (1982) and HCSB (1999) capitalize pronouns. Almost all other versions do not (NIV, NLT, NRSV, ESV, CEB, NET, NAB, REB, NCV, GW, GNT, etc.)

In my opinion, the CSB is an improvement over the HCSB in this regard since there are good reasons *not* to capitalize such pronouns:¹³

1. Most English style books advise that all pronouns should be kept lower case, including those for God.
2. The original Greek and Hebrew did not have capital letters.
3. Capitalizing pronouns with reference to Jesus can miscommunicate the meaning of the text. For example, when the scribes and the Pharisees say to Jesus, "We want a sign from You" (Matt 12:38 NASB), the capitalized "You" suggests that the *Pharisees* think Jesus is divine. But, of course, they do not. Whenever an individual in the Gospels speaks about Jesus, or to him, capitalized pronouns can misrepresent the meaning of the text. Although the goal of emphasizing Christ's deity is a noble one in theory, in practice it can distort the meaning of the text.
4. Difficulties also arise in messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. For example, Psalm 22:1 in the NKJV reads, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" There are two problems. The first is inconsistency, since pronouns in various other passages are not capitalized in the HCSB (see Pss 16:10; 41:9), even though they are identified as messianic prophecies in the New Testament (Acts 2:27; John 13:18). The second problem, however, is that many of these prophecies are fulfilled typologically rather than uniquely in Christ. In other words, the original referent in the Old Testament might be David or righteous

¹³ Most of this material is from Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation*, 127–28.

sufferers in general. Jesus is indeed the fulfillment of these prophecies in that he is the last and greatest in the line of Davidic kings, and the last and greatest of righteous sufferers. But capitalizing pronouns might wrongly suggest that the original human referents (like David) are themselves divine.

It seems best, therefore, to follow the now standard practice of leaving all pronouns in the lower case.

3.3. Messiah/Christ

Deciding whether to translate or transliterate Greek χριστός is a challenge. Do you stay with the transliteration “Christ” or seek to bring out the titular sense by rendering the title by its Hebrew equivalent, מָשִׁיחַ (“Messiah”). While the 1984 NIV used “Christ” throughout,¹⁴ the 2011 revision introduced “Messiah” whenever the term carried a titular sense (66 times). The HCSB similarly followed this pattern, introducing “Messiah” for χριστός 112 times in the NT,¹⁵ while retaining “Christ” 419 times.

The CSB retains this policy, but reduces the number significantly, using “Messiah” only 55 times for χριστός. Most of these are expected:

Simon Peter answered, “You are **the Messiah**, the Son of the living God.” (Matt 16:16)

What do you think about **the Messiah**? Whose son is he? (Matt 22:42)

In other cases, CSB returned to “Christ” even in some cases where a titular sense seems to be present:

Matthew 1:16

HCSB Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called **the Messiah**.

CSB Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called **the Christ**.

Matthew 1:17

HCSB And from the exile to Babylon until **the Messiah**, 14 generations.

CSB And from the exile to Babylon until **the Christ**, fourteen generations.

Matthew 2:4

HCSB So he... asked them where **the Messiah** would be born.

CSB So he ... asked them where **the Christ** would be born.

Luke 4:41

HCSB But He ... would not allow them to speak, because they knew He was **the Messiah**.

CSB But he ... would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was **the Christ**.

Luke 20:41

HCSB Then He said to them, “How can they say that **the Messiah** is the Son of David?”

¹⁴ The only appearances of “Messiah” in the 1984 NIV are those instances where John transliterates the Hebrew term as Μεσσίας (John 1:41; 4:25).

¹⁵ “Messiah” also appears four times in the HCSB where χριστός is absent, when the HCSB supplies a noun for the Greek pronoun (Matt 22:45; Mark 12:37; Luke 20:44; Eph 2:17).

CSB Then he said to them, “How can they say that **the Christ** is the son of David?”

These examples are puzzling, and I’m curious why “Messiah” was changed back to “Christ” in what appear to be titular contexts.

3.4. More Servants, Fewer Slaves

Biblical terms related to servants and slaves are notoriously difficult to translate. This is in part due to the differences between slavery in the ancient world and race-based slavery in the Americas. It is also due to the wide semantic range of terms related to slavery. In the NIV, for example, the Hebrew עֶבֶד (800x) is translated most commonly as “servant” (520x), but also in a variety of other ways: “slave” (Gen 9:25), “official” (Gen 20:8), “attendant” (1 Sam 8:14), “subject” (1 Sam 17:9), “officer” (1 Sam 18:5), “envoy” (2 Sam 10:4), “subordinate” (1 Kings 11:11), “vassal” (2 Kings 17:3), “man” (Gen 14:15), “court” (1 Kings 3:15), and “retinue” (1 Kings 10:13). Similarly, in the NT Greek δοῦλος (126x) is rendered in the NIV as “servant” 98x and “slave” 34x. Further complicating the issue is the semantic range of the English term “servant.” Does servant mean someone who is a paid employee? Or can a servant be one who is owned by a master (i.e., a slave)? The latter is certainly the intention in many passages.

In its advertisements, the HCSB touted its use of “slave” over “servant.” A full-page ad read in large letters “Are we servants or slaves?” with a reflective man staring at the camera. The smaller print on the ad reads:

Slaves had no rights, but some servants did. So when readers see Christians called to be Christ’s slaves in the Holman Christian Standard Bible, the radical nature of discipleship is clearer. Accuracy, one of the reasons you’ll love reading any of the HCSB digital or print editions.¹⁶



Of course, the situation is far more complicated than this. Ownership of persons (i.e., slavery) was pervasive throughout the Ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman world. Yet these “slaves” could have vastly different social statuses and privileges, from the short and brutal life of a galley slave to a status of a household manager overseeing a master’s business, property and other slaves. So to say that “slaves had no rights” is not entirely accurate. Slaves could certainly have status, and this status varied greatly. The translation “slave” can sound overly demeaning or degrading in some contexts.

The CSB significantly reduces the use of “slave(s).” While the HCSB used the term 317 times, the CSB uses it only 189 times. Consider the following examples:

Matthew 24:45

HCSB Who then is a faithful and sensible **slave**, whom his master has put in charge of his household?

CSB Who then is a faithful and wise **servant**, whom his master has put in charge of his household?

¹⁶ The ad was accessed at “Christian Standard Bible 2017,” *Baptist Board*, <https://tinyurl.com/y4tjq5k2>. It always struck me as a bit odd and ironic, considering the history of the Southern Baptist Convention, that the advertisements for the HCSB would extol the intentional proliferation of the word “slave.”

John 13:16

HCSB I assure you: A **slave** is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him.

CSB Truly I tell you, a **servant** is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him.

Romans 1:1

HCSB Paul, a **slave** of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle...

CSB Paul, a **servant** of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle...

While acknowledging the value of a term like “slave” that connotes ownership (after all, as Christians we are “bought at a price”; cf. 1 Cor 6:20), Schreiner notes that the use of slave received mixed reviews by scholars, pastors, and everyday readers. He gives three reasons for CSB’s increased use of “servant”: (1) recognition that “slave” in contemporary English has connotations of race-based slavery; (2) the use of “servant” for δούλος in the New Testament aligns with the Old Testament use of עֶבֶד with reference to followers of God like Moses; (3) there is New Testament precedent, as in Hebrews 3:5 (citing Num 12:7), where a term meaning “servant” (ὁ θεράπων) is used to translate the Hebrew עֶבֶד.¹⁷

This third argument seems a bit stretched. The writer in Hebrews is simply following the Septuagint of Numbers 12:7, which already rendered עֶבֶד as θεράπων. In this context θεράπων was especially appropriate for Moses, since the term commonly refers to “one who renders devoted service, esp. as an attendant in a cultic setting.”¹⁸ It might be better to say that עֶבֶד has a very wide semantic range that goes well beyond the senses generally given to the English gloss “slave” and that δούλος can reflect this wider usage. The primary emphasis of δούλος in certain contexts can be devotion and service rather than ownership.

3.5. Gender Language

The gender language policy of the HCSB was intentionally conservative. The Introduction to the HCSB warns against conceding to cultural agendas and affirms the use of masculine terms:

Some people today ignore the Bible’s teachings on distinctive roles of men and women in family and church and have an agenda to eliminate those distinctions in every arena of life. These people have begun a program to engineer the removal of a perceived male bias in the English language. The targets of this program have been such traditional linguistic practices as the generic use of “man” or “men,” as well as “he,” “him,” and “his.”¹⁹

The HCSB adopted the Colorado Springs Guidelines, also called the Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture, produced at the Conference on Gender-Related Language in Scripture on May 27, 1997 and revised September 9, 1997.²⁰ Though not averse to inclusive language, the HCSB affirms the retention of masculine terms:

¹⁷ Schreiner, “Q&A: Translation Decisions for the Christian Standard Bible,” 4.

¹⁸ BDAG 453.

¹⁹ “Introduction to the Holman Christian Standard Bible.”

²⁰ “Colorado Springs Guidelines,” *Bible Researcher*, 9 September 1997, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/cs-guidelines.html>. For critique of these guidelines, see my “Linguistic and Hermeneutical Fallacies in the Guidelines Established at the ‘Conference on Gender-Related Language in Scripture,’” *JETS* 41 (1998) 239–62.

The goal of the translators has not been to promote a cultural ideology but to faithfully translate the Bible. While the Holman CSB avoids using “man” or “he” unnecessarily, the translation does not restructure sentences to avoid them when they are in the text. For example, the translators have not changed “him” to “you” or to “them,” neither have they avoided other masculine words such as “father” or “son” by translating them in generic terms such as “parent” or “child.”²¹

The CSB discussion begins with the same affirmation: “The goal of the translators of the Christian Standard Bible has not been to promote a cultural ideology but to translate the Bible faithfully.” But it then moves toward a more gender-inclusive approach. No mention is made of the Colorado Springs Guidelines, and the Introduction affirms:

Recognizing modern usage of English, the CSB regularly translates the plural of the Greek word ἄνθρωπος (“man”) as “people” instead of “men,” and occasionally the singular as “one,” “someone,” or “everyone,” when the supporting pronouns in the original languages validate such a translation. While the CSB avoids using “he” or “him” unnecessarily, the translation does not restructure sentences to avoid them when they are in the text.²²

This shift in gender-language policy is evident from the first line of the Introduction to the CSB. Whereas the HCSB Introduction begins, “The Bible is God’s revelation to *man*,” the CSB reads, “The Bible is God’s revelation to *humanity*.”

The most striking gender-language change in the CSB is its rendering of the Greek plural ἀδελφοί as “brothers and sisters.” While the HCSB consistently translated ἀδελφοί as “brothers,” the CSB uses “brothers and sisters” 151 times. This change should not in fact be a controversial one. Back in the early stages of the gender-language debate, opponents of gender inclusive language conceded that ἀδελφοί frequently meant “siblings.”

The original version of the Colorado Springs Guidelines actually rejected the translation “brothers and sisters” for ἀδελφοί. Guideline B.1 originally read, “‘Brother’ (*adelphos*) and ‘brothers’ (*adelphoi*) should not be changed to ‘brother(s) and sister(s).’”²³ However, Dan Wallace, New Testament professor at Dallas Seminary, sent the formulators of the Guidelines examples from secular Greek where ἀδελφοί clearly meant “brothers and sisters.” For example, a passage from the Oxyrhynchus Papyri (713, 20–23; AD 97) reads, “My father died leaving me and my ἀδελφοί Diodorus and Theis as his heirs.” While Diodorus is a man’s name, Theis is a woman’s name. The Greek term is thus fully inclusive in this context, meaning “brother and sister” or “siblings.” Guideline B.1 was subsequently revised as follows: “the plural *adelphoi* can be translated ‘brothers and sisters’ where the context makes clear that the author is referring to both men and women.”

This concession is no doubt the reason for a footnote in the English Standard Version at the first use of ἀδελφοί in NT books. While the ESV text continues to render ἀδελφοί as “brothers,” the footnote adds: “Or *brothers and sisters*. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*.”

²¹ “Introduction to the Holman Christian Standard Bible.”

²² “Introduction to the Christian Standard Bible,” *Christian Standard Bible* (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

²³ Colorado Springs Guidelines: Statement by Participants in the Conference on Gender-Related Language in Scripture,” *Bible Researcher*, 27 May 1997, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csguidelines1.html>.

Significantly, the CSB renders ἀδελφοί as “brothers and sisters” but includes no footnotes, acknowledging that in these contexts ἀδελφοί *means* “brothers and sisters.” Compare the HCSB and the CSB in the following passages:

Matthew 23:8

HCSB You have one Teacher, and you are all **brothers**.
CSB You have one Teacher, and you are all **brothers and sisters**.

John 21:23

HCSB So this report spread to **the brothers** that this disciple would not die.
CSB So this rumor spread to **the brothers and sisters** that this disciple would not die.

Acts 1:15

HCSB During these days Peter stood up among **the brothers**
CSB In those days Peter stood up among **the brothers and sisters**

Romans 1:13

HCSB Now I want you to know, **brothers**, that I often planned to come to you.
CSB Now I don't want you to be unaware, **brothers and sisters**.

1 Corinthians 1:26

HCSB **Brothers**, consider your calling.
CSB **Brothers and sisters**, consider your calling.

Hebrews 2:17

HCSB Therefore, He had to be like His **brothers** in every way.
CSB Therefore, he had to be like his **brothers and sisters** in every way.

The rendering of ἀδελφοί is not the only significant gender language change in the CSB. While the HCSB uses the terms “man” or “men” 3097 times, the CSB uses them only 2551 times, a reduction of 546. Consider the following examples:

Matthew 12:12

HCSB **A man** is worth far more than a sheep.
CSB **A person** is worth far more than a sheep.

Romans 3:28

HCSB For we conclude that **a man** is justified by faith.
CSB For we conclude that **a person** is justified by faith.

Romans 4:8

HCSB How joyful is **the man**...
CSB Blessed is **the person**...

This last example is particularly striking, since “man” here is ἀνὴρ not ἄνθρωπος. Six times in James, the CSB translates ἀνὴρ using a generic term, while HCSB used “man” (see the table below).

Table 1: ἀνὴρ in James

	HCSB	CSB
James 1:8	An indecisive man [ἀνὴρ] is unstable in all his ways.	That person ... being double-minded and unstable in all his ways.
James 1:12	A man [ἀνὴρ] who endures trials is blessed,	Blessed is the one who endures trials,
James 1:20	for man's anger [ὀργὴ ἀνδρός] does not accomplish God's righteousness.	for human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.
James 1:23	... he is like a man [ἀνὴρ] looking at his own face in a mirror.	... he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror...
James 2:2	For example, a man [ἀνὴρ] comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes...	For if someone comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes.
James 3:2	If anyone does not stumble...he is a mature man [ἀνὴρ] who is also able to control his whole body.	If anyone does not stumble ... he is mature, able also to control the whole body.

These examples not only show the gender-inclusive policy of the CSB, but also its handling of resumptive masculine pronouns. While translating generic uses of ἀνὴρ and ἄνθρωπος as “person” or with other generic terms, the CSB consistently retains the masculine resumptive pronouns “he,” “him” or “his” that follow. For example, 1 Corinthians 2:11 reads “For who knows a person’s thoughts except his spirit within him?” While ἄνθρωπος is rendered “person” instead of man, the masculine is retained for the presumptive pronouns “his” and “him.” The CSB website explains the reason for this. While using inclusive terms for nouns,

At the same time, the translators chose not to make third person masculine pronouns inclusive by rendering them as plurals (they, them), because they believed it was important to retain the individual and personal sense of these expressions.²⁴

Of course translation always involves compromise and no language can reproduce the meaning exactly. While retaining masculine singular pronouns maintains agreement with reference to number (singular), it loses agreement with reference to gender (masculine for generic). Another solution, adopted in many cases by the 2011 NIV, is to use singular “they,” a form that is now pervasive in common English.²⁵ First Corinthians 2:11 NIV reads, “For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them?” While plural in form, “their” and “them” are singular in meaning. Both solutions—masculine singular pronouns or singular “they”—have one grammatical anomaly.

In any case, these gender language changes in the CSB are particularly significant in light of recent controversies. As one who was significantly involved in the gender-language debates of the

²⁴ Schreiner, “Q&A: Translation Decisions for the Christian Standard Bible,” 3.

²⁵ See Jeff Guo, “Sorry, Grammar Nerds. The Singular ‘They’ Has Been Declared Word of the Year,” *Washington Post*, 8 January, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/yyjlyxkb>.

1990s and 2000s,²⁶ it struck me as more than a little ironic that a version with such strong Southern Baptist connections would openly adopt gender-accurate language. This irony was not lost on the secular media. *Atlantic Monthly* published an article by Jonathan Merritt and Garet Robinson entitled, “Southern Baptists Embrace Gender-Inclusive Language in the Bible.”²⁷ The subtitle read, “America’s largest Protestant denomination has produced a revised translation that incorporates many features it had long condemned.” The article pointed out that the Southern Baptists, who previously led the charge against gender inclusive language, were now embracing it in their flagship Bible translation.

The CSB now translates the term *anthropos*, a Greek word for “man,” in a gender-neutral form 151 times, rendering it “human,” “people,” and “ones.” The previous edition had done this on occasion; the new revision adds almost 100 more instances. “Men of Israel” becomes “fellow Israelites;” when discussing Jesus’s incarnation the “likeness of men” becomes “likeness of humanity.” The CSB translates the term *adelphoi*, a Greek word for “brother” in a gender-neutral form 106 times, often adding “sister.” “Brotherly love” is translated “love as brothers and sisters.”

Trevin Wax, Bible and Reference Publisher for Holman Bibles, defended the translation in e-mail correspondence with the authors of the article. He rejected the notion that the translation is “gender-neutral,” calling it “gender-accurate” instead. “It uses male pronouns for God, for pastors, and in places where it’s obviously male—and it uses male and female, where that’s what the author intended,” Wax said.²⁸ A similar response came from Denny Burk, who on his blog rejected any change in direction, claiming that the CSB, like the HCSB, followed the Colorado Springs Guidelines.²⁹

While the adoption of gender-accurate language in the CSB is certainly moderate, to say that it follows the Colorado Springs Guidelines is not accurate. The Guidelines arose in a climate of hostility toward gender-inclusive language and their tone is clearly negative and prohibitive. The CSB positively adopts such language both in its introduction and its text. For example, the Colorado Springs Guidelines explicitly reject the translation “brother or sister” for the singular ἀδελφός. Guideline B.1. reads, “‘Brother’ (*adelphos*) should not be changed to ‘brother or sister.’” Yet the CSB did exactly that 24 times.³⁰ Consider the following examples:

Matthew 5:22

HCSB But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his **brother** will be subject to judgment.

²⁶ See Mark L. Strauss, *Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation and Gender Accuracy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998); Mark L. Strauss, “Current Issues in the Gender-Language Debate: A brief response to Vern Poythress and Wayne Grudem,” in *The Challenge of Bible Translation: Communicating God’s Word to the World. Essays in Honor of Ronald F. Youngblood*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss, and Steven M. Voth (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 115–42.

²⁷ Jonathan Merritt and Garet Robinson, “Southern Baptists Embrace Gender-Inclusive Language in the Bible,” *The Atlantic*, 11 June 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y797l9es>.

²⁸ Merritt and Robinson, “Southern Baptists Embrace Gender-Inclusive Language in the Bible.”

²⁹ Denny Burk, “Have Southern Baptists Embraced Gender-Inclusive Bible Translation? Not by a Longshot,” *DennyBurk.com*, 11 June 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y9dwd3f>.

³⁰ Matt 5:22–24; 18:21, 35; Rom 14:10, 13, 15, 21; 1 Cor 5:11; 8:11, 13; 1 Thess 4:6; 2 Thess 3:6; Heb 8:11; 1 John 2:9–11; 3:10, 15; 4:20.

CSB But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his **brother or sister** will be subject to judgment.

Romans 14:10

HCSB But you, why do you criticize your **brother**? Or you, why do you look down on your **brother**?

CSB But you, why do you judge your **brother or sister**? Or you, why do you despise your **brother or sister**?

I also had to chuckle when I saw both Trevin Wax and Denny Burk using the language of “gender accuracy.” This is the terminology we were using with reference to the NIVI and the TNIV twenty years ago.³¹ As translators we were never striving for gender “neutrality,” but rather for gender *accuracy*. (The subtitle to my 1997 book *Distorting Scripture?* was *The Challenge of Bible Translation and Gender Accuracy*.) But in the cacophony of chaos and opposition provoked by the culture wars and anti-feminism of the day, it seemed no one was listening.

When the *Atlantic Monthly* article came out I e-mailed the link to my colleagues on the NIV translation committee (the CBT—Committee on Bible Translation) with a note saying, “Don’t you feel vindicated?” One of them responded with great poignancy:

Although the Southern Baptists have vindicated our T/NIV translations, for some reasons this makes me sad. All the vitriol, all the slander, all the stress CBT endured for years ... we knew we were right. I think they owe us a public apology for all the damage they did.

Well, I doubt an apology is going to happen, but hopefully lessons have been learned. When issues like this arise we need to take a deep breath and think carefully through the issues—not rush out to sign petitions and censure colleagues. I have a friend whose salvation was publicly questioned because of his stand on this issue. Another lost his teaching position at an evangelical seminary. We should be better than this.

I want to commend Tom Schreiner, David Allen and the CSB Translation Oversight Committee for having the courage to follow their convictions in this regard (and to consistently follow their translation philosophy). I’m sure they have taken a few hits because of it.

While adopting a great deal of gender-accurate language, the CSB (like most versions) is not altogether consistent. Here are a few examples I came across where an inclusive term might have been expected:

The crowds ... gave glory to God, who had given such authority to **men**. (Matt 9:8)

The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of **men**. (Matt 17:22)

With **man** this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. (Matt 19:26)

The Sabbath was made for **man** and not **man** for the Sabbath. (Mark 2:27)

³¹ NIVI refers to the gender-inclusive British edition of the NIV, published in 1995, which sparked the gender language controversy of the late 1990s. For details, see Strauss, *Distorting Scripture?* 20–22. TNIV is Today’s New International Version, the short-lived gender-inclusive edition of the NIV introduced when the 1984 NIV was frozen in terms of further revision (TNIV NT, 2002; whole Bible, 2005; canceled in 2011).

But who are you, a mere **man**, to talk back to God? (Rom 9:20)

And [they] exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal **man**. (Rom 1:23)

Paul, an apostle—not from **men** or by **man**, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father... (Gal 1:1)

3.6. Traditional Language

Although the gender language changes are perhaps the most significant in the revision of the HCSB, there are many others. In a good number of cases, the CSB reversed innovations made by the HCSB and returned to traditional language. Here are a few examples.

(1) *Beatitudes*. The HCSB broke with traditional Beatitude word order to retain more natural English grammar. The CSB returns to the traditional Beatitude formula:

Matthew 5:3

HCSB The poor in spirit are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

CSB Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Romans 4:8

HCSB How joyful is the man the Lord will never charge with sin!

CSB Blessed is the person the Lord will never charge with sin.

(2) *Leprosy*. The HCSB removed the word “leprosy” because the skin diseases in Leviticus 13–14 are clearly not Hansen’s disease, translating the Hebrew and Greek words traditionally rendered “leper” and “leprosy” (λέπρος; λέπρα; תַּעֲרֵב) as “skin disease” or “serious skin disease.” The CSB retains “serious skin disease” in the OT for תַּעֲרֵב, but returns to “leprosy” in the NT (11x) for λέπρος and λέπρα. The reason for this distinction between the OT and the NT is not clear, though it might be because the English “leper” and “leprosy” are derived from the Greek terms.

(3) *Tongues*. The HCSB tended to use the term “languages” instead of “tongues” because the latter was considered archaic. Since some considered the HCSB’s use of “language” here to indicate an anti-Charismatic agenda, and since “tongues” can refer either to human languages *or* ecstatic utterance, the CSB committee returned to the traditional “tongues.”

Acts 2:4 (cf. 2:11; 10:46; 19:6)

HCSB Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different **languages**.

CSB Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different **tongues**.

1 Corinthians 12:30

HCSB Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in other **languages**?

CSB Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in other **tongues**?

Tom Schreiner explains the reason for this change:

The translators, representing a variety of denominations, did not intend by the use of “languages” to exclude charismatic views of ecstatic speech. The decision was made

without reference to convictions about gifts of the Spirit, questions of cessationism versus continuationism, or any other theological concern. However, in the years after HCSB debuted, many readers assumed that the HCSB had intentionally excluded Charismatic viewpoints.

Because “tongues” is an appropriate translation and is the word used in every other major English Bible translation, the CSB Translation Oversight Committee elected to adopt the traditional rendering and avoid any appearance of theological bias.³²

A return to traditional language is also evident in the baptism narrative. While the HCSB translated the divine voice from heaven as “You are My beloved Son. I take delight in You!” (Luke 3:22), the CSB has the more traditional rendering, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.”

(4) *Quirky translations.* As noted above, the HCSB is marked by a number of what I would call odd or “quirky” translation choices. The CSB seems to remove most of these, returning to more traditional renderings. Here are a few examples from Matthew’s Gospel.

Matthew 2:1

HCSB	Wise men from the east arrived unexpectedly in Jerusalem.
CSB	Wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem.

It is unclear where “unexpectedly” came from. The Greek is ἰδοὺ μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν παρεγένοντο εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα.

Matthew 5:22

HCSB	But whoever says, ‘You moron! ’ [μωρέ] will be subject to hellfire.
CSB	But whoever says, ‘You fool! ’ will be subject to hellfire.

Evidently the formal similarity (and etymological connection) of the Greek μωρός to the English term “moron” resulted in this translation. But of course it is an anachronistic fallacy to say that the English “moron” is a literal rendering of μωρός.

Matthew 6:27

HCSB	Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying?
CSB	Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying?

This is a difficult idiom (προσθεῖναι ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ πῆχυν ἕνα) and it is unclear whether it is referring to time or space (length). But it is very odd to say that you can’t even do a small thing like adding a “cubit” to your height (18 inches—not a small thing at all!).

Matthew 10:17

HCSB	People will hand you over to sanhedrins and flog you in their synagogues.
CSB	They will hand you over to local courts and flog you in their synagogues.

The Greek συνέδριον is often rendered “Sanhedrin” when it refers to the Jewish high council in Jerusalem. But the plural (συνέδρια) normally refers to local councils or courts and so is usually translated “councils” rather than transliterated as “sanhedrins.”

³²Schreiner, “Q&A: Translation Decisions for the Christian Standard Bible,” 1.

Matthew 13:52

HCSB “Therefore,” He said to them, “every **student of Scripture** instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who brings out of his storeroom what is new and what is old.”

CSB “Therefore,” he said to them, “every **teacher of the law** who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom treasures new and old.”

Since the HCSB elsewhere translates γραμματεὺς as “scribe,” one would expect the same thing here.

Matthew 15:30

HCSB And large crowds came to Him, having with them the lame, the blind, **the deformed**, those unable to speak, and many others.

CSB And large crowds came to him, including the lame, the blind, **the crippled**, those unable to speak, and many others.

“Deformed” does not seem very sensitive to those with disabilities.

Matthew 16:18

HCSB I will build My church, and the **forces of Hades** will not overpower it.

CSB I will build my church, and the **gates of Hades** will not overpower it.

It is surprising that the HCSB, which generally retains the metaphors of Scripture, does not retain the image of a gate.

Matthew 17:2

HCSB He was **transformed** in front of them.

CSB He was **transfigured** in front of them.

This CSB returns to the traditional technical term for the transfiguration.

Matthew 17:4

HCSB Lord, it’s good for us to be here! If You want, I will make three **tabernacles** here.

CSB Lord, it’s good for us to be here. I will set up three **shelters** here.

While Greek σκηνή (hut, tent, shelter, tabernacle) can be used of the OT tabernacle, it is unlikely that Peter is hoping to build three copies of the Old Testament portable temple. The sense here is almost certainly a hut or shelter.

While in most cases, the CSB returns to traditional or less innovative language, in other cases the editors move away from traditional terms, especially when these terms have become archaic or obscure. For example, the HCSB retained the traditional language of “propitiation” for ἱλαστήριον (Rom 3:25), ἱλάσκομαι (Heb 2:17), and ἱλασμός (1 John 2:2; 4:10), no doubt because of the historical debate between “expiation” (cf. RSV) and “propitiation.” The CSB translators likely recognized that few of their readers would know the difference and so rendered the ἱλάσ- word group as “atoning sacrifice” (cf. NIV and NLT).

1 John 2:2

HCSB He Himself is **the propitiation** for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

CSB He himself is **the atoning sacrifice** for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

Occasionally it seemed to me the CSB's revision was not an improvement. Here are a few examples where a case could be made for retaining the HCSB reading (again from Matthew's Gospel):

Matthew 12:10

HCSB There He saw a man who had **a paralyzed hand**.

CSB There he saw a man who had **a shriveled hand**.

The reference to a "shriveled" hand almost certainly indicates paralysis. The HCSB makes this clear.

Matthew 19:28

HCSB Jesus said to them, "I assure you: In **the Messianic Age...**"

CSB Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, in **the renewal of all things...**"

The CSB's "renewal of all things" is formally close to the Greek ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ ("in the regeneration"), but is quite obscure for modern readers. "Messianic Age" makes it clear that the reference is to the eschaton.

Matthew 9:20 (cf. 14:36; 23:5)

HCSB Just then, a woman ... approached from behind and touched **the tassel** on His robe.

CSB Just then, a woman ... approached from behind and touched **the end** of his robe.

As a rabbi Jesus likely had tassels on his robe (Num. 15:37–41; Deut. 22:12). The Greek κρασπέδα is rendered "tassels" in Matthew 23:5 with reference to the robes of the Pharisees and probably means the same thing here and in 14:36.

Matthew 24:1

HCSB As Jesus left and was going out of **the temple complex...**

CSB As Jesus left and was going out of **the temple...**

Jesus is clearly leaving the temple mount, not the temple building proper.

3.7. Textual Issues

As noted above, while Arthur Farstad favored the Majority Text (the Byzantine text type), the editorial decision was eventually made for the HCSB to follow the Critical Text. For the most part, however, in its footnotes the HCSB reserved judgment on textual issues, simply citing "Other mss say..." or "Other mss omit..." In general, the CSB follows this policy, though it introduces a subtle difference with the phrase "Some [instead of 'Other'] mss read..." for less likely variants.

In more notorious passages, the CSB more explicitly renders judgment. For example, in the Johannine Comma ("three witnesses" passage) in 1 John 5:7–8, the HCSB has a footnote that reads:

Other mss (Vg and a few late Gk mss) read testify in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are One.⁸ And there are three who bear witness on earth:

By contrast, the CSB reads:

A few late Gk mss and some late Vg mss add testify in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. **8** And there are three who bear witness on earth:

Similarly, in the HCSB the longer ending of Mark has only a small bracket “[...]” marking it off from the rest of the text and a footnote at the end of verse 20 that reads “Other mss omit bracketed text.” The headings continue as usual with sections marked, “Appearances of the Risen Lord (16:9–13),” “The Great Commission (16:14–18)” and “The Ascension (16:19–20).”

The CSB more clearly marks the longer ending off as a later addition. A line across the text clearly delineates what follows as a separate section and a bracketed heading reads, “[Some of the earliest mss conclude with 16:8.]” The heading that follows is labeled, “THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK: APPEARANCES OF THE RISEN LORD (16:9–13),” and a footnote adds:

16:8 Other mss include vv. 9–20 as a longer ending. The following shorter ending is found in some mss between v. 8 and v. 9 and in one ms after v. 8 (each of which omits vv. 9–20): *And all that had been commanded to them they quickly reported to those around Peter. After these things, Jesus himself sent out through them from east to west, the holy and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.*

This is much closer to the NIV, which similarly separates the longer ending from the rest of the text with a bar and a bracketed heading.

4. Conclusion

The examples above confirm that the CSB is a significant improvement over its predecessor, retaining its strengths while eliminating many of its weaknesses. In terms of strengths, the CSB continues the HCSB’s translation philosophy, which represents a nice balance between formal and functional equivalence (though the term “optimal equivalence” is more a marketing strategy than a reality). This mediating approach helps to maintain readability and clarity without sacrificing important formal features, such as metaphors and word-plays.

As far as improvements over the HCSB, by removing many idiosyncrasies of its predecessor and returning to more traditional language with reference to the divine name YHWH, slaves and servants, beatitudes, tongues, etc., the CSB will likely gain wider acceptance in the Christian community. Its more precise text-critical notes are also an improvement, bringing it more in-line with the consensus of evangelical scholarship with reference to NT Textual Criticism. Finally, its more positive stance towards gender-inclusive language not only improves its accuracy, but also enables modern readers to hear more clearly the inclusive message of the gospel—the good news that in Christ “There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28 CSB).

“Striving for Glory with God”: Humility as the Good Life in Basil of Caesarea’s *Homily* 20

— Coleman M. Ford —

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Abstract: Basil of Caesarea (c. AD 330–379) presents humility as the essence of the good life in his *Homily* 20. Humility was the chief virtue based on Christ’s own humility. Thus, true happiness was only possible through a life of humility. In this essay, I first assess the biblical and theological rationale for humility according to Basil in contrast with prior Greek and Roman notions of humility. Next, I analyze how Basil depicts humility in terms of “glory” in his *Homily* 20. The bestowal of glory is a gift of God and can only be achieved through a life of humble imitation of Christ. This notion gives Basil’s hearers the proper perspective to understand how the good life is lived in Christian perspective. I conclude with some practical implications for understanding Basil’s conception of humility as the good life.

1. Introduction

Basil of Caesarea (c. AD 330–379) was a significant theological force in the fourth century. On the heels of the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), Basil sought to steer the church through tumultuous theological waters amidst the ongoing Arian controversy and its numerous aberrant theological descendants. In particular, Basil was instrumental in defending the deity of the Holy Spirit and for promoting a robust trinitarianism in the spirit of Nicaea.¹ Ordained bishop of Caesarea in 370, Basil

¹ For a thorough treatment of Basil’s exegetical program (along with other fourth century Greek fathers) in defense of the Holy Spirit, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatological Controversy of the Fourth Century*, VCSup 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1994). Basil’s main opponent in the pneumatological debate was Eunomius, a former bishop of Cyzicus before he was deposed by emperor Theodosius in 383. Basil’s work *Against Eunomius*, established the biblical foundation for the activity of the Spirit as conjoined to the Father and Son. Additionally, his more well-known *On the Holy Spirit* demonstrated the personal

remained in close relations with various political figures and helped to establish various church leaders throughout the region of Cappadocia sympathetic to the Nicene cause, including his close friend Gregory Nazianzus and his own brother Gregory of Nyssa. Though he was a significant theological voice, he was also a monastic reformer and pastor. It is in these latter roles that he was able to address various pastoral matters. One of Basil’s chief concerns was the promotion of humility as integral to a flourishing Christian life. Understanding humility as the chief Christian virtue can continue to bear fruit for Christians today.

Basil conceived of humility as the chief virtue, writing upon it variously throughout his career. Humility was especially important for church leaders according to Basil. Michael Haykin notes, “A key area in Basil’s thinking about monastic and episcopal leadership was the responsibility of the monastic leader and bishop to be a man marked by humility.”² Only through the practice of humility may one truly apprehend both excellent character and happiness. More importantly for Basil, humility serves as the divine entrance by which man must enter in order to restore his glory that was lost through pride. To this end, humility leads to happiness because it allows one to comprehend and fully value the life of Christ. Humility produces excellence of character by allowing one to properly apply other virtues free from corrupt human pretension. This notion of humility in Basil is most clearly seen in his *Homily 20*. This sermon, posthumously titled *On Humility*, was likely preached around the year 375. In it, Basil advocated for humility as the chief virtue necessary for the restoration of man’s dignity from the fall, allowing him to achieve excellence in this life and attain true happiness into eternity through imitating the humility of Christ.

Understanding how Basil conceived of humility as the chief virtue of the Christian life raises some important questions. How was humility conceived within the writings of earlier Greek and Roman authors? How did Basil relate humility to Scripture? What are the moral implications and practical applications of humility? For Basil, the practice of humility is necessary because it brings one closer back to the original state of “divine glory.”³ By practicing humility, the course to true moral goodness is rightly established, enabling one to come as close as possible to the original state of “glory which he possessed with God.”⁴ Contrary to the wisdom of the world, only the practice of humility allows one to properly perform virtue and live an excellent life. The world strives for glory by means of power and personal exaltation. This delusive pathway to glory impairs even the performance of basic virtues. Understanding humility continues to bear fruit for modern day believers, especially in a post-Christian world. Indeed, there is little difference between how Greco-Roman philosophers understood humility from how it is understood in modern culture today. Contrary to the wisdom of the world, humility, according to Basil, is the only proper means for attaining glory based on the life of Christ. Basil presents humility as the

activity of the Spirit as complementing the work of the Father and Son. For a succinct overview of Basil’s theology and writings, see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea: A Guide to His Life and Doctrine* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012).

² Michael A. G. Haykin, *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 111.

³ Basil of Caesarea, *Homily 20.1* (PG 31:525b; DelCogliano, 108). English citations from *Homily 20* are taken from St. Basil of Caesarea, *On Christian Doctrine and Practice*, trans. Mark DelCogliano (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2012) and St. Basil of Caesarea, *Ascetical Works*, trans. by Monica Wagner (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1950). Citations from the original Greek are given from *Patrologia Graeca* (PG).

⁴ Basil, *Homily 20.1* (PG 31:525a; DelCogliano, 108).

chief virtue in three distinct ways: first, he frames humility in contrast to Greco-Roman notions; second, he constructs the biblical and theological framework for understanding the value of humility; last, Basil places humility in the greater moral perspective in order to better understand humility as the key to the good life founded in example of Jesus Christ and the present working of the Holy Spirit. In this, modern readers of Basil will gain fresh insight into virtue in Christian perspective, and specifically, how humility can be pursued in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ. There is no lived Christian life, properly understood, apart from humility.

2. Humility in Greco-Roman Perspective

In order to understand humility in Christian perspective, it is important to place it in context with other philosophical and moral renderings. Humility for Basil is to cleave to that which is ultimately good, which is God. It is not to glory in oneself. It is “to realize that [one] lacks true righteousness (δικαιοσύνης ἀληθοῦς).”⁵ This posture acknowledges that one has not “embraced Christ through [one’s] virtue,” but it is Christ who “apprehended you by his advent (παρουσίας).”⁶ Humility is to come down in the same way that Christ came down to us. One who seeks humility is a true lover of virtue.⁷ Humility places man on the path to glory, the place from which he fell, and enables that one to practice true virtue as directed by the life of Christ and focused towards God. The Greco-Roman perspective, on the other hand, portrays humility as weakness and unsuitable for excellence in character. Glory is the reward of virtue.⁸ Humility is unbecoming of man, let alone of God. Aristotle (384–322 BC), in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, provides a foundation for this perspective. The second-century philosopher, Celsus, represents a similar perspective. These two examples serve as evidence towards understand Greco-Roman thought regarding the notion of humility. Aristotle sets the overall tone, while Celsus confirms it in relation to his disdain for Christianity. As such, they provide a contrasting view to the happy life compared to the one secured through humility according to Basil. Though more could be said, these two examples will provide a foundation for a Greco-Roman perspective on humility. We will now turn our attention to these examples in order to frame our discussion of Basil’s conception of humility.

2.1. Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*

At the outset of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle posited the quest on which man is set upon: the search for happiness. He stated, “Now happiness (εὐδαιμονία) above all else appears to be absolutely final in this sense, since we always choose it for its own sake and never as a means to something else; whereas honour, pleasure, intelligence, and excellence in its various forms, we choose indeed for their own sakes ... but we also choose them for the sake of happiness.”⁹ For what Aristotle calls “littleness of

⁵ Basil, *Homily 20.3* (PG 31:529c; DelCogliano, 112).

⁶ Basil, *Homily 20.4* (PG 31:529c; DelCogliano, 113).

⁷ Basil, *Homily 20.7* (PG 31:540a; DelCogliano, 119).

⁸ In his *Tusculan Disputations* 1.45, the Roman philosopher and statesman Cicero stated, “Glory follows virtue as if it were its shadow.”

⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7, trans. H. Rackham, 2nd ed., LCL (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 28–29.

soul” is worth less than acts of conceitedness “for it both occurs more often and is worse.”¹⁰ The “little-souled” person is deficient and unworthy of great things. He asserted, “And inasmuch as the great-souled man deserves most, he must be the best of men; for the better a man is the more he deserves, and he that is best deserves most. Therefore, the truly great-souled man must be a good man. Indeed greatness in each of the virtues would seem to go with greatness of soul.”¹¹

For Aristotle, wisdom (φρόνησις) was that which completed character-excellence. The disposition of wisdom for Aristotle contains both an intellectual quality as well as an aspect of technical expertise, though it does not solely rest in either of those qualities. He stated, “Now it is held to be the mark of a prudent man (δὴ φρονίμου) to be able to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for himself, not in some one department, for instance what is good for his health or strength, but what is advantageous as a means to the good life in general.”¹² Sarah Broadie and C. J. Rowe state, “Wisdom, then, turns out to be impossible without excellence of character just as excellence of character is impossible without wisdom. When Aristotle puts them together in his exposition, what in fact he puts together is an unfinished infrastructure of character-excellence with an abstract or ethically footloose category called ‘cleverness.’”¹³

2.2. Celsus and *True Doctrine*

Celsus, writing in the mid-to late second century AD, was a philosopher who had familiarized himself with much of the New Testament and the writings of his Christian contemporaries. He wished to understand the claims of Christianity in order to discredit the faith. His retort against Christianity entitled *True Doctrine* sought to establish the absurdity of the Christian faith and invalidate the truth claims of Scripture. This challenge argued that Christianity was absurd based on its novelty and its conception of God descending to take on flesh for the salvation of man. Such notions were ludicrous to any serious thinker according to Celsus and contradicted established Greek thought on the subject. Celsus contended that God becoming man is a preposterous idea, unworthy of credence from anyone with intelligence. Celsus loathed the Christians because their concept of God is infantile. Christianity is suitable only for the “most stupid and uneducated yokels.”¹⁴ The intelligent ones view God as completely other and transcendent, wholly unapproachable and unable to intermix with flesh and blood. The idea of a god who would humble himself to the point of taking on flesh to become like man was utterly preposterous to the Greco-Roman concept of divinity. Humility and deity simply did not mingle.

Celsus repeatedly demonstrated his knowledge of Christian doctrine, yet he rejected it as nonsensical. As Robert Wilken notes, “In principle ... Celsus had no objection to the elevation of a man, even Jesus, to divine status ... [but] was Jesus really deserving of such honor? [According to Celsus] Jesus was a low-grade magician, not a great hero like the men of old.”¹⁵ Celsus’s conception of God

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.3 (Rackham, 217).

¹¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.3 (Rackham, 217).

¹² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.5 (Rackham, 337).

¹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics: Translation, Introduction and Commentary*, trans. C. J. Rowe and Sarah Broadie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 50.

¹⁴ Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.1, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 316.

¹⁵ Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 105.

aligned with a platonic metaphysical dualism, that is, a distinction between imperfect and temporal matter, and an unchanging and nonmaterial world of the Good, or the Forms. The later middle-platonic association of the Good with God, while maintaining the metaphysical dualistic assumptions, likely informed Celsus's rejection of Christianity's claim of Jesus as God.¹⁶

Origen of Alexandria, in his *Contra Celsum*, contended along with Scripture, that God has approached man as Christ in the flesh. Such a message has been preached and believed "in all the world because he is the only Son of God who has visited the human race."¹⁷ Origen stated that the simple are made to understand the deep things of God more than the supposed wise and educated. The "intelligible interpretation" of Scripture comes through the Spirit alone.¹⁸ Origen's main point in this work was to distinguish the Christian view of God as distinct—and ultimately superior—to that of Greek thought. Origen reverses traditional platonic thinking regarding a mind's ascent to God and states that knowledge of God begins with God's descent to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Origen argues, contra Celsus, that the gospel is proof in itself of God's revelation apart from human wisdom therefore denying the need for external "Greek proof" for validation.¹⁹ Origen understood that the Christian faith supersedes categories of Greek verification. He affirms that the gospel is demonstrated in "Spirit and of power," quoting 2 Corinthians 2:4.

Stephen Pardue notes the intersection of the canonical Scriptures and the patristic understanding of humility:

For unlike prudence, courage, fidelity, or any number of other Christian virtues, its status as a virtue was profoundly contentious in the pagan ancient world. While early Christians would eventually develop distinctive accounts of each of these virtues, they were pressed to rely especially on scriptural warrant and Jewish precedents to develop their own conception of humility.²⁰

Basil's conception of humility arose from the biblical account, ultimately with the life of Christ as the paradigm for this chief Christian virtue.

3. Humility in Biblical and Theological Perspective

Contemporary philosopher Peter Kreeft notes the "hinge" or cardinal virtues of justice, wisdom, courage and moderation. They are "hinges" (a translation from the Latin *cardes*) because they are the virtues "on which all other virtues turn."²¹ As such they are the natural virtues, described by Plato, from which the theological virtues of faith, hope and love bloom.²² These virtues make up "the necessary

¹⁶ For more on the intersection of platonic and Christian conceptions of God, see Ronald H. Nash, *Christianity and the Hellenistic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

¹⁷ Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.11 (Chadwick, 324).

¹⁸ Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.70 (Chadwick, 384).

¹⁹ Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.2 (Chadwick, 8).

²⁰ Stephen T. Pardue, *The Mind of Christ: Humility and the Intellect in Early Christian Theology*, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology 23 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 26.

²¹ Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue: Traditional Moral Wisdom for Modern Moral Confusion* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 68.

²² Kreeft, 59.

foundation and precondition for all the others.”²³ From here Kreeft affirms that while these virtues are more fully realized by the biblical witness, they are nonetheless part of natural revelation.²⁴ These virtues, according to this conception, are naturally revealed and hence within everyone’s capacity for application.

While Basil recognizes the existence of natural virtues, he also affirms the human inability to naturally practice virtue. For Basil, man has “lost the good which it was in his power to possess.”²⁵ This fall from glory came through pride, and humility is the necessary key to unlocking divine glory. He asserted, “The surest salvation for him, the remedy of his ills, and the means of restoration to his original state is in practicing humility and not pretending that he may lay claim to any glory through his own efforts but seeking it from God.”²⁶ Human effort falls short of the glory of God. Striving for glory by means of self-righteousness, worldly wisdom, and attempts at courage and moderation all fall short of their full expression in a Christian life of virtue. To this notion, Basil provides numerous biblical examples.

In his *Short Rules* 198 (*Regula brevius tractatae*), Basil stated, “Humility is to consider all (human beings) better to oneself according to the definition of the Apostle.”²⁷ In view here is the understanding that Paul provides in Philippians 2:3, but the larger scope includes the full apostolic testimony regarding Christ. The fundamental basis of humility for the believer is the life of Christ through the teachings of the apostles. Basil stated, “Indeed, we find that everything the Lord did is a lesson in humility.”²⁸ The apostles and disciples of the early church provide believers with additional models of humility. Basil exhorted, “Come, let us imitate them, so that out of our humility there may arise for us everlasting glory, the perfect and true gift of Christ.”²⁹ The Christian then grows in humility by modeling Christ and the apostles. Basil used a string of Scriptural quotations to exhort his readers towards humility, suggesting a necessary reliance upon the Bible for those who wish to grow in humility. Imitation of virtuous individuals is the means for growth in virtue. More will be said on this later but suffice it to say, for Basil, Scripture formed the moral matrix of the Christian life.³⁰

Basil’s adherence to biblical language and ideas informed his perspective on humility. His adherence to the positive example of Christ, noting his incarnation, and the negative examples of the Israelites and the devil grounded his discussion in biblical motifs. At every turn, Basil draws his readers to Scripture. One aspect in which Basil’s language appears unsettling relates to his understanding of humility as the means of salvation. If humility is a work in which one must perform in order to be saved, then it is thoroughly unbiblical. If, however, one reads this as a way of life for one whom has already been saved then it becomes more palatable. In his *Shorter Rules* 198, Basil described how one attains humility. First,

²³ Kreeft, *Back to Virtue*, 59.

²⁴ Kreeft, *Back to Virtue*, 67.

²⁵ Basil, *Homily* 20.1 (PG 31:525b; DelCogliano, 108).

²⁶ Basil, *Homily* 20.1 (PG 31:525b; DelCogliano, 108).

²⁷ Basil, *Shorter Rules* 198.1, in *The Asketikon of St. Basil the Great*, trans. Anna M. Silvas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 380 (PG 31:1214c).

²⁸ Basil, *Homily* 20.6 (PG 31:536c; DelCogliano, 116).

²⁹ Basil, *Homily* 20.6 (PG 31:537a; DelCogliano, 117).

³⁰ For a helpful treatment on Basil’s view and use of Scripture, see Stephen M. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of American Press, 2007), 102–49.

one calling to mind the words and example of Christ. Next by claiming the promise of Christ that he who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 14:11). Lastly, Basil urged a consistent and careful practice of humility while understanding the difficulty of the task. Practicing humility is akin to learning a craft, requiring practice fraught with difficulty, yet such is “accomplishing every virtue in accordance with the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ.”³¹

3.1. Pride and Glory

Mark DelCogliano notes, “Though this homily is entitled *On Humility*, it is as much, if not more, about pride.”³² Man’s need for humility comes from his fault of pride. Hence Basil begins his homily by highlighting man’s current disposition. At one point, man enjoyed glory with God, what Basil called “genuine instead of fictitious dignity.”³³ Such a position with God provided true nobility, wisdom, and happiness. Man forfeited his place with God because of pride, due to “looking for something better and striving for what he could not attain.”³⁴ This striving was the temptation in the garden by Satan in Genesis 3, a temptation that promised equal status with God. Instead of enjoying the “good which it was in his power to possess,” man fell from glory—pride “blinds a man to no purpose” and “arouses vain conceit.”³⁵ It is like an inflammation upon a tumor which grows and pervades the soul, becoming “a cause of death.”³⁶ It is the proud which will be humbled, either by choice or by consequence.

Because of pride man exited the glory of God—and by humility God entered the sinful state of man to bring man back to glory. Virtue practiced apart from glory is not true virtue, it is a sham virtue marred by human selfishness and pride. We have the search for beauty backwards. Man does not ascend without God who descends. Thus, the road to ascension begins with a posture of condescension. This is the ironic nature of the distinctly Christian virtue of humility. Basil consistently affirms the reality that mankind spends so much time posturing and seeking success in the eyes of the world. This is the search for validation in the eyes of man. This search is the disguised desire to return to glory. Apart from humility, man’s search for glory is ultimately futile. This sham search disables mankind from the true practice of virtue.

3.2. Temptation towards Exaltation

When the temptation to exalt oneself arises, Basil exhorted his readers to “give thanks to God lest you exalt yourself above your neighbor.”³⁷ Basil warned against self-exaltation, exhorting his readers to recall numerous negative biblical examples of pride. The giants of Genesis 6 exhibited arrogance of exaltation, as did Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. Basil cited both Absalom in 2 Samuel 14 and Adonijah in 1 Kings 1 as two examples of those who exalted themselves based on their supposed beauty. Basil also reminded his listeners that the allure of the devil remains, even for those who have made themselves humble. Basil proclaimed, “For the Devil, having caused man’s ruin by holding out to him the hope of

³¹ Basil, *Shorter Rules* 198.1 (PG 31:1214c; Silvas, 381).

³² DelCogliano, *On Christian Doctrine and Practice*, 104.

³³ Basil, *Homily* 20.1 (PG 31:525a; Wagner, 475).

³⁴ Basil, *Homily* 20.1 (PG 31:525b; DelCogliano, 108).

³⁵ Basil, *Homily* 20.1 (PG 31:525b; Wagner, 475).

³⁶ Basil, *Homily* 20.1 (PG 31:525c; DelCogliano, 109).

³⁷ Basil, *Homily* 20.5 (PG 31:533c; DelCogliano, 115).

false glory, ceases not to tempt him still by the same allurements and he devises innumerable schemes to this end.”³⁸ Those who are humble may cease to be so by succumbing to the temptation to exalt themselves through wealth, power or fame. Yielding to temptation in this way, Basil noted, “bears no relation to excellence of character.”³⁹

Reminding readers of our ever watchful God, Basil recommended that his readers “[s]trive for honor with God.... [H]e renders a splendid reward.”⁴⁰ Basil reminded readers that lording fame and power over peoples is worldly behavior unfit for Christ’s followers. In a sermon on the act of renunciation, Basil warned his monastic audience of the “harlot” which is the world, the one who draws one away from “the life of virtue.”⁴¹ Even if one escapes the grasp of the harlot, “they return enervated” and “peevisly disinclined to all virtuous action.”⁴² This relates to Basil’s exhortation against the “invisible master of worldly wisdom,” that is, the Devil, who, thinking that he had trapped and truly eradicated the Lord, was the one who was ultimately trapped and defeated.

3.3. False Humility

Basil recognized the reality of pretentious humility. The temptation to self-exaltation can easily be disguised as false humility. To this point, Basil pointed to scriptural examples of those who appeared to be submitting to God, yet ultimately were subject to fear and arrogance. Peter, who had declared his dedication to Christ, eventually denied him based on fear. His avowal to stand by Christ was akin more to boastful pride arising from arrogance. Similarly, the Pharisee in Luke 18:11–14, though seemingly humble through total submission to God’s law, “lost the righteousness in which he could boast because of his sin of pride.”⁴³ Basil remarked on the notion of false humility in his *Longer Rules*. The ever-present danger of pride exists in seeking to be humble. For example, one could display humility by offering his or her seat to another. In his *Long Rules (Regulae fusius tractatae)* Basil warned that attempts at humility could easily lead to contentious behavior and “make us as bad as those fighting over the first seats.”⁴⁴ Basil suggested that allowing oneself to be served by another is just as much an act of humility as one performing the action.

Basil declared, “The subordinate therefore need have no fear of undermining his goal of humility if he ever is ministered to by a greater.”⁴⁵ Thus Basil maintained that humility can only properly flourish within a mutual relationship. Roberta Bondi communicates well the idea of humility in the mind of Basil:

The basic attitude of humility recognizes that no person loves or does any good without the help of God, so that whatever acts of kindness or virtue a person performs, whatever strength or happiness one has, one’s ability to work well and to love well—all these are possible because God gives them to the creatures as God’s good gifts. No one is in a

³⁸ Basil, *Homily* 20.1 (PG 31:525b; Wagner, 475).

³⁹ Basil, *Homily* 20.1 (PG 31:525b; Wagner, 475).

⁴⁰ Basil, *Homily* 20.7 (PG 31:540a; DelCogliano, 118).

⁴¹ Basil, *On Renunciation* (PG 31:632a; Wagner, 22).

⁴² Basil, *On Renunciation* (PG 31:632b–c; Wagner, 22–23).

⁴³ Basil, *Homily* 20.4 (PG 31:533b; DelCogliano, 114).

⁴⁴ Basil, *Longer Rules* 21 (PG 31:975c; Silvas, 219).

⁴⁵ Basil, *Longer Rules* 31 (PG 31:994c–995b; Silvas, 232).

position to look down on another from a superior height because of her or his hard work or piety or mental superiority. We are all vulnerable, all limited and we each have a different struggle only God is in a position to judge.⁴⁶

Basil affirmed that everyone was in need of practicing humility, and receiving acts wrought from a position of humility. Thus, humble submission to another person allows one to grow in his or her own pursuit of humility. Basil believed that mutual submission was practiced in view of aiding another's growth in virtue, providing models for emulation and ongoing encouragement.

4. *Humility in Moral Perspective*

Basil's moral perspective was based on modeling one's behavior on the one who demonstrated the greatest act of humility—Jesus Christ. Basil declared, “For the soul grows like what it pursues, and is molded and shaped according to what it does.”⁴⁷ Forming Christ-like habits leads to Christ-like virtue. Proper morality comes from proper reproduction. These are the habits, the practices and the daily manner of life that both exhibit and promote humility. He states, “Your appearance, and your garments, and your transportation ... and the style of your meals ... and your house ... all of these should reflect thrift.”⁴⁸ In his *Shorter Rules*, Basil urged a consistent and careful practice of humility while understanding that it will ultimately be “possible with difficulty to attain the condition of humility.”⁴⁹

Basil went on to provide a list of basic moral axioms based on the life of Christ. These moral axioms are particularly characteristic of monastic communities. Those living in coenobitic groups grow and flourish through the practice of humility towards one another. Though this homily is often placed with Basil's ascetic literature, this does not mean that it is meant only for a monastic audience. While Basil represented an ascetic life as the truest form of Christian discipleship, he does not intend to exclude those outside specifically coenobitic monastic community. Though his moral precepts carry a strong monastic flavor, for Basil, ascetic morality equated Christian discipleship. There are no two forms of discipleship, one for monastic communities and one for lay believers—the call to the Christian life is necessarily an ascetic one.⁵⁰ Humility is not simply for monastic adherents, it is for all who wish to follow Christ and pursue Christian virtue. Basil did not assert the necessity of monasticism for practicing Christian virtue, but he did contend for the necessity of Christian community.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Roberta C. Bondi, *To Love as God Loves: Conversations with the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 43.

⁴⁷ Basil, *Homily* 20.7 (PG 31:537b; DelCogliano, 117).

⁴⁸ Basil, *Homily* 20.7 (PG 31:537b; DelCogliano, 117).

⁴⁹ Basil, *Shorter Rules* 198 (PG 31:1214c; Silvas, 381).

⁵⁰ For more on Basil's concept of Christian discipleship, see Stephen M. Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 102–23.

⁵¹ For more on Basil's necessity of community for Christian discipleship see Augustine Holmes, *A Life Pleasing To God: The Spirituality of the Rules of Saint Basil* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2001), 139–61.

4.1. Self-Control

It is important to note here the virtue of self-control. Anna Silvas observes in Basil the importance of self-control, calling it “an intrinsic element of all the virtues.”⁵² In Basil’s *Longer Rules*, he consistently cited the importance of self-control, noting “it is impossible to accomplish one [commandment] in isolation from one another” as is “especially the case with self-control.” The commandments are linked to self-control “as in a circular dance.”⁵³ The importance of self-control is certainly evident in Basil’s rule, and the practice of such does seem to point to “an intrinsic element” of all the other virtues as Silvas describes. I want to suggest, however, that apart from humility, according to Basil, godly self-control would be impossible. The sort of self-control described by Basil is that which is related to a “weaning from passions” and “a mortifying of the body”; as such, it is the “beginning of a spiritual life.”⁵⁴

Stephen Hildebrand notes, “Self-control frees the soul to rise to God by loosening its moorings in this world and its attachment to the goods of this world.”⁵⁵ Certainly self-control is a guiding principle, especially in Basil’s ascetic theology, but based on a reading of *Homily 20*, such self-control is impossible without first recognizing one’s weaknesses and humbly submitting to the gentle yoke of Christ. If self-control is the “beginning of a spiritual life” then it is humility that transforms one’s priorities, helping them know where to begin. To this end, the importance of memory is crucial for the purpose of self-control. When pride begins to swell, one must “recall the past to mind, in order to “put an end to any stupid self-inflation.”⁵⁶ In witnessing another’s sin, one should resist the urge to judge and rather must “[reflect] upon all the things he has done or continues to do rightly.”⁵⁷ Memory for Basil was the necessary means of self-control. Though self-control plays a vital role in the Christian life, in the end, self-control cannot be properly practiced apart from humility. Self-control, divorced from the Christian virtue of humility, will become a source of pride like all human endeavors.

4.2. Imitation of Virtue

When it comes to performing virtue, humility is the door to the stage. Once inside, imitation of those who have come before becomes the way in which one properly practices virtue. The act of imitation relates to humility as it recognizes that practicing virtues requires submitting to virtuous examples. Basil implored imitation of superiors and biblical individuals. His main exhortation for imitation, however, is focused on the person and work of Jesus Christ. While never alluding to Paul’s Christological hymn in Philippians 2, Basil nevertheless promoted Christ as the supreme model of humility worthy of imitation. Basil asserted, “[We] find that everything the Lord did is a lesson in humility.”⁵⁸ It is the Lord who “descended from heaven into extreme humility and in turn was raised up from humility to an appropriate exaltation.”⁵⁹ Basil affirmed Christ as the prototype of humility, the supreme example to be imitated which would yield similar benefits. Imitating Christ’s humility informed all other actions.

⁵² Silvas, *The Asketikon of St. Basil the Great*, 205, n. 256.

⁵³ Basil, *Longer Rules* 16.3 (PG 31:959c; Silvas, 208).

⁵⁴ Basil, *Longer Rules* 17.2 (PG 31:964b; Silvas, 210).

⁵⁵ Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, 132.

⁵⁶ Basil, *Homily* 20.5 (PG 31:536a; DelCogliano, 116).

⁵⁷ Basil, *Homily* 20.5 (PG 31:536a; DelCogliano, 116).

⁵⁸ Basil, *Homily* 20.6 (PG 31:536b; DelCogliano, 116).

⁵⁹ Basil, *Homily* 20.6 (PG 31:536b; DelCogliano, 116).

Particularly for Basil, Christian charity flowed from humility.⁶⁰ Therefore, Christ shared his glory with those who glorified him through their actions of love. From here Basil mentioned the apostles and “divine lessons passed down by our fathers,” subsequently worthy of imitation as they imitated Christ.⁶¹ Basil exhorted his audience, “[Let] us imitate them, so that out of our humility there may arise for us everlasting glory, the perfect and true gift of Christ.”⁶²

One can choose to imitate either virtuous examples and thus grow in virtue, or one can choose to imitate the immoral acts of the devil. Those who do are bound to experience the same results. Pharaoh sought to subdue Israel, but was defeated by an infant “raised in the royal household” who shattered his power and “led Israel out to safety.”⁶³ Likewise, Abimelech sought to secure power through death and manipulation, yet was ultimately “was destroyed by the hand of a woman and the throwing of a millstone.”⁶⁴ Similarly, the Jews “devised a deadly plot against the Lord” with the intention of securing control and authority, yet in the end were “cast out of their place ... [and] made stranger to the laws and worship of God.”⁶⁵ Through this string of Scriptural examples, Basil demonstrated how biblical redemptive history reveals a repeating pattern of impious imitation, with Satan as the prototype. Basil related this recapitulation of Satan’s impiety to the illusion of human wisdom, which “is a meagre and lowly thing and not a great and pre-eminent good.”⁶⁶ Basil echoed what Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 3:19, that “the wisdom of this world is folly with God.” Only humble imitation of Christ and his saints leads to greatness.

4.3. Happiness and Excellence of Character

Basil’s understanding of happiness and excellence of character was rooted in his understanding of glory. Man’s glory, hence his true happiness and character excellence, was lost through his fall from God’s glory due to pride. Where man once was able to attain the “good which it was in his power to possess,” man now lives under a presumed and “fictitious dignity.”⁶⁷ Restoration of this glory comes only by means of humility. Basil stated, “The surest salvation for him, the remedy of his ills, and the means of restoration to his original state is in practicing humility and not pretending that he may lay claim to any glory through his own efforts but seeking it from God.”⁶⁸ Though man currently holds on to a spurious idea of glory, those who are sensible and have submitted to God through humility are able to obtain true glory and significance. Though worldly wisdom contends for self-made glory, only the humble who seek

⁶⁰ For more on Basil’s notion of social action and charity see Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 27–29. See also Timothy Patitas, “St. Basil’s Philanthropic Program and Modern Microlending Strategies for Economic Self-Actualization,” in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, ed. Susan R Holman (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); C. Paul Schroeder, *On Social Justice: St. Basil the Great* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2009).

⁶¹ Basil, *Homily* 20.6 (PG 31:537a; DelCogliano, 117).

⁶² Basil, *Homily* 20.6 (PG 31:537a; DelCogliano, 117).

⁶³ Basil, *Homily* 20.2 (PG 31:538d; DelCogliano, 111).

⁶⁴ Basil, *Homily* 20.2 (PG 31:538d–539a; DelCogliano, 111). Cf. Judg 9:53.

⁶⁵ Basil, *Homily* 20.2 (PG 31:539a; Wagner, 478).

⁶⁶ Basil, *Homily* 20.2 (PG 31:539a; Wagner, 478).

⁶⁷ Basil, *Homily* 20.1 (PG 31:525a; Wagner, 475).

⁶⁸ Basil, *Homily* 20.1 (PG 31:525b; Wagner, 475).

after God will receive glory. For Basil, it is glory from the Lord which leads to happiness and this pursuit of glory by means of humility “every exaltation of pride [is] laid low.”⁶⁹

Happiness then comes through prostration, not exaltation. This is the model of Christ who “allowed the temporal authorities to exercise the power given them.... Thus he experienced every stage of human existence from birth to death. And after such great humility, only then did he manifest his glory, giving a share of his glory to those who had glorified him.”⁷⁰ This share of glory is the glory lost in the fall of man. The glory of God is restored to those who follow Christ by means of humility. “Everlasting glory” arises from our humility. Only then will excellence of character follow. Rather than the exaltation of oneself due to false wisdom, self-righteousness, wealth and power, Basil maintained that excellence comes when one acknowledges the glory of God alone. Basil asserted, “This is what truly exalts a person; this is what truly confers glory and majesty: to know in truth what is great and to cling to it, and to seek the glory which comes from the Lord of Glory.”⁷¹ Arrogance does not equate excellence, rather, it is “mortifying yourself in all things and seeking the life to come in Christ.”⁷² In describing happiness and excellence of character—that is the traditional outcomes of a virtuous life—Basil took the conventional conception of virtue and subverted it by means of the life of Christ carried out through humility. His final exhortation provided a concluding imperative:

[Strive] after humility in such a way that you come to love it. Love it and it will glorify you. In this way you will travel the good road leading to glory—that true glory which is found among the angels and with God. Christ will acknowledge you as his own disciple in the presence of his angels, and he will glory you if you imitate his humility.⁷³

5. Practical Implications from Basil on Humility

Basil continually asserted the centrality of humility in the Christian life. Contrary to philosophical notions of glory and pride, humility is the pathway to true glory as one beholds Christ’s work and seeks to imitate it in their own life. The implications of practicing humility are myriad for Christians, but based on this short study of Basil’s *Homily 20* and the virtue of humility, I propose three practical implications for modern-day readers.

First, Basil can remind modern Christians about the value of virtue and holy living yet placed in proper perspective. Indeed, modern voices have recognized the loss of speaking of the Christian life in terms of virtue.⁷⁴ Virtue is not a self-driven effort based on innate ability, as both ancient and modern philosophers would contend, rather it is the effect of one’s life subordinated the will of God in imitation

⁶⁹ Basil, *Homily 20.3* (PG 31:529d; DelCogliano, 112).

⁷⁰ Basil, *Homily 20.6* (PG 31:536d; DelCogliano, 117).

⁷¹ Basil, *Homily 20.3* (PG 31:529b; DelCogliano, 112).

⁷² Basil, *Homily 20.3* (PG 31:532a; DelCogliano, 112).

⁷³ Basil, *Homily 20.7* (PG 31:540b; DelCogliano, 119).

⁷⁴ For perspectives on understanding virtue and Christian morality in modernity see Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); David F. Wells, *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

of Christ. Pursuing holiness is a vital facet of the Christian life, and according to Basil, it leads to happiness in the light of Christ and his work on our behalf. Thus, pursuing virtue is not contrary to the Christian life, it is the essence of Christian living. Humility is the axis on which Christian virtue turns.

Second, humility is the proper response to receiving the gift of salvation. For Basil, as Haykin observes, “Foundational to humility ... is the recognition by men and women that they are entirely destitute of all true righteousness and holiness.”⁷⁵ Thus for Basil, converting to Christ leads to humility and informs one’s entire Christian life. The turn away from self to gazing upon God and his work of salvation on our behalf is what truly brings glory to one’s life. Our glory is only found in recognizing the glory of God, intimately displayed in the humility of Christ. Hence, Basil could not conceive of a Christian who understood their salvation and did not respond in humility. For the sake of preaching, teaching, and discipleship, humility should be commended as the proper reply to God’s grace in salvation.

Third, the practice of humility serves as an apologetic to the unbeliever. While humility for humility’s sake will likely never win converts, humility with a focus on Christ has the power to demonstrate another way of life that brings meaning to our life and speaks to the disparity present in our soul. Happiness is the goal of every human, yet only in Christ through humility is it achieved and properly understood. The idea of the good life, though plastered on billboards and extolled in the latest pop song, is only found in a life of humility pursued in light of Christ’s work and example. A humble life which has as its focus the humble life of Christ will be distinctive in a world lost in a culture of self-focused glory-seeking.

6. Conclusion

In his *Homily 20*, Basil contends for the centrality of humility in order to obtain the good life. This good life is a return to the glory that man once had with God at the beginning of creation. The sin of pride, man’s chief reason for his fall from glory, continues to impair his practice of virtue. Man’s wisdom is illusory and his ability to perform virtue is likewise illusory. Only humility can return man to the state of glory he once possessed. Christ has provided the entryway back to glory, and only by imitating his humility may one enter back into glory. As such, subsequent virtues can only rightly be practiced through confessing one’s weakness and practicing humility. Humility produces excellence of character and true happiness by allowing one to properly apply other virtues free from corrupt human pretension. This spoke to Basil’s audience in his day and continues to speak to us in the modern world. The uniquely Christian virtue of humility is necessary for the restoration of man’s dignity. Apart from this, any supposed virtuous striving remains deficient. This chief virtue is the only one capable of allowing man to properly strive for glory with God.

⁷⁵ Haykin, *Rediscovering the Church Fathers*, 113.

Can We Hasten the Parousia? An Examination of Matt 24:14 and Its Implications for Missional Practice

— C. J. Moore —

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Abstract: Among the many possible motivations for mission participation, the eschatological motivation for missions has recently grown in prevalence. Many missionaries speak of their work as “hastening” or “causing” the Parousia. Because of a desire to see Christ come back “sooner,” the eschatological motivation has often led to missional malpractice, due to a lack of nuance and humility in biblical exegesis. Particularly, the eschatological motivation frequently leads to pragmatic practices that should be avoided, practices that *hurt* rather than *help* the Church’s mission. In this article, I examine Matt 24:14, the verse used most often in defense of the eschatological motivation for missions. Along the way, I offer my *modified* view, one that frees the missionary to simply proclaim the gospel of Christ with a proper recognition of God’s sovereignty over both salvation and the Parousia; and still—in some mysterious way—we can be sure that our gospel proclamation indeed plays some role in the second coming of Christ.

What happens to someone who dies without ever hearing the gospel? This question has been debated by missiologists, theologians, ministers, and pastors for centuries. The answer to this question has a significant impact on how one views the Church’s mission today and, in particular, the urgency of that mission. If those who have never heard the gospel are dying and going to hell, then the impetus to *go* and *make disciples* should be followed all the more greatly.

In the twenty-first century, a resurgence of pioneer missions has taken place. Not only have ministries such as The Joshua Project and Operation World shown how utterly lost the world is, but they have also revealed the sobering fact that many have never even heard of Christ.¹ Understandably so, the worth of a human soul has been estimated by many missionaries as a great motivation for missions. In particular, workers should care most for those who have the greatest need: the unreached and unengaged. Others,

¹ For more information on these ministries, see www.joshuaproject.net and www.operationworld.org.

such as John Piper, have made the extension of God's glory the motivation for missions. Piper writes, "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't."² According to Piper, workers should seek to reach the unreached so that God's glory may spread.

However, an issue that must be dealt with is the *eschatological motivation* for missions.³ With this motivation, workers seek to make the gospel known amongst all peoples in order to "[hasten] the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet 3:12).⁴ But is this actually possible? Did Peter believe—and *did he mean*—that Christians can cause Christ to come on a day other than the one already set? What does it actually mean to "hasten" in the context of this passage, especially considering the entire narrative of Scripture? David Platt, former President of the International Mission Board (IMB), writes, "The end will come when the gospel has been proclaimed as a testimony to all nations. *This is why* we long to make the gospel known *to every people group in the world*" (emphasis mine).⁵ In this statement, Platt explicitly states the reason Christians should focus on reaching the unreached—because, *after this*, the end will come. This motivation is directly tied to Matt 24:14, which reads: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (see also Mark 13:10).

In the following article, I will consider this motivation for missions at length, with a focus on mapping out the missiological road ahead. This road will be one that sees the eschatological motivation for missions in a biblical manner, specifically with reference to methodology. In the past few decades, the eschatological motivation for missions has often led to practices that are outright dangerous. Therefore, I will give a modified eschatological motivation for missions as an alternate, but similar option.

1. A Survey of the Eschatological Motivation for Missions

So, what exactly is the eschatological motivation for missions? This motivation has in mind the end of the world and the Christian's part in hastening that day (i.e. the Parousia, or Christ's second coming). While many missionaries believe this to be the case, that does not mean they are working with this motivation in mind. Most Christians understand that Matthew 24:14 is a reference to the fact that world evangelization *will be completed* by the time that Christ comes back, while at the same time admitting they cannot know that time specifically (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32). On the other hand, proponents of the eschatological motivation not only believe they can *quicken* the coming of Christ, but they also have this *primarily in mind* with regard to their work. Therefore, they often do whatever possible to achieve this end, which leads to missional malpractice. Peter Wagner has even stated that "setting goals for world evangelization ... requires a degree of pragmatism."⁶ He goes on to say that workers need to

² John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 15.

³ By "missions," I mean the mandate to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:16–20). Therefore, what I mean by *eschatological motivation for missions* can be understood as *eschatological motivation for fulfillment of the Great Commission*. The former is shorthand. See Matthew Bennett, "Finish the Task: When Mottos Hijack the Mission," *International Mission Board*, 27 December 2018, <https://www.imb.org/2018/12/27/finish-task/>.

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, all Bible references in this article are to ESV.

⁵ David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, Christ-Centered Exposition (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 320.

⁶ C. Peter Wagner, "On the Cutting Edge of Mission Strategy," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th Ed., ed. Ralph D. Winter (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 578.

stop or change what they are doing if people are not substantially coming to Christ. If this were law, pioneer missionaries such as William Carey and Adoniram Judson would have never been given the time needed to see the fruit of their labor.

What's more, many who hold to this view believe that once they complete the task of world evangelization, Christ will *immediately* come back, as will be examined in the next section. In other words, all he is waiting on is us. More often than not, they do not consider the other "signs of the times" also required before Christ's second coming. Lastly, those with this motivation have often been proponents of "countdowns" to the completion of world evangelization, which to this day, have proven unsuccessful. In particular, the countdown itself has led to malpractice; because certain workers want to complete the Great Commission by a certain date, they often do whatever works to maximize the number of converts.

1.1. A Case Study: The Danger of the Eschatological Motivation for Missions

While many have adhered to this view, a case study of one of the more prolific adherents will help with understanding the possible, negative implications of this motivation. Jim Montgomery started DAWN 2000 Ministries with a view of the end times in mind.⁷ Montgomery believed he was living "in the end times."⁸ He had the year 2000 in mind and went well on his way to pragmatism: "Unless [workers] are armed with a vision of multiplying churches, they can easily fall into the trap of using familiar methodologies that produce little or no growth when other methods might produce a great harvest."⁹ Montgomery and others like him assume that if a methodology is not producing immediate and quantifiable results, then it should be disregarded. The danger is that missionaries face the possibility of becoming more concerned with numbers than they are with individual souls. A harvest is in the world, but the harvest often takes time since "God ... gives the growth" (1 Cor 3:7). Much more than this, what if the method is simply the proclamation of the gospel, ordained by God as the primary means to salvation (Rom 1:16)? Should this, then, be changed?

Montgomery's beliefs led him to implement saturation church planting (SCP) as the official model of DAWN Ministries. He writes that "SCP ... became the essence of the strategy we suggest for completing the Great Commission, the strategy for the end of the age."¹⁰ The overall goal behind this strategy is sound. Montgomery wanted to "put a church in every neighborhood of every city and town in the world."¹¹ If Christians were truly able to do this, then Montgomery believed they "[could] almost hear the trumpet sound."¹² He continues, "The primary task the Lord gave his Church is close to completion and the Lord can soon return for his bride." By SCP, Montgomery wanted "a presence of Christ in every place in the form of a gathered body of believers."¹³ The issue is with *how quickly* this was

⁷ DAWN stands for "Discipling a Whole Nation."

⁸ Jim Montgomery, *Then the End Will Come: Great News About the Great Commission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 4.

⁹ Montgomery, *Then the End Will Come*, 177.

¹⁰ Montgomery, *Then the End Will Come*, 23.

¹¹ Montgomery, *Then the End Will Come*, 165.

¹² Montgomery, *Then the End Will Come*, 61.

¹³ Jim Montgomery, "His Glory Made Visible," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 662.

to be done. Montgomery often notes that his goal was to plant five to seven million churches by the year 2000, so that the Great Commission could be completed, bringing Jesus Christ back in his own lifetime. However, he said this in 1989, giving his ministry and others only eleven years to complete the task. He often claims he did not mean the goal had to be completed by 2000, but it seems apparent that he had this in mind.¹⁴

With such a vast planting of churches, one is led to ask many, pertinent questions. Were these churches really healthy? Who pastored them? Were the pastors biblically qualified? How did one become a member? What place did discipleship have? Did these churches prove to be viable later on? The problem is that when one longs to see so many come to Christ in so short an amount of time, he becomes more prone to accepting the minimal qualifications for what it means to be a Christian and what it means to be a church. In the long run, this pragmatic way is not helpful for the church's task of missions. Not to mention, Montgomery may have been misguided by his interpretation of certain passages. Do Montgomery and others truly believe that all God is waiting for is for his people to complete world evangelization by their own standards? No way exists of knowing the specifics of when this task will be completed. All one can know is that it has been completed once Christ comes back.

1.2. Further Evidence of the Prevalence of the Eschatological Motivation for Missions

While Montgomery is a good case study, he is not the only one who has displayed this motivation for missions. Early in the 1900s, the slogan, "the evangelization of the world in this generation," became the heartbeat of many different mission agencies.¹⁵ The attendees of the Lausanne II Congress on World Evangelization, an ecumenical movement for reaching the whole world with the gospel, affirmed the following together: "There is nothing magical about the date [2000], yet should we not do our best to reach this goal? Christ commands us to take the gospel to all peoples."¹⁶ They affirmed this because they believed Christ in the following way: "We have been told to go to the ends of the earth with the gospel, and we have been promised that the end of the age will come *only* when we have done so" (emphasis mine).¹⁷ In 1971, Joe Odle wrote this with reference to Matthew 24:14: "It is in this generation that ... [the end times] have come to pass."¹⁸ Forty-eight years later, it appears he was wrong. Luis Bush said he was "expectant that Jesus' commission to his disciples [would] be fulfilled in his time, and perhaps

¹⁴ SCP (sometimes referred to as "rapid multiplication") is not a bad thing in and of itself. Nothing is wrong with the desire to see churches planted at a rapid pace. The danger lies in thinking that one can make this happen on his own terms. One must not deny the sovereignty of God, as he is the one in control of man's salvation and thus, the pace at which churches can be planted in any given place. Zane Pratt writes, "On the one hand, we must avoid any extra-biblical practices that impede the advance of the gospel. We will pray, mobilize, send, and work to get the good news to as many people as we can, as quickly as we can with biblical integrity. On the other hand, we trust that God knows best how he wants his message to advance, so we must never compromise any biblical command or standard in the *interest of speed*" (emphasis mine). See Zane Pratt, "What Should We Think About Rapid Church Multiplication?" *International Mission Board*, 26 September 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/y4cgn4fv>.

¹⁵ Stephen Neill, *The Unfinished Task* (London: Edinburgh House, 1957), 146–48.

¹⁶ Alan Nichols, ed., *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World: Story of Lausanne II Congress on World Evangelization, Manila 1989* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1989), 124.

¹⁷ Nichols, *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World*, 126.

¹⁸ Joe T. Odle, *Is Christ Coming Soon?* (Nashville: Broadman, 1971), 86.

by the year 2000 ... [and that he wanted] to give more of [his] energy, effort, and time to see the task of evangelization completed in his time.¹⁹

In a *Los Angeles Times* article from 2006, Louis Sahagun wrote of various local pastors' belief that they could "shorten the path to Judgment Day."²⁰ These pastors were planning to plant an "astronomical amount of churches" in hopes that they might "hasten the End Time." Starting in the 1970s, the "A.D. 2000" movement took root. Barrett and Reapsome note that in the 1970s, seven mission agencies had clear, global plans to finish the task of world evangelization by the year 2000. In the 1980s, they write that this number increased to fifty-seven. By 1999, they expected there to be more than one-hundred-fifty of these types of overall goals.²¹ They concluded from their research that, "The year A.D. 2000 has long been considered the most likely *terminus ad quem* of God's plans for our world."²² The overall suspicion of the year 2000 proved to be false.²³

Some have stated there was no harm in setting that specific goal. David Hesselgrave writes, "The A.D. 2000 slogan already has been relegated to the missiological dustbin, but it produced results that are still positive and hopeful."²⁴ Not only that, but Hesselgrave also recommended setting similar goals because "at the end of that period the goal may not be reached, but there will be more progress than if no goals had been set."²⁵ To some extent, he is right. However, this traditional understanding of the eschatological motivation for missions has, again, often led to pragmatic methods that should have been avoided.²⁶

¹⁹ Luis Bush, quoted in J.D. Douglas, ed., *Proclaim Christ Until He Comes: Calling the Whole Church to Take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1990), 347.

²⁰ Louis Sahagun, "End is Not Near Enough for Pastors," *The Los Angeles Times*, 8 February 2006, <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/feb/08/local/me-pastors8>.

²¹ David B. Barrett and James W. Reapsome, *Seven Hundred Plans to Evangelize the World: The Rise of a Global Evangelization Movement* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 1988), 41.

²² Barrett and Reapsome, *Seven Hundred Plans to Evangelize the World*, 45.

²³ A modern example of the eschatological motivation for missions is being developed in the *Mission Frontiers* magazine, through their 24:14 Coalition based on Matthew 24:14. They include a new countdown, as seen in the title of the January/February issue of 2018: "Are You In? 24:14: The Coalition to Foster Movements in All Peoples by 2025." Editor Rick Wood says of this new coalition: "I believe 24:14 has the potential to accomplish its biblical goals of reaching all peoples with surprising speed and effectiveness.... 24:14 may be the last best hope any of us will have to fulfill God's plan for all of history, that Jesus would be worshipped and given glory He deserves from all peoples." See Rick Wood, "24:14, The Best Hope for Reaching All Peoples. Are You In?" *Mission Frontiers* 40.1 (2018): 5.

²⁴ David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: Ten Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 308.

²⁵ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 309.

²⁶ Aside from the case study on Montgomery already covered, there are other historical narratives to consider, though in an article of this size, we cannot consider them all. A couple of examples are worth noting. A. B. Simpson, who led a nineteenth-century campaign to "bring back the King," rushed church planting with a notable lack of reverence for biblical ecclesiology. Rather than "adopting complex doctrinal formulations that polarize," Simpson sought to start churches "with a few distinctive points about Christ on which many [would] readily concur." See Gerald E. McGraw, "The Legacy of A.B. Simpson," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16.1 (1992): 74. Simpson essentially promoted unity without truth in hopes that he could rush the coming of Christ by planting churches quickly. As well, Simpson's critics saw his Bible college as a "dangerous educational short-cut" because of Simpson's "non-theological approach [and] his departure from the regular work of denominational

Therefore, a *modified* eschatological motivation for missions is needed. With this in mind, all missionaries—and every Christian for that matter—needs a right view of Matthew 24:14. Sound methods may be more often practiced if one knows what this verse means and what it does not.²⁷

2. Interpretive Issues in Matthew 24:14

Matthew 24:14 is one of the most debated verses in all of Scripture, so it is unlikely that a sure conclusion will be reached in this article on all matters concerning it. More than anything, missionaries should simply consider the fact that most interpretations of this text are not conclusive, even amongst those who share similar, biblical convictions. In this section, the following questions will be considered: (1) What is the “gospel”? (2) What must “nations” do with the gospel? (3) What does Jesus mean by “nations?” (4) Is this verse actually a reference to Jesus’s second coming? and (5) Can workers evangelize with urgency in such a way to bring Christ back “sooner?”

2.1. The Gospel of the Kingdom or the Gospel of Grace?

Interestingly enough, scholars have actually debated what is meant by the word “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) in Matthew 24:14. One’s understanding of this word is important because it determines what it is that the worker will “[proclaim] throughout the whole world,” when he seeks to preach this gospel “to all [the] nations.” Generally speaking, εὐαγγέλιον simply means “good news.” It comes from the combination of the adverb εὖ, which means “well,” and the noun ἄγγελος, which means “messenger.”²⁸ In most cases in Scripture, εὐαγγέλιον is understood to be “God’s good news to humans.”²⁹ The NT reveals that this “good news” or “good message” is the simple but profound *news* that Jesus saves by faith alone through grace alone because of his sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection from the dead (Eph 2:1–10). Paul

ministry” (p. 76). Thus, Simpson effectively “cheapened the gospel,” because he wanted to get missionaries to the field quicker. Simpson’s goal was to train Christian workers as quickly as possible, foregoing the more traditional model of seminary education. This is a low view of the missionary task and a low view of the missionary, which again was somewhat due to his desire to see the Parousia in his day. In another example, John Mark Yeats notes the Judeo-centric missiology of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (LSPCJ). See John Mark Yeats, “To the Jew First: Conversion of the Jews as the Foundation for Global Missions and Expansion in the Nineteenth-Century British Evangelicalism,” *SwJT* 47 (2005): 207–23. For the LSPCJ, the conversion of the Jews was a means to an end so that “the whole chain reaction leading to the Second coming and the redemption of mankind might be set in motion” (p. 212). Effectively, the LSPCJ believed that if they could “successfully bring about the conversion of the Jews, Christ would return, resolving the tensions of the age” (p. 222). This eschatological motivation led them to missional malpractice, as they offered employment to Jews who converted to Christianity. Yeats notes that these “converts” would often “revert to their former religion once difficulty was encountered or financial success was attained” (p. 219). Even in the midst of practicing a bribery-centered method, the LSPCJ was continually funded because its supporters believed that if the Jews would convert *en masse*, then it would lead to a conversion of the Gentiles *en masse*, and thus hasten the Parousia; in other words, the eschatological end justified the missiological means.

²⁷ Though verses like 2 Pet 3:12, Rev 5:9, and Mark 13:10 are also used as proof-texts for this motivation for missions, this article’s main focus will be on Matt 24:14, which is the most often-quoted verse for this view.

²⁸ *NIDNTTE* 2:306.

²⁹ BDAG 402–3. Outside of this definition, the word is also used as a reference to the “details relating to the life and ministry of Jesus,” which is related to definition above. Additionally, it can also be used to speak of “a book dealing with the life and teaching of Jesus” (i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

made this message clear by reminding the church in Corinth of the gospel in 1 Cor 15:3–4: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” William E. Blackstone says the gospel is the “good news of Christ,” and more specifically, “of the kingdom to come.”³⁰ Here, one can see the issue of this verse. What exactly is the relationship of the gospel to “the kingdom”? Had Jesus simply said “this gospel,” the controversy could likely have been avoided. Yet, he did not, and so, faithful interpreters must deal with this anomaly.

NT writers often employ βασιλεία (“kingdom”) to refer to the reign of the Messiah, in specific, or to the reign of God, in general. God is the ultimate, omnipotent ruler. One might say that the phrase, “the gospel of the kingdom,” then, simply means *the good news/message of God’s sovereign rule*.³¹ This phrase, “the gospel of the kingdom,” is only used two other times in the NT: Matthew 4:23 and 9:35. In Matthew 4:23, Jesus is said to have taught “the gospel of the kingdom” throughout “all Galilee.” In Matthew 9:35, Jesus is said to have proclaimed “the gospel of the kingdom” throughout “all the cities and villages.” Whereas in 4:23 and 9:35 *Jesus* is the one proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, he says in 24:14 that his disciples will be the ones who continue to preach this specific message.³² Is there a difference

³⁰ William E. Blackstone, *Jesus Is Coming* (London: Fleming H. Revell, 1916), 133.

³¹ Michael Bird ties the language of “kingdom” to man’s salvation. He writes, “[The gospel set forth by] Jesus probably functioned as an announcement that Israel’s bondage from foreign oppression was ending, that the new exodus was beginning and restoration was beckoning, that God was becoming king, and that God’s kingship would express its *saving* powers for Israel.” Michael Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 32, emphasis mine. Speaking of “the gospel of the kingdom,” Wilhelm Anderson writes of J.C. Hoekendijk’s understanding that “the God who lets His kingdom break in upon us with the resurrection of the Crucified is the Creator of the world. He reclaims the world for Himself and for His kingdom with the victory of Christ over sin, death, and the devil.” In other words, the accomplishment of salvation should not be separated from the kingdom of God. Man is saved *into* God’s kingdom, to live under his sovereign rule. See Wilhelm Anderson, “Further Toward a Theology of Mission,” in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 300–13. Moreover, Aremu Ajani writes, “Jesus was referring to a proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. In other words, it is the proclamation of salvation through Christ in order to be a part of God’s kingdom both now and in the future.” See Ezekiel Oladapo Aremu Ajani, “The Kingdom of God and Its Missiological Imperatives for the Contemporary African Christian Mission,” *Oghomoso Journal of Theology* 12.1 (2007): 125. Finally, Leon Morris comments on Matt 24:14, “The good news that God has established his kingdom *through what his Son has done* for sinners is a *message* [i.e. gospel] that must be taken to the ends of the world.” Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 601, emphasis mine. Again, the kingdom of God is established through the salvation accomplished for man by Christ. In this established kingdom, man now lives under the sovereign rule of God; the *gospel of the kingdom* should be understood as the *one gospel*.

³² For a concise and helpful explanation of this “gospel of the kingdom,” and how it is no different from the one, true gospel, see Paul R. Raabe, “The Gospel of the Kingdom of God,” *Concordia Journal* 28 (2002): 294–96. He writes, “If the church is about proclaiming the Gospel, it must be about proclaiming the kingdom of God. For the expression ‘the kingdom of God’ ... is an idiom of the Gospel itself” (p. 294). He continues, “So now, in this in-between time, what is the mission of the church? It is to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom of God to all nations. It is to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching them, and in that very mission Jesus Christ is with us to the end of the age. And where Jesus Christ is, there is the kingdom of God” (p. 296).

between the general gospel message already mentioned and this “gospel of the kingdom?” The answer must be no, since there is only one gospel message.³³

George Ladd comments that the gospel of the kingdom is “this Good News of Christ’s victory over God’s enemies.”³⁴ He says that it is the “Good News *about* the Kingdom of God.”³⁵ In similar fashion, Robert Yarbrough notes how the *gospel* is dependent on *kingdom* language, specifically in Jesus’s ministry. He writes,

We see [in Matt 4:23] that there is a “gospel” associated with the kingdom. What is the relationship between “gospel” and “kingdom”? First, it is “good news,” a “favorable announcement,” which is the basic meaning of the original.... Jesus sounds this note repeatedly throughout his ministry.... There is a dogged consistency here. And as Jesus’ earthly course nears its end, he looks to the future and states that his gospel/kingdom message will be carried forth until the world as we know it comes to an end.... In the context of Matthew, [there] can be no other “gospel,” no other greater good news, than that of the kingdom.³⁶

In the phrase itself is an understanding that when one is saved by the power of the gospel (Rom 1:16), he is thus saved into the kingdom of God (Matt 19:24). God not only rules this kingdom, but he also lords over those who are a part of his kingdom. Furthermore, a simple search of the word εὐαγγέλιον shows that it is used seventy-six times in the NT, frequently with a genitive modifier. Not only is the gospel referred to as the “gospel of the kingdom,” but it is also referred to as the “gospel of Christ,”³⁷ “the gospel of God,”³⁸ “the gospel of glory,”³⁹ “the gospel of peace,”⁴⁰ and “my/our gospel”⁴¹ The interpreter should not be led to believe that these are *different* gospel messages.

Some dispensationalists believe that this gospel of the kingdom is somewhat different from the gospel preached today. In his commentary, John MacArthur notes his belief that, ultimately, Matthew 24:14 is a reference to God “supernaturally [presenting] the gospel to every person on earth.”⁴² The gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed to a great degree because “the Lord himself appears.”⁴³ The evangelization

³³ Moises Silva writes, “However varied may be the emphasis and development of the term εὐαγγέλιον in the NT, the ref. is *always* to the oral proclamation of the message of salvation and not to something fixed in writing” (emphasis mine). See *NIDNTTE* 2:312.

³⁴ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 130.

³⁵ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 125, emphasis mine.

³⁶ Robert Yarbrough, “The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Matthew and Revelation,” in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 111–12.

³⁷ Rom 1:16; 15:19; 15:29; 1 Cor 9:12–13, 18; 2 Cor 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27; and 1 Thess 3:2. Similarly “The gospel of Jesus Christ” in Mark 1:1; “the gospel of our Lord Jesus” in 2 Thess 1:8.

³⁸ Mark 1:14; Rom 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:2; 2:8–9; and 1 Pet 4:17.

³⁹ 1 Tim 1:11.

⁴⁰ Eph 6:15.

⁴¹ Rom 16:25; 2 Cor 4:3; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Thess 2:14; 2 Tim 2:8.

⁴² John MacArthur, *Matthew 24–28*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 29.

⁴³ MacArthur, *Matthew 24–28*, 29.

mentioned in this verse, then, is not a reference to the church's proclamation of the gospel, as much as it is a reference to an "evangelization of the world, miraculously proclaimed from heaven." Though MacArthur would not say that Christians are not called to preach of God's kingdom still, he holds that, primarily, it is God's prerogative to preach the gospel as it is mentioned in Matthew 24:14.⁴⁴ Others are more clear. While dispensationalists Blaising and Bock still hold a rather dispensational view of the revelation of God's kingdom, they argue that Jesus was preaching "*the good news about the kingdom*" in his healing "people from physical infirmities," and the "ultimate physical healing was [his and others'] bodily resurrection from the dead."⁴⁵ Therefore, the gospel of the kingdom *eventually* included Christ's death and resurrection, thus showing there is only *one gospel message*. Any dispensationalist who might argue for variance in *gospel type* based on the NT's varied *phrasing of the gospel* does not rightly deal with the fact that the disciples are told to preach this *exact, same gospel* after Jesus's departure.⁴⁶ There is only one gospel, and Paul even commends believers to beware of anyone who preaches a gospel other than "that [one]" he preached (Gal 1:8). For those after Christ, one message is to be proclaimed, just as there is one gospel message that is proclaimed in the NT: Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection for the salvation of his people.

Another matter worth noting is that of inaugurated eschatology. When Jesus is introduced in the NT, the *eschaton* is introduced, and the fulfillment (and person) of the kingdom is revealed. The Messianic kingdom is what God's people had been waiting on up to the point of Christ's birth. This eschatological doctrine is often referenced in terms of its "already/not yet" nature. Jesus says that the "kingdom of God" is "at hand" in Mark 1:14–15, yet he also speaks of a "future" kingdom in passages like Luke 19:11–12. Jesus likewise says those of the kingdom shall be gathered and separated *in the future*

⁴⁴ For example, see his writing on Jesus's particular proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom in *Matthew 8–15*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1987), 105 and *Matthew 1–7*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 124–26.

⁴⁵ Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1993), 241. See also Darrell Bock, *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010). In this book, Bock shows his belief in only *one gospel*, writing, "[Jesus] brought the good news that God's promised rule of deliverance had arrived. *To experience the kingdom* Jesus preached is to experience God's presence" (p. 1, emphasis mine). Later, as he is writing about the mandate to preach this *one gospel message*, he says, "My prayer is that a look at these themes will open up a renewed understanding of how the gospel of the kingdom works" (p. 5). So, Bock references the *one gospel message* as the "gospel of the kingdom," phrasing used by Jesus in Matt 24:14.

⁴⁶ In large part, it seems dispensationalists hardly hold to this view today, though it was rather prominent in the twentieth century. David Turner writes, "When the New Scofield Reference Bible came out in 1967, it was weighed and found wanting: 'the old was better.' I was taught that the Gospel according to John was to be preferred to that of Matthew. Matthew was a kingdom Gospel for the Jews, and for Gentiles like me, salvation was by grace through faith, not by repentance. The Lord's prayer was to be found in John 17, not Matthew 6. The church's marching orders were found in John 20, not Matthew 28. Although I owe my spiritual parents a debt that I cannot repay, ongoing studies of the Scriptures have convinced me that their views on these matters were mistaken" ("Matthew Among the Dispensationalists," *JETS* 53 [2010]: 697). Writing of prominent dispensationalist, E. W. Bullinger, Turner continues, "Bullinger took Matt 28:18 futuristically and connected Matt 28:19–20 to the future tribulational preaching of the kingdom gospel in Matt 24:14. This kingdom gospel was not to be confused with the Pauline gospel of grace" (p. 713). Though John MacArthur would not say the *exact* same, there are certainly hints of Bullinger's thinking in his more modern take.

(Matt 13:30, 41, 49–50) and that the kingdom has *yet to grow* to its fullest extent (Matt 13:32).⁴⁷ Jesus, in his bringing the kingdom, puts God’s people in the “end times,” though the “end times” have not yet been fully consummated. Jesus, before his ascension, speaks of the kingdom in Acts 1:3, and throughout the remainder of Acts, his disciples do much of the same (8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23). The kingdom-gospel preaching of Paul would surely be a part of what he asks Timothy to entrust to others (2 Tim 2:1–2), others who will teach of the same kingdom—the same kingdom for which Timothy suffered (2 Tim 1:5) and the same kingdom that believers are brought “safely into” (2 Tim 4:18). Therefore, this gospel of the kingdom is what we continue to preach in this intermediary period.⁴⁸ Gladd and Harmon write,

Jesus indicates that the full realization of those promises remains for a future day. As they live between the *already* of what Jesus has done and the *not yet* of what the Father will do, Jesus explains how he will continue his mission. God will send the Holy Spirit to empower them to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth.... That is the task God has given us as his people. As we wait for Jesus’s return, we are priests who mediate God’s presence to the world by *proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of Jesus Christ*. Through us Jesus is being fruitful and multiplying his people so that the earth will be filled with his glory.⁴⁹

What’s more, in his writing on the inauguration of the kingdom in Christ, Patrick Schreiner helpfully notes the direct relation between the cross—what some might say is the most essential substance of the gospel—and the kingdom; we cannot understand the gospel without reference to the kingdom. It is the gospel of the kingdom that we, thus, preach. He writes, “The kingdom of heaven has come through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the King.”⁵⁰ He continues, “The Son of God not only accepts his fate but controls it as the King of the kingdom. He knows that the way to the kingdom is by giving his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). In Jesus’s death, he exhibits his power over Satan.”⁵¹ One should

⁴⁷ Silva writes, “Jesus preached the kingdom of God neither solely as a present reality nor exclusively as a future event. Rather, he was aware that the future rule of God was present in his actions and in his person. He spoke, therefore, of the future kingdom, which would suddenly dawn, as already realizing itself in the present” (*NIDNTTE* 1:487).

⁴⁸ For more on how the “central concern of Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom” is taken up in the NT, even without the explicit use of βασιλεία, see *NIDNTTE* 1:489–91.

⁴⁹ Benjamin L. Gladd and Matthew S. Harmon, *Making All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 164, 167, emphasis mine. Gladd and Harmon aim help church leaders “preach and teach in accordance with the overlap of the ages and call their people to live in light of their position in the ‘latter days’” (174). Another helpful treatment of inaugurated eschatology can be seen in Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), 335–60.

⁵⁰ Patrick Schreiner, *The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 90.

⁵¹ Schreiner, *The Kingdom of God*, 94. Schreiner goes into much more detail on the relationship between the cross and the kingdom in the conclusion of his book (pp. 135–43). He writes, “If the kingdom is the *goal*, then the cross is the *means*.... Kingdom and cross must mutually interpret each other, and they must be kept in the same orbit” (pp. 136, 141). With the inauguration of the kingdom, and thus the *eschaton*, “Jesus’s mission and the gospel of the kingdom come into full clarity. When Jesus announces that the ‘kingdom of God’ is at hand, he is announcing that in his person all the promises of God are yes and amen (see 2 Cor 1:20)” (p. 142). See also Thomas

have no qualms with stating that what God's people proclaim now, until Christ comes again, is the *good news of God's kingdom*.

2.2. A Gospel Proclaimed or a Gospel Believed in?

The next issue has to do with how the nations respond to the gospel and whether or not it matters that their response is *positive* or *negative*. What must the “nations” do with the gospel? Whenever Jesus said this gospel would “be proclaimed throughout the whole world,” what did he have in mind? There are primarily two views: (1) the gospel must *simply be preached* or *shared* throughout every nation and (2) the gospel must not only *be preached* but also *believed in* throughout every nation.

2.2.1. A Gospel Preached in Every Nation

First, some believe that the responsibility of Christian workers is solely to make the gospel known throughout the world, since Jesus's actual phrasing in this verse does not stipulate the nations' response, whether positive or negative. Blackstone says that the responsibility of Christians, then, is to “faithfully ... continue proclaiming the glad tidings of the coming kingdom while we watch momentarily for the Bridegroom.”⁵² If Jesus means in this text that the gospel must be universally proclaimed, not believed, then what he has in mind is the basic extension of the gospel beyond the Jewish community to the Gentiles. Osborne writes that Matthew 24:14 “does not mean that all the nations will be converted before the end can come but rather that the universal proclamation will continue until the end.”⁵³ Still, some theologians believe that the gospel must not only be preached, but also, it must be preached to the extent that a decision might be made on a wide scale. Berkhof writes, “[These words] do require, however, that those nations *as nations* shall be thoroughly evangelized, so that the gospel becomes a power in the life of the people, a sign that calls for decision.”⁵⁴ All in all, those who hold to this first position basically believe that the Christian's responsibility, as seen in Matthew 24:14, is simple: *preach the gospel*.

This view is admirable for the responsibility it puts on God to call the lost to himself and the responsibility it puts on man to simply share the message and let God work out the visible results. Once the gospel has been faithfully preached to every nation, then Jesus will come back. He is not waiting for a specific number of adherents from each nation, only that they might all hear the gospel message. Yet, one must ask: does this view rightly consider other texts?

2.2.2. A Gospel Preached and Believed in Every Nation

Those who hold to the second view—that the gospel must both be *preached* and *believed in* throughout every nation—have a greater devotion to the biblical-theological framework of missions.⁵⁵ If

R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 462–63.

⁵² Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, 135.

⁵³ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 877.

⁵⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 697–98.

⁵⁵ For a thorough work on the biblical theology of missions, see Arthur Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), as well as Christopher Wright's *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018). Though it is dated, another helpful work on the biblical theology of missions is George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Mis-*

one were to take Matthew 24:14 in isolation, the first view would be more acceptable. However, readers should not conclude their interpretation of this verse with only Matthew 24:14 in mind. Stephen Neill writes that “Christ died for all men; and therefore, the Gospel must be preached to all men, and disciples *must be won* from every nation.”⁵⁶ The reason disciples must be “won” and not solely “preached to” is found in the Great Commission itself. Matthew 28:19–20 reads: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

According to this verse, Jesus will be with his disciples until “the end of the age.” Surely, this is a reference to Christ’s second coming, for he does not abandon his people after his ascension or after the destruction of the temple. During this intermediate period, then, Christ’s disciples are not only to preach and teach, but they are also to “make disciples” from every nation. Jesus does not have in mind only the proclamation of the gospel but belief in it, adherence to it, and a commitment to live out its truth. The command is unmistakable, then. The gospel is shared in order for people to believe in it.

Moreover, Revelation 5:9 points to the universal nature of belief before the return of Christ. Here is the picture of heaven given in that verse: “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from *every tribe and language and people and nation.*’”⁵⁷ Commenting on this verse, Bruce Ashford says, “[It] is not only that the gospel will be *proclaimed*. It is also that this gospel is *powerful to save* worshippers from among all people.”⁵⁸ J. Herbert Kane sums up this second position in the following way:

Before we can decide whether a task is finished or unfinished it is necessary to define both its nature and extent. What is the extent of the Christian mission? It is coterminous with the world. It is a global task. We have been commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ to go into *all* the world, to preach the gospel to *every* creature, and to make disciples of *all* nations. And when we get through we shall have in the church converts “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev 5:9). This gospel must be preached in all the world. Then, and only then, will the end come (Matt 24:14). This is the extent of the task.⁵⁹

When considering not only Matthew 24:14 but also texts like Matthew 28:19–20 and Revelation 5:9, it seems apparent that Jesus will not return until lost people have been made into disciples from all nations. However, what Christian workers shall not do is debate about whether or not a nation has been sufficiently discipled, for this is not something God’s people are told of in the Bible. Jeffrey Brawner rightly asks, “[At] what point has one ‘preached’ to a people to fulfill Jesus’s prophecy that “This good

sions (Chicago: Moody, 1972). For a more current but brief work, see Zane Pratt, David Sills, and Jeff K. Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014), 37–66.

⁵⁶ Stephen Neill, *The Unfinished Task* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1957), 17.

⁵⁷ The same fourfold description for God’s people is used in Rev 7:9, 11:9, 13:7, and 14:6, and noted by Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 162.

⁵⁸ Bruce Ashford, “A Theologically Driven Missiology for a Great Commission Resurgence,” in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 205, original emphasis.

⁵⁹ J. Herbert Kane, *Understanding Christian Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 433.

news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world?”⁶⁰ Brawner speaks here of the 2% threshold currently used on the mission field to determine whether or not a nation is *reached*.⁶¹

Whether the threshold is the 2% mark of today or the 20% mark of two decades ago, workers need to remember that these standards have been set by man and not by God.⁶² Ladd says Christians need to know one truth in this regard: “Christ has not yet returned; therefore, the task is not yet done. When it is done, Christ will come.... So long as Christ does not return, our work is undone. Let us get busy and complete our mission.”⁶³ Christians have to accept that the task is not known to be finished *in any regard* until Jesus actually comes back.

2.3. Individuals, Nations, or People Groups?

One of the more contested words of Matthew 24:14 is “nations.” This little word has been the reason some missionaries and mission agencies have moved their focus solely toward people groups, particularly the unreached. This shift happened because their understanding of the Greek word, ἔθνος, is not “geo-political nations” or what is most commonly referred to, today, as a country. Rather, they view ἔθνος as a reference to *ethnicities* or individual people groups. In BDAG, ἔθνος is broadly defined in two ways: “a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions ... people groups foreign to a specific people group.”⁶⁴ As well, the word ἔθνος is translated in a variety of ways in the NT: Gentiles, nation, heathen, and people. So, what should readers make of this word?

2.3.1. Gentile Individuals

John Frederick Jansen understands nations to refer to *Gentile individuals*. He says, “In both verses [Matt 24:14 and 28:19–20], the word rendered ‘nations’ is *ethnē*, which may be rendered as ‘the Gentiles.’

⁶⁰ Jeffrey Brawner, “Finishing the Task: A Balanced Approach,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 574.

⁶¹ A people group is considered to be “unreached” or “least-reached” if there is “no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside assistance.” At this point in time, it has been determined that once a people group crosses the threshold of 2% evangelical, they are then able to sufficiently evangelize their own group without outside assistance; they would then be considered a “reached” people group, even though The Joshua Project, a leading authority on this issue, notes that these “percentage figures are somewhat arbitrary.” See *The Joshua Project*, “Unreached/Least Reached,” <https://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions>.

⁶² For more on this development, see Robin Hadaway, “A Course Correction in Missions: Rethinking the Two-Percent Threshold,” *SwJT* 57 (2014): 17–28. In this article, Hadaway describes the current metric used for unreached and unengaged people groups and the history of its arbitrary change. He also critiques the metric, in hopes that missionaries will not continue to wrongly neglect the “harvest areas” of the world.

⁶³ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 137.

⁶⁴ BDAG 276. For the context of Matt 24:14, BDAG appropriates the former definition as the most likely. “Nation” or “people,” then, would be the best translation. The second definition carries with it the connotation that there are primarily two categories of people in the NT: Jews and Gentiles. This second definition is most pertinent for the Septuagint, for those who are not God’s people are often referred to using some variation of ἔθνος (See *NIDNTTE* 2:89–90). Therefore, this is a complex, exegetical matter.

Not only Israel but ‘all the Gentiles’ (*panta ta ethnē*) are to receive the good news of the gospel.”⁶⁵ By individuals, it is most often stated that what Jesus primarily meant was that the gospel was to go out to *individuals* who were *not Jewish*. In this sense, not every people group, or nation for that matter, needed to be preached to—just Gentiles, in general. R.T. France, in his own commentary on Matthew, says that the gospel only needed to extend to those outside of the Jewish community: “[The] gospel which Israel has largely rejected will be preached to the Gentiles.”⁶⁶ So, in essence, the gospel was simply to go to those who were, before, not considered to be God’s people. This movement of mission was so that those who were once not a people of God could become his people.

2.3.2. Geo-Political Nations

There are some who believe ἔθνος refers to actual geo-political nations *that were reached* during the time of the NT, which leads to some overlap between this belief and the former one. Adherents of this argument believe that the word “nations” Jesus referred to in this verse is not a reference to every nation in the world *per se*, but rather, the *known nations* during NT times. Those who argue for this also depend on the word used for “the whole world,” which is οἰκουμένη. R. T. France notes that this word was used “for the whole of the then known world,” and often was generally used for the Roman empire, as well.⁶⁷ Therefore, when Jesus stated that the gospel would be proclaimed “throughout the whole world ... to all nations,” he meant to nations within the known, inhabited world *at that time*.

Commentators refer to other texts as a major part of their defense for this belief. For example, Colossians 1:23 says that the gospel had been proclaimed “in all creation under heaven.” Romans 10:18 says that the gospel had gone “to the ends of the world.” And Romans 16:26 says that God had been made known “to all the nations.” Therefore, the nations Jesus wanted to be reached in Matthew 24:14 were actually reached during the ministry of Paul. So, there is no need for Christians to attempt to fulfill this verse’s mandate today; it is done. France has even said that this text “does not demand ... [that] the British must be included, let alone the Americans and Australians!”⁶⁸ The only problem with this view is that it does not as readily consider verses like Romans 15:21, where Paul said that it was his ambition “to preach the gospel, *not where Christ has already been named*, lest I build on someone else’s foundation” (emphasis mine). He also said in 2 Corinthians 10:16 that it was his aim to “preach the gospel in lands beyond [Corinth].” That is, in places where Jesus was not yet known.

2.3.3. People Groups

Jim Montgomery, founder of DAWN 2000 Ministries mentioned earlier, most certainly had a view of people groups in mind. He writes, “We are well aware that the ‘nations’ Jesus refers to in his final command are not the same as the geopolitical entities we call ‘countries’ today.”⁶⁹ Likewise, Jerry Rankin says, “Jesus was not referring to geopolitical countries; the expression He used, [πάντα τὰ ἔθνη],

⁶⁵ John Frederick Jansen, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ in New Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 93.

⁶⁶ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 339.

⁶⁷ France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, 339.

⁶⁸ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 909.

⁶⁹ Jim Montgomery, *DAWN 2000: 7 Million Churches to Go* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1989), 89.

means the ethnic and linguistic people groups throughout the world.”⁷⁰ Men such as Ralph Winter, Jason Mandryk, Steven Hawthorne, Jeffrey Brawner, Wayne Grudem, and David Platt⁷¹ have also affirmed this understanding of the phrase. The summary of this viewpoint is that Christians should seek *not* to reach nations at large, but rather, the smallest homogenous units within those nations known as people groups. As this is done, then the nation, at large, will also be reached.

All in all, this issue is not as settled as the ones already mentioned. In most modern missiological contexts, the first option is often ruled out, which is the view that Jesus had only the Gentiles in mind, *generally speaking*, when he said these words to his disciples.⁷² A great difficulty persists when it comes to this debate. As already mentioned, ἔθνος can refer to “Gentiles” or “peoples/nations.” In some sense, no matter what view one holds to, elements of *both* are required in each understanding. If it is “peoples,” then “Gentiles” are included. If it is “Gentiles,” then as those Gentiles are reached, surely the “peoples” would be as well. The significance of the issue lies in how missionaries are to strategize.

How does one make the hermeneutical decision needed here? John Piper makes a good defense when he writes for his own view—“people groups”—in *Let the Nations Be Glad*. Piper consistently considers mission strategy when trying to settle this debate. While to some degree both Gentiles and people groups are implied in Matthew 24:14, the question must be answered: is the primary task to reach as many individuals as possible or to reach all the people groups of the world? Piper argues for the latter: “[One] would have to go against the flow of the evidence to interpret the phrase [πάντα τὰ ἔθνη] as ‘all Gentile individuals’ (or ‘all countries’). Rather, the focus of the command is the discipling of all

⁷⁰ Jerry Rankin, “To All Peoples: The Great Commission and the Nations,” in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 211.

⁷¹ Though Platt’s view on the definition of “nations” has not changed, he has recently written on the need for missionaries to focus on reaching both unreached *peoples* (i.e., “nations”) and unreached *places* (David Platt, “Rethinking Unreached People: Why Place Still Matters in Global Missions,” *Desiring God*, 13 February 2019, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/rethinking-unreached-peoples>). The article has more to do with mission strategy than it does with this exegetical issue. The nuance is helpful, nonetheless. He writes, “Unreached peoples and places are those among whom Christ is largely unknown and the church is relatively insufficient to make Christ known in its broader population without outside help” (p. 4). He continues, “I would in no way advocate for dropping or in any way disregarding the designation of unreached people groups. But to be true to Scripture, we should consider both unreached people groups and unreached places as we carry out our mission” (p. 7). Throughout the article, Platt balances his recent development without disregarding his previously stated belief that mission strategy must be particular about reaching “nations,” rather than as many individuals as possible.

⁷² A minority view is that what Jesus had in mind was none of these three but rather a “collective of nations” (i.e. the “Gentiles” as a *whole*). Hare and Harrington write of this view: “[In] Matthew’s time ... [ἔθνη] would not have referred to those specific national groups (Egyptians, Greeks, etc.) that impinged upon the nation of Israel. Rather ... [it] would convey the notion of that whole collective of nations (the Gentile nations) other than Israel as well as those individual non-Jews (the Gentiles) who made up that collective.” In this understanding, the call is to make disciples of “all the Gentiles” (i.e. all the “Gentile collective nations”), with their seeming diversity. For more, see Douglas R. A. Hare and Daniel J. Harrington, “Make Disciples of All the Gentiles,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 361. More research could be done on this view to help bridge the gap between those who fall on opposite sides of the spectrum; however, this argument fits more with the “peoples” side than it does the “Gentile individuals” one. The emphasis is that God has in mind not individual people, but specific people groups from among the Gentiles. Also, adherents of this view often conclude that Jews should not be included in the nations to be reached, which is another topic too weighty for the space of this article.

the people groups of the world.”⁷³ Piper summarizes his argument with ten points. The following six are most significant:

(1) In the NT, the singular use of [ἔθνος] never means Gentile individuals but always people group or nation.... (3) The phrase [πάντα τὰ ἔθνη] occurs eighteen times in the NT. Only once must it mean Gentile individuals. Nine times it must mean people groups. The other eight times are ambiguous... (4) Virtually all of the nearly one hundred uses of [πάντα τὰ ἔθνη] in the Greek OT refer to nations in distinction from the nation of Israel.... (5) The promise made to Abraham that in him “all the families of the earth” would be blessed and that he would be “the father of many nations” is taken up in the NT and gives the mission of the church a people-group focus because of this OT emphasis.... (7) Paul understood his specifically missionary task in terms of this OT hope and made the promises concerning peoples the foundation of his mission. He was devoted to reaching more and more people groups.... (8) The apostle John envisioned the task of missions as the ingathering of the “children of God” or the “other sheep” out of “every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.”⁷⁴

Furthermore, the basic argument from the original languages also serves as a prime example; that is, it is rather easy to see how ἔθνος would actually be referring to *ethnicities*.⁷⁵ However, this issue cannot rightly be settled until one determines what “end” Jesus had in mind when he said that “the end [would] come.”

2.4. The End: To Be or Has Been?

When Jesus refers to “the end” (τὸ τέλος) in Matthew 24:14, does this refer to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 or to his second coming? In Matthew 24:3, the disciples apparently ask Jesus two

⁷³ Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 210.

⁷⁴ Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 210–11. To read Piper’s full argument, see pp. 177–224.

⁷⁵ However, a plethora of issues arises when one tries to determine what “ethnicity” means. As for modern understandings, I agree with J. M. Hall when he says: “Because ethnic identity is ‘socially constructed and subjectively perceived’ it is impossible to find an objective set of criteria that defines the ethnic group in every situation.” See J. M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), 19. Likewise, Baum writes, “The great difficulty of reflecting on ethnicity from a theological point of view is that social scientists have not come to an agreement on the meaning and social function of ethnicity in various parts of the world.” See Gregory Baum, “Editorial Summary,” in *Ethnicity*, ed. Andrew M. Greeley and Gregory Baum (New York: Seabury, 1977), 101. In the context of Matt 24:14, it is likely that Jesus had in mind a much different understanding than what we would know as an “ethnicity” today. At the least, the word ἔθνη in that NT context would undoubtedly have some focus on “the racial and cultural qualities that form ‘peoples’ or ‘people groups,’” since “Luke speaks of ‘the [ἔθνος] of the Samaritans in Acts 8:9,’ and they “had not existed as an independent political ‘nation’ for another 150 years.” See Walt Russell, “Do We Need to Evangelize All Peoples Before Christ Returns?” *Mission Frontiers* (July 1994): <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/archive/bring-back-the-king>. When it comes to the biblical theology of mission, the fourfold formula of Revelation (tribe, language, people, and nation) helps with this defense. “Ethnicity” was not understood in its modern, complex form two thousand years ago, but there was a general understanding of a more particular distinction than nations *at-large* and most certainly nations existing as only two groups (i.e. Jew and Gentile). Even in the OT, there is ethnical diversity in the lives of both Ruth and Jonah. There were “Gentiles,” yes, but there were also more specific groups of people, namely Moabites and Ninevites. For a thorough evangelical treatment of this topic, see J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, NSBT 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

different questions: (1) When will these things be? (2) What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?⁷⁶ Most likely, the first question refers to the temple's destruction, while the second is a reference to the Parousia. Thus, Matthew 24 offers particular challenges to interpreters because of this distinction "between two primary events."⁷⁷

First, it is possible that Jesus made no true allusions to the Parousia in Matthew 24. R. C. Sproul states that Jesus "did not have the end of the world in mind" in Matthew 24:14.⁷⁸ Rather, "He was thinking about the end of the Jewish age, which came when Jerusalem fell. That was the beginning of the times of the Gentiles."⁷⁹ Sproul's primary reason for this view is that the nations most certainly could have been preached to, in full, as the NT seems to make clear at numerous points. Sam Storms agrees with Sproul's above assessment and also notes the arguments for both geo-political nations and Gentile individuals mentioned in the previous section, as he makes his defense for his view that "Matt 24:14 is not concerned with that task [to proclaim the gospel of God and to make disciples of all nations]."⁸⁰ He continues,

Often our immediate, knee-jerk interpretation is that the events described with these words [in Matt 24:14] describe global events. Yet we know that they were limited to the Roman Empire of the first century [because of the word οἰκουμένη that is used]. The reference to the "nations" also indicates that the point is not that every geographical area on the globe must be covered but that all the *Gentiles* must be reached.⁸¹

R. T. France argues that to take a position other than this one is "to take this text quite out of context."⁸² What Christ had in mind was the "extension of the Christian mission outside Judaism."⁸³ France directly relates his interpretation of this passage to temple language. Remembering his view that the "end" Christ has in mind is the temple's destruction, Christ commissions his disciples in this text in this way: "The 'new temple' that will replace [the old one] will already be under construction through the universal mission of the church." In other words, in Matthew 24:14, Jesus—with the destruction of

⁷⁶ The structure of the Olivet Discourse is a complex issue that cannot be fully exhausted in this article. Some believe that Jesus only answers one question in Matthew 24, indicating either the timing of the temple's destruction or of the Parousia. Others hold to the view that Jesus is answering two questions throughout Matt 24, which is the position set forth in this article. Still, some others say that Jesus is often answering both questions at the same time. For a helpful discussion of various positions, see D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Matthew–Mark*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, Revised Expositor's Bible Commentary 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 551–57.

⁷⁷ Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, 315.

⁷⁸ R. C. Sproul, *Matthew*, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 668.

⁷⁹ This understanding, then, is that Jesus's "coming" or the "end" in Matt 24 was not a reference to his second coming before final judgment, but rather, his coming was completed with the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. This passage of Scripture, then, does not speak to eschatology *at large*, outside of vv. 36 and following, where Sproul believes Jesus more clearly distinguishes between eschatological events and the end of the Jewish age. Others who hold to this view, including Sproul, believe that Jesus is not answering two questions; rather, he is answering *one*: when will the destruction of the temple take place?

⁸⁰ Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 242.

⁸¹ Storms, *Kingdom Come*, 243.

⁸² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 908.

⁸³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 909.

the physical temple in mind—was preparing his people to build the new, spiritual temple, something they would begin well before the old was destroyed. Though Sproul, Storms, France, and others holds to this first view, it does not mean they deny the mission of the Church as making disciples from every people group; they simply do not believe *this text* speaks of that specific mission.

Others believe Jesus’s reference to “the end” in verse 14 seems to be a direct reference back to the second question of the disciples. John Frame writes that there are “a number of predicted events that clearly did not take place in A.D. 70 [when the temple was destroyed].”⁸⁴ One of these is *precisely* world evangelization, or the spread of the gospel among all *people groups* of the world. Again, one’s interpretation of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη proves most important. In his commentary, Carson writes of “the most common approach to the Olivet Discourse today,” which is that verses 15–21 and 34 “foretell the destruction of Jerusalem,” while the rest of the chapter foretells of the Parousia.⁸⁵ The two ends are “purposely intertwined, perhaps under some kind of ‘prophetic foreshortening.’” Carson means that the near event, the destruction of the temple, serves as a type of proof that the far event, the Parousia, will actually take place.

What’s more, if the disciples were not clear on what “end” Jesus had in mind here, they most certainly had this question answered when Jesus gave them the Great Commission mandate to make disciples of all nations, as he remained with them to the end. If both Matthew 24:14 and 28:19–20 were fulfilled in AD 70, then why did the disciples who had received the mission teach others to continue in that mission in times beyond the temple’s destruction? They implored generations of Christians to continue to preach the message because until all peoples of the world believed, they knew Jesus would not come back. Therefore, it seems best to hold to the understanding that Jesus had his second coming in mind when referring to the “end.” The great news is that God’s people on earth, in every generation before the second coming of Christ, are commanded to—and *get to*—be a part of God’s mission for people from all “nations” to hear and believe in the gospel.

2.5. Can Christian Workers Bring Jesus Back Sooner?

With all of these considerations, this question remains: can Christians actually hasten Christ’s second coming with the work of world evangelization? The answer seems to be both yes and no. First, Christian workers do play a part in one of the signs of the times mentioned in Matthew 24, specifically in verse 14. However, this sign is only *one of* the signs mentioned in that passage. God is not simply waiting on world evangelization to be complete. There are a host of other things to take place as well. We do not know, for certain, the sequence of these events.⁸⁶ Stephen Neill mentions that the Church

⁸⁴ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 1093.

⁸⁵ Carson, “Matthew,” 551–52. Carson personally and more specifically believes that “*the disciples* think of Jerusalem’s destruction and the eschatological end as a single complex web of events.... Jesus warns there will be delay *before* the End—a delay characterized by persecution and tribulation for his followers (vv.4–28), but with one particularly violent display of judgment at the fall of Jerusalem (vv. 15–21; Mk 13:14–20; Lk 21:20–24)” (p. 557).

⁸⁶ For example, consider the following assessment: “According to the Synoptic passages in Mark 13:10–14 and Matthew 24:13–15, the Antichrist appears after the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, just as in 2 Thessalonians 2:6–ff, he will appear after ‘what is restraining him’ has been removed.” See Oscar Cullman, “Eschatology and Missions in the New Testament,” in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 53.

serves as “the forerunner to prepare the way for the coming again of its exalted and glorified King.”⁸⁷ It is better, then, to speak of the church’s mission as *one of* the necessary causes but not the sole cause of Christ’s return. Moreover, the eternal God is not waiting in the way mankind considers waiting. God knows when he will send his Son back, and he somehow sovereignly uses the work of man to bring that to fruition.

Second, since there is no date revealed to man concerning when Christ will come back, then any talk of *quicken*ing or *hasten*ing that coming is nonsensical. It is not as if Christ is set to come back on March 6, 2156 as of today, and that by working harder on the Great Commission, Christians can make him come back by March 5, 2156. Some often use 2 Peter 3:12 as a defense for this type of belief, but the word used for “hasten” in that verse, *σπεύδω*, can simply mean “earnestly desire.”⁸⁸ Outside of its five uses in Luke-Acts,⁸⁹ the word only appears as a verb one other time in the NT: 2 Peter 3:12. Silva believes this anomaly to be “remarkable.” In reference to the “day of God,” the text denotes an understanding that one can “speed its coming.” The word *παρουσία* is used here to refer to the “coming” of God’s day. However, Silva writes, “[But] some believe that here the verb means ‘to seek/desire eagerly.’”⁹⁰ Silva also says that “in the later writings of the NT,” this word and related words “are used in a somewhat more general way, but ... the emphasis is on Christian living. Our whole conduct must be molded by earnestness and diligence, for only so will believers reach the goal set before them.”⁹¹ By and large, Silva affirms that *σπεύδω* is most often used in the sense of *earnest desire*, especially in other ancient literature, as he writes “The sense [of] ‘haste’ is relatively infrequent in both [Philo and Josephus], whereas ‘earnestness’ is prominent.”⁹² However, one cannot deny the plausibility of the opposing argument, especially when the verse is considered in isolation from the rest of Scripture. Peter *seems* to have in mind “causing” an event, namely the Parousia. In BDAG, the word is defined as “to cause something to happen or come into being by exercising special effort” (i.e., “hasten”).⁹³ Yet, more in line with Silva, it is also noted that *σπεύδω* can be understood as “striving for,” again noting a sense of earnest desire, or “to be very interested in discharging an obligation.”

A thorough exegetical study of 2 Peter 3:12 is beyond the scope of this article, which focuses on Matthew 24:14. While 2 Peter 3:12 is referenced much less frequently than Matthew 24:14, ironically 2

⁸⁷ Neill, *The Unfinished Task*, 32.

⁸⁸ See Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 173 and Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 128, 284. Bauckham goes further and says that 2 Peter 3:12 is about the desire for righteousness to dwell in the world. That is, Christians are a people who long for the expansion of righteousness. See Richard Bauckham, “The Delay of the ‘Parousia,’” *TynB* 31 (1980): 3–36. Michael Pocock likens “hasten” to “an attitude of eagerness about the Lord’s return.” Michael Pocock, “The Destiny of the World and the Work of Missions,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 1 (1984): 215–34. This is understandable when considering that the reason for the Lord’s waiting in 2 Peter 3 is not that the mission is incomplete. Rather, it is because the Lord is patient and desires mankind to come to repentance. It is a passage that has more to do with holiness than it does with man’s evangelistic efforts.

⁸⁹ Luke 2:16; 19:5–6; Acts 20:16; 22:18. Its use in Luke-Acts is uniformly in reference to various characters being “in a hurry” or “eager.”

⁹⁰ *NIDNTTE* 4:349.

⁹¹ *NIDNTTE* 4:349–50.

⁹² *NIDNTTE* 4:439.

⁹³ BDAG 938.

Peter 3 may offer a stronger exegetical support for an eschatological motivation for missions (and holy living). At this point, it shall suffice to say that in light of the whole biblical narrative, the notion that we might “hasten” a day that the Lord is sovereign over is somewhat absurd. God, in his omniscience, knows when the Parousia will be; that day will not change.⁹⁴ Man cannot surprise God with efforts that supposedly quicken a day that is already set.

As well, man should not believe that he can expect or suspect when this day will come (e.g. the year 2000 or 2025). It will certainly be a surprising day for all of mankind. Moreover, to believe that the Parousia can actually be “hastened” might logically lead to the heresy of open theism (though one could argue that this is the extreme, logical conclusion). Christopher Hays seems to purport this doctrine when he writes, “[Jesus] reveals that the timing of the consummation of the kingdom depends on human actions and obedience. In Protestant evangelical circles, this passage is read within a framework that assumes that the timing of the end is fixed, but the text itself suggests no such thing.”⁹⁵ Though Hays may or may not affirm it, open theism is still a dangerous doctrine that must be avoided, for it has implications much more far-reaching than missiology. Undoubtedly, God uses his people by way of their evangelism for the salvation of mankind. The Church’s evangelism is the determined means to accomplish God’s determined ends. However, this truth in no ways suggests that God is dependent on humanity for the timing of the Parousia. While this is paradoxical mystery to our finite minds, it does not mean we should make conclusions with no consideration of God’s omnipotence and omniscience.

Is the timing of the Parousia ultimately under God’s control or man’s? Surely, it is the former. Though man plays some concurrent role, he cannot make happen what God has not planned. Again, though one must appeal to mystery in these matters, it does not make it any less true. Christians should most certainly long for the Parousia, and knowing that they play a mysterious part in God’s plan is a reason to work. However, eschatology should not be the Christian’s main motivation. More than anything else, one’s reception of salvation is the primary motivation.⁹⁶ Those who have been reconciled to God in Christ are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18–21).

3. Conclusion: What Shall the Method Be?

First, countdowns to Jesus’s return or countdowns to the completion of world evangelization should be avoided. When it comes to the particulars of world evangelization, workers do not even know the parameters for when this is to be considered “finished.” As well, no one—even the Son, himself—knows

⁹⁴ Cullman describes this well: “We cannot achieve the coming of the kingdom of God by our own action: we cannot ‘bring in’ the kingdom of God. The whole witness of the NT is so clear on this point that no further proof is needed” (Cullman, “Eschatology and Missions,” 43). He continues, “In the NT eschatology ... the divine sovereignty is fully maintained, in so far as neither by his action nor his knowledge can man know when the kingdom will come” (p. 48).

⁹⁵ Christopher M. Hays, “The Delay of the Parousia: A Traditional and Historical-Critical Reading of Scripture: Part 2,” in *When the Son of Man Didn’t Come: A Constructive Proposal on the Delay of the Parousia*, ed. Christopher M. Hays (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 85.

⁹⁶ That is, when one receives the gospel and its benefits through faith and repentance (Mark 1:14–15), it should motivate him to make that gospel known to others.

when Jesus is coming back (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32). Workers should heed the words of France on this matter: “[We have] no warrant for deciding when [the end] must come.”⁹⁷

Second, in this period where the end times have *already* been inaugurated but are still *not yet*, Christians should make sure they are diligent to proclaim the one gospel message revealed in the NT. This command is the one standard Christians also have for success. While setting goals for the amount of churches to be planted is not bad in and of itself, it puts the results of the primary mission in the hands of the missionary rather than God. No missionary can be sure that a certain number of people will believe in the gospel in order for a church to be planted. Therefore, Christians should rather set goals for how many people they share the gospel with, which is all they actually control, and let God take care of the visible results.

Third, there should be a major focus on reaching the people groups of the world, especially the unreached. God has a desire, through the mission given to his people, to have people from every tribe, language, people, and nation in his fold. However, this truth does not mean Christians should neglect reaching those places that have already been regarded as “reached.” There is no way for mankind to know what God considers “reached” and what he considers “unreached.” All people are important, and there is not a person saved who does not have an immediate celebration in his name in the kingdom of heaven (Luke 15:10).

Fourth, missionaries should long for the coming of Christ, but their longing for his coming should not lead them to missional malpractice. Hesselgrave’s words prove helpful in this matter:

[A] larger time perspective helps resolve the tension between wanting to see many coming to the Lord in a hurry and patiently building a self-sustaining, disciple-making church.... We should act as though he is coming today, but we should plan as though he is not coming for a thousand years. There is a tension there, but, rightly understood, that must be close to what Jesus meant.⁹⁸

These four conclusions summarize what one may call a *modified eschatological motivation* for missions. Surely, Christians get to play a mysterious part in the coming of Christ, and this should spur the Christian worker toward urgent evangelistic and missional efforts; his efforts do mean something. However, this longing for Christ’s coming should not lead one to do whatever pragmatic practice possible, neglecting to consider that though God’s plan is to reach the peoples of the world with the gospel, each individual person still matters to God. Though Christians desire for Christ to come quickly, they should not cut corners to “make it happen,” for others’ eternal destinations are at stake. The command is thus: spread the gospel faithfully, and surely, God will take delight in the work of his people, which furthers his glory both now and forevermore; and though unknown, his people’s work will play some significant part in the second coming of his Son.

⁹⁷ France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, 340.

⁹⁸ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 281, 301.

The Doctrine of Scripture and Biblical Contextualization: Inspiration, Authority, Inerrancy, and the Canon

— Jackson Wu —

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Abstract: This essay explores the relationship between contextualization and an evangelical doctrine of the Bible, with a special emphasis on biblical inspiration, biblical authority, biblical inerrancy, and the biblical canon. Readers will see how the doctrine of Scripture leads to a biblical view of contextualization. How might a robust doctrine of Scripture practically improve our approach to contextualization, both in principle and practice? This article not only affirms the importance of contextualization; it also identifies biblical boundaries for contextualization. In the process, readers consider specific ways to apply one's doctrine of the Bible.

1. Applying the Doctrine of Scripture to Contextualization

Debates about contextualization tend to polarize people. At issue is the relationship between the Bible and culture. Many theologians and missionaries are concerned that contextualization too easily leads to compromise. They fear syncretism, not wanting Christians to adopt cultural ideas that corrupt the church's teaching and practice. Christians must prioritize Scripture over culture. In contrast, others are reluctant to divide theology and culture. They consider this separation idealistic and impractical. For others, sharply dichotomizing the Bible and culture is contrary to the nature of Scripture itself. Biblical truth must be expressed or embodied in cultural forms.

Unfortunately, these discussions routinely overlook or assume an important question. What is the relationship between contextualization and the doctrine of Scripture? When explaining a doctrine of the Bible, evangelicals typically emphasize a few key topics, such as the Bible's authority, inspiration, and its truthfulness. These ideas become the foundation for a biblically faithful view of contextualization.

Evangelicals have similar perspectives regarding the relationship between the Bible and contextualization. Since the Bible has ultimate authority in our lives, contextualization must not allow culture to twist or obscure biblical teaching. Therefore, Christians typically begin by interpreting the Bible and then consider potential implications for culture. In this line of thinking, contextualization primarily concerns the communication and application of Scripture.

This perspective is not altogether mistaken; yet, such views of contextualization remain problematic. Common approaches to contextualization overlook the influence of culture upon interpreters.¹ Consequently, some Christians preach a truncated—and ironically even syncretistic—gospel. They do not notice the subtle influence of their own (sub)culture. In the end, missionaries can unwittingly pass along a Westernized version of Christianity among non-Western people.

So what is a more holistic view of contextualization?

Contextualization cannot be defined merely in terms of communication or application.

I suggest that contextualization refers to the process wherein people interpret, communicate, and apply the Bible within a particular cultural context.... Good contextualization seeks to be faithful to Scripture and meaningful to a given culture.²

This essay explores the relationship between contextualization and an evangelical doctrine of the Bible. Readers will see how our doctrine of Scripture leads to a biblical view of contextualization. In the process, we not only affirm the importance of contextualization. We also identify biblical boundaries for contextualization that stem from an evangelical view of the Bible.

This article introduces several topics that remain controversial in some circles. I will not attempt to use contextualization to resolve these disputes. Instead, I propose an initial framework for relating contextualization to four key issues connected to an evangelical doctrine of the Scripture: *biblical inspiration*, *biblical authority*, *biblical inerrancy*, and the *biblical canon*.

First, we explore missiological implications of *biblical inspiration*. Second, readers will discuss *biblical authority* in light of the relationship between the ancient text and contemporary cultural context. The third section addresses the subject of *biblical inerrancy*. I will raise a few interrelated questions. How can one understand debates about inerrancy in light of the Bible's ancient oral transmission? Drawing from this discussion, I will suggest possible applications for contextualized ministry, particularly in oral cultures. Finally, what insights can we gain from research concerning the *biblical canon* and recent work on canonically-shaped interpretation? I offer a few initial for suggestions how this research might influence contextualization.

This essay brings together biblical studies and mission practice. Our study will hopefully spur readers to consider specific ways to *apply* one's doctrine of the Bible. Accordingly, this doctrine is more than a mere litmus test to determine whether someone is "evangelical." How might a robust doctrine of Scripture practically improve our approach to contextualization, both in principle and practice?

¹ Jackson Wu, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame*, EMS Dissertation Series (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2013).

² Jackson Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015), 8.

2. Missional Implications of Biblical Inspiration

Evangelicals affirm the Bible is divinely inspired, “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). Accordingly, biblical contextualization is rooted in the process of biblical revelation itself. By considering *how* God reveals himself through Scripture, we can better understand the meaning and significance of contextualization.

“All theology is contextualized” has increasingly become a truism among scholars.³ Some justify this statement culturally and pragmatically. After all, interpreters have limited perspectives and must express themselves in culturally-bound ways. These are true observations. But the Bible also gives its own justification for the claim “all theology is contextualized.” In fact, we can say the Bible itself is an example of contextualization. In this section, I will describe three ways the Bible serves as a biblical model of contextualization.

2.1. God Uses Ancient Cultures to Reveal Himself

In the Bible, God demonstrates how to do contextualization. The Bible by its very nature illustrates how a transcendent God conveys truth within concrete historical contexts. The words, imagery, concepts, and arguments presented in Scripture reflect the writers’ varied backgrounds, assumptions, and cultural milieus. In that sense, all propositional truth claims are rooted in some cultural context. No biblical text is expressed in a culture-free manner, independent of time and place.

We could cite numerous examples to illustrate this point. John Walton summarizes, “God often used existing institutions and converted them to his theological purposes.”⁴ Angel Rodriguez highlights many parallels between the Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern religious writings. Focusing on the Law and the ritual system of priestly worship, he summarizes:

It is obvious that God was employing a common ritual practice from the ancient Near East to convey a truth that was not expressed through the performance of the ritual itself in any other religion. In other words, God selected a ritual practice and invested it with a particular meaning that was foreign to it. God was mediating new knowledge using structures of knowledge already present. He condescended to use what was available to the Israelites in order to lead them beyond their cognitive limitations into a better understanding of His plan for them.⁵

In addition, scores of scholars show how the OT borrows from and adapts ancient Near Eastern covenant forms and practices.⁶ For example, the covenant-signifying practice of circumcision was not

³ E.g., Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 3; David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 423.

⁴ John Walton, “Ancient Near Eastern Background Studies,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 42. Also see Brian Petersen, “A Brief Investigation of Old Testament Precursors to the Pauline Missiological Model of Cultural Adaptation,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 24 (2007): 117–29.

⁵ Angel Manuel Rodríguez, “Ancient Near Eastern Parallels to the Bible and the Question of Revelation and Inspiration,” *JATS* 12 (2001): 61–62.

⁶ See for example Bruce Wells, “What is Biblical Law? A Look at Pentateuchal Rules and Near Eastern Practice,” *CBQ* 70 (2008): 223–42; René Lopez, “Israelite Covenants in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Covenants (Part 1 of 2),” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 10 (2004): 92–111; Előd Hodossy-Takács, “The Concept of Covenant in the Ancient Near East and in Biblical Theology,” *Studia Theologica Debrecinensis* 4 (2011): 21–32.

unique to Israel.⁷ God's use of covenant made clear the nature of his relationship to Israel. He was Israel's king, and they, his holy people. God demanded loyalty as a king did his clients.⁸ To some degree, God borrowed ancient conceptions of law and kingship to convey how he would reign over Israel and, indeed, the world.⁹ Ancient Israelites would easily have grasped significant honor-shame implications conveyed by the covenant presentations in Deuteronomy 28 and 2 Samuel 7.¹⁰

In the opening chapters of Genesis, God reveals his purposes for creating the world. Though theologians dispute certain details, most agree that Genesis 1–2 draws extensively from ancient Near Eastern imagery. Accordingly, Genesis 1 “functions also as a theological-political document that describes how the Supreme Monarch establishes his kingdom and thereby justifies his claim to exclusive possession of everything in it.”¹¹ In fact, the creation is portrayed as a Temple-kingdom in which humanity, made in “the image of God,” rules on his behalf.¹²

2.2. God Reveals Himself to All Nations

From the perspective of the divine author, for whom is the Bible written? Paul emphasizes his conviction that Scripture is written for others in addition to its original audience. In Romans 15:4, he states, “Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope,” (see also Rom 4:23; 1 Cor 10:6, 11; cf. 1 Cor 9:9–10; 2 Tim 3:16–17). Throughout the Bible, a repeated theme is the expansion of blessing and of God's glory to all nations (see Gen 12:3, Isa 66:19, Matt 28:20). In fact, this promise is called “the gospel” in Galatians 3:8. We can naturally conclude that God intends Scripture to be understood by people from every cultural context.

God inspired his word for the sake of *all nations*. Two implications follow from this. First, all nations will find things in Scripture that make sense to them within their local context and worldview. We can find many emphases and themes that seem Chinese, Indian, Malaysian, and so forth. Second, because of cultural differences, we also expect some concepts that one culture grasps will not be understood by people in another culture. In other words, not every culture will comprehend the significance of every

⁷ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 192; John Meade, “Circumcision of the Heart in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: Divine Means for Resolving Curse and Bringing Blessing,” *SBJT* 18 (2014): 59–85.

⁸ Niels Peter Lemche, “Kings and Clients: On Loyalty between the Ruler and the Ruled in Ancient ‘Israel’” *Semeia* 66 (1994): 119–32.

⁹ John Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 275–310; Gary Smith, “The Concept of God/the Gods as Kin in the Ancient Near East and the Bible,” *TJ* 3 (1982): 18–38; Roy Rosenberg, “Yahweh Becomes King,” *JBL* 85 (1966): 297–307.

¹⁰ James Jumper, “Honor and Shame in the Deuteronomic Covenant and the Deuteronomic Presentation of the Davidic Covenant” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University), 2013.

¹¹ Bruce Reichenbach, “Genesis 1 as a Theological-Political Narrative of Kingdom Establishment,” *BBR* 13 (2003): 47–69, esp. 48. See also Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000).

¹² G. K. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation,” *JETS* 48 (2005): 5–32; David J. A. Clines, “Humanity as the Image of God,” in *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967–1998*, 2 vols., JSOTSup 268 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 2:447–97; Stephen L. Herring, *Divine Substitution: Humanity as the Manifestation of Deity in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

text and idea because of the limitations of their own worldview. As a result, we might not see *what is actually in the Bible* because of the limitations of our cultural background.

2.3. Even Emphasis Is Inspired

If we accept God's word as authoritative and inspired, we cannot ignore the importance of emphasis. In each book and passage, biblical writers seek to make establish certain ideas. Depending on context, some ideas are primary; others are secondary.¹³

For instance, John's Gospel emphasizes the theme of new creation,¹⁴ but one finds little to nothing in John about justification. This obviously does not imply justification is an unimportant doctrine. It simply means the topic is not a primary motif in John's letter. Every text has one or more main themes and various subordinate ideas. If we are not sensitive to the author's emphasis, we disrespect the biblical message itself.

God inspired the words of the Bible, and he inspired those words to have a certain *emphasis* rather than another. Thus, biblical emphasis is a part of biblical inspiration. In this respect, the Bible is already contextualized from the moment it was spoken, written, and passed on to others.

3. *The Authority of the Text in Context*

The Bible is authoritative because it is inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20–21).¹⁵ For many, biblical authority shapes their understanding of contextualization. Since the Bible is supremely authoritative, people argue that Scripture must take priority over culture. David Sanchez speaks for many when he says, "First, the Bible must be the final authority in the contextualization process and not merely a partner or a subservient source in the development of human ideologies or syncretistic doctrines. Culture and cultural items must be judged by Scripture, not Scripture by culture."¹⁶ From this starting point, evangelicals generally affirm similar definitions of contextualization.

Yet, as we have seen, even God's inspired words are given within specific cultural settings. Their most basic meaning in part stems from that original context. Furthermore, readers in every generation must interpret and apply its words to the various life situations they face. This interaction between Scripture and cultural context puzzles many people. How can we speak of the Bible's authority given the Bible's claim emerge from and have significance for concrete, historical circumstances?

¹³ The terms *primary* and *secondary* in no way imply *important* and unimportant.

¹⁴ Andreas Kostenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 336–54.

¹⁵ Metzger points out that church fathers (e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, Athanasius, Eusebius, Augustine, others) applied the term θεόπνευστος ("inspired by God" or "God-breather" from 2 Tim 3:16) to non-canonical writings, e.g., 3 Esdras, Shepherd of Hermes, among others. Therefore, inspiration may be understood as a necessary but not sufficient condition of canonicity. See Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 211, 255–56. Authority is not equivalent to canonicity just as individual churches and teachers might be "given a word from the Lord" and, in that sense, be recognized as authoritative, yet we would not count their message as canonical and thus authoritative for all places and persons.

¹⁶ Daniel R. Sanchez, "Contextualization and the Missionary Endeavor," in *Missiology*, ed. John Mark Terry, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015), 294.

Typical descriptions of “contextualization” include “the translation of the unchanging content of the Gospel of the kingdom into verbal form meaningful to the peoples” in their various cultures,¹⁷ “making concepts of ideals relevant in a given situation,”¹⁸ and “to discover the legitimate implications of the gospel in a given situation.”¹⁹ More recently, Kevin Greeson says contextualization is “attempting to adapt the style, form and language of the Christian faith and message to the culture of the people one is seeking to reach.”²⁰

In these explanations, we should observe that the Bible is implicitly separated from culture such that one *first* interprets the Bible and *then* applies or communicates its message within culture. This sequence stems from evangelicals’ commitment to biblical authority. Desiring not to usurp Scripture, evangelicals tend to regard contextualization primarily as the process of applying and communicating biblical truth. Yet this perspective is only partially correct.

Some people seem to make an unnecessary inference when asserting the Bible has “priority” over culture whereby “priority” determines sequence. However, one ought to distinguish between temporal sequence and authoritative rank.²¹ By analogy, consider the common distinction in systematic theology between general revelation (via nature and conscience) and special revelation (Scripture and Christ). Experientially, general revelation comes before special revelation in temporal sequence, yet evangelicals ascribe higher authority to the latter.²²

God’s self-revelation in the Bible is clothed in cultural language and concepts. This observation disallows the dichotomy between Scripture and culture. To begin with the Bible necessarily entails we start with culture—namely, the ancient cultures from which the Bible emerged. These historical contexts inherently restrict the range of possible interpretations and applications of a biblical text. Indeed, biblical truth is not communicated in an abstract way, unbounded by the conventions of any social setting. Multiple millennia distance contemporary readers from the biblical authors. Accordingly, “The idea that one can achieve an acultural theology [is a] ‘fundamental fallacy.’”²³

Beginning with culture is inevitable. Our experiences cannot help but provide a lens through which we try to make sense of the biblical message. Human cognition by nature is “embodied” and “perspectival” in that “human embodiment ‘motivates’ and constrains what we are able to conceive (not

¹⁷ Bruce J. Nicholls, “Theological Education and Evangelization,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 647.

¹⁸ Byang H. Kato, “The Gospel, Cultural Context, and Religious Syncretism,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 1217.

¹⁹ George W. Peters, “Issues Confronting Evangelical Missions,” in *Evangelical Missions Tomorrow*, ed. E. L. Frizen and Wade Coggins (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977), 169.

²⁰ Kevin Greeson, *The Camel: How Muslims Are Coming to Faith in Christ!* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2010), 199–200.

²¹ Wu, *Saving God’s Face*, 59–60.

²² Though an imperfect analogy, we might also think in this way: Just as we come across maps and signs before arriving at a destination, so we might think of culture in relation to the Bible. We begin with the former and make our way toward the latter.

²³ David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 50. He credits this phrase to Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 8.

just perceive).”²⁴ Similarly, a group of cognitive researchers summarizes, “the concepts we have access to and the nature of the ‘reality’ we think and talk about are a function of our embodiment. We can only talk about what we can perceive and conceive, and the things that we can perceive and conceive derive from embodied experience.”²⁵ To make these claims does not at all imply relativism. Rather, humility requires us to acknowledge our limitations as humans.

Readers interpret the biblical text within their own cultural context. Those who study the Bible attempt to discern the significance of words, symbols, and motifs that find their meaning in ancient contexts far removed from later readers. In fact, contextualization is made more difficult by the fact interpreters are influenced by their own cultures. Consequently, later readers will make certain observations of the text while overlooking other details.

On the other hand, the above observations remind us that everyone begins at the same starting place. If we acknowledge the authority of Scripture, we must consider the implications that follow from this manner of divine revelation. The Bible’s original context is a common locus that bounds possible readings. God’s intention for the text *to some extent* is constrained by the meaning of a passage within its context, whether historical, literary, cultural, and canonical.

What then can we say about contextualization? Susan Baker voices an insight increasingly shared by others: “Contextualization is not confined to the message alone. It touches on *how we do theology*.”²⁶ In sum, contextualization begins with interpretation. It is not a process that only follows interpretation.

The theology that emerges becomes a collage of biblical and cultural contexts. The fact does not imply we cannot find truth in the Bible, nor must it lead to radical relativism. Rather, our personal perspectives, shaped by countless social dynamics and experiences, always limit and make possible our various interpretations. Therefore, “contextualization is, arguably, the most necessary and the most dangerous reality in modern mission settings.”²⁷

Church leaders warn against syncretism, allowing cultural context to distort one’s reading of the biblical text. Syncretism is one of the most pervasive and pernicious threats against biblical authority. Unfortunately, writers typically mention only one kind of syncretism. They rightly caution Christians to avoid “cultural syncretism,” whereby the church’s teaching and practice reflect cultural values more than the Bible. The latter might, in fact, be used to justify various social norms.

²⁴ John Sanders, *Theology in the Flesh: How Embodiment and Culture Shape the Way We Think about Truth, Morality, and God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 20.

²⁵ Vyvyan Evans, Benjamin Bergen and Jörg Zinken, “The Cognitive Linguistics Enterprise: An Overview,” in *The Cognitive Linguistics Reader*, ed. Vyvyan Evans, Benjamin Bergen and Jörg Zinken (Sheffield: Equinox, 2007), 2–36, esp. 7.

²⁶ Susan S. Baker, “The Social Sciences for Urban Ministry,” in *The Urban Face of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World*, ed. Manuel Ortiz and Susan S. Baker (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 75, emphasis mine. See also Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “What is Everyday Theology? How and Why Christians Should Read Culture,” in *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 15–60, esp. 36. Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 20; Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 144, 189.

²⁷ Keith Eitel, “Indigenous Missions,” in *Missiology: An Introduction*, ed. John Mark Terry, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 276.

However, pastors and missionaries rarely consider a second type of syncretism. In “theological syncretism,” Christians confuse theological tradition with biblical teaching. A person’s church background filters out legitimate interpretations that do not fit accepted tradition. Someone might object to the term “syncretism” since it typically refers to the illicit blending of culture and Scripture. However, we must remember that churches, denominations, and organizations are also subcultures, which unwittingly reflect and borrow from the broader culture. In various respects, a church might reflect the conventions of the surrounding culture more than the convictions of Scripture. This observation alerts us the need to distinguish sound contextualization and subtle forms of syncretism.

Theological syncretism is more than our merely having a theological bias. After all, one’s background and culture inevitably shape a person’s understanding of the text. Rather, theological syncretism occurs when the priorities, questions, and assumptions of the interpreter’s subculture are read into the Bible and/or mute its message. Christians will no doubt debate what constitutes a specific instance of theological syncretism. Such disagreements are precisely what we would expect where theological syncretism exists. Still, its consequences are no less real.

Theological syncretism typically establishes a *de facto* “canon within the canon,” whereby churches prioritize certain texts over others due to theological custom. Whereas *cultural* syncretism inserts unbiblical elements into Scripture and goes beyond the Bible, *theological* syncretism limits the biblical message to accord with church tradition and, in effect, silences parts of Scripture.

Pragmatic concerns and church priorities can undermine biblical faithfulness. For example, an emphasis on individual conversion might lead to a stress on evangelism at the expense of protecting the church, serving the poor, theological training, and fostering godly character. An imbalance of ministry priorities can then shape the way people interpret the Bible. That is, one is tempted to read Scripture so as to justify ministry practice. Christians should certainly care deeply about evangelism and the salvation of individuals; however, these legitimate concerns should not undermine other biblical emphases and teaching.

Anyone who accepts biblical authority will agree that contextualization should be biblically faithful. But “faithfulness” entails far more than some people might think. Simply speaking true words does not imply one is faithful to Scripture. Interpreters are not faithful to the Bible if they ignore the emphases of the text itself. Furthermore, we must consider the intent of a passage within its context. The authors aimed to achieve what effect?

John Walton is right to remind us that the Bible was “written for us, but not to us.”²⁸ God inspired the Bible to be understood within its ancient context. Still, biblical writers would have been unfaithful to God had they communicated in a way that was *utterly* nonsensical and insignificant for a later audience. Naturally, contextualization too must not only be biblically faithful; it should be culturally meaningful. That is, readers, regardless of their cultural context, should be able to grasp the significance of Scripture inasmuch as it conveys core ideas that are true and discernible among all nations. The Bible not only makes sense within its original setting; we also expect people across time and space to perceive that Scripture speaks to them within their culture. Our message is not culturally meaningful if it is not biblically faithful. But, at the same time, since the Bible is inspired for the sake of all nations, we can ask another question. Are we biblically faithful if our message is not culturally meaningful?

²⁸ John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 9.

4. *Biblical Inerrancy, Orality, and Contextualization*

Scholars have shed much ink battling over whether the Bible is “inerrant” or “infallible.” For many people, the character of God and the reliability of Scripture is at stake. Others believe such dispute as unnecessarily divisive and its terminology anachronistic.²⁹ What significance does the debate over inerrancy have for contextualization? How might one’s view of inerrancy and infallibility influence how he teaches the Bible or crafts stories for unreached people groups? Do “inerrantists” have more or less flexibility in how they use Scripture?

By looking at orality, we can consider the relationship between inerrancy and contextualization. Some writers explicitly describe the initial writing of the Bible as a process of contextualization.³⁰ Much is written concerning the diverse ways that orality shaped much of the written biblical account. Furthermore, many people groups today only receive biblical instruction in oral form. The very method by which the biblical message first spread remains a critical way missionaries now teach oral-preference peoples.

How might the Bible’s oral background influence our understanding of Scripture?³¹ Few systematic theology books explore this topic. In *The Lost World of Scripture*, John Walton and Brent Sandy highlight various implications of the fact the Bible emerged from its ancient oral context. They write,

The evidence then suggests that the gospel message preserved the essential essence of things Jesus and the disciples said and did. If there are variations in the written Gospels, it’s likely there were similar variations in the oral texts. It’s safe to conclude that a precision of wording was not expected either in the oral transmission or in the written records. “There is more to history than precise chronological sequence or always relating the exact same detail or reporting something in the same words.”³²

Richard Bauckham advances a similar point about eyewitnesses.³³ In sharing a story or testimony, communities allow for some variation in detail without accusing the teller(s) of contradiction. Biblical writers could take messages that were orally transmitted for years and narrate them into a fixed written form. Their accounts could have been crafted in multiple ways (as seen in the four Gospels) yet without

²⁹ Jonathan Merritt, “N. T. Wright on the Bible and Why He Won’t Call Himself an Inerrantist,” *Religion News Service*, 2 June 2014, <http://religionnews.com/2014/06/02/n-t-wright-bible-isnt-inerrantist>.

³⁰ See J. P. Holding and Nick Peters, *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* (Clarcona, FL: Tekton, 2014). They comment, “inerrancy requires a contextualization of the Bible as both the superlative literature that it is and as a document; and that the ‘as it stands’ readings frequently (not always) de-contextualize the Bible, reading it as a text out of time, and therefore without respect to critical defining contexts during the time of its writing,” (Kindle loc. 140).

³¹ See Burton Keith Brewer, “Models for the Oral Transmission of the Gospel Traditions and the Problem of Continuity: An Analysis and Evaluation” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 2005).

³² John Walton and Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 149. The final sentence quotes Darrell Bock, “The Words of Jesus in the Gospels: Live, Jive, or Memorex?” in *Jesus under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 81.

³³ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

contradiction. As an example, Walton and Sandy note that “the four Gospels do not agree on the wording of the placard Pilate posted on Jesus’ cross.”³⁴ They conclude:

[A] modern view of historiography must not be the standard by which we judge ancient practices of writing history. Again quoting Bock, “To have accurate summaries of Jesus’ teaching is just as historical as to have his actual words; they are just two different perspectives to give us the same thing. All that is required is that the summaries be trustworthy.”³⁵

Not surprisingly, oral-preference cultures possess different conventions and expectations than largely literate cultures with respect to precision and historiography.³⁶ Inerrantists need not be alarmed since these observations accord well with the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.³⁷ For instance, Article XIII states, “We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose.”³⁸

How might these observations about the ancient production of biblical texts influence the contemporary retelling of biblical stories in oral cultures? They confirm a point some people think apparent but others dispute. Those who tell biblical stories in oral contexts are not required to give word-for-word accounts. Christian workers should not assume that accuracy or biblical fidelity depends on how precise their words match their written Bible. After all, unless one’s listeners speak Classical Hebrew or Koine Greek, storytellers must narrate the biblical message in their own words. That retelling *de facto* amounts to something other than an exact word-for-word rendering of the biblical text.

In short, Christians have flexibility in telling biblical stories *just as* the Gospel writers did when writing their accounts. Retellings must reflect the message found in the written text (since this is what we have). However, we cannot ignore the fact that the Gospels as well as Samuel–Kings–Chronicles, for example, recount many of the same stories in diverse ways. Accordingly, Terry rightly answers objectors who suggest we “are changing God’s word” if we do not “tell the story exactly word for word as it is in the Bible.” He points to multiple passages in the NT that appeal to OT stories. Terry concludes, “the intent was not to tell each story in every detail, but to speak to certain truths among the listeners.”³⁹

³⁴ John Walton and Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture*, 148. They point out that the differences cannot be dismissed due to contrary translations of the sign into Greek since John 19:20 specifies Greek as one of the languages used for the placard. See Matt 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38, John 19:19.

³⁵ Walton and Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture*, 149. Also see pp. 202, 212. They again quote Bock, “The Words of Jesus in the Gospels,” 88.

³⁶ Michael Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?: What We Can Learn from Ancient Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

³⁷ This point is defended in Holding and Peters, *Defining Inerrancy*.

³⁸ In addition, the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy with Exposition adds, “Differences between literary conventions in Bible times and in ours must also be observed: since, for instance, non-chronological narration and imprecise citation were conventional and acceptable and violated no expectations in those days, we must not regard these things as faults when we find them in Bible writers. When total precision of a particular kind was not expected nor aimed at, it is no error not to have achieved it. Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.” See “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy with Exposition,” *Bible Research*, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>.

³⁹ James O. Terry, “Questions from New Storytellers,” *Orality Journal* 3 (2014): 74.

Furthermore, contemporary Christians can learn from the techniques used by ancient people, who faithfully passed along the biblical message with accuracy to future generations. Although we lack audio recordings of ancient storytellers, residual evidence within the written text marks the influence of orality upon the canon. Since much is written elsewhere on the subject, I will be content to summarize a few key observations.⁴⁰ For example, Gospel writers use techniques such as chiasm, ring-composition, verbal echoes, parallelism, and *inclusio*.⁴¹ John Harvey lists multiple devices found in Paul's letters, including repetition, chiasmus, inversion, alternation, inclusion, ring-composition, refrains, and word chains.⁴² Ritual and performance also transmit and preserve "oral" texts.⁴³ Furthermore, the structure of biblical texts can help listeners' recall.⁴⁴

Not only can scholars draw from recent anthropology to understand ancient orality,⁴⁵ contemporary Christians also can strategically use ancient rhetorical devices in ministry. For instance, listeners could better recall and interpret biblical passages if teachers intentionally consider the verbal or thematic links that join texts.⁴⁶ Teachers then can use those biblical connections to join different parts of the stories they share with others.

Additionally, both teachers and learners would benefit from critically assessing how they structure stories and oral lessons. Recognizing the Bible's unifying narrative structures can also contribute to non-narrative didactic instruction.⁴⁷ A robust Christian theology necessarily attends to the Bible's narrative framework, not only doctrines. Accordingly, listeners can discern the Bible's narrative cohesion, not merely our theology's logical coherence.

⁴⁰ For a helpful overview, see Ernst Wendland, "Rhetoricity of the Scriptures," in *Translating the Literature of Scripture: A Literary-Rhetorical Approach to Bible Translation* (Dallas: SIL International, 2004), 189–228. On the interaction of oral tradition and orality in missions, see Anthony F. Casey, "The Use and Limitations of the Oral Tradition in the New Testament and Implications for Ministry in Oral Cultures Today" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Chicago, IL, March 2012).

⁴¹ See Kevin Iverson, "Orality and the Gospels: A Survey of Recent Research," *CBR* 8 (2009): 71–106; Joanna Dewey, "Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark," *USQR* 43 (1989): 32–44. For a broad survey on related issues, see Brewer, "Models for the Oral Transmission of the Gospel Traditions."

⁴² John D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 97–118.

⁴³ Cf. Risto Uro, "Ritual, Memory and Writing in Early Christianity," *Temenos* 47 (2011): 159–82. Regarding modern missions and orality, see Randall Prior, "Orality: The Not-So-Silent Issue in Mission Theology," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 1 (2011): 146.

⁴⁴ See Kevin Larson, "The Structure of Mark's Gospel: Current Proposals," *CBR* 3 (2004): 140–60.

⁴⁵ See Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁴⁶ For example, if listeners hear words or concepts like the law written on people's hearts and "Spirit" in close proximity, they ought naturally to think of the "new covenant."

⁴⁷ I have in mind the ongoing discussion among biblical scholars whether an implicit grand narrative underlies Paul's letters. See Joel R. White, "N. T. Wright's Narrative Approach," in *God and the Faithfulness of Paul: A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N. T. Wright*, ed. Christoph Heilig, J. Thomas Hewitt, and Michael Bird (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 181–206.

5. *The Canonical Shape of Contextualization*

Even while emphasizing the importance of orality, one must not forget that we now have a written Bible. This fact about the Bible—that verbal accounts eventually became written texts—remains significant. The church recognized a distinct collection of documents as divinely inspired and authoritative in shaping the church's beliefs and practice. As we will see, the formation of the biblical "canon" has implications for contextualization.

The Bible has come to us in written form. This fact should shape how we perceive and practice contextualization. Rodríguez considers what happens when oral accounts become written texts. He suggests,

As texts (and their interpretative traditions) "emerge as a reference system" for behaviour and orientation, they become central points round which group identities develop and cohere.... "[T]he 'correct' text of a book was linked to the social boundaries of the community that preserved it."⁴⁸

In context, he emphasizes how a written text demarcates and strengthens "the social identity of the group, its ethical demands and patterns of behaviour (including its critique of the larger society)."⁴⁹

No doubt, this dynamic is true not only in oral cultures but in any context where people begin to regard the written Bible as authoritative. What can we infer from Rodríguez's observation? As missionaries start churches and offer biblical training, they will likely see certain patterns develop in their groups. An increasing number of leaders will rise up from among those who are educated and literate. This group of emerging leaders will often be young, despite local customs that age or position determines authority. This phenomenon creates both challenges and opportunities. The literacy and youth of new potential leaders is thus a socially-disruptive, conflict-generating phenomenon. Mission workers are wise to anticipate potential conflicts that could threaten church unity. On a positive note, local believers might be more open to incorporate ideas and utilize skills from a more diverse group of people.

When a written text serves as a boundary marker for Christian groups, rigid dogmatism becomes a greater possibility. After all, local Christians tie fidelity to a written message to a believer's social identity. The community naturally seeks to respect the written tradition; however, people easily confuse the text with the teaching or theology of their leaders. Thus, congregations begin to regard their leaders' teaching as unchanging and authoritative as are the words printed on the pages of their Bible.

Several practical implications follow from these observations. First, mission strategists would be wise to implement varying levels of *exegetical* training, not merely theological instruction. Through receiving ongoing training in biblical interpretation, several problems can be avoided or mitigated. Churches are reminded to distinguish biblical truth from theological systems that spring from it. That is, the Bible does not address countless questions with clarity. Differences in opinion and interpretation will emerge, yet dogmatism is not a constructive approach to mediate such disputes.

⁴⁸ Rafael Rodríguez, "Reading and Hearing in Ancient Contexts," *JSNT* 32 (2009): 163–64. The final quote comes from Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 19.

⁴⁹ Rodríguez, "Reading and Hearing in Ancient Contexts," 164.

In addition, the presence of a written text (and the ability to exegete it) can moderate the authority of those who have social influence, whether locals or missionaries. Other people in the community can compare and discuss the message of the teacher with the words in the biblical text. Teachers are held accountable to the Bible. Ideally, they will be humbler and more careful when interpreting and explaining the biblical message.

Other applications stem from the fact the Bible has a written text. When developing a comprehensive and contextualized strategy, missionaries ought not to underestimate the importance and urgency of translating the Bible into written form. In some cases, this task might require them to create a written language to reflect the local spoken language. Also, mission leaders should neither discourage literacy training nor prioritize storytelling at the expense of developing literate resources.⁵⁰

Over the past few decades, many writers have advocated a canonical approach to biblical interpretation. They suggest that even the arrangement of the biblical canon should influence how we interpret the Bible.⁵¹ Various scholars suggest the order and grouping of the biblical books give insight into how earlier faith communities understood the Bible's message. Precisely how the shape of the canon should affect our reading of Scripture is a matter of debate. Nevertheless, the canon, to some degree, can serve as "a control for the interpretive task."⁵²

How a letter, story, or even major sections of the canon are arranged gives strong evidence for (1) which oral teachings were emphasized prior to the writing of the text and (2) the presumed narrative/biblical context of a given teaching. While different readings will contest certain details about an interpretation, various macrostructures are still able to capture key emphases that transcend individual passages. Literary macrostructures serve to frame a writer's message in a way that guides readers to discern his main contours of thought (such as themes, logic, and points of emphasis). In short, these macrostructures represent the framework that organizes the canon.

Given their scale, macrostructures are far less susceptible to manipulation by contingencies (such as by the whims of a writer, editor, local community, or situation). Such large-scale frameworks reflect either the authors' concentrated literary effort or the driving force of their understanding made manifest in their carefully-stylized presentation. These macrostructures are likely to demonstrate the authors' intentionality to stress certain ideas over others.⁵³ Thus, interpreters are warranted in giving epistemological and theological priority to those ideas conveyed by the macrostructure.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ For a brief foray into this debate concerning oral and literate methodologies, see Wes Seng, "Symposium: Has the Use of Orality Been Taken Too Far?" *EMQ* 52 (2016): 160–71, which includes replies from four respondents.

⁵¹ For a recent sample of relevant publications, see Brevard S. Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Craig G. Bartholomew et al., eds., *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 7 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006); Matthew Emerson, *Christ and the New Creation: A Canonical Approach to the Theology of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014).

⁵² Ched Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible: Exploring the History and Hermeneutics of the Canon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014), 220.

⁵³ Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible*, 101–41.

⁵⁴ By "epistemological priority," I refer to how one distinguishes the clarity of a given interpretation. Readers must compare the strength of different perceived insights. Which ideas are clearer than others? By "theological priority," I refer to the emphasis given to certain theological themes, doctrines or passages. For instance, the

Ministry practitioners can draw important insights from scholarly studies that explore the relationship between the canon and interpretation. For example, given that the canon suggests a fundamental narrative, interpretive and theological framework, what applications follow? The shape of the canon can highlight themes that teachers need to prioritize or are prone to neglect due to their own theological biases. From a canonical perspective, Birger Gerhardsson's comments about oral texts can be applied to the Bible. He says, "There was however a somewhat different way of learning an oral text collection. It was first learned as a whole; analysis and interpretation was undertaken later."⁵⁵

The ordering of books and groups of books within the canon might be suggestive. It is well known that the Pentateuch has pride of place within the OT, both in terms of position and influence. Accordingly, the entire OT should be read in view of the Pentateuch. A similar argument can be made that the Gospels serve a similar function in the NT. Others even argue that in the early church, "Romans was shortly received as the introduction of the Pauline corpus, from its content, position, and majestic formulation of the Pauline gospel."⁵⁶

Aside from possible hermeneutical implications, we can surmise practical applications. For example, what people hear or read first has a disproportionate effect on how they understand what follows. Cognitive science confirms this insight. In addition, the metaphors we use and the way we frame a message strongly influence people's interpretation and response to that message thereafter.⁵⁷ Those who do contextualization ought carefully to consider what content they share first as well as how they frame that message.

In order to contextualize theology in a biblically faithful manner, Christians must recognize the canonical framework, which establishes limits and prioritizes for how teachers interpret and communicate biblical truth. The observation that canonical structure influences our understanding of the text not only should shape how Christians share the biblical story; it even raises questions about the way missionaries are trained. How many training programs prepare missionaries to consider the broad range of factors that affect exegesis?

Finally, we consider the composition and purpose of the canon. The composition of canon helps to confirm and protect the church's collective identity. Narrative constitutes the largest portion of the canon. Scholars across many disciplines argue that narrative serves a key purpose by reinforcing collective memory. Put simply, people use stories to form a shared social identity.⁵⁸ The stories of Scripture solidified the collective identity of God's people in the Bible.

Abrahamic covenant has far more theological significance than whatever possible conclusions one might draw from the fact that the Spirit "carried Philip away [to] Azotus" after baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:39–40).

⁵⁵ Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, trans. Eric J. Sharpe, rev. ed., Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 117.

⁵⁶ Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul*, 69. Recent interpreters using a canonical approach include Emerson, *Christ and the New Creation*.

⁵⁷ See Sanders, *Theology in the Flesh*, 45–80, 203–41.

⁵⁸ For a survey of this topic relative to biblical studies, see Ritva Williams, "Social Memory," *BTB* 41 (2011): 189–200; On the use of the exodus event to undergird social memory, see Ronald Hendel, "The Exodus in Biblical Memory," *JBL* 120 (2001): 601–22.

A contextualized approach to ministry among oral-preference learners will account for the role of both telling stories and highlighting narrative passages in Scripture.⁵⁹ The use of story and narrative are important for sound contextualization. James Slack reminds missionaries, “Memory is affected by the form or style of the information that has been told and heard by the oral communicator.”⁶⁰ Stories help learners recall the biblical message and grasp its significance. In this way, contextualization can foster a strong sense of collective identity in the church.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined the relationship between the doctrine of Scripture and contextualization. We saw that our doctrine of Scripture carries practical implications. It affects how we understand and implement contextualization. The foregoing study has explored four key areas to support this conclusion.

First, we highlighted a few implications of *biblical inspiration*. One reason all theology is contextualized is that God uses ancient cultures to reveal himself. In the Bible, he reveals himself to all nations, which makes contextualization both possible and necessary. God inspired various passages to have differing emphases. Therefore, contextualization must account for the meaning of each text within its original cultural and canonical context, not allowing theological tradition to undermine biblically faithful contextualization.

Second, we considered the significance of *biblical authority* on contextualization. Contrary to the impression of some people, we cannot completely disentangle the Bible and culture. Biblical truth is manifested and understood in concrete cultural forms. We all read the Bible within a specific cultural context. This fact does not undermine biblical authority but rather compels us to approach the task of contextualization with greater intentionality and humility.

Third, our study clarified the relationship between *biblical inerrancy*, infallibility, and orality. The Bible’s oral background shapes much of the written form we have today. This historical insight sheds light on contemporary methods of contextualization, particularly those used in oral-preference contexts. In order to contextualize the biblical message effectively, contemporary missionaries need rigorous training in hermeneutics.

Fourth, those engaging in contextualization can benefit from research on the *biblical canon* and canonical interpretation. The fact that we have a written Bible is significant. Our methods of contextualization must be flexible, yet the written text establishes firm limits on how people can (or cannot) interpret and teach the Bible. Also, the written text guards against syncretism and errant dogmatism. Finally, the narrative structure and composition of the canon appear to have several practical implications for contextualization.

This essay offers only an initial framework to relate contextualization and the doctrine of the Bible. No doubt, missionaries and theologians will identify countless other insights upon further reflection. One goal of this short study is simply to spur readers on to find more ways to bring biblical studies and missiology into closer conversation. In doing so, we will find that the Bible can shape both our message *and* our methods.

⁵⁹ In contrast, in Western Christianity, didactic passages seem to exert disproportionate influence on systematic theology texts.

⁶⁰ James B. Slack, “Oral Memory and Its Implications Concerning Chronological Bible Storying,” 16 September 2004, <http://mediaassets.imb.org/files/83/8350/8350-46113.pdf>.

The Insights and Shortcomings of Kantian Ethics: Signposts Signaling the Truthfulness of Christian Ethics

— Zachary Breitenbach —

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Abstract: Immanuel Kant proposed what he considered to be the one true ethical system—a system rooted in pure reason, without recourse to grounding morality in God, that sought to explain universal moral truth. This article argues that Kant’s ethical system, despite grounding morality purely in reason and in light of its own philosophical failures, contains significant insights that serve to illuminate the philosophical attractiveness of key biblical ethical principles. The article highlights three insightful objectives of Kant’s ethical view and compares them to three crucial ethical principles that are taught in the Bible. It then contends that Kant’s view of ethics fails to accomplish his desired objectives and makes the case that a biblical understanding of ethics succeeds. The shortcomings of Kantian ethics serve as a signpost to the truth of Christian ethics.

Few ethical systems have been as influential or as hotly debated in Western philosophy as the one proposed by Immanuel Kant. Kant, living when reason was king in eighteenth-century Enlightenment Europe, proposed what he considered to be the one true ethical system—a system rooted in pure reason, without recourse to grounding morality in God, that sought to explain universal moral truth.¹ This article will argue that Kant’s ethical system, despite grounding morality purely in reason and in light of its own philosophical failures, contains significant insights that serve to illuminate the philosophical attractiveness of key biblical ethical principles.

¹ John E. Hare, *The Moral Gap: Kantian Ethics, Human Limits, and God’s Assistance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996). Though it is not clear, Hare thinks Kant might have believed traditional Christian doctrines (see pp. 38, 48). God is important to Kantian ethics in that God ensures that virtue and happiness align and that the moral law can be perfectly fulfilled; however, for Kant, we will see that moral law springs from reason. God is not its source.

To accomplish this, I will highlight three important objectives of Kant's ethical view and compare them to three critical principles of a biblical perspective on ethics. Kant emphasizes: (1) the existence of objective and universally-binding moral values and duties that require an intrinsic "Good" to ground objective morality; (2) the principle of "moral worth" that incorporates insightful appeal to the role of motive in ethics; and (3) the belief that humans have inherent value. Kant's justification for these three contentions will be juxtaposed with the rationale for the biblical ethical principles that: (1) God himself is the intrinsic "Good" that grounds objective morality; (2) moral worth is found in honoring God by willing and acting in accordance with God's will; and (3) God provides a superior basis for ascribing value and respect to human beings.

After briefly surveying Kant's ethical perspective, I will first show how Kant, in spite of his exclusion of God from morality's foundation, offers several key insights that help to establish the tenability and attractiveness of these biblical principles. Then, I will demonstrate how Kant's view of ethics fails to accomplish his own desired objectives and how a biblical understanding of ethics succeeds. Note that, for the purposes of this article, a "biblical understanding of ethics" refers to a general Christian ethical approach that draws upon the Bible and minimally includes the three biblical principles identified above. Certainly there are a variety of nuanced positions that a Christian ethicist might hold, but this article will defend these three particular ethical principles that are widely recognized as biblical.

1. An Overview of Kant's View of Ethics

Kant was born in 1724 in Königsberg, Germany, and he lived there until his death in 1804. A crucial influence on Kant that was especially formative to his ethical approach is the Enlightenment thinking that was at its height in Europe during his lifetime. Kant was a staunch defender of the Enlightenment ideal of human autonomy and the lofty capabilities of human reason.² He viewed the Enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-incurred tutelage." By "tutelage," Kant means "man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another."³ He encouraged people to stop blindly following the traditions of others and claimed that the "motto of enlightenment" is: "Have courage to use your own reason!"⁴ Indeed, as we will see, autonomous human reason (i.e., our ability on our own to use the mind's conceptual schemes to generate knowledge) is the very foundation of Kant's ethical theory.

For Kant, reason exists in the human mind prior to and independent of experience, and it ultimately produces the basis for objective moral truth. Kant spurned the idea put forth by empiricists like David Hume that all synthetic knowledge is *a posteriori* (i.e., known only after using our sense experience). While empiricists were arguing that morality is a human construction based entirely upon human experiences, feelings, and desires, Kant was insisting that "there really exist pure moral laws which entirely *a priori* (without regard to empirical motives, that is, happiness) determine the use of the freedom of any rational being, both with regard to what has to be done and what has not to be done."⁵

² R. Scott Smith, *In Search of Moral Knowledge: Overcoming the Fact-Value Dichotomy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 94.

³ Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?," in *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), 85.

⁴ Kant, "What is Enlightenment?," 85.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, in *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: In Commemoration of the Centenary of its First Publication*, trans. F. Max Müller, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1907), 647.

These “pure moral laws” that reason produces are “imperative” and “in every respect necessary” because they are rooted in reason and not contingent upon human experience.⁶

But how does pure reason produce “necessary” moral laws that are objective and universally binding? Kant’s answer is that reason alone produces an intrinsic “good” that serves to ground objective morality—the “good will,” which is the rational faculty that recognizes moral duty. This “good will” is not an instrumental good that merely produces other goods; rather, “it is good only because of its willing, i.e., it is good of itself.” Even if circumstances should not allow the good will to be put to use, it would still be intrinsically good and would “sparkle like a jewel in its own right, as something that had its full worth in itself.”⁷ The good will is the only good “which could be called good without qualification.” As such, the good will is able to discern what Kant considers to be the “supreme principle of morality”⁸ that serves to generate our moral duties—the categorical imperative (CI).

Although Kant considers the CI to be one cohesive principle, it comprises three formulations. The first formulation, the Principle of Universal Law, states, “I should never act in such a way that I could not also will that my maxim should be a universal law.”⁹ If reason dictates that we could will that a maxim should be applied universally, then it becomes our moral duty to act on that maxim; conversely, if we could not rationally will to universalize a maxim, then it is our duty not to act on it.

It is important to see that Kant’s CI is intended to generate duties that are morally obligatory and not optional or contingent upon the desires of any person. Kant contrasts the idea of a “hypothetical” imperative with his concept of a “categorical” imperative. A hypothetical imperative “says only that an action is good for some purpose,” but the CI “declares the action to be of itself objectively necessary without making any reference to a purpose.”¹⁰ Kant provides a number of examples to illustrate how the Principle of Universal Law reveals to us our moral duties independent of desire. In one example, Kant describes a man who needs to borrow money but does not have the means to repay what he needs to borrow. The man is considering accepting the following maxim: “When I believe myself to be in need of money, I will borrow money and promise to repay it, although I know I shall never do so.” Kant argues that when the man applies the Principle of Universal Law to this maxim, the man will discover that the maxim cannot be universalized and is, therefore, morally wrong. It cannot be universalized, Kant says, because that would make “the promise itself and the end to be accomplished by it impossible; no one would believe what was promised to him but would only laugh at any such assertion as vain pretense.”¹¹ Thus, regardless of what the man wants to do, reason dictates that his objective moral duty is to reject that maxim and not make the lying promise. If everyone in such a situation made a lying promise then a contradiction would result because the man’s goal of obtaining a loan would not be possible. Kant wants to say that it is this contradiction and not the consequences of undermining loans that makes reason demand the rejection of this maxim.

⁶Kant, *Critique*, 647.

⁷Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), 10.

⁸Kant, *Foundations*, 8–9.

⁹Kant, *Foundations*, 18.

¹⁰Kant, *Foundations*, 31–32.

¹¹Kant, *Foundations*, 40.

The second formulation of the CI, the Principle of Ends, states, “Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only.” Kant upholds the inherent value of humans on the same basis that he argues for objective morality—pure reason. Kant argues that humans, as “rational beings,” are by nature “ends in themselves” and “objects of respect.”¹² This is because every person “necessarily” thinks of himself as a valuable end in himself because he has a “rational nature” that grounds value—nothing can be valued without rational beings to do the valuing.¹³ This argument of Kant is sometimes called the “regress” argument because “by regressing on the condition of value, it is possible to derive the intrinsic value of rational nature itself.”¹⁴ The second formulation of the CI ensures that no maxim that devalues a rational person can be acceptably universalized.

The third formulation, the Principle of Autonomy, states, “Never choose except in such a way that the maxims of the choice are comprehended in the same volition as a universal law.”¹⁵ Given the first two formulations, it is clear that Kant’s theory has no need for a transcendent being to generate moral law for humanity. In this final formulation, Kant emphasizes that the good will of a rational being is sufficient for determining absolute moral law. Humans have the autonomous ability to legislate moral values and duties. In fact, Kant holds that God himself, along with all rational beings, can only be good by adhering to the CI. He declares, “Even the Holy One of the Gospel must be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before He is recognized as such.... But whence do we have the concept of God as the highest good? Solely from the idea of moral perfection which reason formulates *a priori*.”¹⁶

Another concept that is especially critical to Kantian ethics is “moral worth.” For Kant, “moral worth” means moral praiseworthiness. An agent’s action has moral worth if it is in accordance with duty *and* the agent is motivated to do the action out of duty. This means that the motivation of an agent is critical, and Kant even asserts that an action done out of duty that is contrary to one’s natural inclination results in the “highest”¹⁷ moral worth of all. Kant regards it as unthinkable that subjective feelings could have any bearing on moral motivation. While Kant thinks God, who lives up to the moral law perfectly, gives us hope that the moral law can be perfectly fulfilled, at the same time he does not allow such hope to be our motivation for being moral. Rational duty must be our motivation in order for our action to have moral worth.

Having briefly surveyed the core points of Kant’s view of ethics, we will now examine how the three key principles of a biblical understanding of ethics identified previously are plausible by comparing them to Kant’s view of ethics. We begin by seeing how Kant’s ethical perspective offers positive insights that support the tenability and attractiveness of these biblical ethical principles.

¹² Kant, *Foundations*, 46–47.

¹³ Kant, *Foundations*, 47.

¹⁴ Evan Tiffany, “How Kantian Must Kantian Constructivists Be?” *Inquiry* 49 (2006): 540.

¹⁵ Kant, *Foundations*, 59.

¹⁶ Kant, *Foundations*, 25. Kant sees the “highest good” as the conjunction of virtue and happiness. Notably, he thinks only God can bring about such a condition; however, God is only good by perfectly living up to the CI as demanded by reason.

¹⁷ Kant, *Foundations*, 15.

2. *Insights from Kant's View of Ethics*

Kant's ethical system offers a number of insights that help to reveal the soundness of a biblical understanding of ethics. Consider the first biblical principle that was introduced above, which states that objective and universal moral values and duties exist, and that God is the intrinsic good that grounds their existence. This traditional view sees God as the basis of objective morality such that the truths of morality are found in God and are fully independent of all human opinions and beliefs. The Bible portrays God as the very foundation and standard for universally-binding morality. Support for this concept can be gleaned from numerous biblical passages. We are commanded to be holy because of God's holy character (Lev 19:1–2). God is maximally holy (threefold repetition of “holy”) and exposes our sinfulness (Isa 6:1–5). Jesus states that “no one is good—except God alone” (Mark 10:18). God alone is the standard. Although Kant rejects the idea that God grounds morality, he does correctly recognize the reality of objective morality and the need for an intrinsic “good” that must provide some ontological basis for it.

There is great wisdom in Kant's passionate rejection of all ethical systems that cast morality as a human construct that is relative to the desires of individuals or the whims of culture. Morality must be objective and universal to be truly normative, and normativity is seemingly a necessary feature of any adequate ethical system. Moral relativism, if true, would make moral criticism impossible such that morality would fall apart. Kant recognizes this and harshly condemns ethical relativism for making morality out to be a “bastard patched up from limbs of very different parentage, which looks like anything one wishes to see in it.”¹⁸

Kant appears to be correct that objective morality must be grounded in an intrinsic “good” that has “its full worth in itself.”¹⁹ He saw that if there is no objective good that serves as the incorruptible standard of moral perfection, then the subjectivity that destroys the prescriptivity of morality cannot be avoided. As C. S. Lewis rightly observed, “The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard.... You are, in fact, comparing them both with some Real Morality.”²⁰ Plato recognized this as well when he postulated the idea of a “Good” form that serves as the objective basis by which anything can be called good. Plato saw that the “Good” must exist independent of all appearances and human conventions. Recounting the words of Socrates in Plato's cave allegory, Plato writes of this “Good” as that which is the ultimate “cause of all that is correct and beautiful,” even though we often see it in only a distorted way in this world.²¹ As long as morality is truly an objective reality, as it apparently must be, then both Kantian and biblical ethics are correct in affirming an intrinsically good moral standard as a foundation.

Kant also provides insight concerning the second principle of biblical ethics that was outlined above by affirming that moral worth depends on our motives and not just our actions. As discussed previously, Kant only allows for an agent's action to have moral worth if the action is in accordance with moral duty and the agent is motivated to do the action *out of* moral duty. Similarly, the Bible indicates that God is concerned not only with our actions but also our motivations and our will. God does not merely base

¹⁸ Kant, *Foundations*, 44.

¹⁹ Kant, *Foundations*, 10.

²⁰ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, reprint ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 13.

²¹ Plato, *Republic*, 517b (*Plato's Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube and C. D. C. Reeve, Hackett Classics [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992], 189).

the moral worth of a person's action on whether the act itself is in accordance with his commands; rather, the motivation of the agent to act in a God-honoring way is also critical. For example, the apostle Paul writes that God wants us to "will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil 2:13). The scribes and Pharisees "do all their deeds to be noticed by men," and Jesus condemns this motivation (Matt 23:1–12). Even good works, such as prayer, must not be done with a wrong motive (Matt 6:1–6). All food is acceptable to eat, but if one is convinced that eating a certain food is wrong and does it anyway, he is morally guilty (Rom 14:14, 23). So, in Scripture, the action done by a person is not the only thing that is significant in terms of moral praiseworthiness; one's motivations and reasons for acting matter greatly.

Louis Pojman rightly points out that the benefit of an ethical system that accounts for motive is that "two acts may appear identical on the surface, but one may be judged morally blameworthy and the other excusable" depending on the motive of the agents carrying out the acts.²² Kant captures this truth, and he realizes that one's commitment to one's moral duty will sometimes require one to contradict one's own natural inclinations. For example, Kant's contention that "love as an inclination cannot be commanded" is theologically insightful and attractive.²³ While some critics find such dutiful love to be cold and uncaring, Kant is surely correct that love for others must be more than a feeling that we are either inclined or disinclined to have if love is truly a moral duty.²⁴ In the same way, biblical ethics involves the command to love others—even one's enemy—regardless of inclination (Matt 5:44).

Finally, Kant's agreement with the third of our biblical principles—that humans are inherently valuable and deserve respect—is also intuitively attractive. Although the next section will explore the difficulties Kant has in justifying the value of humans independently from God, Kantian and biblical ethics share the advantage of being in accord with the nearly universal sense that human life is valuable. Most people would agree that it is "difficult, if not impossible," to deny our moral sense that there is something valuable about human life, and denying that human value is an objective reality "runs counter to our most basic feelings."²⁵ While this widely-held moral sense that humans have value does not prove that humans really are valuable, any ethical theory that is in accord with such a prominent aspect of our moral experience is to be preferred. With these insights of Kant in mind, let us now examine how the shortfalls of Kant's view of ethics highlight the greater tenability of the three specified biblical principles of ethics.

3. Biblical Ethics Succeeds Where Kant Falls Short

In comparing the three proposed biblical principles of ethics with Kantian ethics, it is evident that both Kant and the biblical principles aim to achieve many of the same objectives despite having different foundations to ground morality. Kant's understanding of ethics, however, proves to be less plausible when his justification for objective morality, his requirements for moral worth, and his argument that humans possess inherent value are compared with a biblical view of ethics.

²² Louis Pojman, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, 6th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009), 11. For example, it seems that a man who helps an elderly lady across the street to impress his friends should be judged as less morally praiseworthy than a man who does this same action out of a sense of moral responsibility.

²³ Kant, *Foundations*, 16.

²⁴ Julia Driver, *Ethics: The Fundamentals* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 86.

²⁵ Burton Frederick Porter, *The Good Life: Alternatives in Ethics*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 85.

Kant departs from the first biblical principle by grounding objective morality in the “good will” that is produced by reason in every rational creature. In accord with the Enlightenment ideals of human autonomy and reason, we legislate morality apart from God. Careful attention must be given to how well Kantian ethics can justify this point philosophically, and it must be compared to the philosophical justification that the biblical understanding of ethics can provide. This is key, as both views stand or fall with the ability that their intrinsic “good” has to ground objective morality.

The classic problem that confronts any moral system that claims some absolute standard as the ground of objective morality is the Euthyphro dilemma. This dilemma, which goes back to the time of Plato, questions whether God’s commands could really determine what is good (or “pious”). Plato records that Socrates poses the following dilemma to Euthyphro: “Is the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?”²⁶

Both horns of this dilemma are a challenge to any proposed absolute standard of goodness. For any purported standard of objective morality, one can ask whether that standard merely recognizes goodness (i.e., goodness is external to the standard) or whether that standard determines goodness arbitrarily. Consider first whether the biblical understanding of ethics is able to defend that the Christian God is plausibly the ground of objective morality in the face of this challenge. It will not do for objective morality to be arbitrary (if good is *merely* what God says), and God cannot ground objective morality if there is a standard of morality outside of God (if God simply affirms what is independently good). Fortunately for biblical ethics, there is a third alternative—God himself is the “Good.” The third alternative is that “God’s own holy and perfectly good nature supplies the absolute standard against which all actions and decisions are measured. God’s moral nature is what Plato called the ‘Good.’ He is the locus and source of moral value.”²⁷ So God *is* the Good. God’s will and essentially holy nature are fused such that God only wills that which is consistent with his nature. God is not an arbitrary “stopping point” for morality’s foundation, as there are “principled reasons to think that God’s existence is necessary and that God functions as the very ground of being.” If God is the “primordial good of unsurpassable value,” then goodness is anchored in an unchanging, personal, and necessarily perfect source.²⁸ It is reasonable that the ground of objective morality would have these properties; morality seems to be essentially bound up with personhood, and anything that would ground *objective* morality would have to be unchanging and beyond human opinion.

Although the biblical grounding of objective morality in God’s holy nature appears to survive the Euthyphro dilemma, Kant’s “good will” does not fare as well. Kant may seem to split the horns of the dilemma by claiming that the good will is intrinsically and necessarily good. The problem, however, is that there is no reason why the good will must be good “without qualification” in the way Kant says it is. Louis Pojman raises the problem that the good will itself—the rational faculty that recognizes the CI as the supreme moral principle—could potentially be “put to bad uses.” Although the good will seems to be a good, Pojman insightfully recognizes that it is “not obvious” that the good will is necessarily good or that it is “the only inherently good thing” since a “misguided do-gooder” could act in accordance with

²⁶ Plato, *Euthyphro*, 10a (*The Trial and Death of Socrates*, 3rd ed., trans. G. M. A. Grube and John M. Cooper [Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000], 11).

²⁷ J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 491.

²⁸ David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *God and Cosmos: Moral Truth and Human Meaning* (Oxford: University Press, 2016), 286.

what he believes is good and yet carry out what most of us regard as bad actions. Perhaps the good will is a “necessary condition to any morally good action,” but it does not seem to be sufficient.²⁹

Ultimately, for Kant, the good will is intimately tied to the principle that it produces—the CI and its requirement of universalizability. The problem is that universalizability is unable to stand as the ultimate moral criterion. For one thing, Kant does not adequately specify parameters for the characteristics of a maxim that is appropriate to universalize as moral law. Aside from the limitation that a maxim must not violate the Principle of Ends, Kant “provides no guide for determining what features must be included in the maxim.” This leaves open the door for morally problematic actions “to be based on a maxim that a person would universalize.”³⁰ Also, it is highly dubious that reason necessarily produces the same conclusions in all rational beings. For example, one could justifiably will to universalize the maxim that “one should always tell the truth no matter what consequence might come about as a result.” Indeed, Kant believed that reason demands the acceptance of this maxim. Yet many would argue that reason demands the acceptance of the maxim that “one should tell the truth unless doing so would harm others.” It is unclear which maxim is necessitated by reason, and both positions have defenders. This example also highlights the difficulty the CI has in handling moral conflicts.³¹

If, however, God’s unchanging and necessarily good character is the intrinsic “Good,” then there is no concern about disagreements among rational human persons as to what should be universalized—that is, what is good. Only God, out of his necessarily holy nature, stands as the ontological ground of goodness, and conflicting human beliefs are irrelevant to the existence of objective morality. With biblical ethics, the existence of moral values and duties (moral ontology) does not depend upon the conclusions we reach as we try to know what these moral values and duties are (moral epistemology). What happens when two maxims that appear to be legitimately justifiable according to our best human reason disagree with each other? If objective morality is rooted in God, then such a situation is irrelevant to moral ontology.

In addition to providing a better foundation for objective moral values, having a biblical ground of ethics can adequately justify moral duties while the Kantian ground of ethics cannot. Since biblical ethics grounds objective morality in God, God’s commands are justifiably our moral duties because they are derived from his essentially holy nature.³² Biblical ethics is able to sustain itself as a truly deontological ethical system (i.e., a system that accounts for moral duties). On the other hand, although Kant would deny it, significant voices have charged that Kant’s good will is unable to produce true moral duties without appealing to a more subjective consequentialist justification for them. The famous utilitarian ethicist John Stuart Mill, for example, claims that the CI does not avoid seemingly “immoral” actions on purely logical grounds; rather, he says Kant merely shows “that the consequences of their universal adoption would be such as no one would choose to incur.”³³ Mill has a valid point. Some seemingly immoral maxims do not lead to any obvious contradiction if universalized, though we can see that the consequences of universalizing them would be morally bad and may produce a negative result. For example, consider the maxim that “two consenting adults who are not already in a committed

²⁹ Pojman, *Discovering Right and Wrong*, 127.

³⁰ Bernard Gert, *Morality: Its Nature and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 306.

³¹ Baggett and Walls, *God and Cosmos*, 167.

³² William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 182.

³³ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), 5.

relationship should always have sex with each other if they desire to do so.” The universal acceptance of this maxim would not in any way lead to a logical contradiction that would undermine the very practice of the maxim, and it is not obvious that the Principle of Ends is being violated since both individuals are consenting and may well have a legitimate interest in the wellbeing of the other person; however, one can reasonably will that this maxim should not be universalized because of the consequences it would have. Such promiscuity is known to carry a heavy emotional weight for those who engage in it, and it also raises the likelihood of the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Such behavior also makes it more difficult to form meaningful committed relationships, which one can reasonably argue have significant value. In fact, there are actually “Kantian consequentialists,” such as R. M. Hare and David Gauthier.³⁴ Gauthier argues that Kant’s ethical system “is consistent with and supports a consequentialist normative principle” even though Kant sought a fully deontological system of ethics.³⁵ If that is the case, then it is hard to see how Kant’s good will allows for objective moral duties; however, because God himself is the necessary “Good” and his nature produces moral truth that is essential and binding upon us, moral duties transcend humans, and their existence does not depend upon our own assessment of what actions will probably produce “good” consequences. It is not clear that Kant’s CI is able to account for the full range of objective duties that are binding on us and that it can do this without recourse to subjective human considerations of consequences.

Moreover, the authority and bindingness of moral duties seems to be much stronger and more plausible if the source of these duties is a person rather than something impersonal, such as “reason.” Merely “acting and thinking rationally does not constitute a full explanation of moral belief and practice. Moral obligation carries extra clout and punch, which needs accounting for.”³⁶ When we fall short of our moral duties, we sense that we are guilty in a sense that goes beyond simply violating a principle of reason. Locating the source of moral authority in an essentially holy personal God better explains the objective guilt that seems to accompany violating one’s moral duty. In view of all these considerations, the biblical ethical principle that the standard and basis of all goodness is found in God is quite plausible, and this fact is highlighted by the apparent problems that Kant’s system has in establishing the good will as the one intrinsic good that grounds objective morality.

Moving to the second principle of biblical ethics, Kant’s insight in agreeing with the biblical principle that moral worth depends on our motives as well as our actions has been noted; however, Kant’s view of moral worth proves to be too narrow when compared to the biblical assessment of moral worth. As Joseph Kotva points out, Kantian ethics and all ethical theories that are based *strictly* upon “rules or duty” are at a disadvantage in accounting for the biblical recognition that the moral life is more than rules. Kant fails to see that life is a “race” that requires ongoing character development. While Scripture goes beyond virtue ethics, it captures its insights. We are constantly to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” as we model ourselves after Christ (Heb 12:1–2). Paul emphasizes the need to develop such virtues as “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22–23), and he exhorts others to grow in character by following his example as he follows Christ (1 Cor 11:1). While Christian ethics certainly has a strong deontological component,

³⁴ John E. Hare, *The Moral Gap*, 18–19. Hare notes that R. M. Hare is a Kantian who believes he is consistent with Kant in applying act-utilitarianism to Kant’s CI to determine whether an act should be universalized.

³⁵ David Gauthier, *Kantian Consequentialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 9.

³⁶ Baggett and Walls, *God and Cosmos*, 176. This quote is in the context of showing a limitation of Erik Wielenberg’s secular approach to ethics, but this particular criticism applies to Kantian ethics as well.

Kotva rightly points out the biblical emphasis on developing virtues and constantly struggling for moral growth in order to become a person of greater character.³⁷

The key shortfall of Kant's view of moral worth is that he does not credit moral worth to a person who grows in character such that she no longer does an action out of rational duty but out of modified and improved inclination. Kant is clear that there can be no moral worth involved when an agent is "so sympathetically constituted" that she performs kind acts out of the pure joy of doing them rather than a sense of duty.³⁸ While biblical ethics would applaud someone of such character who enjoys doing virtuous things, Kant does not recognize such a person as morally praiseworthy. He thus fails to capture the value of moral growth and the fact that one should strive both to "will and act" according to what is good (Phil 2:13). While feeling joy from doing what is good should not be our sole moral motivation, David Baggett and Jerry Walls are surely correct that "normal healthy human considerations of self-interest are a perfectly legitimate part of moral motivation."³⁹

Therefore, although Kant is certainly right that duties such as the command to love others should be done regardless of inclination, loving others is something that we ought to work towards *wanting* to do so that the duty does not have to be against inclination. Finding joy in doing what is good is a mark of moral development and personal character, and the Bible more completely captures this. Such character is exemplified in Jesus, who endured the agony of the cross "for the joy set before him" (Heb 12:2).

Finally, Kant's view of ethics falls short of the third biblical ethical principle in terms of justifying the idea that humans possess value. We have seen that Kant attempts to ground the intrinsic value of humanity in our rationality. Kant argues that pure reason forces us to the conclusion that humans must have value because nothing can be valued without rational beings to do the valuing. In contrast, biblical ethics holds that humans have value in virtue of being made in the "image of God" (Gen 1:26–27). Human value is based on "the relationship for which we were created" rather than because of any "distinguishing characteristic" found in human capabilities.⁴⁰ This is attractive; for if human value is rooted in a capacity like reason or rationality, then how can the value of babies or those with brain damage be upheld?⁴¹ The reason that the biblical justification for the value of humans is superior to Kant's follows from the earlier point that God is a far more credible "stopping point" for objective morality than the good will.

If God truly is the ultimate "Good," then perhaps human rationality is an instrumental good rather than an intrinsic good. Rather than agreeing with Kant that the "rational nature" of humans is itself sufficient for regarding humans as "ends in themselves,"⁴² it may be that rationality functions as an instrumental good in so far as it allows us to have a relationship with the one true source of ultimate value—God himself. If that is the case, then Kant is correct in valuing rationality but wrong in thinking that it has intrinsic value.

³⁷ Joseph J. Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 156.

³⁸ Kant, *Foundations*, 14. Kant believed happiness must result from moral living for us to press on in the moral life, but our motivation to be moral must be duty and not happiness. See Hare, *The Moral Gap*, 76–78.

³⁹ Baggett and Walls, *God and Cosmos*, 266.

⁴⁰ Stanley Grenz, *The Moral Quest* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 217.

⁴¹ Baggett and Walls, *God and Cosmos*, 117.

⁴² Kant, *Foundations*, 46.

Beyond the automatic implications that locating objective morality in God has for human value, careful consideration of the question of human value by itself reveals that humans, if they are to justify having truly *objective* value, must justify their value by appealing to something outside of themselves. If humans consider themselves intrinsically valuable merely because they value themselves, then how can David Hume's is-ought problem be avoided? Just because it *is* the case that humans tend to ascribe value to their own lives and the lives of other people does not mean that we necessarily *ought* to do so.

Finally, there is a sort of argument from contingency that points to God as the proper justification for human value and dignity. Kant and many others have claimed that we are the sort of beings who have intrinsic value.⁴³ But even if Kant were right that our rationality provides a basis for intrinsic human value, this would not negate the fact that God is necessary for us to have value because "relationality and intrinsicity are neither at odds nor mutually exclusive."⁴⁴ If there is no possible world in which beings like us could exist apart from God, then there is no reason in principle why our value could not come from both our relationship to God as well as the intrinsic qualities God has given us. Paul Copan argues that morality and value are "necessarily connected" with personhood. Since an essential attribute of God is that he exists necessarily and is the ontological ground of all other persons, morality and value would be impossible without God.⁴⁵ Using this logic, it is plausible that the source of intrinsic value can only be found in a necessarily existing person. Thus, in response to Kant's view that the mere possession of rationality endows all rational creatures with intrinsic value, one must ask on what basis humans exist to have rationality. God, if he does exist as Kant himself believed, is the only reason that there is rationality. Even if it were true, as Kant claims, that rationality brings about value, God is the source of rationality. Ultimately, in view of these considerations, the biblical justification for human value appears more plausible and legitimate than Kant's justification.

4. Conclusion

The three biblical principles of ethics proposed in this article appear to be eminently plausible when held up to philosophical scrutiny. Because Kant, without grounding morality in God, sought to achieve many of the same goals that these biblical principles accomplish, Kantian ethics serves as an instructive signpost pointing to the plausibility of biblical ethics. Morality must be objective and universal if it is to avoid the total collapse that relativism ensures. Kant is undoubtedly correct in recognizing this. Furthermore, we have seen that objective morality—to be truly objective—must have a plausible absolute standard of intrinsic value and goodness that grounds it. Biblical ethics provides a philosophically justifiable basis for accomplishing this by identifying God as that source. In contrast, Kant is unable to legitimize the "good will" as being "good without qualification" and able to produce moral principles and binding duties that are defensibly objective and have an ontological basis that is fully independent of humanity. Biblical ethics also legitimizes the attractive conviction that humans really do have intrinsic value. Kant is right to recognize the truth that humans are "objects of respect" and should be "treated

⁴³Erik Wielenberg, *Robust Ethics: The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Godless Normative Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 83–84. Wielenberg, a secular moral realist, contends that rooting human value in God devalues the intrinsic human value that common sense tells us we have.

⁴⁴Baggett and Walls, *God and Cosmos*, 286.

⁴⁵Paul Copan, "A Moral Argument," in *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*, ed. Francis Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and James Porter Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 113.

as ends,” but he is unable to objectively ground this apparent truth in a justifiable source. God himself is the ultimate standard of goodness and value, and it is only by way of our relationship with God that we, as creatures made in God’s image, can have intimate connection to the ultimate source of value and can ourselves be endowed with objective value.

Hebrews and the Typology of Jonathan Edwards

— Drew Hunter —

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Abstract: In appreciation for the recent resurgence of interest in biblical theology and typological interpretation, this article considers Jonathan Edwards’s typological interpretive practices and principles. The article examines what Jonathan Edwards’s interpretive reflections on Hebrews reveal about his typological interpretation of the Old Testament. The article then shows the unique contribution that Edwards’s principled typological method makes to current discussions about typology and the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament.

For many serious students of Christian Scripture, typological interpretation is either gladly welcomed or firmly rejected.¹ Most, therefore, will either lament or rejoice that the subject of typology “has enjoyed a remarkable resurgence of interest among biblical scholars.”² This revival of attention has surfaced many questions, some new and others old. It also coincides with the contemporary discussion of how to interpret the Bible theologically. The definition and acceptability of typological interpretation remains one of the pressing and debated issues in this conversation. Typological interpretation refers to interpreting a biblical person, event, or institution as an example or pattern that prefigures an ultimate fulfillment in Jesus and the coming of the eschatological age in him.³ Why is this topic so important? Because of its relationship to several other important hermeneutical questions, such as divine authorship of the Bible, the unity of the Bible, exegetical methodology, and the New Testament authors’ use of the Old Testament. Since it touches on such significant and diverse issues,

¹ I am grateful to Dr. Dane Ortlund and Dr. Daniel Treier for their helpful comments and feedback on an early draft of this article.

² Gordon Hugenberger makes this comment over twenty years ago in his essay, “Introductory Notes on Typology,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 331. The interest continues today.

³ This definition is essentially consistent with Daniel J. Treier, “Typology,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 824. Similarly, Francis Foulkes, “The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 366.

decisions about typological hermeneutics “have decisive consequences for theological hermeneutics.”⁴

One way to make progress in this discussion is to take a thoughtful glance backward. One of the common themes for recent theological interpreters is that of recovering the early Church fathers and their hermeneutical practices. A reason for this is their well-known (though often criticized) practice of typological interpretation. With the rise of modern biblical scholarship in 1700s came a rejection of the unity of the Bible, which led to a rejection of the legitimacy of typological hermeneutics. However, this was not universal, for some Protestant theologians thoughtfully maintained a form of typological hermeneutics in the midst of this period.⁵ One such interpreter was the pastor-theologian Jonathan Edwards.

It is in the spirit of recovering the past for the present and future that we’ll consider Edwards’s typological interpretive practices and principles. Specifically, this article considers how Jonathan Edwards’s interpretive reflections on Hebrews reveal his typological interpretation of the Old Testament. As a result of this study, we will consider the unique contribution that Edwards’s principled typological method makes to several current and important theological discussions.

1. Exegetical Examples of Typology in Edwards’s Writings on Hebrews

The primary sources for this study of Edwards’s typology are his interpretive reflections on the book of Hebrews. There is certainly a practical reason for limiting our focus in this way: Edwards’s writings are vast, and it would exceed the limits of this article to provide anything that approaches an exhaustive study of his writings. Yet limiting our study to his reflections on Hebrews is strategic for two reasons. First, from a biblical perspective, Hebrews arguably contains more typological discussion than any other biblical writing.⁶

Second, and most importantly for this study, Edwards considered Hebrews to be the most significant biblical book for the formulation of his own thoughts on typology. Edwards devoted an eight-page private notebook to explaining and defending his view of typology, in which he argues, “the Old Testament state of things was a typical state of things.”⁷ In it he marshals text after text from Hebrews in support of his conclusions—he refers to Hebrews twice as often as any other biblical book.⁸ Further, he wrote in a sermon on Hebrews that “the principle design of the whole Epistle” of Hebrews is to “illustrate” aspects of Christ’s words by types from the Old Testament.⁹ His notes on Hebrews provide

⁴ Treier, “Typology,” 823.

⁵ Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 47.

⁶ Vern Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1987), 118. Poythress claims that Hebrews is the most important text to consider in a discussion of typology and the relationship of the OT and NT.

⁷ Jonathan Edwards, “Types,” in *Typological Writings*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson, Mason I. Lowance Jr., and David H. Watters, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* 11 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 146 (citations of Edwards’s works are hereafter abbreviated *WJE*). The context of Edwards’s use of the word “typical” indicates that this word is equivalent to what most today would call “typological.”

⁸ “Types,” *WJE* 11:146–53. The Hebrews references total 20 times, many of which are full quotes. Second to this is 1 Corinthians at 10 occurrences, with only a few others minimally scattered throughout.

⁹ “Christ’s Sacrifice,” *WJE* 10:595.

us with the clearest window through which to see how Edwards arranges the typological furniture of his hermeneutical house.

Unlike other topics on which he wrote, Edwards's thoughts and interpretive reflections on typology were never brought together and synthesized into a single, comprehensive work. He did not write a lengthy treatise on typology, nor are his exegetical methods clearly organized into any final form that he intended for publication. Yet Stephen Stein notes that although Edwards "wrote no systematic treatise on hermeneutics ... he commented at length on hermeneutical issues in his commentaries and notebooks, his sermons and published works."¹⁰ Therefore, it is to these that we will turn.

Stein organized Edwards's writings into four categories based on their intended audiences.¹¹ The first and largest category consists of exegetical notes in personal notebooks intended for his private study. Some of these comments are entries in his "Miscellanies" notebook, but most are either in his running list of "Notes on Scripture" (over 500 entries, written between 1723 and 1758 and listed in the order in which he wrote them) or in his "Blank Bible," which was a KJV Bible interleaved with blank pages for writing (about 10,000 notes, written between 1730 and 1758). The second category is sermons he wrote for various congregations, 1,200 of which remain today. Third, Edwards left various books and treatises intended for publication that often include biblical exegesis. Fourth, he left several writings incomplete, which he intended to finish for future publication.

As we scan this vast corpus of writings, we find many comments on Hebrews that give a window into Edwards's view of typology. For our purposes, we will organize his typological reflections on Hebrews into two categories. This first step consists of *exegetical examples* from texts that he viewed as typological. The second will then move a step beyond this to Edwards's *theoretical principles* of interpretation.

We begin by considering several places where Edwards's reflection on Hebrews provides us with exegetical examples of his typological interpretation. These examples provide a window into his typological hermeneutics.

1.1. The Typology of Sacrifices and Priesthood

Sacrifice and priesthood are two of the most prominent themes in Hebrews. Therefore, it is likely no coincidence that these are also the most prominent typological examples in Edwards's reflections on this book. In particular, we'll focus on Edwards's reflections on Hebrews 9. In a sermon from this chapter Edwards wrote that the design of the entirety of Hebrews 9 "is to explain these glorious mysteries of Christ's priesthood, mediation, satisfaction, and sacrifice, and to illustrate them by types of them in the Mosaical Dispensation."¹² Edwards focused specifically on Christ's sacrifice and priesthood.

First, in a sermon on Hebrews 9:12 titled, "Christ's Sacrifice," he gave specific attention to the typology of sacrifice later in this same sermon. He wrote, "There always from the very first was such a

¹⁰ Stephen Stein, "Quest for the Spiritual Sense: The Biblical Hermeneutics of Jonathan Edwards," *HTR* 70 (1977): 107.

¹¹ In what follows, Stephen Stein, "The Spirit and the Word: Jonathan Edwards and Scriptural Exegesis," in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 121–22.

¹² *WJE* 10:595.

thing as sacrificing in the world.”¹³ Edwards then made the link to Christ explicit: “Then came the Great Sacrifice himself into the world, the end and antitype of all these things, who was the true sacrifice.”¹⁴ And again, “this sacrifice [of Christ] is illustrated by its types that were abolished by this, its antitype.”¹⁵ Taking his cue from Hebrews, Edwards believed that the sacrifices in the OT were types that pointed forward to the antitypical “true” and “great” sacrifice of Christ.

Edwards later wrote a sermon on Hebrews 9:13–14 which filled out his view of the typology of sacrifice: he claimed that all sacrifices—that of bulls, goats, calves, kids, lambs, sparrows, and turtle doves—pointed to Christ and are fulfilled in him.¹⁶ What he meant by “pointed to” and “fulfilled” is clearly typological, for he wrote that they “represent something in Christ” and that “they are all typical and Christ’s sacrifice is the antitype of them.”¹⁷

Second, Edwards also explained his typological view of the priesthood. Referring to the priesthood of Melchizedek and all the priests in the order of Aaron he states, he stated, “All were types of the [Christ] the Great high Priest.”¹⁸ From Hebrews, Edwards argued that every priest typologically pointed to Jesus Christ.

1.2. The Typological Aspects of the Sacrificial System

Edwards also viewed other aspects of the sacrificial system as typological. In his sermon on Hebrews 9:13–14, Edwards considered the altars of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, together with all that was in the tabernacle, as typological. The “alter of burnt offering,” Edwards argued, “was a type of the divine nature of Christ.”¹⁹ In one of his “Notes on Scripture” (#285), he appealed to the Hebrews author’s statement in 10:20, which refers to “the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.” He concluded that “typical ordinances of the Old Testament are in Scripture represented as Christ’s flesh,” specifically noting that “the veil signified the flesh of Christ (Hebrews 10:20).”²⁰

He also considered the whole ceremonial law and the things included within it as types. He wrote in his second sermon on Hebrews 12:22–24 that these things are “representing and shadowing forth the Redemption of [Christ].”²¹ Later in the same sermon he wrote that Moses was the “typical mediator” of the covenant with God’s people who represents Christ.²²

¹³ *WJE* 10:594. It is important to note that his typology extends beyond the biblical text into what has been labeled “natural typology” in this section as well. He not only views OT sacrifices as types, but even all pagan sacrifices as such.

¹⁴ *WJE* 10:595.

¹⁵ *WJE* 10:595.

¹⁶ “Heb. 9:13–14,” *WJE* 53:L.15v.

¹⁷ *WJE* 53:L.16r.–16v.

¹⁸ *WJE* 53:L.16v.

¹⁹ *WJE* 53:L.10v

²⁰ *WJE* 15:246

²¹ “Heb. 12:22–24 (f),” *WJE* 55:9. For Edwards, “representing” and especially “shadowing” are clearly typological terms.

²² *WJE* 55:13.

1.3. The Typology of Other Institutions

Thus far, we've considered examples that have the Israel's cultic system in view. Three other examples follow that demonstrate a broader understanding of typology. First, Edwards provided an example of a type that pointed to the New Testament church. Within a sermon series on Hebrews 12:22–24, he equated the church with “God's Jerusalem” and stated that it is the antitype of the “Jerusalem of old.”²³ In other words, the city of Jerusalem from the Old Testament was a type of the true Jerusalem (i.e., “God's Jerusalem”), which is the church.

Second, Edwards made a typological connection between Mt. Sinai and God's presence in heaven, following from his understanding of Hebrews 8:5. Edwards explained that Moses's lengthy stay on Mt. Sinai to receive the law pointed beyond itself. “That mount,” wrote Edwards, “when Moses was in it with God, typified heaven, as the Apostle teaches (Hebrews 8:5).”²⁴ He also wrote, reflecting on Moses's death in Deuteronomy 32:50, “Tis evident that heaven is sometimes typified by the top of the mount, by Hebrews 8:5 compared with Hebrews 9:23.”²⁵ In both cases, he appealed to the Hebrews author's argument in Hebrews 8:5 for support. In other words, Edwards is intentionally tethering his typological reflections on the Old Testament to the book of Hebrews.

Finally, Edwards reflected on the typological theme of rest that runs through the storyline of the Bible. In a lengthy note on the theme of rest in Isaiah (#503), he linked this rest to that which Christ gives in Hebrews 4:8–10. From here, he tied it backwards to the salvation-rest of Israel in Exodus. He noted that the previous Exodus salvation pointed forward to a greater salvation and rest that the Messiah was to bring. One of the ways that he supported this connection was through noting that there were various “types and symbols of his presence” such as the tabernacle, ark, and cloud of glory.²⁶

2. *Theoretical Principles of Typology in Edwards's Writings on Hebrews*

The examples above raise several important questions: With what hermeneutical principles did Edwards operate? Was he conscious of his principles? Did he have any controls to his typological reflections? Thankfully, we do not need to speculate at this point; Edwards left behind many theoretical reflections on typology. Such principles are found in some of his exegetical notes such as his “Blank Bible” and “Notes on Scripture,” but they are primarily developed in “Types” and “Types of the Messiah,” two works that Edwards probably intended to integrate into a larger manuscript for future publication on the topic. These writings (and a few others) provide the theoretical principles that underpin the exegetical examples above. As Lowance Jr. observes, “doctrinal statements contain theoretical declarations that are applied elsewhere in the Edwards canon.”²⁷ In other words, Edwards held theoretical principles that underpinned his exegetical reflections. What are these principles? We find six principles of Edwards's typological understanding of the Bible.

²³ “Heb. 12:22–24 (b),” *WJE* 55:5.

²⁴ *WJE* 15:82.

²⁵ *WJE* 15:82.

²⁶ *WJE* 15:603–5.

²⁷ Mason I. Lowance Jr., “Editor's Introduction to ‘Types of the Messiah,’” *WJE* 11:159.

2.1. Principle #1: There Is Continuity and Discontinuity Between Type and Antitype

For Edwards, types and antitypes are related to, but not identical with, one another. Types and antitypes have both similarities and differences. He explained this principle in two different places, both of which involve reflections on Hebrews 10:1, which says, “The law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities.” First, in his note on Hebrews 1:3 in the Blank Bible, he wrote that Jesus is the “express image” of God and is thus “an image that exactly answers the original” and is of equal value.²⁸ He then contrasted this with the relationship of types to antitypes. He drew attention to the statement in Hebrews 10:1 that says types are *not* the very image of the things. Thus, in contrast to the relationship of Jesus to God, the types are not equivalent in value or accomplishment. For “if they had been the very image exactly answerable,” he argued, “they would have been equivalent, and might have answered the same purpose.”²⁹

Second, he made this same point from a different angle. Commenting on Hebrews 10:1, he wrote, “the shadow of a thing is an exceeding imperfect representation of it, and yet has such a resemblance that it has a most evident relation to the thing, of which it is the shadow.”³⁰ Thus, according to his reading of Hebrews 10:1, there is continuity and discontinuity between type and antitype—a “resemblance” between the two, but an “exceeding imperfect” one.

2.2. Principle #2: The Purpose of a Type Is to Teach About Christ and “Gospel Things”

Types are not aimless, pointing to any number of disconnected objects. Edwards did not find types that point to various early church figures, locations, or events in post-biblical world history. He operated with the principle that types always and only point to spiritual things related to Christ and the gospel. We see this point in two steps.

First, Edwards argued that types are meant to teach about antitypes. He explained this point in his short notebook labeled, “Types.” Hebrews 8:2–5 contrasts the things that Moses was to make according to a heavenly pattern with the “true tabernacle” that Jesus entered. In light of this, Edwards viewed all that was typical under Moses as being given for us to consider. His argument reveals his principle: “For what end is a type or picture, but to give some knowledge of the antitype or thing painted?”³¹ The implied answer is, of course, that there are no types given without the purpose of teaching about the antitype.

But what is specifically taught? This leads us to the second step: For Edwards, the antitype is always related to Christ and “gospel things” of the New Testament age. He reflected on Hebrews 9:8–11, in which the author of Hebrews notes that certain gifts and sacrifices were given “until the time of reformation” (9:10), and that “Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come.” Edwards noted that such sacrifices and washings and regulations “were signs for that time then *present*, of good things *to come*.”³² He added further weight to his point by quoting in full from Hebrews 9:22–24; 10:1; 11:19, and 13:11–13. He further clarified this point elsewhere: As shadows, the types cannot be fully understood until light is shone on them. In other words, “the light that was plainly to reveal the gospel things came

²⁸ “Blank Bible,” *WJE* 24:1137.

²⁹ *WJE* 24:1137.

³⁰ *WJE* 15:248.

³¹ *WJE* 11:148.

³² *WJE* 11:149.

after Christ, the substance of all ancient types.”³³ According to Edwards, when Christ came light shone backward on shadowy types to reveal “gospel things.” And these “gospel things” that have arrived in Christ are the substance of not just some, but *all* ancient types.

2.3. Principles #3: There Are More Types in the Old Testament than the New Testament Interprets

It is evident from what we’ve seen that that Edwards viewed the Old Testament as filled with types. He considers this principle present in Hebrews 7, where even the Old Testament’s silence about Melchizedek’s birth and death are typological. “If so small things in Scripture are typical,” he reasoned, “it is rational to suppose that Scripture abounds in types.”³⁴ More specifically, he believed that the New Testament does not mention or interpret all of the Old Testament types.

Edwards devoted three entries in his “Miscellanies” notebook to typology. The explicit purpose of one of these was to make a defense of this very point, and to do so from the book of Hebrews. From Hebrews 9:5, he argued that there are more types in the OT than the NT interprets: “That some things in the Old Testament are types of gospel things and are so intended for our instruction, which are nowhere explained in the New Testament, is evident by Hebrews 9:4–5.”³⁵ He drilled into the end of verse 5, wherein the Hebrews author began to list typological aspects of the tabernacle, but then stopped short and wrote, “which things we cannot now speak particularly.” Edward took this phrase to mean that the author of Hebrews believed there were many typological things to say, and that he *could* go on to explain all of their typological significance, but he must refrain at that point. Hence, Edwards immediately followed the verse with the paraphrase, “i.e. we cannot now particularly explain what gospel or heavenly things they signified.”³⁶

In “Types of the Messiah,” he wrote that this short phrase of Hebrews 9:5 “proves, evidently that many things in the tabernacle were typical ... which signification is not explained to us in Scripture.”³⁷ In other words, the author of Hebrews believed that many aspects of the temple were typological, but he simply didn’t think this letter was the time to explain them.³⁸

One of the clearest statements of this point came in the conclusion to his short notebook on typology. He wrote that it is “unreasonable” to say that we cannot recognize types unless the Scripture is explicit about them, for the Bible itself “is plain that innumerable other things are types that are not

³³ *WJE* 15:247.

³⁴ “Types,” *WJE* 11:151. The same point is made in his work, “Types of the Messiah,” *WJE* 11:322.

³⁵ “Misc. 1139: Why the Creation of the World Was Committed to Christ,” *WJE* 20:516.

³⁶ *WJE* 20:516. From this Edwards text, Stein wrongly claims that he did not think that all the things in the OT could be understood in their typological sense. He writes, “one must be reminded that Edwards himself insisted that some types remain unclear, reasoning that ‘we cannot now particularly explain what gospel and heavenly things they signified’” (Stein, “Quest for the Spiritual Sense,” 112). But this is precisely the *opposite* of the point Edwards is trying to make here. First, the sentence quoted is not a direct expression of Edwards’s own thoughts about typology, but is a paraphrase of Hebrews 9:5—one that he agrees with, to be sure. But this paraphrase reveals that Edwards thinks the Hebrews author *did*, in fact, clearly understand the types, but he simply didn’t have the time to explain them. The other examples that follow make this point clear.

³⁷ *WJE* 11:323.

³⁸ Cf. *WJE* 11:149, 154.

interpreted in Scripture (all the ordinances of the Law are all shadows of good things to come).³⁹ Thus, Edwards believed that interpreters have freedom to see more types in the Old Testament than the New Testament explicitly identifies.

2.4. Principle #4: Types Can Be Understood apart from Any NT Interpretation

Following from the previous point, the Old Testament is not only filled with types, but they can and should be interpreted even apart from any clear explanation from the New Testament. Edwards found it unreasonable to assume that those who first received the types could not at all understand them. Following a running list of five passages from Hebrews 8–13, he concluded that the Old Testament believers were to be able to know the fulfillment of all the types. He argued that if we could not understand any types except for those that the New Testament explicitly explained, then God’s people under the Old Testament “were secluded from ever using their understanding to search into the meaning of the types given to [them].”⁴⁰

He also reflected on Hebrews 9:1–4. He quoted the list of types that the author of Hebrews could not speak in detail about, and then he asked, “But are these types all in vain, and must we never receive the instruction that is held forth because the Apostle did not speak of [them] particularly?”⁴¹ The tone of these statements communicates something of his bewilderment at those who would miss this point from Hebrews.

This all follows from the second principle above (i.e., the purpose of types is to teach about Christ and “gospel things”), for if all types were given in order to instruct, then one ought to expect that they are all understandable. “Did God give [types] to hold forth to us spiritual things? And yet, is it presumption for us to endeavor to see what spiritual things are held forth in them?”⁴² Far from presumptuous, Edwards thought it our *obligation* to seek understanding. “If they were for our instruction,” he stated, “then we must endeavor to understand them, even those [types] that are nowhere explained in Scripture.”⁴³

Edwards was carefully nuanced on this point. He certainly did not want to give any ground to those who would say that God’s people are incapable of understanding types that are not explained in Scripture. Nevertheless, he also believed that it was more difficult to perceive the instruction of types in the Old Testament time compared with the New. “The types of the Old Testament were given much more for our instruction under the New Testament,” he wrote, “for they understood little, but we are under vastly greater advantage to understand them than they.”⁴⁴ Here’s the nuance: All of God’s people should be able to understand the types, and yet they are more easily understood after the realities have come.

2.5. Principle #5: The Types Should Only Be Interpreted with Proper Warrant

The previous principle raises an important question, and one that interpreters commonly ask today: “What are the controls?” In order to guard against fanciful interpretations, some have argued that the

³⁹ *WJE* 11:152.

⁴⁰ *WJE* 11:150.

⁴¹ *WJE* 11:149.

⁴² *WJE* 11:149.

⁴³ *WJE* 11:323.

⁴⁴ *WJE* 11:149.

only types we can identify are those explicitly referenced in the New Testament. Edwards steered a middle course based on his reading of Hebrews 8:4–5. He first pressed for caution: “Persons ought to be exceeding careful in interpreting of types, that they don’t give way to a wild fancy.”⁴⁵ But this caution did not lead him to the other extreme. Rather, he wanted interpreters “not to fix an interpretation unless warranted by some hint in the New Testament of its being the true interpretation, or a lively figure and representation contained or warranted by an analogy to other types that we interpret on sure grounds.”⁴⁶

He used Hebrews 8:4–5 to illustrate this because the author wrote that Moses was told to make *all things* related to the tabernacle according to the pattern. It was not just the tabernacle that was typical (on the one hand), nor was everything imaginable typical (on the other). Instead, everything *related to* the tabernacle was typological. In light of this, we see that Edwards did not affirm *anything and everything* as a potential type, yet he did identify all that was related to the tabernacle as typological. We also see that Edwards affirmed that although we may search out more types than the New Testament explicitly mentioned, yet our interpretations must have warrant—in this case, our proposed types must have some analogy with the types that were specifically noted in connection to the tabernacle. Thus, Edwards demonstrated a carefully nuanced perspective on identifying types in Scripture.

2.6. Principle #6: The Failure to Understand Types is the Fault of the Interpreter

This final principle comes as a corollary to the previous ones: Because the types are given to instruct God’s people (principle #2), and because we are expected to understand them even apart from an explicit New Testament explanation (principle #4), the readers are only to blame if they do not understand. This appears to be his point when he drew a parallel between typology and Jesus’ parables. Just as Jesus expected his disciples to understand the *parables* without explication, people should understand *types* without explication. Hebrews 5 informed this principle for him: “Christ blames the Jews and disciples that they don’t understand his parables, that were made up of types without explication.” Edwards supported this claim with the reference, “Matthew 13:15, ‘Their ears are dull of hearing,’ compared with Hebrews 5:10–12.”⁴⁷ He continued, “Yea, Christ blames the disciples that they did not understand the types of the Old Testament without his explaining them.”⁴⁸ Because of the threat of being dull of hearing according to Hebrews 5, typological interpretation is not merely an interpretive game for Edwards. It was not a fad or a mere interpretive interest. It was a matter of sanctification. God has given us types to understand, and he expects us to search diligently to understand them. If we fail to see them, it is due to our dullness of hearing.

3. The Significance of Edwards’s Typological Interpretation for Today

Jonathan Edwards’s interpretive methods and conclusions have often either been neglected or unappreciated. His exegetical practices—including his view of typology—have not been clearly

⁴⁵ *WJE* 11:148.

⁴⁶ *WJE* 11:148.

⁴⁷ *WJE* 11:147.

⁴⁸ *WJE* 11:147.

understood or well served in scholarship up to this point.⁴⁹ While some early admirers appreciated Edwards's interpretation of the Bible, for the most part his biblical interpretation "has had virtually no effect on succeeding generations."⁵⁰ Regardless of the numerous reasons for this, we must now ask the question: What can theological interpreters appreciate or appropriate from Edwards's typological methods? Here are several ways that Edwards helps us with the theory and practice of typological interpretation today.

3.1. Principled Typological Interpretation

Edwards serves exegetes and theological interpreters as a model of thoughtful and principled typological interpretation. His methods should contribute to our recent discussions about typology, biblical theology, and the theological interpretation of Scripture.

Some evangelical scholars are leery of Edwards's typology because he viewed not only the Old Testament but also all of nature as typological.⁵¹ Furthermore, it is true that some of Edward's typological examples may seem a bit uncontrolled to recent interpreters. In Stein's view, "For Edwards the gap between typology and allegory was small and the step-over easy. His hermeneutical category of the spiritual sense makes it impossible to say when typology ends and allegory begins."⁵² However, we should lament a wholesale dismissal of his hermeneutic; this essay demonstrates that he had a very thoughtful and nuanced view of typology. Furthermore, Edwards was not an allegorist. Allegory is not concerned with understanding a text in its historical and literary context. In contrast to allegory, typology is always concerned with the historical and contextual meaning of texts.⁵³ While allegory disregards an event's historical and literary context and therefore *reads into* texts meanings that are not there, typology pays proper attention to a text's history and context, and thus *draws out* and develops its meaning rather than contradict it.⁵⁴

While the language Edwards used to describe typology differs from our use today, the content of his principles is similar. Therefore, since we've discerned Edwards's principles, we are now able to see how they may confirm or correct our own thinking. Consider, for example, the first principle above, which affirmed that there is both continuity and discontinuity between the type and antitype. Translated into recent terminology, Edwards affirms that there is both "correspondence and escalation" in typology.

⁴⁹ Sweeney notes that there has been a widespread neglect of Edwards's exegetical writings due to a preoccupation with his roles in America's "public" life. Thus, "we have neglected the scholarly work he took most seriously." See Douglas Sweeney, "Longing for More and More of It? The Strange Career of Jonathan Edwards's Exegetical Exertions," in *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Tercentenary of His Birth*, ed. Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Caleb H. D. Maskell (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 26.

⁵⁰ Robert Brown, "The Sacred and the Profane Connected: Edwards, the Bible, and Intellectual Culture," in *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Tercentenary of His Birth*, ed. Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Caleb H. D. Maskell (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995), 39.

⁵¹ Hugenberger lists this as one of the reasons for caution about confusing typology with allegory ("Introductory Notes on Typology," 335–36).

⁵² Stein, "Spiritual Sense," 112.

⁵³ Francis Foulkes, "The Acts of God," 367.

⁵⁴ G. K. Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 395.

Edwards is also a model for us with his balance of the fourth and fifth principles. Edwards affirmed that there are more types in the Old Testament than the New Testament explicitly affirms (principle #4), and yet he also insisted that we need proper warrant in order to affirm something as a type (principle #5). This shows that Edwards strove for a balanced middle way between those who “give way to a wild fancy” (a danger of holding to principle #4 without principle #5) and others who will not admit any other types than what is explicitly referenced in the New Testament (a danger of holding to principle #5 without principle #4).

How does this balanced perspective help us today? Edwards shows us that the New Testament gives the interpreter both freedom *and* constraint. It gives us *freedom* because, as Edwards showed, the author of Hebrews acknowledges that there are more types than are explicitly noted as such in the New Testament. Thus, we have freedom to identify more types than the New Testament directly identifies. Yet this also provides *constraint* because our interpretation does not have warrant unless we find an analogy made between our proposed type and another type that is more clearly supported in the New Testament. This offers nuanced and controlled guidance for discerning types throughout Scripture.

3.2. The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament

Edwards also contributes to a related discussion about the question of whether we should follow the New Testament’s hermeneutical methods or limit ourselves to their conclusions. Jesus and the New Testament authors repeatedly quote, echo, and allude to Old Testament texts. The key question is: Are the New Testament author’s interpretive practices a legitimate pattern for us to follow?

There are essentially three options.⁵⁵ (1) We may view the New Testament authors’ hermeneutical methods as *flawed*, and therefore *reject* those methods while keeping their conclusions. Those who embrace this view think that the New Testament authors sometimes had a misguided interpretation of the Old Testament—they used allegory and quoted the Old Testament texts out of context. Nevertheless, theologically conservative interpreters will still affirm that the New Testament authors’ writings were inspired, thus we should accept their assertions without adopting their methods. Thus, Richard Longenecker concludes, “Christians today are committed to the apostolic faith and doctrine of the New Testament, but not necessarily to the apostolic exegetical practices as detailed for us in the New Testament.”⁵⁶ (2) We may view the New Testament authors’ hermeneutical methods as *flawed*, and yet *follow* those methods anyhow. Some less theologically conservative interpreters think that the NT authors had misguided and flawed interpretive practices, yet we may still follow their flawed methods. (3) We may view the New Testament author’s hermeneutical methods as *faithful*, and therefore *follow* those methods. This view is settled between the middle of the other two. These interpreters consider the New Testament authors to have both trustworthy conclusions *and* exegesis that is consistent with the Old Testament historical and contextual meaning. For example, G. K. Beale argues that Jesus and the New Testament authors interpreted the Old Testament texts within a broad redemptive-historical framework and within their immediate literary and canonical contexts.⁵⁷ He argues that typological interpretation pervades the entire Bible and should be normative for us today.

⁵⁵ These options are derived from Treier, “Typology,” 825.

⁵⁶ Richard Longenecker, “Negative Answer to the Question ‘Who Is the Prophet Talking About?’ Some Reflections on the New Testament’s Use of the Old,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 385.

⁵⁷ Beale, “Positive Answer to the Question,” 394, 400.

Jonathan Edwards's work with Hebrews demonstrates that he fits in this third and middle perspective. In formulating typological principles, we observed how Edwards consistently appealed not just to the Hebrews texts, but also to the Hebrews author's *method* of typological interpretation. Edwards operated with principle that the author of Hebrews had a trustworthy typological method that we should emulate. He also operated with the principle that the New Testament authors interpreted the Old Testament within a redemptive-historical framework. His principles that guided his approach still make helpful contributions to the discussion today.

3.3. A Unique Response to Modern Criticism

Edwards also serves theological interpreters as a model of an early responder to modern biblical criticism, and as one who did so by demonstrating the typology of the Bible. First, we can appreciate Edwards in the same way that we do other pre-critical interpreters. Edwards's typological interpretation aligns him with them since this way of reading the Bible is "viewed as the most important interpretive strategy for early Christianity."⁵⁸ Stephen Stein notes that Edwards's interpretive method practiced throughout his lifetime "reflected" and "conforms closely" to the pre-critical method.⁵⁹

Second, however, Edwards was not merely pre-critical; he was also engaged in modern scholarship. While his typology corresponds to the pre-critical methods, we should not classify him as a pre-critical writer, not least because he is not chronologically *pre*-critical. Doug Sweeney notes, "Despite his reputation as a 'pre-critical' reader, or 'pre-modern' thinker, he was fully apprised of recent trends in modern critical thought."⁶⁰ In fact, Edwards voraciously appropriated much of critical scholarship so that he could respond to it from a biblical perspective. Stein notes that Edwards "was not part of any emergent school of historical criticism," and that he was actually "responding to the transitional age in his view on the authority of Scripture."⁶¹

This historical context allows us to see his typological method with an intriguing new lens—we see that Edwards worked out his principles of typological exegesis in order to defend the authority of Scripture. He sought to mount a "formidable defense of typological interpretation, and, in fact, extend[ing] its range and application."⁶² Edwards remains for us, then, a unique ally in biblical interpretation. We appreciate Edwards as a thoughtful response to modern criticism. He remained a classic example of one who was committed to engaging with all scholarly biblical endeavors, appropriating where able and responding where needed.

3.4. The Unity of the Bible as an Apologetic for Its Divine Authorship

What would his defense of typology have looked like? For what purpose would he publish it? Although we cannot know for sure, clues indicate that Edwards was writing personally on typology in order to defend the remarkable unity of the canon of Scripture, thus defending its divine authorship.

⁵⁸ Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation*, 45.

⁵⁹ Stephen Stein, "The Spirit and the Word: Jonathan Edwards and Scriptural Exegesis" in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 119.

⁶⁰ Douglas Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word: A Model of Faith and Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 95.

⁶¹ Stein, "The Spirit and the Word," 119.

⁶² Stein, "The Spirit and the Word," 119

It appears that he was working on this just prior to his untimely death. When notified of his election as president of Princeton, Edwards expressed reluctance to oblige because it would interfere with his writing, which he said had “swallowed up my mind, and been the chief entertainment and delight of my life.”⁶³ He wrote of two particular “great works” that he “had long on [his] mind and heart.”⁶⁴ The first, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, would be “a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of an history.”⁶⁵ The second, *The Harmony of the Old and New Testaments*, would have three parts: prophecies of the Messiah, types of the Old Testament, and doctrine. Much of the typological writings examined in this article would likely be integrated into these works. He began them as private meditations for his personal delight and study, but later began to develop them with these wider purposes in mind.

But what apologetic function would these works serve? During this same time period, Edwards was vigorously reading and copying the works of particularly important intellectual authors in Europe (such as John Locke and David Hume). According to Sweeney, this reveals that one of the aims of his scholarly labors was dealing with the deist threat.⁶⁶ The trend in scholarship was to reject the supernatural view of the world and Bible. Thus, in addition to sheer personal delight in biblical studies, Edwards was likely formulating and applying his typological principles in order to demonstrate the unity of Scripture and divine authorship. Showing the intrinsic coherence and aesthetic beauty of Scripture was one way in which he would respond to those who treat the Bible as a merely human and historical text.

In this way, Edwards was reacting to scholarly trends quite similar to those that current theological interpreters are responding to. In our current time evangelical interpreters must respond to modern critical and rational views of the Bible that treat it as a merely human book.⁶⁷ It is also interesting to consider that Edward’s likely planned to use his typological notes in order to engage modern critical scholarship regarding the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. In other unfinished works on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, he sought to demonstrate that the unitary features of the narrative demonstrate a single author. Edwards appropriated the new historical methods and nevertheless defended the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch with these very methods.⁶⁸ This practice has striking similarities to that of recent theological interpreters with respect to critical methodology.

Sweeney notes, “In an era characterized by the rapid spread of biblical criticism, theological skepticism and religious minimalism, Edwards demonstrated a robust faith in Scripture’s credibility, expounding it with confidence in traditional Christian methods.”⁶⁹ His goal was to demonstrate that the Bible was a unique God-given book.⁷⁰ We can learn from Edwards on this point. The aesthetic beauty and unity of the Bible can serve as a strong apologetic for the divine authorship of the Bible in our day.

⁶³ Jonathan Edwards, *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, ed. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 322.

⁶⁴ Edwards, *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, 322.

⁶⁵ Edwards, *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, 322–23.

⁶⁶ Douglas Sweeney, “Introduction,” *WJE* 23 :13.

⁶⁷ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Introduction,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 20.

⁶⁸ Brown, “The Sacred and the Profane Connected,” 42.

⁶⁹ Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word*, 95.

⁷⁰ George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 481.

The recent publications of studies on biblical theology demonstrate the profound unity of the Bible. Thus, as we trace the unified story and central themes that cut across the canon, we not only gain an understanding of the content of the Bible; we're also strengthened in our confidence in its divine origin.

3.5. The Proper Attitude of a Biblical Scholar

Finally, Edwards's typological principles demonstrate that he was a scholar with theological integrity. He did not leave his faith out of his interpretive practices and publications. The sixth hermeneutical principle above—that the failure to understand types is the fault of the interpreter—appears to be one that he took to heart. If one fails to understand the meaning of types in Scripture, he or she must be, according to Hebrews 5:12–14, “dull of hearing.”⁷¹ All biblical and theological scholars would do well to join Edwards in heeding this point.

In a time (as today) when many scholars disdained any hermeneutical method that took the divine authorship of Scripture seriously, Edwards submitted himself to the Bible as God's word. Marsden explains that he had this attitude because he “took so seriously the immensity of the gap between the ways of the infinite and eternal God and the limits of human understanding,” and so “he was willing to make the best of the biblical accounts, as counterintuitive as they might sometimes seem.”⁷² This is true, and yet Edwards also demonstrated that typology is actually the *most* rationally consistent view of the Bible. Nevertheless, he knew that he would not persuade all. In his “Types” notebook—the one in which he reflected on typology from Hebrews—he wrote, “I expect by very ridicule and contempt to be called a man of a very fruitful brain and copious fancy, but they are welcome to it.”⁷³ This is the mindset of one who loves the praise of God more than the praise of men; an example to be followed. The determining factor for whether or not biblical interpreters embrace the legitimacy of typology must ultimately be based upon what is true, rather than what is least likely to be ridiculed among other scholars.

4. Conclusion

What would Jonathan Edwards publish, were he alive today, related to current discussions about typology, the use of the Old Testament in the New, and other conversations related to biblical theology? This article has suggested at least three ways that Edwards would influence these conversations: (1) He would probably appeal to his principled typological method, (2) he would argue that we should follow the hermeneutics of the New Testament authors, and (3) he would commend Hebrews as a primary model for our typological interpretive practice.

Although he is not here to update and submit his writings to the conversation, we can still benefit from his work. A fresh interaction with Edwards's typological interpretations can make several contributions to current discussions on Scripture and hermeneutics. And we also find in him a model of a pastor-theologian who delighted in and submitted to the Bible as a divinely authored, aesthetically beautiful, and unified work that points us to Christ and “gospel things.”

⁷¹ Treier similarly notes, “such genuine connections may not always be convincing to those without eyes of faith” (*Introducing Theological Interpretation*, 49.)

⁷² Marsden, *A Life*, 481.

⁷³ *WJE* 11:152.

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— OLD TESTAMENT —

Bob Becking. *Ezra-Nehemiah*. Historical Commentary on the Old Testament. Leuven: Peeters, 2018. xxvi + 330 pp. €74.00/\$93.00.

Bob Becking's commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah is a welcome contribution. Becking, Emeritus Professor of Humanities at Utrecht University, is no stranger to Ezra-Nehemiah. He has not only contributed to Ezra-Nehemiah scholarship in the past but is also a published scholar in the study of Persian history. This dual specialisation allows for an elaborate study of the nexus between history and the biblical text, which is the aim of the series.

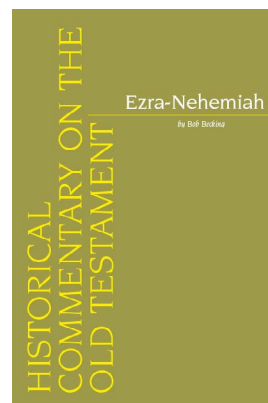
The commentary begins with a helpful 20-page introduction. This introduction covers a great number of issues within a small space. Issues which have caused various disagreements (e.g., the unity of Ezra-Nehemiah, authorial relations to 1 and 2 Chronicles, and historical reliability) are assessed (pp. 1–9). Additionally, the introduction offers adequate summaries of the ancient witnesses and traditions; some of these, like 1–2 Esdras and 4–6 Esdras, are not well known by many readers of Ezra-Nehemiah (pp. 9–13).

A number of readers may demur on Becking's conclusions from the outset. For instance, Becking argues that Ezra and Nehemiah were originally two separate arrangements (pp. 4–5). This has significant impact on the exposition of the text. This example, however, can be considered a minor point of controversy for the reader. Perhaps the most notable claim is that the book of Ezra is a pseudepigraphic writing (p. 6). Nonetheless, for Becking, the historical inaccuracies or fabrications do not devalue the text since "there is more at stake than ... pure history" (p. 1).

Each chapter begins with "Essentials and Perspectives," which gives a helpful overview of its content and themes. This section, at several points, sound sermonic and can be helpful for the preacher. For example, Becking laments that the Netherlands' (his home country) pessimism towards law and gravitation towards "freedom and happiness" has caused "moral disorder" (p. 240). Yet in Nehemiah 8–12, Becking argues, "the *tôrā* is presented as a compass" and "the *tôrā* leads to joy" (p. 240). Next, under the title "Scholarly Exposition I: Introduction to the Exegesis" there is an explanation of historical, contextual, and structural matters. Each chapter then ends with "Scholarly Exposition II: Exegesis," which is virtually a verse-by-verse interpretation of the text. The commentary's superstructure is logical and easy to navigate. Moreover, it helps the reader to understand the presuppositions that the commentator has before he enters into the exegesis of the text.

Becking's analysis of the final-form of Ezra-Nehemiah is rather refreshing. A noteworthy example can be found in Becking's study of the chronological inconsistencies of Ezra 3–6. Instead of attributing the composition to mere historical blunder, Becking utilizes narratology in order to understand the justification behind the formation of the story (pp. 48–53). He remarks that the story is "constructed with an apparent intention to relate past events in a non-chronological order" (p. 48). An approach like this is ultimately helpful for readers of Hebrew narrative. Not all narratives ought to be chronological, and its achronological structure may indeed serve a purpose.

For the modern reader, the intermarriage crises in Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13:23–31 are perhaps the most morally confusing parts of the Hebrew Bible. Becking offers a moderated analysis of the events.



One nuance he adds to the debate is the translation of the word נְכָרִי which is used to describe the wives. This word is usually translated as “foreign” evoking images of race. However, as Becking notes, נְכָרִי can be easily translated as “different” or “strange” and rarely has ethnic connotations (p. 137). Therefore, these women may have been scrutinized for their “strange” lifestyles. Becking, however, still finds that “Ezra 9–10 places before the reader, a moral problem” (p.138), a problem which this commentary does not solve, but nevertheless attempts to make sense of.

I have only two minor critiques of this commentary. The first being less significant than the latter. The careful reader will be more or less frustrated by a number of typological errors and missing references. For example, the translation of Nehemiah 2:4–5 contains a typological error (p. 181; cf. p. 178). Moreover, there are a number of citations that cannot be located in the bibliography (e.g., p. 23, n. 23; p. 180, n. 38).

The second critique has to do with a missing element within the commentary. Although there are small remarks concerning the shifting narrators (third person to first person and *vice versa*) and language (Hebrew to Aramaic and *vice versa*), nothing substantial is said of them. For example, Becking briefly concludes his assessment on the language shift in Ezra 6:19–22 saying, “With the celebration of the Passover, the narrative reaches its target. This makes it understandable that the narrator suddenly shifts from Aramaic to Hebrew” (p. 94). Additionally, for the Artaxerxes Edict, Becking finds that a language transition is adopted to give an impression of authenticity (p. 110). For a commentary with a copious amount of references, it was surprising to see that this topic, which is of great interest, is not developed any further (see, e.g., Joshua Berman, “The Narratological Purpose of Aramaic Prose in Ezra 4:8–6:18,” *Aramaic Studies* 5 [2007], 165–91).

Overall, Becking’s commentary is a well-researched and dynamic work that only a skilled scholar could produce. Even though readers may have reservations about Becking’s conclusions, it is impossible not to appreciate Becking’s deep and thought-provoking analysis of Ezra-Nehemiah.

Paul Byun

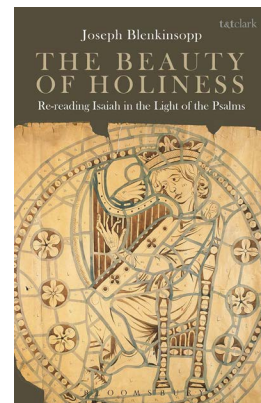
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Joseph Blenkinsopp. *The Beauty of Holiness: Re-Reading Isaiah in the Light of the Psalms*. New York: T&T Clark, 2018. xii +174 pp. £17.99/ \$24.95.

I think three groups of people will gravitate toward this book: those who love the books of Isaiah, those who love the Psalms, and those familiar with the name Joseph Blenkinsopp. This volume is a historical-critical and intertextuality scholarship of Isaiah and Psalms at its best. Blenkinsopp works through these books intertextually, identifying a plethora of common traditions and themes between them. He argues that a guild of temple singers composed and perpetuated these traditions over a long period of time, leaving vestiges of liturgical and prophetic elements in the pages of these books.

The ingenious contribution of this work, in my view, is how Blenkinsopp reimagines a common prophetic and liturgical source that gave rise to intertextual doublets in Isaiah and the Psalms. These doublets, or parallels, as Blenkinsopp



argues, are connected by terminologies and language characteristic of temple musicians and prophets. The parallels identified are said to be unique—they are either entirely absent in the Hebrew Bible or given a twist in Isaiah and Psalms. For instance, the term “Torah” in these two books is less connected to Moses or associated with the imposition of law as seen elsewhere. Instead, this Torah has prophetic connotations, and proceeds from Zion rather than Sinai. It is also a Torah for all peoples and not merely for the nation of Israel (p. 6).

Blenkinsopp’s volume can be broadly structured into three sections. First, Blenkinsopp discusses the origins and developments of the liturgical psalms on the basis of the Psalter, the books of Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah. He argues that the authorship of these liturgical compositions can be traced to temple musician guilds based on the eponyms seen in the superscriptions (or in his preferred term, “rubrics”) of Asaphite, Korahite and Ezrahite psalms. Subsequently, temple guilds of Heman, Asaph, and Ethan/Jeduthun perpetuated the use of these songs from the time of David through to Josiah. Blenkinsopp suggests that Ethan and Heman probably had Edomite origins but were later indigenized into the Levitical guilds by the Chronicler (pp. 22–23). Importantly, Blenkinsopp also points out that musicians such as David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun had prophetic ministries. They were given prophetic gifts alongside their instrumentation abilities (2 Sam 23:1–7; 1 Chr 25:1–8). On the other hand, cult prophets were involved in temple worship (Amos 7:10–17; Jer 7:1–2). In other words, psalmody and prophecy had a more intimate connection than usually supposed.

Second, Blenkinsopp works through the three sections of the book of Isaiah (1–39, 40–55, 56–66), uncovering substantial psalmic material in Isaiah. They occur as “psalm entire, embryonic, or fragmentary,” manifesting “terminology, themes, and religious orientation” found in the Psalter (pp. 37, 50–51). For instance, Blenkinsopp notes that the concept of God’s holiness in the Trisagion, Isaiah 6:1–7, is likely dependent or even composed by the guilds that produced Psalm 22, where “God is holy and enthroned on the praises of Israel,” or Psalm 99, where the “Enthroned One is proclaimed holy three times” (p. 38). Third, Blenkinsopp reserves four chapters for the furtherance of four themes that are common and significant in Isaiah and the Psalms: traditions and eschatological perspectives surrounding Zion (ch. 7); language relating to the righteous and the wicked as two segregated groups (ch. 8); a specific community called the “servants of YHWH” (ch. 9); and an apparent repudiation of sacrifice (ch. 10).

Blenkinsopp’s erudition is obvious; yet more than this, his understanding of the text reimagined from the life in the temple guilds has shown us what the ministers at the temple “aimed to achieve in their participation in the temple liturgy”—the beauty of holiness (p. 148). This idea is inspiring! Likewise, all who meditate on and sing of God’s glory in Isaiah and the Psalms today will revel in the beauty of God’s holiness as the original musicians did. As such, Blenkinsopp’s study has evoked something of the heart from these texts that had always resound through the ages.

Now most, if not all, of the connections identified between Isaiah and the Psalms by Blenkinsopp are said to be dependent on the Psalms (pp. 50, 52, 70–74, 81–82, 158–159, 161). I am surprised that Blenkinsopp has invariably assumed a single direction of dependence, almost without qualification, even though the dating of individual psalms is notoriously difficult. In other words, Blenkinsopp is not interested in the final editing or editors of the psalms. He is, rather, focused on the presumed early authors of the psalms. Hence, it must be said that while Blenkinsopp finds a convincing number of connections between Isaiah and the Psalms, he makes little comparisons of the final theological contours and messages of both books. His comparisons of the themes of Torah and Zion in Isaiah and

the Psalms are masterly and accurate, but his quiescence on kingship is especially odd, since it is a considerably important theme in both texts.

This volume is less accessible than it initially looked. Blenkinsopp writes in long sentences and his proposals require readers to be somewhat familiar with the dating and historical agendas in the compositions of Isaiah, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah and the Psalms. Many of Blenkinsopp's sources are German, steeped in higher critical scholarship, and dated from between the early to mid-twentieth century. Several are even dated to the nineteenth century. Though the title of the book, its length, and readable format may entice many readers, I think those who will best appreciate this volume are students working at the interface between biblical history and the text. Nevertheless, Blenkinsopp is an important name in the field, and for those who can appreciate his work, how great is that appreciation!

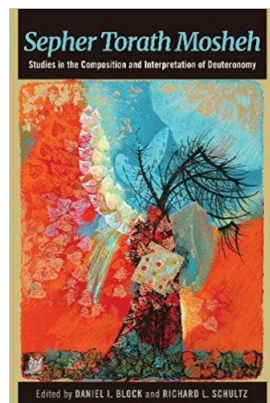
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Daniel I. Block and Richard L. Schultz, eds. *Sepher Torah Mosheh: Studies in the Composition and Interpretation of Deuteronomy*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2017. xxvi + 446 pp. £33.99/\$39.95.

Deuteronomy has long held a privileged position within the OT guild. Ever since Wilhelm de Wette's contention that the book's provenance is best connected with Josiah, Deuteronomy has offered historical critics an anchor point to ground compositional models—not only for the Pentateuch but also for the Former and Latter Prophets. Evangelical responses to such reasoning have not always been magnanimous. In fact, there has been a noticeable divorce between evangelical scholarship and the wider academy. *Sepher Torah Mosheh*, edited by Daniel Block and Richard Schultz, is an attempt at rapprochement.

The volume's opening chapter by Peter Vogt establishes the broader interpretative landscape. Differing critical approaches to Deuteronomy are surveyed as a means of contrasting evangelical responses. Vogt concludes that while evangelicals have historically tended to be reactive rather than proactive (p. 22), a "more confident and assertive evangelical cadre" is beginning to turn the tide (p. 29). The current volume is a case in point. Thirteen evangelical scholars engage with, affirm, and critique critical readings in their respective attempts to grapple with the text and theology of Deuteronomy. The result is a compelling showcase of the potential.

Three chapters explicitly consider historical matters. Two examine the connection between Deuteronomy and ANE treaties. Neal Huddleston presents a forty-eight-page survey of seven ANE treaty forms extant from 2300 to 600 BC. This survey serves as data for a subsequent essay, co-written with Lawson Younger, which critiques conclusions drawn from comparative analyses. Younger and Huddleston note an all-too-frequent "violation" of documents that only considers superficial similarities, not the contrasts (p. 95). They conclude that Deuteronomy draws from a broader cultural milieu rather than one specific ANE treaty form (p. 109). A third chapter by Sandra Richter presents data from recent archaeological digs at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Richter argues that this locale—ancient Shechem, the highest peak in the most densely populated region in Canaan—was the ideal place to



announce the rule of a new sovereign, namely YHWH (Deut 27; p. 310). Accordingly, she proposes that the first instantiation of the ambiguous “place of the Name” announced throughout Deuteronomy was Ebal/Gerizim (p. 337).

Two back-to-back essays by Michael Grisanti and Bill Arnold tackle compositional issues. Grisanti charts the development of the critical consensus that links Deuteronomy with Josiah (pp. 111–18), presents counter evidence (pp. 119–29), and considers alternate proposals (pp. 130–38). He concludes that Deuteronomy was primarily composed by the end of Moses’s life (p. 138). Arnold’s essay heads in a different direction and, as it does so, considers an evangelical touchstone: inspiration. Eschewing both the traditional thirteenth-century date and a late Josianic provenance, Arnold opts for a middle position. Drawing on Michael Fishbane’s distinction between *traditum* and *tradio*, he suggests that Deuteronomy is best understood as a corporate product—that is, as a scribal recasting of Mosaic tradition designed to perpetuate the text faithfully for a new generation (pp. 150–53). This, he argues, is more consistent with what we know of ancient text production. These two chapters illustrate the conversation captured by this volume—contributors do not see eye-to-eye on all points. Readers are thus inducted into a lively, yet cordial, discussion.

A contribution by Brent Strawn explores the rhetoric of Deuteronomy. Strawn notes how the use of self-involving language (“we” and “you”) positions the audience as rescued slaves and as recalcitrant rebels, forcing a point of decision (pp. 183–84). This, in turn, bequeaths a “transhistorical effect” to the book, involving readers wherever and whenever they might be (p. 184, emphasis removed). Importantly, readers are engaged as both slaves *and* rebels; one cannot simply elect a favored persona. Strawn concludes, “That is how Deuteronomy’s inscription works: writing the audience into the story’s most noble and ignoble moments for salutary ends” (p. 190, emphasis removed).

A further five chapters fruitfully apply intertextual analysis. Markus Zehnder reads Deuteronomy’s command to love the alien (Deut 10:19) against Leviticus 19:34. Richard Averbeck compares Deuteronomy with Exodus 21–23 and Leviticus 17–27 to argue for the presence of cultic frames around the various law codes. The presence of wisdom themes in Deuteronomy is explored by Gordon McConville. Carsten Vang assesses the long-noted textual overlap between Deuteronomy and Hosea and concludes that the direction of dependence presumed by critical scholars (Deuteronomy upon Hosea) is based more on undefended assumption rather than literary considerations. Finally, in an intriguing essay, Daniel Block ponders what Moses may have thought of Paul (p. 340), particularly in relation to Galatians and the matter of circumcision. Block concludes that Moses would likely have agreed with the apostle (p. 356), noting that in Deuteronomy “physical circumcision is never identified as *an* or *the* Israelite identity marker” (p. 358). For Moses, as with Paul, internal orientation (circumcision of the heart) remained central.

Sepher Torah Mosheh fulfils what it sets out to accomplish: a considered and proactive evangelical engagement with critical scholarship on Deuteronomy. The contributors are by no means uniform; diversity on multiple issues is apparent. Readers will therefore find material with which they agree and disagree. That, one suspects, is part of the point. The volume calls for and models serious engagement with the issues instead of retreat and reaction based on prior commitments. Students and researchers are amply served in this regard. At the same time, one cannot help wondering what critical scholars would make of the volume. Jeffrey Tigay was invited to attend the 2015 symposium that marked its

origin. It would have been interesting to have his reflections included. Nevertheless, this remains an important volume which displays frontline evangelical scholarship at its best.

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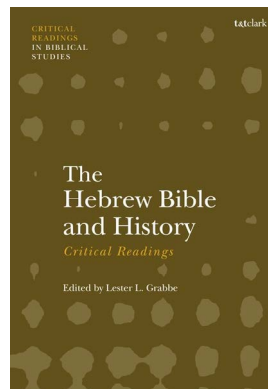
Lester L. Grabbe, ed. *The Hebrew Bible and History: Critical Readings*. T&T Clark Critical Readings in Biblical Studies. New York: T&T Clark, 2018. 562 pp. £130.00/\$202.00.

It is often said that “History is in the eye of beholder.” The reporting of history lends itself to subjectivity, ideological bents, and a narrow focus. In the last seventeen years, the European Seminar has wrestled with issues of historicity in ancient Israel. Their most recent contribution, *The Hebrew Bible and History: Critical Readings*, continues the Seminar’s work by providing a dialogue on writing a history of ancient Israel. The contributors span the theological spectrum so that their viewpoints provide a dialogue.

The volume comprises of five parts, including an introduction at the beginning of each section. Part one (pp. 3–170) focuses on the question of historical methodology and each article deals with the tension between a maximalist and a minimalist position. For instance, Herbert Niehr (pp. 15–23) begins the section with an overview of the various types of textual sources in recovering a historical methodology. He argues that the process for recovering a historical methodology should begin with a historical anthropology, then primary sources, then secondary sources. J. Maxwell Miller (pp. 31–55) discusses the possibility of writing a history without the Bible. He argues that the Bible is often considered a secondary source but that it does not differ from works such as Herodotus. Nadav Na’aman (pp. 56–71) probes the reliability of archeology as having the final authority. He argues that archeology is lacking in two areas: incomplete information and interpretative bias.

Part two (pp. 171–382) focuses on the rise of the monarchy in ancient Israel. John Van Seters (pp. 185–202) discusses the historicity of the geography of the Exodus. He notes that the work of archeology in the past few decades has overturned earlier discoveries. He focuses on Pithom and Succoth and identifies them with the Tell el-Maskhuta, a town built by Necho II around 600 BC. Walter Dietrich (pp. 270–92) provides a synchronic reading of the story of David and his relationship to the Philistines. He argues that David did not fight against the Philistines but had a treaty with them. Herman Niemann (pp. 311–51) argues that a historical event can be restricted through a threefold process. He also argues that we should avoid the presupposition whereby any theological dimension of the biblical portrayal can be derived from Solomon.

Parts three and four (pp. 383–518) focus on two case studies: Josiah’s reform and Nehemiah’s wall, with contributions investigating the historical issues that have come into skepticism recently concerning either Josiah’s reform or Nehemiah’s wall. In the last chapter (pp. 519–33), Lester L. Grabbe outlines the work of the seminar dating back to the past twenty years. He suggests categories that the historical method should apply when researching the history of ancient Israel.



The essays are arranged in such a way that the volume will serve as a reference work for years to come. The reader navigates easily through 564 pages because Grabbe has compiled the book as gears rotating in order. The introduction to each section serves as a goldmine for readers, since he introduces each section by surveying the issues while also summarizing each article. The structure at the macro-level services the reader even though there are some inconsistencies in its formatting. For example, some chapters use footnotes with a bibliography, while others use only footnotes. The volume would further assist the reader with the inclusion of a bibliography after each section.

The essays display European scholarship, which the editor declares without any hesitation (p. 521). Grabbe should be commended for his attempt to bring a wide range of voices from across Europe to dialogue on writing a history of ancient Israel. Yet, he admits that the past seventeen years of the seminar has not brought a consensus (p. 522). He introduces the volume by stating the inclusive nature of the contributors, but then he reveals his hand against the “ultra-conservatives.” He states, “It is safe to say that ultra-conservatives were not a part of it. This was because I felt that all who participated had to be genuinely critical scholars, whereas fundamentalist and many conservative evangelicals would be unable to engage in a useful dialogue on the issues” (p. 524). Here Grabbe displays a common mantra that inerrancy and good scholarship cannot coexist, but this author hopes that initiatives such as the new Text and Canon Institute at Phoenix Seminary will disprove such false presuppositions. Evangelicals have an invested interest in the text that should promote their inclusion in wrestling with the historicity of Scripture. Perhaps if the editor expands his audience to evangelicals a solution may arise concerning the historicity of ancient Israel. The Seminar limits itself by denying evangelicals a place at the table.

The volume comprises top-notch scholars from around Europe and each essay succinctly addresses a particular topic. A key issue in the volume is archaeology’s relationship to the text, since archeological evidence appears to contradict the text. Archeology and composition theory dominate the formation of the critical readings. The text plays the piper to either archeology or composition theory. Thus, the biblical figures such as David or Saul become fluid figures, or even a part of the narrator’s imagination. These critical readings of the Hebrew Bible provide imaginative reconstructions of ancient Israel with a plethora of textual information. Evangelicals will disagree with many of the conclusions but should glean from their analysis of each text and would serve well the Church and scholarly community by engaging with this scholarly resource.

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Mignon R. Jacobs. *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. xlv + 377 pp. £39.99/\$48.00.

Mignon R. Jacobs is professor of Old Testament Studies at Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio. Among her other books is *Gender, Power, and Persuasion: The Genesis Narratives and Contemporary Portraits* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

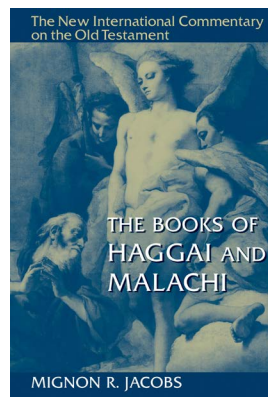
Jacobs has produced a very different commentary within this series. It is a highly disciplined, precise, and carefully crafted work. I must admit it took me some time to appreciate the wisdom and usefulness of this approach.

In the introduction Jacobs states, “My primary task was to interpret the texts, first, as prophetic literature and, second, as diverse intertextual voices within the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament canon” (p. xiii). Where there are “various interpretative options” the commentator steps back to “allow these options to coexist” even though this “may jar readers who want a single, decisive interpretation.” Jacobs states that “my faith commitments and theological stance shape this approach to writing a commentary” (p. xiii) without inviting the reader to engage with these commitments. The focus is on the text.

The result is a rigorous, technical, and extensive investigation. Matters of textual criticism are set out in some detail. Jacobs’s conservative approach to the text resists textual variants that evidence paraphrase and harmonization, as well as modern speculations that lead to emendation. Typically, the evidence is left to speak for itself. On rare occasions Jacobs states a personal opinion in terms such as “I retain the MT” (p. 111).

The commentary works most helpfully as a translator’s handbook and would be an outstanding help for students, pastors or scholars wanting help to read the Hebrew text with precision. Jacobs provides an extensive investigation of the semantics and syntax of the Hebrew text of these books. Footnotes include extensive citations of competing scholarly opinions, often without comment. If read quickly, some of the semantic discussions seem unnecessarily redundant, e.g., “to despise the name is a particular formulation designating an action that results in the defamation of Yahweh’s character or reputation” (p. 188). However, discussions like these do bring out the finer nuances of the language and require of the reader pause and consideration.

Jacobs is to be commended for a very cautious and honest approach when dealing with passages where translation options cannot be firmly settled. Tendentious argument is vigorously resisted. Personal preferences are occasionally stated simply and without argument. This work is an exemplary model of interpretative integrity, allowing a question to remain unresolved at the limits of the available evidence, while setting out the data fully and clearly. So, for example, after a detailed discussion of the translation difficulties and options in Malachi 3:13–15 (pp. 253–60), Jacobs focuses on the issue of divorce in Malachi 2:16 (pp. 260–63). One option is to read Yahweh as the one who hates divorce (cf. NASB, NRSV). This raises questions with respect to both Deuteronomy 24:1–4 and Ezra 9–10 (cf. Mal 2:10–12). An alternative translation would be “the one who hates, divorces, and covers his garment with violence.” How then to understand “covering his garment with violence?” Is this a public display of violence as a product of one’s arrogance? Is it the imagery of taking a wife (cf. Deut 22:30; Ruth 3:9; Ezek 16:8)? The implication then might be that “marriage to one woman conceals the divorce of a previous one” (p. 262). The overall force of the passage is a warning against acting treacherously (2:15).



In conclusion Jacobs issues a timely warning, “Much caution should be exercised, especially considering how these verses have been used on issues of divorce, intermarriage, and alliance” (p. 263). Jacobs leaves the reader to work through the possibilities.

One of the great strengths of this commentary is Jacobs’s extensive investigation of intertextual data to clarify the meaning of words, phrases or concepts. The Scripture index locates over four thousand OT citations within the work—a remarkable number for a commentary on two short prophetic books. This contrasts with an indicator of the major desideratum of this commentary: there are only seventy-four citations from the NT (and fifty-two from the apocrypha) in the whole work.

In the author’s preface Jacobs states, “My approach ... is to inquire about the significance of the text for both the ancient and the modern audience” (p. xiii). In the body of the commentary the only matters of significance for a modern audience appear to be those pertaining to academic questions of textual criticism, semantics, and syntax. Insufficient attention is given to questions of biblical theology engaging with the New Testament’s use of these books, their place in the development of our understanding of Jesus’s person, life and work, let alone eschatology.

Haggai’s prophecies with respect to the construction of the second temple focus on a most significant event in preparation for the coming of Jesus as the embodied temple of God (John 2:13–25). The final destruction of the second temple in turn brought closure to the transition from shadow to reality, as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer transferred the temple function to the expanding missionary church. Much more could be said about Haggai’s contribution to this theme within its canonical context. More could be said about Haggai’s discussion of holiness, particularly with respect to Jesus’s power to make clean what was unclean, and to sanctify his people once for all time.

The New Testament writers make extensive use of the Book of Malachi. Pastors and students will look for a deeper and more extensive discussion of issues such as the universal expectation of Malachi 1:11, the relationship between faith and lifestyle (1:6–2:9), covenant family life (2:10–17), and especially the eschatological expectations of Malachi 3–4.

Jacobs states, “Recontextualizing the ideas and themes most often requires reconceptualizing. This task is not the primary concern of a commentary, even though it might offer specific theological stances for the reader” (p. xiii). This may explain the reasons for this deficiency. However, it does contrast with Jacobs’s approach to another difficulty.

Contemporary sensitivities are a matter of genuine concern, particularly with respect to the issue of the Bible’s gendered language with reference to God. The Hebrew text uses masculine pronouns, even though the Creator exists without actual gender. Jacobs states “to avoid the masculine pronoun, I use Deity (the Deity) or God” (p. xiv). In places this usage is open to suggesting that God/Yahweh and “the Deity” are two different beings, for example, “God is also aware of those who honor and reverence the Deity and will bless them” (p. 153); “Yahweh’s hatred, like the Deity’s love, is compelled by Yahweh’s choice” (p. 174); and “a perception that Yahweh requires of people something that the Deity does not require” (p. 266). This approach produces readings that are awkward at best. As a general tendency it also depersonalizes God.

Overall this volume provides a valuable resource, particularly for Hebrew students, scholars and pastors who want to have a precise and faithful understanding of the Hebrew text in its historical context.

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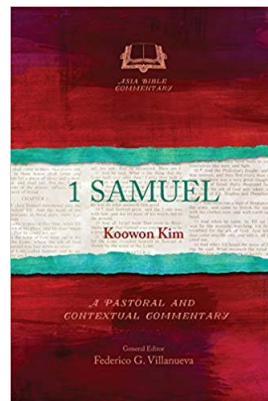
Koowon Kim. *1 Samuel*. Asia Bible Commentary. Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2018. xvi + 281 pp. £16.99/\$24.99.

Koowon Kim's contribution is one of thirteen volumes published thus far in the Asia Bible Commentary series by the Langham Global Library in partnership with the Asia Theological Association. The goal of the series is to provide a resource that is "biblical, pastoral, contextual, missional, and prophetic for pastors, Christian leaders, cross-cultural workers, and students in Asia" (p. xi). The authors are evangelical scholars all across Asia who seek to contextualize the Bible for particular Asian contexts by demonstrating its cultural relevance and leveraging cultural resources with which to engage the text. Kim is a seminary professor at Reformed Graduate University in Seoul, South Korea.

Kim's *1 Samuel* begins with a brief introduction followed by the commentary and then selected bibliography. In the body of the commentary are also embedded fifteen brief topic studies in inset boxes that highlight a biblical theme or issue for particular discussion from a pastoral, cultural, or even historical point of view. Kim is explicit in how he contextualizes his commentary for Asian audiences (p. 10). First, he introduces Chinese, Korean, or Japanese folk sayings or Confucius's teachings for "illustrative purposes." Secondly, he applies the text wherever possible to the situation of Korean churches as he knows them. And thirdly, in his commentary on the David narratives of 1 Samuel 16–31 he includes relevant episodes from the Chinese epic novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*—a work of historical fiction recounting the turbulent period of Chinese history from the end of the Han dynasty into the so-called Three Kingdoms period (ca. 170–280 CE).

Kim's volume is a worthy commentary in the tradition of western, historical, and textual biblical scholarship. There are many exegetical and theological insights in his exposition of 1 Samuel that make the book a fascinating read and help for pastors. For example, he notes the contrast of Hannah considered by Eli as a "wicked woman" (בַּת-בְּלִיעַל) in 1:16 with Eli's sons who are referred to in the narrative as "scoundrels" (בְּנֵי בְלִיעַל) in 2:12 (p. 29). In Samuel's victory over the Philistines at Mizpeh, Kim intriguingly suggests that Yahweh is here depicted as a divine warrior striking out at the enemy as Israel stands by and watches (p. 71). Israel is merely Yahweh's armor-bearer as "The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Kar" (1 Sam 7:11 NIV). His assessment of Saul's quick ascent to the throne compared with David's long and tortuous one is theologically profound and fruitful: "This season of suffering characterized David's rise to the throne, for David became a man of obedience through suffering, which is an essential trait of an Israelite king" (p. 172). Kim writes clearly and concisely, summarizing in excellent fashion each section of the biblical narrative. The commentary is conversant and grounded in previous scholarship although statements are not cited as often as one might wish as to their sources.

There are a number of problems, however, with this work. First, there are several rather egregious errors. For example, in the man of God's condemnation of Eli in 1 Samuel 2:29, Kim argues that the double-meaning of כָּבֵד "to be honored" and "to be heavy" is suggested in the text: "Further, we are told that Eli had "honored" [כָּבֵד] his sons more than God by "fattening" [כָּבֵד] himself and his sons on the choicest part of the offerings made by God's people (pp. 34–35). But the Hebrew text does not have כָּבֵד for the word "fattening." The editors should have caught this misstatement as well as others upon which the exegesis and exposition so fully depend.



A second problem is that Kim tends to (a) moralize the Old Testament story and (b) over-interpret the text. In critiquing the priesthood of Eli, for example, Kim reminds readers that the church today has become like a “business” selling sermons like merchandise (p. 38). Recently, evangelical scholars have expressed concerns over moralizing the Old Testament story. Rather, the focus should be on the redemptive-historical themes raised, that these motifs are part and parcel of the narrator’s larger theme of “those who honor me, I will honor” and reflect the theology of the Deuteronomic historian. Kim also has the tendency to over-interpret the text. Perhaps the most notable example is the conclusion that Saul failed in obeying the Lord not two times (as in 1 Sam 13 and 15) but three times (cf. pp. 6, 98–103). When Samuel anoints Saul in 1 Samuel 10 and after three signs are fulfilled thereafter, he tells Saul to “do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you” (v. 7). Kim interprets Samuel’s latter words to *imply* that Saul should attack the Philistine outpost at Gibeah (p. 99). In fact, the implied action becomes to Kim a “command,” which of course Saul fails to do and thus becomes his first “failure to obey.” When asked why Samuel didn’t just come out and tell Saul directly to attack Gibeah, Kim writes that Samuel apparently “wanted Saul to figure out the Lord’s will, based on the wisdom he had acquired through his life experience and rational judgment” (p. 100). Surely, this asks too much of the reader to infer and the explanation is rather tortuous.

The Asia Bible Commentary seeks to contextualize the Bible for its Asian audiences. Kim does well to bring up on almost every page an Asian proverb, illustration or parallel that relates to the narrative stories of 1 Samuel. Pastors in Asian contexts will no doubt appreciate the parallels and illustrations, but these are for the most part illustrations only. Contextualization requires more, involving the integration of the thought world of the Bible and more importantly the redemptive-historical themes of the Scriptures with the thought world of the target culture. Many of the Asian examples seem piecemeal and tangential to the actual theology of the book. Kim includes Korean and Asian parallels on everything from betrothal type-scenes (p. 90) to armor-bearers (p. 164) to victory chants (p. 176) to the composite bow (p. 195). But how do these illustrations bring to bear in a foreign culture the religious and theological themes of 1 Samuel? One of the more helpful comparisons is Hannah as a model of the Korean “fighting” woman who “fights” with herself, her family members and even with God (p. 11). Yet, surely in as hierarchal and patriarchal as the Korean culture one cannot overlook the fact that Hannah was a *woman* and yet was fundamentally instrumental in executing God’s next movement in his redemptive-historical drama. In such an honor and shame-based culture as the Asian, one cannot overlook the redemptive-historical meaning of God’s removal of Hannah’s shame in this story.

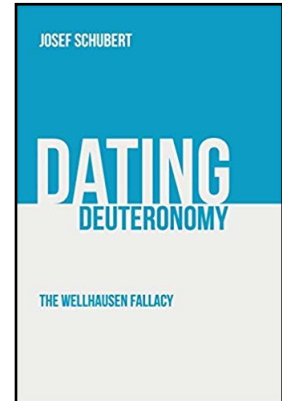
In summary, Kim’s commentary on 1 Samuel is a valuable contribution filled with many worthwhile insights and grounded in traditional, western biblical exegesis. But it would be unwise to rely solely on this work for critical study, its interpretation of 1 Samuel and contextual sermon preparation.

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Josef Schubert. *Dating Deuteronomy: The Wellhausen Fallacy*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018. 192 pp. £20.00/\$26.00.

As one who has loved Deuteronomy for over thirty years, I am far from jealous when someone claims to be “Dating Deuteronomy.” The more who date and then love Deuteronomy the better!

Nonetheless, the issue of establishing the date of the Book of Deuteronomy remains highly contentious in Old Testament scholarship, a lynchpin for the Old Testament to use the language of Gordon Wenham many years ago (“The Date of Deuteronomy: Linch-Pin of Old Testament Criticism: Part 1,” *Them* 10 [1985]: 15–20; and Part 2, *Them* 11 [1985]: 15–18). Since de Wette, and then more famously and popularly Wellhausen, the view that Deuteronomy dates from the time of Josiah continues to retain significant popularity. When I published a small book on Deuteronomy by an evangelical Australian publisher over twenty years ago (*Deuteronomy: The God who Keeps Promises* [Melbourne: Acorn Press, 1998]), the editor wanted me to reflect Josianic origins, something she simply assumed uncritically. Though Wellhausen’s hypothesis has met considerable critique and modification over the past 150 years, a Josianic origin of Deuteronomy remains often astonishingly intractable as a theory.



Schubert’s book is a refreshing argument aimed at dismissing the Wellhausen fallacy of late dating of Deuteronomy, P, and the general reconstruction of Israelite history and religion. To that end I am in full agreement with Schubert’s thrust. As Schubert points out at different points, Wellhausen’s theory is largely built on successive steps of speculation. One of the appeals of this book is its refreshing sense of logic, likelihood, and reason.

Schubert writes from an explicitly secular perspective, though from a Jewish ethnicity. He studied under Cassuto, Segal, Mazar and others in the 1940s in Jerusalem but then turned to psychology. Now Emeritus Professor at the University of Regina, Canada, he helped found the department of Jewish studies because he was appalled at the lack of biblical knowledge among students. Now in his nineties, I believe, this is his first book, and extremely helpful it is indeed.

Schubert’s main arguments focus at times on Hebrew language, analyzing the nature of Israelite religion and cultic practice, and in general arguing for the logical consistency of the Pentateuch. The first section, consisting of three chapters, deal with the problem, as he sees it, of the Wellhausen hypothesis and archaeological assumptions. The second section of three chapters discusses the Torah, namely the composition of the Pentateuch, its religion, and then a chapter on Deuteronomy specifically. The final section, of five chapters, is under the heading of the “Ethnogenesis of Israel.” Here Schubert traces his understanding of the origins and history of Israel. The chapters in turn look at the tradition of a wandering Aramean to a Nation bound by covenant, from the conquest to monarchy, religion during the monarchy, the prophets and finally the exile.

At each point he undermines the assumptions of the Wellhausen school’s reconstruction of the development of Israelite religion. In particular he asserts clearly that monotheism was original to Moses, at least, and in the Patriarchs, and was not an evolution of ancient Israel. He argues this is the most likely scenario historically as well. He attacks the minimalist archaeological view asserting that logically the unity of monotheistic Israel pre-conquest is much more likely than the non-conquest views, and more consistent with archaeology as well.

Schubert asserts convincingly that the Pentateuch was recognized as an entity before the separation of Israel into two kingdoms after Solomon. The closeness of the Samaritan Pentateuch and that of the Hebrew Bible testify to this. So it is inconceivable, he argues, that either is copied from the other; the most reasonable, likely, and logical answer is that the Pentateuch originated pre-division. He also argues persuasively that the idea of editing earlier Scriptures is hard to believe when they were regarded as sacred books. Such editing of a Scripture was unheard of in the ancient world.

Schubert's approach to Hebrew aims to substantiate his argument, claiming that, for example on sacrifices at high places, the Hebrew has been misunderstood and wrongly used to support Wellhausen, et al.

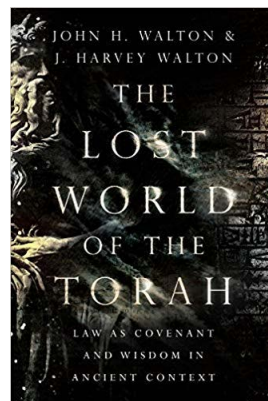
I have never been convinced by the "pious fraud" theory of Wellhausen. And inconsistencies, contradictions or clunky repetitions are not best explained by redactors or by weaving sources together. Such views surmise incompetent redactors at best. If an editor can draw together such nuances and tensions, then so too can an author. Hooray for Schubert's book, bringing some common sense back into the debate and contributing to what needs to be done—a total debunking of Wellhausen's fallacious hypothesis. In doing so, Schubert shows the ripple effects of Wellhausen that spread all the way through Old Testament study.

The book has plenty of minor typos that could be cleaned up for reprinting. Nonetheless it is eminently readable, refreshing and ought to be read by anyone studying Deuteronomy.

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John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton. *The Lost World of the Torah: Law as Covenant and Wisdom in Ancient Context*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019. 268 pp. £16.99/\$20.00.

The present work is John H. Walton's sixth in a series of Lost World volumes published by IVP Academic. He is joined by his son, J. Harvey Walton (who also collaborated on *The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest*), in an attempt to recast our understanding of the Torah, not as *legislation/legal code/moral instruction*, but as wisdom instruction, covenant stipulation, and ritual instruction—all embedded within an original ancient Near Eastern (ANE) context far different from our modern one. As in the previous volumes, Walton and Walton proceed by way of advancing and defending one proposition per chapter (23 propositions in all), each one laying the groundwork for further discussion, culminating in a final series of propositions designed to explore "the practical issues of today using an informed understanding of the Torah and applying a consistent hermeneutic" (p. 6).



In Part 1 ("Methodology"; Propositions 1–2), Walton and Walton employ the analogy of cultural rivers to argue that we who live within a modern cultural river with all its attendant (and assumed) cultural currents (such as democracy, individual rights, etc.) must be careful to read ancient texts (and the OT *is* an ANE text) in light of the ancient cultural river in which they are embedded, with due appreciation for the cultural currents that often differ from ours and perhaps don't even anticipate ours.

Only by reading the ancient Hebrew text for what it is (and not what we want it or assume it to be), with the aid of “cultural brokers” who can help those in one culture to understand the backgrounds and beliefs of another culture, can we have confidence that we have reached authoritative interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. With this in mind, they assert that our concepts of Torah today are influenced by our modern, post-Reformation notions of law and legislation as prescriptive formulations enforcing obligations upon those under its authority; according to the authors, however, the ANE context presents legal material only as descriptive formulations, calling for wise understanding by those who might settle disputes and make decisions. To put it more bluntly, they aver that many read Torah “as if it were prescriptive, codified legislation, though that concept did not exist in the ancient world” (p. 22) and so are guilty of hermeneutical cultural river violation.

Part 2 (“Functions of Ancient Near Eastern Legal Collections”; Propositions 3–7) provides the authors’ actual arguments that legal collections (like the laws of Hammurabi) are not in fact prescriptive legislation, based on their lack of comprehensiveness and the lack of appeal to the written legal sayings in court records (both of which should be present in the case of codified legislation). Instead, the legal collections’ lists function as aspective wisdom, providing illustrations of what wise order in applying justice looks like. Since the Torah is like these legal collections, it should likewise be understood as aspective legal wisdom designed to preserve order and not supply legislation. It is here that Walton and Walton state in no uncertain terms what many will find to be shocking: “If God did not give rules, as we have suggested, there are no rules to follow. If God did not provide legislation, there are no laws to obey” (p. 44). In a similar vein, they also point out that the Torah shares much in common with ANE suzerainty covenants; just as the stipulations of such covenants are not given by the suzerains to legislate the vassal’s society or to provide moral requirements, so we should not assume that YHWH provides these stipulations for said reasons. Instead, they propose that the covenant stipulations serve to preserve covenant order and to reflect on YHWH the sovereign’s reputation by revealing what kind of a wise and just king he is. Finally, the authors propose that holiness for Israel is a status conferred by YHWH, not something to be acquired by observing rules or performing rituals.

Part 3 (“Ritual and Torah”; Propositions 8–9) explains how ANE ritual functioned as part of the “Great Symbiosis” where worshipers needed the favor of the gods while, at the same time, the gods were dependent on humans to meet their needs. Here the Israelite covenant differs greatly from ANE religions, since YHWH has no needs to meet. Therefore, the function of ritual must be to preserve covenant order, wherein offerings serve as tribute to the suzerain and rituals preserve the favor of YHWH dwelling in their midst.

In Part 4 (“Context of the Torah”; Propositions 10–14), Walton and Walton discuss in detail the contextual situatedness of the Torah in the ancient world (and its ancient values), in the covenant relationship (with Israel as the unique vassal), and in Israelite sacred space (where Israel receives instruction in how to preserve the blessings of divine presence and favor).

The final section, Part 5 (“Ongoing Significance of the Torah”; Propositions 15–23), applies the foregoing conclusions to significant questions about how to apply Torah today (actually, it would be more accurate to describe this lengthy section of 101 pages as how *not* to apply it). They argue for a number of controversial points, such as the following: the NT does not provide hermeneutical guidance for how to understand the OT in context; one cannot legitimately separate the Torah into parts in order to determine what is of enduring value; a derived-principles approach to applying the Torah is too problematic to be consistent and workable; the Torah is not and never was intended to provide an ideal

social structure or a moral system/set of moral principles; and a divine command theory of ethics could be constructed even without a written Torah construed as moral. Following the conclusion, the authors provide an appendix expounding the Ten Words within their hermeneutical framework.

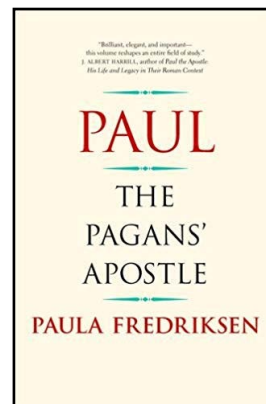
No doubt many will laud the work of Walton and Walton and breathe a sigh of relief that their approach offers “a way to resolve a longstanding problem: why the inclusion of slavery or patriarchy in the Torah should not concern us” (p. 225). For my part, while supportive of their fundamental goal of interpreting the Torah in its original context, I found myself in vigorous disagreement with them at so many points. However, due to the requirements for brevity in this kind of review, I thought it best to present a summary of the book as charitably and accurately as possible and to limit myself to one substantive criticism. A significant plank in their argument is that the legal sayings of the Torah (as well as ANE legal collections) are not codified prescriptive legislation. This conclusion is based on the lack of comprehensiveness in what it addresses and the absence of judges overtly grounding rulings in legal collections for the court documents we have. The latter is of course an argument from silence. The former presents a false dichotomy: either a legal collection is comprehensive in scope and prescriptive legislation, or it must be descriptive legal wisdom. As Walton and Walton put it, “The conclusion can only be that these documents could not possibly serve as codified legislation to regulate every aspect of society” (p. 30). But why must this be an all or nothing proposition? Why can’t a non-comprehensive legal collection serve as both codified legislation for the areas it does address and instructional legal wisdom for judges in the areas that it doesn’t? Appeals to our modern experience of indexing comprehensiveness to codified legislation would be to impose our modern cultural river on the ancient one.

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

Paula Fredriksen. *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. xii + 319 pp. £15.99/\$22.00.

Pauline studies are *en vogue*. However, there is little consensus regarding the best interpretive lens(es) through which to view Paul. N. T. Wright (in *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015], vii–ix) notes at least four major Pauline interpretive “schools” in contemporary biblical studies: (1) the Lutheran view (OPP); (2) the so-called, “New Perspective on Paul” (NPP); (3) Apocalyptic interpretations; and (4) Social-Scientific approaches, with varying subgroups within each. Over the past decade, an amalgam of competing (perhaps, antithetical?) Pauline portraits have been sketched by each of these groups. Paula Fredriksen’s *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* combines a synthetic blend of these last three approaches to Paul while ploughing new soil left mostly untilled in Wright’s monograph. In several places she acknowledges the formative influence of Krister Stendahl (pp. v, 178). Fredriksen is Aurelio Professor of Scripture emerita at Boston University and Distinguished



Visiting Professor of Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and currently serves as co-chair (alongside Matthew Novenson) of the SBL's "Pauline Literature" section. Also known for her work on Judaism, the historical Jesus, and early Christianity, she is well-qualified to write this book.

Fredriksen's epigraph, "The past is gone; and the truth of what is past lies in our own judgment, not in the past event itself" (Augustine, *Faust*. 26.5), is consistent with her overarching thesis: "Paul lived his life entirely within his native Judaism. Later traditions, basing themselves on his letters will displace him from this [Jewish] context. Through the retrospect of history, Paul will be transformed into a 'convert,' an ex- or even an anti-Jew; indeed, into the founder of gentile Christianity" (p. xii). Nevertheless, Augustine's quote is equally applicable to Fredriksen's own assumptions regarding Paul. Fredriksen's goal/purpose in writing is to answer sundry research questions that function as the bedrock to her thesis: "How many years [since penning Rom 13:11–12] stood between Paul and his call to proclaim the good news? Why—*how*—after the passage of so much time, can Paul still be so sure that he knows the hour on God's clock" (p. xi, emphasis original). Methodologically, Fredriksen employs a hybrid approach (p. 7) utilizing the tools of social-scientific criticism, comparative analysis of primary sources, and exegetical analysis of key Pauline texts (e.g., Rom 1–2; 7–11; 1 Cor 15; Phil 2:6–11). The subtitle "*The Pagans' Apostle*" stems from Fredriksen's distinction between "Gentiles" (a religiously neutral, ethnic term) and "pagans" (a religiously specific, ethnic term denoting non-Jews and non-Christians [p. 34]).

Structurally, the book consists of a preface (pp. xi–xii), introduction (pp. 1–7), five chapters (pp. 8–166), postscript (pp. 167–78), abbreviations (pp. 179–80), notes (pp. 181–253), bibliography (pp. 255–80), and indices (pp. 281–319). In her introduction, Fredriksen reveals her methodology of investigating Paul's "two generative contexts": the "scriptural" (Paul's moorings in Jewish apocalyptic hope) and "social" (Greco-Roman world), which was Paul's missionary ambit (p. 7).

Fredriksen's chapters fall into two major sections: chapters 1–2 cover Paul's "social" world, whereas chapters 3–5 address the "scriptural." Fredriksen adroitly sketches at least four major themes regarding Paul: (1) Paul was an apostle racing on time's edge (p. xii, 169, 175); (2) despite his "conflicting" portraits of the Law (e.g., Gal 3:11; Rom 7:12), Paul did not proffer a "Law-free" gospel and remained faithful to Judaism (pp. xii, 113–19, 175); (3) the gods/δαίμόνια/στοιχεῖα of the first-century Mediterranean world were hierarchical and ethnic—creating anti-Jewish tension/persecution as the "ex-pagan pagans" (to use Fredriksen's "oxymoronic" terminology [p. 34]) abandoned their ancestral gods in favor of YHWH—thus, bringing the gods' ire against their nations and families (pp. 92–93); and (4) eschatologically, while all are one in Christ (κατὰ πνεῦμα), Israel remains distinct (κατὰ σάρκα) from "the nations" (τὰ ἔθνη; pp. 114–21).

Numerous strengths mark this work. It is eloquently written and well-researched with over seventy pages of notes and a twenty-five-page bibliography. Fredriksen argues her thesis well—highlighting the necessity to recover Paul's Jewish (apocalyptic) roots, the effects of distancing—socially and chronologically—on one's exegesis (p. 58), and the reality of spiritual warfare (p. 92). Further, Fredriksen boldly swims against the streams of the consensus—critiquing the OPP and NPP (pp. 122, 234, n. 64). Perhaps, the book's greatest strength is Fredriksen's vivid illumination of Paul's first-century world, which serves as a helpful corrective to post-Shoah interpretations of Paul within Western Christianity. For this, and more, Pauline students/scholars owe Fredriksen a debt of gratitude.

Despite these notable strengths, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* leaves one wanting. First, regarding formatting, end notes and the inconsistent use and transliteration of Greek make for a frustrating

experience—better to have used Greek script throughout. Second, Fredriksen presents an imbalanced approach to Paul by elevating Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Galatians with only passing reference to the full Pauline corpus—even amongst the seven undisputed letters (pp. 295–301). Third, Fredriksen seems to contradict herself—alluding in her epigraph to the impossibility of recovering the historical Paul, while at the same time claiming (through her method) that one “can ... begin to see Paul as he saw himself” (p. xii). As George Tyrrell asserted: “The Christ that Harnack sees ... is only the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well” (cf. *Christianity at the Crossroads* [London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1909], 44). Similarly, the present book risks turning the image of Paul into the image of Paula. Fourth, and more systemic, Fredriksen’s evolutionary view of the gospel pits Paul against Jesus and the Evangelists (pp. 2–3), and she presents the Fourfold Gospel, Acts, and Paul as contradictory, unreliable historical witnesses (pp. 4–6).

In sum, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* offers an accessible, affordable entry into the discussion of “apocalyptic Paul.” Fredriksen rightly situates Paul in the center of his complex cultural milieu, “thick” with various divine, human, and suprahuman actors (p. xii). Fredriksen’s erudite work evinces the fruit of a lifetime of study, and her synthetic approach is commendable. However, given the weaknesses above, this book cannot be recommended without reservation.

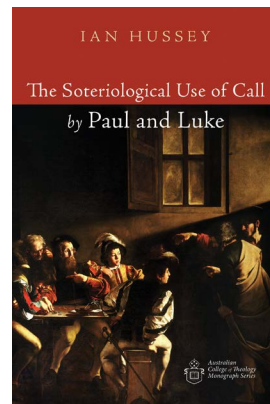
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Ian Hussey. *The Soteriological Use of Call in Paul and Luke*. Australian College of Theology Monograph Series. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018. xi + 126 pp. £15.00/\$19.00.

This crisp, accessible book fills an important gap in the literature by considering the use of *καλέω* and its cognates as a salvation metaphor by Paul and Luke. Dr Hussey teaches at Malyon College, Brisbane, and has served as a Baptist pastor. His interests in New Testament and pastoral ministry have clearly drawn him to this topic, on which he earlier published an article (“The Soteriological Use of ‘Call’ in the New Testament: An Undervalued Category?” *BTB* 46 [2016]: 133–43).

Hussey approaches the topic as one who seeks to understand the process of Christian conversion in the early churches. His introduction sets the scene by sketching scholarly debates about the relationships of Paul and Jesus, and especially Paul and Luke, notably in relation to soteriology. Paul and Luke are frequently set off against each other by scholars working in this area, and Hussey gives succinct summaries of important contributions to this discussion. He then turns to the *καλέω* word group and sketches the range of uses and translations of these lexemes, before outlining the focus and shape of the remainder of this book. Notably, he works with the Pauline corpus other than the Pastorals, arguing that the other disputed Paulines are widely agreed to reflect Paul’s theology, even if not from his hand. (Curiously, he treats Philippians as a disputed Pauline [p. 84], which it is not generally considered to be).

The first of the core chapters studies Old Testament use of “call” language and themes in the life of Israel, notably that God calls Israel into existence, that Israel’s call is the result of God’s choice (election),



and that Israel's call is expressed in the form of covenant—a covenant which has a characteristic meal. This meal points beyond itself to the messianic banquet to come when God saves his people.

This is followed by a study of the overall soteriologies of Paul and Luke. Hussey of necessity paints with a broad brush—the whole chapter is just 24 pages—but is judicious in the themes he identifies. For Paul, he sums up in three key propositions:

1. Righteousness by faith is a metaphor of salvation, not an all-encompassing term;
2. Covenant deserves a more central place in Pauline soteriology;
3. Righteousness is related to covenant rather than imputation. (p. 36)

He provides a very helpful list of 38 metaphors of salvation used by Paul to demonstrate the range of Paul's understanding (pp. 37–38). The influence of the “new perspective” is clear in his use of Sanders, Dunn and Wright—although not uncritically—in seeing covenant as a key category in Pauline soteriology.

When Hussey turns to Luke, he identifies salvation as lying at the heart of Luke's soteriology. This is not simply tautology: Luke uses the Greek word group for “save” extensively. After summarising previous scholarship very succinctly, he proposes that salvation relates to the kingdom of God, and the biblical covenants (especially in Luke's eucharistic words)—the latter is expressed clearly in Acts 3:25; 7:8, 44—the believing community stands in continuity with the people of Abraham. The study of Paul and Luke leads Hussey to claim that a key point of convergence between Luke and Paul is the use of “covenant language in soteriological ways” (p. 59).

In studying Paul's soteriological use of call, Hussey provides a verse-by-verse discussion of key passages: Gal 1:6, 15; 5:8, 13; 1 Thess 2:11–12; 4:7; 5:24; 2 Thess 1:11; 2:14; 1 Cor 1:2, 9, 26; 7:15–24; Rom 1:6–7; 4:16–17; 8:28–20; 9:7, 10–13, 22–26; 11:28–29; Eph 1:18; 4:1, 4; Col 3:15; Phil 3:13–14. He claims he is working with “a generally agreed chronological order” (p. 60), which surprised me a little—although I agree that Galatians is early, this is a minority position in scholarship. The comments on the passages are not detailed exegetical conversations with other scholars—rather, he tends to cite those with whom he agrees, and his sources are not always the most in-depth commentaries (and I found little in German cited, for instance). That said, the discussion is clear, lucid and engaging, and shows the wide range of things to which believers are said to be called (summary, p. 86).

Hussey's discussion of Luke focuses on only six passages where he perceives a soteriological use of call language: Luke 5:32; 14:12–14, 15–24; Acts 2:21, 39; 15:17. As with Paul, he works through the passages presenting his understanding with support from scholars with whom he agrees (including some, it must be said, rather lightweight sources). I was somewhat surprised not to see Jacob Jervell among his conversation partners here. His summary at the end of the chapter is very clear and helpful, and broadly on the right track, even if some of the arguments along the way seem to me to be stretching the evidence.

The conclusion draws the threads together in a very useful table comparing Pauline and Lukan uses of *καλέω* language (p. 111). Notably, both use call language in connection with election, covenant, the kingdom of God, God's eternal purpose to save gentiles, sanctification and repentance, present and future experience, the supersession of ethnicity and socioeconomic status in belonging to Christ, and the formation of Christian community. There are differences too: Luke lacks the Pauline indicative claims about sanctification and vocation, but this (Hussey considers) relates to the different authors' intents. Thus the *καλέω* word group should not always be translated in two different ways, “invite”

and “call,” since the two English words convey rather different ideas. A closing short section draws implication for the Christian life, connecting with Os Guinness’s good work on vocation.

The presentation of the book is not as good as I’m accustomed to expect in these days of computer typesetting (not least from this publisher). A number of Greek words are wrongly accented (either no accent or too many), or what should be nominative forms have the iota subscript which signals the dative case. A few footnoted references lack page number(s). A few sentences seem to lack a word.

Overall, this book does a good job at what it’s trying to do: provide an overview of call language in relation to salvation in Paul and Luke—and that is no small achievement in just over 120 pages. Those who want to see the detailed exegetical debate and to consider alternative views will need to look elsewhere. There is certainly at least one PhD thesis to be written in this area: who will do this for us?

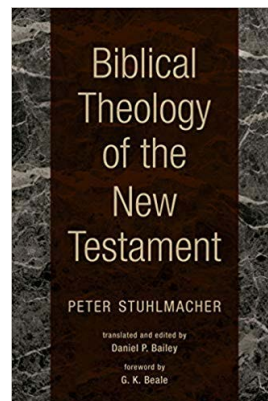
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Peter Stuhlmacher. *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*. Translated and edited by Daniel P. Bailey. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. xxxiv + 935 pp. £74.80/\$95.00.

With this volume, we are given an English translation of the magnum opus of Peter Stuhlmacher, professor emeritus of New Testament at the University of Tübingen, Germany. A number of his other works are available in English (e.g., *Revisiting Paul’s Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001]; *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994]), but this work stands as the culmination of his thoughts on the NT and ought to be widely and deeply considered by NT students.

For those familiar with the original German work, there are a few modifications of note to accommodate “the needs of English-speaking theological students” (p. xiii) such as the inclusion of English-language bibliographical material at the end of every chapter, summaries of “recent works of New Testament theology” (p. xiv; e.g., Frank S. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005]; G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011]), and the additional of some supplementary material by Daniel Bailey within the text (not to mention the inclusion of an essay by the same).

Stuhlmacher is writing from a Protestant perspective and, more specifically, one informed by the Lutheran tradition. The latter is evidenced by his relatively frequent (positive) citation of Martin Luther (pp. 314–15; 750–62) as well as his mention of the Augsburg Confession (pp. 313, 857–58). The book is divided into two main parts. The first focuses on what the proclamation of the New Testament and the second, briefer part focuses such areas as the question of canon and the center of Scripture. The first part is further divided into six main sections, namely, the proclamation of (1) Jesus; (2) the Early Church; (3) Paul; (4) after Paul; (5) the Synoptic Gospels; and (6) John and his school.



He sets up the body with a helpful discussion of biblical theology as a discipline coupled with a survey of “the current leading theologies of the New Testament” (p. 15) and current research surrounding the discipline. He argues here that the method employed to elucidate the biblical theology of the New Testament “must correspond to the biblical texts and help them express themselves in their own language.” Therefore, while “the historical-critical method” is the “one established method,” it must be, he argues, a method that “is prepared to enter into serious dialogue with the texts” and agree “as far as possible with their central kerygmatic statements” (p. 12). What this means is that he distances himself from the existential reading of the NT exemplified by Rudolph Bultmann and others of this school (more recently, Hans Hübner), realizing in turn the important and unbreakable connection between “the gospel of Christ” and “the tradition, language, and thought mode of the Old Testament” (p. 44).

Though many positive features can be noted, our attention will first turn to some problematic aspects of the book. Stuhlmacher seems to approximate something like a “canon-within-the-canon” approach to the NT (see Michael Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 68–73) by arguing that Paul and the Pauline school (Colossians, Ephesians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus) are in direct conflict with other NT books (James, Hebrews), with 1 Peter serving as “a kind of golden mean between Paulinism” and the more Jewish letters of James and Hebrews (p. 519). This arises from his contention, following W. G. Kümmel, that “the center of Scripture corresponds with the Pauline message of the justification of the ungodly by faith alone” (p. 786; cf. pp. 780–82 for his discussion of Luther in this connection).

Moreover, he favors the historicity of the Synoptic Gospels over against the Gospel of John: “in rendering this tradition [from the time of the earthly Jesus] in the language of their own school, John and his pupils proceeded ... recklessly with the historical events as compared to ... the synoptic tradition” (p. 58). Thus, while he recognizes the strengths of the “Johannine school” (which includes 1–3 John, Revelation), it is sub-par when compared with the synoptic gospels. (For an account that argues persuasively for the historicity of both the Synoptic Gospels and John, the reader is referred to Craig L. Blomberg’s *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007], esp. 196–240). This gives rise to another issue. By evaluating John’s Gospel thus, Stuhlmacher’s discussion of Jesus’s proclamation is marred. Less significant, though arguably still incorrect, is the prominence he places on the Septuagint in the life of the early church as well as in the formation of the NT canon.

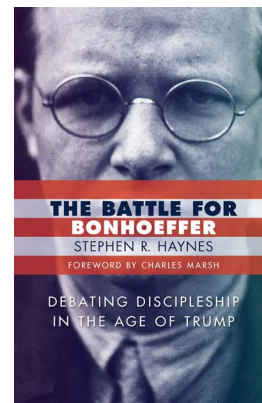
Despite these and other areas of difficulty, there is much to commend Stuhlmacher’s book. On many occasions, he departs from the critical consensus, preferring a close and even churchly reading of the text. This is most obvious when one considers his German theological milieu, i.e., Martin Hengel exerts more influence than Bultmann. Further, his constant attention to the Old Testament and Jewish context sheds profound light on the text. In comparison with G. K. Beale’s work, his work is more introductory in content; yet he is a clear improvement on Udo Schnelle’s *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. M. Eugene Boring [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009]). In conclusion, the magnum opus of this senior German scholar has much to offer the NT student, will indubitably contribute to English-speaking scholarship, and serves as a reliable entry point into the world of German NT studies.

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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

Stephen R. Haynes. *The Battle for Bonhoeffer: Debating Discipleship in the Age of Trump*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. 213 pp. £15.75/\$19.99.

Over the past 15 years, Stephen Haynes, Professor of Religious Studies at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee, has been the leading surveyor of the cultural reception of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the United States. Haynes's work has demonstrated the varieties of Bonhoeffer interpretation from various segments of the theological spectrum, ranging from the liberal Bonhoeffer to the conservative Bonhoeffer. In particular, Haynes's work *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon: Portrait of a Protestant Saint* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004) mapped out the territory of Bonhoeffer reception, indicating the ways in which various theological traditions tend to focus on particular works of Bonhoeffer while downplaying others, and demonstrating that Bonhoeffer's theology has been notoriously easy to bend towards the readers' predilections. In *The Battle for Bonhoeffer*, Haynes continues his project of surveying the use of Bonhoeffer in America by focusing on the evangelical reception of Bonhoeffer in the era of Trump, analyzing how Bonhoeffer has been utilized in the political and cultural battles raging in the lead up to and during the first stages of the Trump presidency.



Early in the book, Haynes tracks the evangelical engagement with Bonhoeffer in the years before the presidency of George W. Bush. In doing so, Haynes analyzes how the reception of Bonhoeffer's theology among evangelicals moved from a period of reservation about Bonhoeffer's liberal theological education and worry about concerning aspects of his theology to a full embrace of Bonhoeffer as a moral hero. In this short survey, the main theme of *The Battle for Bonhoeffer* emerges: What explains the evangelical embrace of Bonhoeffer? Why has he been placed into the pantheon of evangelical heroes alongside Lewis, Graham, and others? Haynes believes this move to evangelical sainthood occurred because, as the culture wars were heating up in the 1980s and 1990s, evangelicals needed heroes who could be guides in that war. Making connections to Bonhoeffer's battles with the emerging forces of Nazism in the 1930s, and his role in resisting Nazism, evangelicals found a figure who could be a guide to faithfulness to following Christ in a hostile culture. Focusing primarily on Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* allowed the evangelical church to absorb aspects of Bonhoeffer's theology that were most amenable to evangelicalism and so raise Bonhoeffer's status as a guide to the church in dark times.

Haynes then turns to evangelical reception of Bonhoeffer during and after the Bush presidency, with the hinge figure in this story being Eric Metaxas, who established a new audience for Bonhoeffer in popular evangelicalism through his best seller *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010). Metaxas offered a full-throated endorsement of Bonhoeffer as a foil to the liberal cultural dominance of the Obama years, providing a picture of Bonhoeffer as one who was aligned with the evangelical cause and so able to guide evangelicalism through the sense of being under attack in the American culture. Haynes continues the book by tracking "the Bonhoeffer moment" in evangelicalism, by which he refers to the increase in engagement with Bonhoeffer in the era of the Trump presidency. He shows that numerous influential evangelical commentators, often dependent upon Metaxas's depiction of Bonhoeffer, appealed to Bonhoeffer in the key issues of the culture wars

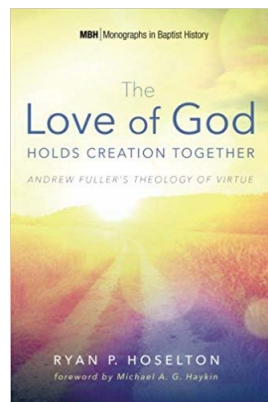
and the evangelical desire to maintain power and influence over the culture. A populist Bonhoeffer has arisen in the intersection of Metaxas's biography and the rise of Trump. Haynes offers a searching critique of this populist Bonhoeffer, demonstrating the incompatibility of this figure with the historical Bonhoeffer.

Haynes's book puts before evangelicalism important questions regarding our relationship to Dietrich Bonhoeffer: What is the place of Bonhoeffer in the era of Trump? What should be the relationship between Bonhoeffer and American evangelicalism? While there is plenty in his theology that evangelicalism can and should utilize, we must honestly recognize that Bonhoeffer is not an American evangelical. Metaxas's book has deep flaws, and Haynes is right to query evangelical devotion to Bonhoeffer if that devotion is based on him being one of our tribe. He is not. Haynes offers insight into how and why Bonhoeffer has been forced into the mold of evangelicalism, and how this has resulted in evangelicals being unable to grasp Bonhoeffer's own theological commitments and purposes fully. If evangelicalism is to appropriate Bonhoeffer as a guide in our time, then we must do it with integrity, recognizing the places of difference between Bonhoeffer and the evangelical tradition. Haynes's book should be read by evangelicals who look to Bonhoeffer as it provides us with a needed perspective on Bonhoeffer's theological inheritance and the areas where we are prone to misappropriating Bonhoeffer's theology. Rejecting the populist Bonhoeffer doesn't mean rejecting Bonhoeffer; rather, it means having a more nuanced, and so more honest relationship to Bonhoeffer, and a better understanding of the ways he can be a resource for evangelical theology.

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Ryan P. Hoselton. *The Love of God Holds Creation Together: Andrew Fuller's Theology of Virtue*. Monographs in Baptist History 7. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018. xii + 104 pages. \$16.00.

During the last several decades, Andrew Fuller's (1754–1815) legacy among Evangelicalism has become a popular theme in Baptist scholarship, especially regarding his soteriological influence on the Modern Missionary Movement. This emphasis is merited as Fuller's evangelical Calvinism remains his foremost contribution to evangelicalism. However, as Ryan Hoselton notes, other areas of Fuller's theology and practice have yet to be surveyed. This work focuses on one such area: ethics. In its pages, Hoselton adopts the term *aretegenic*, a neologism coined by Ellen Charry, to describe Fuller's relationship between virtue and theology. According to Charry, classic theologians such as Augustine of Hippo (354–430) and John Calvin (1509–1564) believed that an accurate knowledge of God “fostered virtue and excellence in the lives of believers” (p. 3). A similar aretegenic theology, Hoselton maintains, materializes throughout Fuller's theological corpus but develops most evidently in his apologetic works against Socinianism and Deism. Through an examination of these primary works, the author determines that “Fuller rooted morality in right Christian doctrine. A right knowledge of God and human nature grounded a correct knowledge of virtue, and a vital love of God and neighbor facilitated a love of virtue” (pp. 2–3).



Hoselton structures the work around this thesis. In chapter two, the author introduces Fuller's evangelical Calvinism within his Enlightenment context. Fuller's soteriology centers on an Edwardsean application of natural and moral inability to human responsibility. Although sinful humanity is morally unable and unwilling to respond to God's decrees, they remain naturally able and, thus, accountable. This understanding of human depravity and responsibility directly contradicted the optimistic anthropology of most Enlightenment thinkers, including Joseph Priestley (1733–1804), whose Socinian theology emphasized progressive ethics and human capability, and Thomas Paine (1737–1809), who popularized Deism and its rejection of Christianity's suppression of human potential. After introducing these figures within their Enlightenment context, Hoselton proceeds in chapter three to detail Fuller's apologetic against both Priestley's Socinianism (in *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared, as to Their Moral Tendency* [1793, 1802]) and Paine's Deism (in *The Gospel Its Own Witness* [1800]). The author highlights Fuller's use of virtue as a central argument against both systems. True morality, Fuller contends, rests in Christian orthodoxy. Chapter four applies this argument to Fuller's broader theological system, including the doctrines of God, humanity, redemption, and revelation. Each of these dogmas displays Fuller's aretegenic approach as "every doctrine of the gospel proved salutary to the lives of believers, rousing a love for God that pervaded the agent's entire being" (p. 68). In chapter five, Hoselton demonstrates Fuller's application of doctrine to Christian morality as proof of its truthfulness in comparison to the failure of Enlightenment principles to inspire similar results. The author then concludes with a brief application of Fuller's aretegenic method to modern virtue ethics.

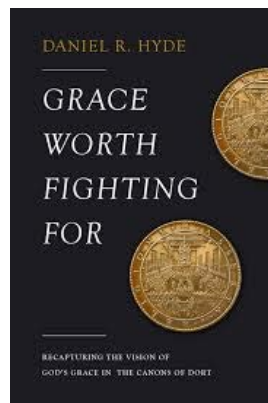
The greatest strength of Hoselton's work lies in its charting of new territory in Fullerite scholarship. Unlike any previous study, *The Love of God Holds Creation Together* demonstrates the effects of Fuller's evangelical Calvinism far beyond his soteriology and missiology to his ethics. Love and virtue were just as predominant in Fuller's thought as they were to Jonathan Edwards, his theological predecessor and mentor. Through a scholarly examination of primary sources, Hoselton uncovers this essential function of virtue in Fuller's polemic against both Socinianism and Deism. As such, the author effectively locates Andrew Fuller within his Enlightenment context beyond the oft-studied immediate setting of High Calvinism. Hoselton's work introduces the reader to the broader intellectual climate of Fuller's day.

A few questions remain unanswered by Hoselton's work, which could be explored by future studies. First, the present study investigates Fuller's aretegenic approach, primarily in two apologetic works. Although Hoselton briefly discusses the theologian's most influential work, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, as well as other sermons and writings, other areas of Fuller's corpus remain uncharted. Deeper study of Fuller's other polemical works such as those against antinomianism, universalism, and Arminianism could uncover additional insight into his aretegenic theology. Further, Hoselton's conclusions related to Fuller's systematic theology can be extended to other doctrines. One could ask, for example, how Fuller roots virtue in the areas of ecclesiology and eschatology, among others. While *The Love of God Holds Creation Together* leaves these questions unanswered, this detracts little from the overall value of the work. Hoselton has provided a valuable resource for both Baptist studies and Fullerite scholarship. After reading the work, one is left with the impression that this brief monograph is only the starting point for future studies on virtue in the thought and practice of Andrew Fuller.

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Daniel R. Hyde. *Grace Worth Fighting for: Recapturing the Vision of God's Grace in the Canons of Dort*. Lincoln, NE: Davenant Press, 2019. x + 421 pp. £19.95/\$24.95.

This book was written to mark the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dort (or Dordrecht). That Synod was convened to respond to *The Remonstrance*, a document published in 1610 by the followers of Jacobus Arminius. In the introduction, Hyde describes the origins of the Synod and details all the participants. He also makes it clear that this book is not an exercise in history but rather an attempt to demonstrate that the redeeming grace of God expressed in the *Canons of Dort* is vital for Christian life today and is worth fighting for. He then provides an outline of the Canons of Dort under four headings: First Point of Doctrine: Redemption Planned; Second Point of Doctrine: Redemption Accomplished; Third & Fourth Points of Doctrine: Redemption Applied; and Fifth Point of Doctrine: Redemption Preserved (pp. 41–43).



The main substance of the book is based around these four headings. The Synod followed a format which has often been used in Christian theological writing, namely, stating what they affirmed and then stating what they rejected. Our author has two chapters on each point of doctrine, one on the articles being affirmed and one on the articles being rejected. The format of the chapters is that the article being affirmed or rejected is stated, and then the author explains its significance.

In explaining each article, the author's approach is varied. On some points, we have perhaps one or two pages, mostly repeating *verbatim* what is in the article, together with a few supportive and applicatory comments. On other articles, he breaks into a sermonic mode. For example, on page 236, in discussing human depravity, he uses an illustration from *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* in which good and bad eggs are separated, with the bad eggs going to the incinerator. He concludes with the words, "We are by nature bad eggs deserving of hellfire." The evidence that major sections of the book originated as sermons is clear throughout, such as on page 243 where he writes, "Turn back to Romans with me for a moment." There are even long sections where sermon outlines are included in the text! For example, on page 320–25, there is a three-point sermon: The Certainty of Salvation, The Certainty of the Saved, and The Certainty of the Savior. Similarly, Hyde includes an alliterative sermon on the theme of "Once Saved, Always Saved?": The Real Potential in Ourselves, The Righteous Permission of God, and The Remedy Prescribed in Scripture (pp. 325–29).

Given that this journal has theological students as its primary intended audience, it should be emphasized that this is not an academic study of the *Canons of Dort*, nor does it pretend to be. It is unashamedly an attempt to state and affirm the grace of God as described in the *Canons* for a popular audience. Although in some places there are detailed references to theological discussions which have a bearing on the material in hand (including references to Augustine, Calvin, and many others) this is not done consistently. The lack of a careful academic approach is underlined by the absence of any attempt to explain, in a sympathetic and careful way, the reasons (especially biblical reasons) for the views of the writers of *The Remonstrance*. They are almost always summarily dismissed. There are two useful appendices at the end of the book: *The Remonstrance* of 1610 and also *The Opinions of the Remonstrants* of 1619, this latter document being their response to the Canons of Dort. These two appendices appear without comment, and there is no attempt to engage with them. For Christians with interest in the doctrines of grace as found in Scripture, they may well find this book to be useful, although it is a long

read and could have used a good editor. For theological students and others, there are better places to go for a study of the *Canons of Dort*.

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Thomas Kaufmann. *Luther's Jews: A Journey into Anti-Semitism*. Translated by Lesley Sharpe and Jeremy Noakes. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. vii + 193 pp. £18.99/\$30.00.

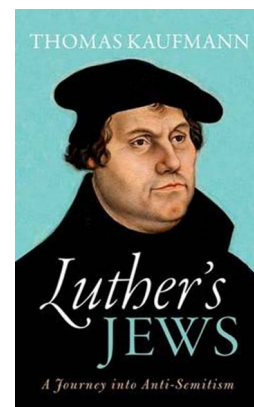
This book (a translation of Kaufmann's *Luthers Juden* [Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014]) is an ambitious attempt to fully "historicize" Martin Luther's writings and statements about Jews and Judaism. Kaufmann here offers a systematic and chronological survey of Luther's dealings with and writings about Jews, building on his own earlier study which systematically placed each of Luther's major "Jewish writings" (*Judenschriften*) in their own respective historical contexts (*Luthers "Judenschriften": Ein Beitrag zu ihrer historischen Kontextualisierung* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013]). He also dives into the fraught and often tragic reception history that Luther's anti-Jewish writings have had.

To this end, chapter 1 pursues a twofold aim. First, Kaufmann broadly assesses the legal, cultural, and economic situation of European Jews in the sixteenth century, demonstrating how they were at once ingrained in European life and yet legally, culturally, and religiously marginalized. He then attempts to parse out what actual contact Luther had with living Jews. Such contact for Luther was slim, though not non-existent, and Kaufmann highlights the role that Bernhard, a converted Jew, played in Wittenberg and in Luther's thinking about Jews more broadly.

Chapters 2 through 5 proceed with a chronological, workman-like survey of Luther's comments and policies towards the Jews. Methodologically, a glance at the endnotes reveals that Kaufmann has decided to focus exclusively on expositing Luther's views from the primary sources themselves. References to secondary scholarship are entirely non-existent in the notes, though a helpful bibliography is included at the end of the work.

The first two chapters of this section cover Luther's opening decade as an author and a public figure. Chapter 2 gives evidence from Luther's earliest writings that the reformer's developing theology had surprisingly pro-Jewish elements, discarding many medieval legends and stereotypes about Jewish host desecration, ritual murder, and well poisoning. Chapter 3 then focuses on Luther's key 1523 treatise, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*. Kaufmann agrees with many in noting how the work was remarkably tolerant for its own time. Importantly, he sees it as a carefully formulated statement of Jewish policy, especially emphasizing how Luther closed the treatise by noting that he advocated increased Jewish toleration but only until he could "see what effect [it] had" (p. 62).

Chapters 4 and 5 turn to the period from 1523 until Luther's death in 1546. Here Kaufmann covers much traditional information but also helpfully chronicles the publication history of Luther's *Judenschriften*. In this way, he demonstrates that the early, more tolerant Luther, was in fact much more widely-read in the sixteenth century than Luther's late anti-Jewish diatribes. Kaufmann further shows



that many of Luther's late fears, such as Sabbatarian Christians who underwent circumcision at the hands of Jews, were, in fact, polemical literary creations of the reformer's own mind with little to no basis in reality.

The final chapter reveals the ambiguous afterlife of Luther's Jewish writings. Just as this corpus of texts gave a contradictory set of perspectives on the Jews, so also it has been received and used for quite different ends. Kaufmann is here to be commended. In seeking to interpret Luther historically, he does not—indeed, he believes one cannot—ignore the fateful ways in which Luther's *Judenschriften* have been used. In the twentieth century, Nazi party members with “no interest in Luther's theological concerns” (p. 147) published widely-read extracts of Luther's most anti-Jewish statements, thereby seeking to appropriate him as the father of modern anti-Semitism. It is an image that, while grossly simplistic from a historical angle, has nevertheless persisted with tragic consequences.

On the whole Kaufmann's volume offers a brief but helpful summary of the perennial topic of “Luther and the Jews” that serves well as a systematic introduction to what Luther said and thought. However, due to its decision to proceed without reference to the concerns of secondary literature, it would be helpfully supplemented by the standard work of Heiko Oberman (*The Roots of Anti-Semitism* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984]) or the informative but much larger volume edited by Stephen G. Burnett and Dean Phillip Bell (*Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth Century Germany* [Leiden: Brill, 2006]).

While on one level a survey, Kaufmann's work also contains insights that will prove helpful even to specialists. Several of these stand out. First, Kaufmann at various points contextualizes Luther's Jewish writings by describing contemporaneous, but little-known works by Christian authors about Jews (e.g., pp. 65–71). Second, Kaufmann repeatedly and rightly insists that Luther's anti-Jewish writings, in fact, utilized a “two-pronged attack” (p. 124). Specifically, in their own historical moment, the *Judenschriften* were directed not only against Jews but also, and perhaps more primarily, against Christian Hebraists of Luther's own time whom the reformer believed inadequately interpreted the Old Testament in a Messianic fashion. The Basel Hebraist Sebastian Münster justly plays a central role in Kaufmann's narrative at this point, an emphasis missed by many other studies (pp. 101–9).

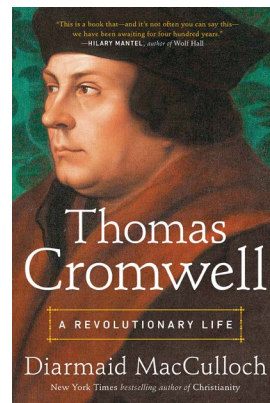
Despite these virtues, the work is at times marred by translational and editorial infelicities. For example, the translators inexplicably use the King James Version for quotations of the Bible, resulting in odd archaisms such as God being able “to graff [the Jews] in again” (p. 46). As for the work's content, Kaufmann spends very little time noting anti-Jewish medieval and contemporary influences on Luther, such as the works of Ramon Martí and Petrus Galatinus, to which Luther was heavily indebted in his late *Judenschriften*. Yet these minor matters do not detract from what is generally a fine work.

Kaufmann ends where he began—by making clear the need to read Luther “through a consistently historicizing lens” (p. 156). This means placing Luther, and his views, firmly in their sixteenth-century context. Yet “to historicize [Luther] does not mean to justify him, to make him irrelevant, or to ‘diminish’ him” (p. 159). Rather, this study raises the perennial challenge of whether, in looking at Luther, we will pause long enough to recognize his own distance and differences from us, rather than simply proof-texting from him to justify our own ends. In this regard, Kaufmann's work presents a model to be emulated.

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Diarmaid MacCulloch. *Thomas Cromwell: A Revolutionary Life*. New York: Viking, 2018. 552 pp. \$40.00.

Lacey Baldwin Smith, the noted historian of Tudor Britain, wrote that explanations of how the Protestant Reformation unfolded in England could be divided in three. First, historians leaning toward Rome customarily attribute the upheaval to the marital escapades of King Henry VIII; the king ended papal jurisdiction in England because the Roman pontiff refused him the annulment he sought. This was not about doctrine but jurisdiction, and so a break with Rome was forced upon a nation which had no Roman quarrel of its own. Second, interpreters highlight earlier movements of dissent—extending back to Wycliffe and the Lollards and continuing into the reign of Henry—as the fertile soil out of which agitation for Reformation sprouted; here pre-existing native aspirations found a window of opportunity provided by Henry’s desperate search for a male heir. Third, others hold that England’s population was increasingly irreligious in the sixteenth century and largely indifferent to whatever religious agenda their monarch decided to pursue.



Diarmaid MacCulloch’s massive *Thomas Cromwell* is not a book seeking to explain the advance of England’s Reformation, and so it does not conform to any such line of interpretation. The *Cromwell* volume is rather a very comprehensive study of the rise to power of a man of humble origin who, after European (particularly Italian) mercantile experience, and some legal training, entered the service of the then-chancellor of the England, Thomas Wolsey (also the non-resident archbishop of York and a Roman cardinal). Wolsey was about to fall from royal favor because of his failure to secure for his king the desired papal annulment. Always loyal to his discredited master, Wolsey, Cromwell was nevertheless soon elevated to exercise the powers formerly wielded by the fallen Wolsey. Shortly, Cromwell became King Henry’s “fixer,” adept at introducing the monarch’s legislative agenda into Parliament.

In particular, Cromwell drafted legislation which secured for the king a made-in-England marriage annulment, terminated papal authority in England, set out what was required (an oath) for supporting Henry’s arrogation to himself of the title, “Supreme Head of the Church,” and ensured that the offspring of the second marriage (not the first) would stand in the line of succession.

Central to MacCulloch’s portrayal of Cromwell is the reality that King Henry as “Supreme Head of the Church” proceeded to vest in Cromwell (as Vice-gerent) the functional authority of directing the English Church away from the orbit of Rome into some still-to-be-determined alternative. In Western Europe the only alternative orbit to Rome was represented by the strident Protestantism of Saxony and Switzerland; for these King Henry had very little appetite.

It is at just this point that Lacey Baldwin Smith’s framework proves helpful. King Henry, we can acknowledge, was driven through these changes by a purely personal agenda. His Vice-gerent, however, turns out to have been a man familiar since his youth with remaining Lollardy, who grew to be acquainted with William Tyndale in the 1520s and was a known admirer of Erasmus and his writings. MacCulloch compares the evangelical Cromwell (p. 69) of the 1520s with the Italian evangelicals of that era (the “Spirituali”; pp. 72–73). Though his relationship with King Henry’s second wife, Anne Boleyn, was characterized by mistrust (she had helped bring on Wolsey’s downfall), their Protestant sympathies largely overlapped. Cromwell (though not his King) was thoroughly conversant with the English reforming “underground,” a loose-knit movement including clergy, preaching friars, university scholars,

bankers, and printers. With such already-present human resources, Cromwell, whom MacCulloch terms “a vigorous impresario” (p. 189), re-oriented increasing swathes of the English Church towards the European Protestant movement as it existed in the 1530s in Saxony, Zurich, and Strassburg.

Wielding a well-nigh unlimited and unregulated discretionary authority, the Vice-gerent advanced first the inspection (and selective closure) of faltering monastic houses, encouraged diplomatic alliances with the German Lutherans and promoted the circulation of the Bible in English. It is surely one of the ironies of this story that by the time the translator, William Tyndale (1494–1536) was captured and executed at Antwerp as the outworking of King Henry’s antipathy toward him, Vice-gerent Cromwell was securing (p. 416) permission from the same King for the circulation of improved versions of Tyndale’s Scripture translation within England.

And yet this unregulated discretionary authority would prove Cromwell’s undoing, for his exercise of authority had made him many enemies in the church hierarchy, nobility, and regions where traditional Catholicism held fast. By 1540, Cromwell was accused of treason and condemned to death; then all influential friends such as Archbishop Cranmer could do was appeal for mercy toward him. Those who succeeded him in office would never be permitted to wield this same unregulated discretionary authority.

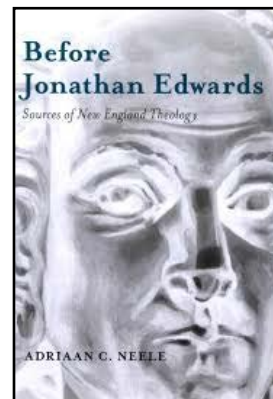
Yet, as he met his end, Cromwell left a still-minority Protestant movement within the Church of England much stronger than it had been at his rise to power a decade earlier, in free possession of vernacular Scriptures and (since about 1536) much more oriented to the orbit of Zurich and Heinrich Bullinger than to Lutheran Saxony (p.363). Cromwell had helped to set the stage for bold Protestant advance when at King Henry’s passing in 1547, he was succeeded by the energetically Protestant Edward VI.

In sum, this volume enables those interested in Reformation England to view the period 1520–1540 in much clearer light. Reading MacCulloch’s *Cromwell* is heavy going. Its 552 pages of text are augmented by 30 pages of bibliography and 150 pages of notes. Like the same author’s companion biography, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), this displays the fruits of the granular consultation of massive surviving contemporary sources: diplomatic, governmental, and personal. It is encouraging to find the then-contemporary chronicler, John Foxe, treated with general respect. *Thomas Cromwell* is, all in all, a tour de force.

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Adriaan C. Neele. *Before Jonathan Edwards: Sources of New England Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. xii + 268 pp. £47.99/\$74.00.

Jonathan Edwards studies have witnessed major developments along new fronts over the past several years, seeing important works come out on Edwards's exegesis and an increasing number of works on his use of post-Reformation Reformed dogmatics. It is this latter development that is the focus of this present review. The bulk of the secondary literature thus far has often been more concerned with Edwards as a theological giant of his own making, starting with his own system of thought and then advancing toward an articulation of the New Divinity, than with Edwards's own theological backdrop. Adriaan Neele's book, for instance, plays off of the title of another book, Crisp and Sweeney's *After Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology*, which serves as an example of the way Edwards tends to be read. But rather than turning to Edwards as a source of the New Divinity, Neele turns instead to key movements in Reformed theology leading up to Edwards's own work.



Rather than seeing Edwards as a lone genius working on the wilderness front, Neele focuses on the theological context in which Edwards was working. This is a particularly important task, especially in our own context, where we have seen major developments and interest in Reformed High Orthodoxy, particularly by figures like Richard A. Muller and Willem J. van Asselt. Unfortunately, advancements in this research have not often been utilized to understand Edwards. Over the past ten years this has changed, but what Neele offers is a richer historical account of the key figures and texts that were on hand for Edwards as he took on his significant publishing endeavors. Furthermore, a focus in this area raises questions on the adequacy of the current discussion, which often ignores theological developments in New England as a feature of Reformed intellectual history. By avoiding New England, Edwards is often treated as an outsider to the discussion rather than a central figure. Neele's book offers a different way to analyze the material, placing Edwards within the broad movements of Reformed intellectual history and its fragmentation at the end of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century.

Beyond questions of intellectual history, Neele's real focus is to analyze a series of questions and issues in Edwards's thought, showing how they are continuations of long-debated issues that took place on an international stage. As it turns out, this is a stage that Edwards was quite familiar with. After his initial exploration of Reformed intellectual history, Neele turns to four case studies to consider Edwards's theological development in relation to key sources in post-Reformation Reformed dogmatics. He looks at homiletics, sources of biblical exegesis, sources for the formulation of doctrine, and sources of history and theology. Each of these points of emphasis highlights a central feature of Edwards's corpus. Edwards was, of course, primarily a pastor, and therefore homiletics and exegesis were the core of his life's work. Neele addresses the debates on these tasks, as well as key areas of interest in the secondary literature, to reveal how Edwards's views and development relate to his forebearers. Furthermore, by focusing on the formulation of doctrine and history as theology, Neele gets to the heart of Edwards's theological trajectory, namely to write a dogmatic theology in "an entire new method, being thrown into the form of an history" (p. 204), and he raises questions about how *new* that mode actually was.

While this does not take away from the importance of this book, it is worth noting one minor critique. There are times in the book when the focus on the backdrop to Edwards's work overtakes the

idiosyncratic nature of his emphases. For instance, in the final chapter looking at the use of history in theology, and Edwards's own admission that his dogmatic work was going to be in a historical mode, Neele provides incredibly helpful background material to show where Edwards stands in relation to his sources. All of this helps to push the conversation forward on what it means that Edwards's theological enterprise was to be in "an entire new method," and how his use of history would form that reality. But this seems to assume that the newness of Edwards's method was solely tied to his use of a historical mode, which is, in my mind, the least original feature of his method. Rather, it seems, it is the tri-fold form of his historical mode that establishes the uniqueness his method, where Edwards traces through the history, not only of earth but of heaven and hell, showing how the histories of heaven, earth and hell are connected by the reign of Christ as he rides the chariot of providence through history. This points to Edwards's use of Ezekiel 1 as the architecture for his "History of Redemption" sermon series that no doubt would have been utilized in his dogmatic treatment. This is a minor, but relevant, critique of Neele's work, which will no doubt prove its worth to all who read it. *Before Jonathan Edwards* is essential reading for students of Edwards and those who are interested in post-Reformed Reformed theology, and it will be a key source for any looking to engage the source material of Edwards's own pastoral and academic endeavors.

Kyle Strobel

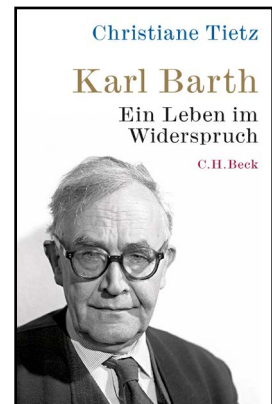
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Christiane Tietz. *Karl Barth: Ein Leben im Widerspruch*. München: C. H. Beck, 2018. 538 pp. £24.80/\$34.79.

Christiane Tietz, Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Zürich, commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of Karl Barth's death (December 10, 1968) with a pioneering study of his life and work. *Karl Barth: Ein Leben im Widerspruch* [Karl Barth: A Life of Conflict] is the first German-language biography of Barth since 1975 (written by his assistant Eberhard Busch). Tietz expertly builds her account on primary source materials as well as a wealth of scholarship on the renowned Swiss theologian and presents it in a readable account for the scholar and lay reader alike.

Tietz begins with Barth's childhood and student years. She highlights his family life, early friendships, and studies in Bern, Berlin, Tübingen, and Marburg. From early on, Barth considered himself a follower of the staunch liberal theologian Adolf von Harnack. Hence while studying in Tübingen, he harbored "deep inner disdain" for Adolf Schlatter's divergent approach to historical-critical exegesis (p. 50). Later in Marburg, Barth was especially drawn to the thought of Wilhelm Hermann, who had been deeply influenced by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Immanuel Kant.

During his pastoral apprenticeship in Geneva (1909–1911) and pastorate in Safenwil (1911–1921), Barth fell under the influence of Christian socialism. He learned from liberal Protestant theology that building the Kingdom of God was the key ethical imperative of Christianity, and he grew convinced that socialism was the channel to carry this mission out. He remained committed to socialist politics until his death.



It was also during his pastorate in Safenwil that his thinking radically changed course toward what became Barthian theology—variously designated as “theology of the Word of God,” “dialectical theology,” “Theology of crisis,” and “Neo-Orthodoxy.” Through his studies in Romans, he came to see that modern theology had confused the relationship between God and the world. Flipping the thought of Schleiermacher on its head, he contended that theology must begin with God and not man. He thus reoriented theology around the otherness of God, stressing the distance between God and man that could only be bridged by God’s self-revelation and the redemptive work of the God-man Jesus Christ. Beginning with the publication (and extensive subsequent revisions) of his commentary on Romans in 1918, Barth elaborated on the implications of this thinking in his writing and teaching for the rest of his life. His massive multivolume *Church Dogmatics* represents the culmination of his life work.

Given that this book is a biography and not a critical engagement with Barth’s theology, extensive analysis of his theology of the Word of God receives comparatively little room. Readers will, however, discover key aspects of Barth’s life about which many students of his theology know little.

At thirty-nine years of age and with five children, Barth began a bizarre love affair with Charlotte von Kirschbaum. Not wishing to conceal it, he not only told his wife but also moved Charlotte into their home. She lived with them for thirty-five years. Long a scandalous rumor, Barth’s children confirmed the veracity of the affair by releasing their love letters to the public in 1991. They spoke of the tremendous burden their father’s love triangle had on them and commended their mother for keeping the household together. As Tietz explains, Barth never sugarcoated the affair, nor did he attempt to justify it theologically. In his commentary on Romans 12, he downplays the need for a this-worldly ethic and stresses instead the importance of finding comfort for a guilty conscience in the grace of God.

Tietz also highlights Barth’s opposition to the ordination of women. While Barth was an avid participant in the growing ecumenical movement, he had no patience for its promotion of female ordination. He criticized the thinking behind it for committing the same errors as modern theology: its starting point was ultimately humanistic. He sympathized with women but insisted that theology must begin with God, and God’s Word taught against female ordination.

Barth’s encounter with the American evangelist Billy Graham is also treated in this book. Barth met Graham in Switzerland in August 1960, and he found him congenial. He did not like his preaching but felt Graham preached law rather than gospel, focusing too much on scaring people into conversion. For Barth, the “Christian faith began with joy, not fear” (p. 394).

Barth battled for many years not only with other theologians but also with depression. His final months were especially difficult. The day before he died, he told his childhood friend, “Yes, the world is a dark place. But do not hang your head! No! ... God is in control. For this reason, I have no fear” (p. 414). Barth died in his sleep on December 10, 1968.

While Barth is among the most studied theologians in the English-speaking world and Asia, Schleiermacher has largely overshadowed Barth in contemporary German-speaking scholarship. Tietz sympathizes with Barthian theology, but she questions whether it will have much of a future as it offers very little to culture and science.

With his doctrine of the Word of God, Barth exposed obvious weaknesses of Neo-Protestantism. His wish to overcome Schleiermacher and consequently to make God the starting point for his thought moves in the right direction. But he never fully overcame the crisis of Protestant theology because he could not accept that Scripture was God’s very Word itself but rather a witness of divine revelation. He thus got stuck halfway. This writer believes that theology must ask more radically: what does God, in

fact, say? Theology must take God at his Word, and this will not be possible without dramatic corrections to the course modern Protestantism has taken since Kant.

Tietz's biography sheds tremendous insight into Barth's life and thought. It combines diligent research, masterful narration, and accessible prose. Highly commended. (Editor's note: this review was originally written in German and translated by Ryan Hoselton.)

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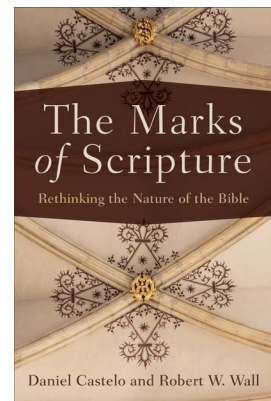
— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

Daniel Castelo and Robert W. Wall. *The Marks of Scripture: Rethinking the Nature of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. xiii + 185 pp. £13.99/\$21.99.

The genesis of this book is the journal article "Scripture and the Church: A Précis for an Alternative Analogy" (*JTI* 5 [2011]: 197–210), in which Castelo and Wall proposed Scripture's analogy to the church as an alternative to the popular and yet controversial incarnational analogy. The tenet of both the article and this book revolves around English Anglican theologian John Webster's idea that a dogmatics of Scripture must be constructed with the economy of God's salvation at the center. Any talk of Scripture would be pointless without situating it in God's work of sanctifying and "healing of Scripture's addressee, which is the church" (p. 34).

Chapter 1 is devoted to situating Scripture's ontology and teleology within the economy of God's salvific self-presentation. Scripture is defined as an auxiliary of the Holy Spirit in forming and reforming God's people into loving communion with God and one another. The authors prefer the term "canon" in explaining the ontology of Scripture. Scripture became what it is now through canonization by the church under the direction of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, Scripture *is* the church's book from its origin. They also use the term "means of grace" to emphasize its being an ordinary but sanctified channel *through which* the Holy Spirit is nurturing the church into the likeness of Christ. Such ontology and teleology of Scripture naturally leads to the discussion of ecclesial analogy in which the Bible is taken as a theological category in itself rather than merely as epistemological source for theology.

Incarnational analogy in chapter 2 is presented in detail as a foil for the authors' preferred ecclesial analogy. According to the authors, Scripture's analogy to the incarnate God is plagued with inherent dangers of either deifying Scripture or degrading it as just another human literature. A more fundamental fault with the Christ-Scripture analogy lies in its structural detachment from the economy of salvation. Just like two natures of Christ, divine and human features of Scripture may not be discussed independent of their roles in the saving economy of God's loving and regenerative self-presentation. All this inclines the authors to say that the incarnational analogy "should be put to rest" (p. 30).



Should Scripture be better compared to the church, another of God's ordinary channels by which God manifests himself in a saving way, the authors go on to argue, the creedal confession of the church as "one," "holy," "catholic," and "apostolic" might be applied to the nature of Scripture in a constructive way. Chapters 3–6 are devoted to fleshing out this Church-Scripture analogy. Each chapter begins with a dogmatic and practical account written by Castelo (a theologian) on how the church can be understood as exemplifying the mark in question, then Wall (a biblical scholar) offers a constructive account that applies Castelo's ecclesial reflections analogously to Scripture.

First, the authors define ecclesial "oneness" not as uniformity but in terms of the church's calling as the sanctified body of Christ, that is, a kind of unity that exists in diversity. Modern criticism has revealed Scripture's diversity of literary genres, historical circumstances, and theological beliefs, and yet, according to the authors, these must be put in the context of God's continual use of Scripture for salvation in Christ. Scripture's unity is in this regard derived from Jesus's hermeneutics of Scripture, which locates its normative meaning in his own work of salvation. In this sense, unity is less a character of Scripture than a function of God's redemptive work through Scripture. Second, holiness of the church is no different in this regard. The church can call itself "holy," not because of its acts but because of its relationship with God who nurtures his people to becoming holy like him. Likewise, Scripture is holy not because it contains no error but because God is able to use ordinary human writings for his holy purpose of "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Third, the church's catholicity is a function of the universal "presence and work of the Trinity across the globe" (p. 99); it is the opposite of Constantianism, namely, collusion between a particular church and a particular political arrangement. Just as God's church worldwide is identical in its worth and function, Scripture's authority and usefulness reaches every membership of Christ's global church, not to mention that every part of every scripture is appointed by God's spirit as a textual witness to Christ. Finally, the fourth mark of the church, apostolicity, is redefined as referring to the culture of witnessing to God's work in accomplishing the healing of the world. Being apostolic means being an apostle-like witness to God's work of salvation in Jesus. Scripture is apostolic because it not only contains the apostles' eyewitness to the risen Christ but also exemplifies a way of life informed by a Christo-centric or Christo-telic reading of Scripture.

The ecclesial analogy proposed by Castelo and Wall is a welcome addition to the discussion of Scripture's nature. It is refreshing to hear the authors say that the focus in our discussion of Scripture's nature should be on the Trinity at work in the economy of salvation. The authors' use of the four marks of the church as a rubric for his discussion of Scripture is original and constructive. Further, this book, holistic in its perspective, does not separate the practice of Scripture from its dogmatics. It is no wonder that the authors provide practical tips on "how to read the Bible in light of its ontology and teleology" in the last chapter. Two points of criticism are in order, however, the first of which concerns the authors' use of incarnational analogy as a foil for their preferred ecclesial analogy. They could have spoken positively and convincingly about the latter without dispensing with the former altogether, since, as the authors acknowledge, the nature of Scripture cannot be encapsulated within a single analogy (p. 21), not to mention that there are many versions of incarnational analogy, the best of which comes very close to the vision of the authors (p. 29). Second, more importantly, the ecclesial analogy may perpetuate a sort of cognitive dissonance in a Christian use of Scripture as it makes the content of Scripture secondary

to its function as a means of grace for the church. But my criticism does not detract from the authors' otherwise cordial and constructive treatment of the subject.

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Douglas Farrow. *Theological Negotiations: Proposals in Soteriology and Anthropology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. xv + 272 pp. £29.93/\$38.00.

Douglas Farrow, Kennedy Smith Chair in Catholic Studies at McGill University, is a prominent Catholic theologian perhaps most known for two monographs on Christ's ascension. With this volume, he offers provocative explorations in theology, which explains the apt if somewhat understated title of the book.

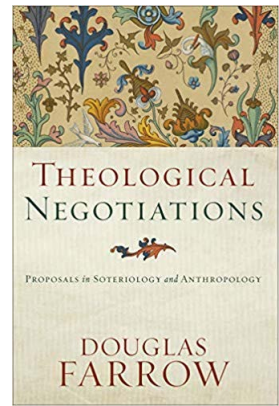
He notes at the outset that at "the heart of the book lies an interest in the dialectic of nature and grace" (p. vii). Chapter 1 bears this out with a discussion of the relationship between theology and philosophy. Here, he brings Immanuel Kant, Karl Barth and Thomas Aquinas into discussion. He argues that Barth is analogous with Kant because they both present a totalizing approach to the philosophy/theology relation, albeit in their distinct and contrary ways. Thomas, he argues, is to be preferred on balance. Whereas Thomas sees the two as conciliatory ("the *pax Thomistica*," p. 31), Barth sees their connection in more militant terms. Yet, Farrow argues, Barth is closer to Thomas and even Vatican I than most realize, closer even than Barth himself discerns. This back and forth between various thinkers, drawing out sometimes unexpected conclusions, is characteristic of the volume throughout.

Chapter 2 on theological anthropology is concerned with Thomas's understanding of nature and grace in conversation with competing interpreters of Thomas (De Lubac, Stephen Long). Farrow concludes that Thomas's anthropology suffers from a "christological deficit" (p. 62).

Chapters 3 through 6 have, arguably, the most polemical edge. Chapter 3 places Martin Luther into conversation with the Council of Trent. Chapter 4, in conversation with Aquinas and Anselm, discusses the relationship between satisfaction and punishment. Chapters 5–6 address the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation from different vantage points.

Chapters 7–9 stand somewhat at odds with the rest of the volume. Chapter 7 is a thoughtful diatribe against the notion of autonomy. Chapter 8, perhaps one of the most helpful overall, offers a penetrating look at the relationship between the Jewish people and the modern church. Chapter 9, based on Hebrews, continues the conversation of chapter 7 and admonishes the reader toward godly fear.

A few critical remarks are in order. In the third chapter, as one would suspect, Farrow takes a Catholic perspective on the relationship between justification and sanctification *contra* Luther. He writes, "to ground sanctification in justification ... is right. Only it is not possible if justification is by faith alone" (p. 80) for "good works ... increase the justification that is ours in Christ" (p. 81). To bolster his case, Farrow turns to penance and purgatory and the grace that flows from these to show how we are finally sanctified and in turn justified. While this does admit of a certain theological coherence,



the conclusion decisively overthrows the Protestant account of justification and sanctification. Notably missing is any significant treatment of the letters to the Romans or the Galatians, which serve as a backbone for the Protestant understanding. Moreover, no effort is put forth to demonstrate the biblical origins of such concepts as penance and purgatory. In fact, with the latter, he admits that it “is derived from sources ... that ... are quite cryptic” (p. 89). In sum, though a fascinating look at this topic from a Catholic perspective, it fails to address the strongest arguments of the Protestant view (for an invaluable defense of the Protestant view in conversation with Catholic sources, see G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification*, trans. John Vriend [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952], chs. 1–2).

More briefly, in chapter 4 Farrow argues, in conversation with Anselm and Aquinas, that Anselm’s satisfaction theory of the atonement is more cogent than Aquinas’s view, which approaches something like the penal substitutionary view. Yet Farrow does not seem to be aware of the points of contact his own account has with a penal substitution view, reflecting an overreliance on Barth (cf. p. 114) to the neglect of other Protestant voices; nor does he adequately interact with such biblical texts, such as Galatians 3:13 and Matthew 26:36–46.

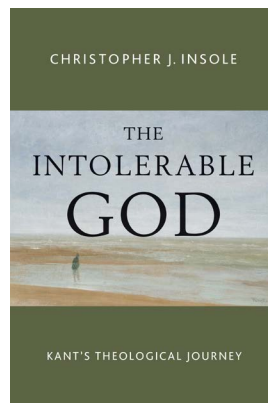
Some strengths ought also to be highlighted. Whether one agrees with Farrow or not, it is clear that even though he is staunchly Catholic, he is not afraid to sympathetically engage with Protestant thinkers and even at times admit the validity of some of their insights or even their concerns regarding Catholic teaching. Moreover, he does not shy from taking a critical look at one of the most revered theologians of the Catholic tradition: Thomas Aquinas. Coupled with this critical glance is his willingness to correct mistakes he finds in his own tradition, such as the contention that purgatory is gracious. He also reconstructs transubstantiation in a manner which moves away from Thomism and toward an “eschatological perspective” (p. 168). This kind of theological courage and forthrightness is something to be appreciated in any theologian, and Farrow models it well.

In conclusion, Farrow is a high caliber Catholic theologian who has offered us various theological proposals written lucidly and argued well. He demonstrates a deep awareness of his own tradition, the Protestant tradition as expressed in the Reformers and Barth, and is additionally conversant with philosophical schools such as those of Kant and Descartes. For those interested in reading a seasoned Catholic theologian who does not avoid critical engagement with his own tradition as well as sympathetic interaction with those with whom he disagrees, this work is highly recommended.

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Christopher J. Insole. *The Intolerable God: Kant's Theological Journey*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. x + 176 pp. £19.99/\$30.00.

Christopher Insole's *The Intolerable God: Kant's Theological Journey* is an accessible presentation of material worked out more fully in his earlier *Kant and the Creation of Freedom: A Theological Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). While the earlier book deals in more detail with issues pertaining primarily to Kant studies, *The Intolerable God* is suited to readers "who have an interest in theology and who have encountered the figure of Immanuel Kant, and who want to know more about his thought and significance" (p. 1). Insole's approach is set within "a new wave of more historically sensitive, theologically open-minded, and holistic Kant interpretation" in place of the more traditional view of Kant "as attempting a straightforward refutation of the possibility of theological discourse" (pp. 1–2). When Kant is read in this new way, certain theological issues come to the fore, making the book important for any reader interested in the engagement between philosophy and theology. Insole focuses upon the relationship between Kant's notion of human freedom (requiring autonomy) and divine action in the world. The book's title and main theme come from Kant's statement: "One can neither resist nor tolerate the thought of a being represented as the highest of all possible things, which may say to itself, 'I am from eternity to eternity, and outside me there is nothing except what exists through my will'" (p. 7). Insole shows Kant's struggle with this concept of God, which Kant says is irresistible, yet intolerable in relation to our own freedom.



Chapters 1–4 outline the background of Kant's thought and his intellectual development, especially his theological rationalism (the view that the divine mind contains essences which are the fundamental reality of things, coupled with the view that human reason provides access in some way to these essences), and the highest good (happiness in proportion to moral worthiness), while tracing Kant's struggle to see the possibility of human freedom in this worldview. Chapters 5–6 present a metaphysically robust interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism—namely the view that space, time, and the things we experience in space and time are empirically real for us but are not fundamentally (transcendentally) real in themselves—as Kant's solution to the problem of freedom. This maneuver allows Kant to hold to determinism in the empirical world while preserving freedom in the noumenal world (the world of essences for theological rationalism), which includes our true selves (rather than merely our empirical selves). Chapter 7 presents the doctrine of divine concurrence—the view that God acts directly in all creaturely actions while these actions are still freely performed (preserving libertarian freedom)—as a notion that is not irrational but still goes beyond reason, while explaining that Kant (limiting himself to reason alone) rejects concurrence. Chapter 8 presents Kant's radical notion of autonomy (giving the law to oneself), leading him to reject the notion of God as directly involved in human actions.

The book's central issue is the relation of human freedom to God's existence, offering an engagement between theology and Kantian philosophy and serving as a helpful model of philosophico-theological engagement generally. While concurrence is the classical theological option, Kant rejected concurrence, as he limited himself to reason alone (with concurrence transcending reason). For Insole, Kant could have accepted divine concurrence, since "God acting in all our actions is perfectly consistent with everything that Kant demands from freedom, that is, our being ultimately responsible for our actions, and our being able to do other than we do" (p. 124). It seems that Kant had another reason for rejecting

concurrence—his radical notion of autonomy. Insole notes that Kant rejects the notion that the will can be autonomous while being moved by “any external object (*Object/obiectus*) at all, even the uncreated good that is God, or the perfection of rational nature” (p. 150), such that Kant “rejects the claim that the ultimate object of theology (God) can be a worthy object for us” (p. 151). In the end, “Kant’s inability to accept concurrence accounts leads ultimately to the tearing apart of his system, as the demands of freedom render the hope for the highest good ultimately impossible, or at least, impossible for God to achieve while God is something distinct from us and our reason” (p. 128).

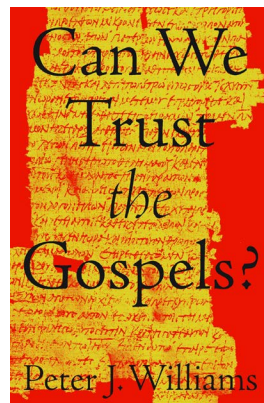
In certain regards, the reader is still left with certain questions about how Insole understands Kant’s relationship to theology. Looking at Insole’s work in light of other approaches to Kant and theology can help to illustrate this. Lawrence Pasternack presents Kant’s position in terms of the aptly spelled out formula: “Pure Rational Faith (*reiner Vernunftglaube*) = Saving Faith (*seligmachender Glaube*)” (*Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Kant on Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* [London: Routledge, 2014]), p. 3). For Pasternack, Kant’s goal is to determine whether all that is required for salvation is present to reason. Chris Firestone interprets Kant such that philosophy (relying only on reason and freedom) and theology (utilizing Word and Spirit) are meant to chasten one another such that Kant’s philosophical system is open to new rational insights from theology, provided that theology can show a rational need for them (*Kant and Theology at the Boundaries of Reason* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009]). In *The Intolerable God*, Insole argues that Kant is using a notion of philosophy that “affirms and believes in God and divinity, but which, on principled grounds, engages only with what reason (albeit expansively understood) can show, rather than with revelation and mystery,” speaking of Kant’s “self-studied and apophatic refusal to have a *philosophical* position on that which goes beyond, or falls below, what philosophy can say” (pp. 154–55). While affirming that theology must go beyond Kant/reason, Insole does not address the issue of the meaning of Kant’s *philosophical* position, whether it might be related to Kant’s view of salvation. He says that Kant, as a philosopher, “could regard with complex approval, and regret, the theologian who embraces revelation and mystery: approval, inasmuch as the theologian is led to philosophical truth, and regret, perhaps, at the means of doing so” (p. 155). The question still remains as to what might possibly count as philosophical truth for Kant, especially on reason “expansively understood,” as Insole never addresses the issue of whether Kant’s system is open or closed.

Insole presents a parallel between Kant and Virgil in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Kant, like Virgil, goes only so far as reason allows, whereas the full range of humanity (including reason) may well require more than reason can provide. For Insole, “If Kant is our Virgil, Aquinas is our Beatrice” (p. 116). We are encouraged to go beyond Kant, as Dante joined Beatrice to enter paradise. It seems to me that not even Firestone would allow Kant to be Beatrice. The issue is how far Kant can proceed, or (per Pasternack) if paradise (salvation) is at issue for Kant at all. Perhaps dealing with these specific issues would be too much for Insole’s project in *The Intolerable God*, especially, as the subtitle makes clear, since the focus is *Kant’s Theological Journey*. Insole most certainly presents a worthwhile journey.

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Peter J. Williams. *Can We Trust the Gospels?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. 153 pp. £11.81/\$14.99.

Peter Williams, Principal of Tyndale House (Cambridge), demonstrates his extensive scholarship throughout *Can We Trust the Gospels?* yet makes it easy for the uninformed reader to follow his argument. Not intended for the expert in Gospel criticism, this volume addresses those inquiring into the matter of the reliability of the canonical Gospels for the first time. While the mainline media frequently give voice to theories denying their truthfulness, few in their audience are familiar with the actual evidence and methodological issues involved in the debate.



Williams makes his purpose clear: he does not set out to *prove* that the Gospels are true, but seeks to demonstrate that they are *trust-worthy*. Before one can consider the (extraordinary) claims made by the Gospels concerning Jesus, one must first “ask whether the Gospels show the signs of trustworthiness we usually look for in things we believe” (p. 16). This he does by building a cumulative case in eight chapters.

Noting that the Gospels’ reliability has been questioned on the grounds that they were written by devotees commending their faith, Williams begins by looking at what three prominent first and second century non-Christians say about it: Cornelius Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and Flavius Josephus. Strikingly, their writings report many core facts and beliefs found in the Gospels, giving evidence that these are original, not later developments, as contemporary critics often claim.

Williams then assesses the Gospels from an historiographical point of view. He notes that all serious historians of antiquity recognize the canonical Gospels as being the oldest and best sources we possess concerning Jesus. Their extant textual evidence outstrips even that which is available for a Roman emperor like Tiberius.

The next logical step in the argument is to demonstrate the factual reliability of the Evangelists, examining a diversity of data including: geography, personal names, local flavor, dating, botanical terms, tax references, local languages, and unusual customs. The Gospel writers show themselves to be competent and knowledgeable in those matters.

Williams then looks at four sets of “undesigned coincidences,” in which different authors confirm each other’s narrative in ways that cannot be intentional, because they are too subtle or indirect for most readers even to notice. Three of these occur among the various Gospels, and the fourth between the Synoptics and Josephus.

Asking whether we have access to Jesus’s own words, and noting that Jesus is depicted as a Jewish teacher, Williams shows how the Gospels reflect ancient pedagogical practices meant to facilitate memorization. Moreover, striking teachings like the “golden rule” are more likely to originate from one genius than several independent ones.

Considering the matter of textual transmission, Williams reminds the reader that medieval (Christian) scribes were generally both competent and careful, which accounts for our ability to read ancient (pagan) authors today. With very few disputed verses, the vast majority of the Gospels’ textual tradition is cohesive, corroborating its trustworthiness.

Addressing perceived contradictions, Williams notes that the variations we find among the Gospels show their independence and the fact that the authors (and the church tradition) did not try to

harmonize them by forcibly ironing out apparent problems. Before claiming conflict between differing Gospel accounts, one should make sure to understand each one correctly.

Finally, Williams deploys the age-old argument, “Who would make this up?” There are many particulars in the Gospels that are best explained (“simplest explanation”) as faithful reports rather than inventions (“complex explanations”). This includes “embarrassing” elements (crucifixion, disciples’ lack of understanding, etc.). The hardest to believe in the Gospels for the modern man is the presence of so many miracles. Since miracles are impossible, they must be untrustworthy reports, so the argument goes. As Williams points out, the problem here is that the premise generates the conclusion. The fact, however, is that the simplest explanation, though not the only one, is that Jesus actually was who he claimed to be according to the Gospels.

Having worked through these various arguments, Williams includes a short discussion on presuppositions and how they control the way one evaluates and explains the “evidence.” Though essentially evidentialist in nature, his apologetic method is somewhat eclectic. Making much of the idea that the “simplest explanation” is more “likely,” he sets out to argue for the warranted (rational) nature of belief in the Gospel records, relying heavily on “everyday” common sense. His argument thus focuses on purported common ground shared with unbelievers, in order to foster consideration of the claims the unconvinced naturally would doubt or question—and thus read the Gospels and be confronted by Christ’s claims on their lives.

The main tactical problem with this type of argument is that it depends upon an essentially subjective value judgment, plausibility. This, however, is the very point where presuppositions and individual sensitivities keep believers and unbelievers apart. Williams, to be sure, is not epistemologically naïve, but one wonders if he might not underestimate the power of the “noetic effect of sin” (Rom 1), as well as our contemporaries’ instinctive skepticism fueled by the “conspiracy theories” peddled by the *Da Vinci Code* and its pseudo-scientific ilk.

This being said, nonspecialist readers of all apologetic schools will find in this book—conveniently gathered in one place—much material they can use profitably when evangelizing, and when comforting curious or troubled believers.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

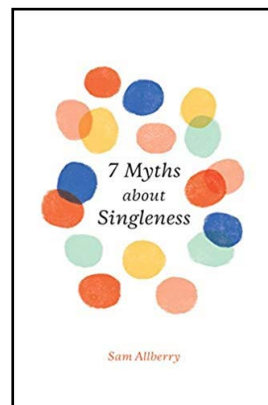
Sam Allberry. *7 Myths about Singleness*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 176 pp. £10.99/\$14.99.

One might well imagine that with all the books on singleness to be found on the shelves of Christian bookstores, we scarcely need another. Yet Sam Allberry's *7 Myths about Singleness* shows that we do. Far from being another self-helpesque book designed to equip unmarried Christians to somehow "eke out something just about tolerable" from their singleness (p. 12), *7 Myths about Singleness* sets out to explore the Bible's presentation of singleness as something infinitely more than tolerable. This is precisely what makes it such an important contribution to this topic.

Rather than simply taking the form of an extended exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7, or perhaps providing an account of all the wonderful ways in which God has worked through particular single Christians in history, Allberry paves an entirely different path. Not only does *7 Myths* seek to recover a genuinely theological account of singleness from the pages of Scripture, it also seeks to uncover just how far much contemporary evangelicalism has wandered from that account. Indeed, Allberry argues that it is only in overturning some common misconceptions within Christianity today, that the "whole church, single and married, [may] understand the positive vision the Bible gives us of singleness" (p.15)—hence the title! His overall intention is to facilitate a scripturally informed shift away from the view that singleness, for the Christian, is a state of inherent negation or lacking, to the view that it is a state of implicit blessing and opportunity.

For a comparatively short book, *7 Myths* is a remarkably thorough exploration of the following modern Christian fallacies about singleness: (1) it is too hard, (2) requires a special calling, (3) means no intimacy, (4) means no family, (5) hinders ministry, (6) wastes your sexuality, and (7) is easy. With the addition of an introduction, a conclusion and an appendix (the last being a short treatise on how to avoid sexual sin), each of the seven chapters analyses the roots, the content and the implications of a particular myth. Allberry's writing is concise, yet compelling. He fills out the substance of each myth by including personal illustrations, popular examples, commonly held theological teachings and recurrent pastoral attitudes, while also critically holding up each misconception to the penetrating and corrective light of Scripture.

One of the strengths of this methodology is that it allows—in fact it requires—the reader to be confronted by a range of uncomfortable realities that current evangelical discourse often prefers to ignore. For example, within the first few pages, Allberry gently reminds his readers of the difficult fact that most married people will, one day, be single again themselves (p. 14). A number of chapters later he affirms the often-unappreciated biblical truth that marriage is for this life only, and that *all* of us will be unmarried in eternity (p. 119). Elsewhere he challenges his readers to acknowledge that Jesus teaches that marriage can be too hard for some (Matt 19:11–12; pp. 23–25). Meanwhile, in his chapters on intimacy, family and sexuality, Allberry patiently seeks to expose the unbiblical underbelly of much Christian culture, which all too often regards our sex lives as core to our sense of personhood (p. 18); sees a life absent of romantic hope as a life only partially lived (p. 26); and tends to collapse sex and intimacy together so that they are virtually synonymous (p. 48).



And yet, as he goes about this task of identifying our mistaken ideals and demolishing our unrecognized idols, Allberry (who has years of pastoral ministry experience) is consistently humble, gentle and loving. As a single man he takes no glee—or even comfort—in the struggles of those who are married. Indeed, in a remarkably honest moment he contends that he would “choose the lows of singleness over the lows of marriage any day of the week. I think being unhappily married must be so much harder than being unhappily single” (p. 30). The author’s willingness to expose his own vulnerability through the many personal musings, experiences and reflections relayed in the book is another of its key strengths. Perhaps the most remarkable example of this comes towards the end of the book when Allberry bravely recounts a recent season of life in which he experienced an unrelenting escalation of the anxieties that singleness can bring. He writes that he viewed everything through the lens that there were “no guarantees, since people can move, or marry, or have some other commitment that supersedes their friendship with me. So, I reasoned, no matter how fond of me a good friend seemed to be, they would drop me when work or family warranted it” (p. 137).

This illustrates another compelling aspect of the book—the pastoral insight provided to married readers (including pastors) into the unspoken thoughts, fears and disappointments experienced by many single Christians, as well as suggestions of how those readers might be able to meet those anxieties with real and demonstrable love. Yet, as noted at the beginning of this review, none of this is framed as an endeavor of Christianized self-help. Rather, Allberry’s approach is deeply theological. Of particular significance are his extended biblical explorations on the nature of friendship (ch. 3) and Jesus’ reconstitution of family (ch. 4). These chapters confront the modern Christian tendency to see marriage as the ideal form of friendship and the biological family as the Christian’s primary place of belonging. In so doing, they challenge married readers to drastically expand their theological vision of Christian relationships. Of course, the book also seeks to challenge the presuppositions and practices of single Christians too, calling them to exploit their singleness for a life of intentional devotion to Christ and proactive sacrificial service of others.

It is difficult for me to provide any points of critical engagement with *7 Myths about Singleness*. The reason (from my own unmarried Christian perspective at least) is that there seems little to criticize, both in terms of content and communication. Instead, it might be instructive for me to relay a personal anecdote. Upon finishing the book, I shared an excerpt from it with a married friend in pastoral ministry. In the part I shared, Allberry had reflected on some of the (often unrecognized) practical complexities of the single life, in an effort to encourage those who are married (and particularly those in ministry) to be more creatively intentional in their care for singles. My married minister friend responded that it was good to read, but then immediately went on to express how his experience of marriage was also complex in its own unique ways. It’s “not all one way,” he said. There needs to be some “balance.”

Of course, Allberry would agree with this sentiment. Indeed, on multiple occasions in his book, he communicates his recognition that marriage is indeed uniquely difficult and complex. But this is a book on *singleness*. A book on singleness that, many would argue, is long overdue. A book on singleness that intentionally seeks to counter and correct the dominant evangelical narrative that all too easily veers toward a view of marriage as the normative experience, desired goal and greatest good of every Christian.

Perhaps the little bit of “imbalance” that *7 Myths about Singleness* provides is exactly what we need.

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Jeffrey Arthurs. *Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017. 158 pp. £14.99/\$20.00.

Many books on preaching appear to fall into one of two distinct camps. First, with tents carefully constructed, authors warm their hands over the fire of preaching content. These books ping-pong the terms “exegesis” and “hermeneutics” over the net again and again with the tenacity of Federer and Djokovic. They often do so in polemical fashion because they know content doesn’t have a monopoly in the market of homiletics.

They also know there’s a second group lounging down by the lake, roasting hot dogs over the smoke of preaching delivery. These authors, perhaps having recently read their first book on sociology, plumb the depths of culture, the affections of congregations, and the rhetorically rhythmic crescendo of conclusions. Both camps occasionally—often with subtlety—drop gum wrappers on the other’s plot.

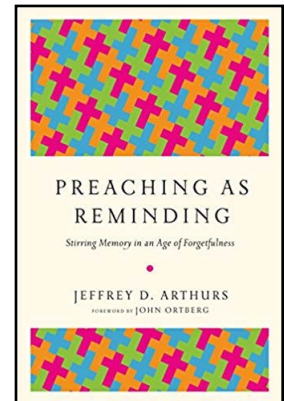
Fortunately, however, Jeffrey Arthurs, professor of preaching at Gordon–Conwell Theological Seminary, just so happens to own a large cabin in the midst of the campsites. His book, *Preaching as Reminding*, invites both groups over for dinner.

The thesis of Arthurs’s book might be captured in this sentence: “Stirring memory is one of the minister’s primary tasks” (p. 48). This assertion implies that content matters. Content matters so much, Arthurs contends, that the preacher doesn’t get to come up with it. His role is merely to remind the congregation of truths someone else wrote.

The first three chapters of the book outline a theological understanding of why we should remember certain truths, why we might often forget them, and the role of the preacher in facilitating the former. The second chapter includes thoughtful neurological explanations of the fall and the exacerbating effects of modern media on our fallen natures. If the preacher aims to remind, he needs to be reminded how easily we forget.

Throughout, Arthurs labors to emphasize that remembering is more than mere mental recall. Instead, memory “re–members disconnected things” (p. 14). Employing Peter, Paul and Moses, he details how often the Scriptures call upon God’s people to remember the character and/or deeds of their Lord. As the Lord’s Remembrancer, the preacher “re–members” two often disconnected things—the congregation’s affections and the congregation’s God—by stirring memory.

In quasi–Pauline fashion, Arthurs follows the theological framework established in the first three chapters with application in chapters four through seven. How might the preacher stir memory? Arthurs takes four chapters to discuss four ways: style, story, delivery, and ceremony. While “Sola Content” appears theologically noble, the communication of that content matters as well. Faithful preaching consists not only in what the preacher says, but in how the preacher says it.



For example, in chapter four Arthurs explores the importance of style. He does so, however, without separating it from content. Rather than aiming for spectacle—style calling attention to itself—effective style is like a pair of spectacles, an aid “by which we see something more clearly” (pp. 69–70). Arthurs, therefore, details the importance of using concrete and vivid language. Following his own advice, he pens this memorable sentence: “Vivid language rouses slumbering knowledge” (p. 66). If stirring memory serves as one of the minister’s aims, corraling the right verb or adjective might end up strengthening the exposition.

However, Arthurs rightly points out that choosing the perfect turn of phrase will not ensure faithful or effective communication. Because the act of preaching should never be disembodied, the particulars of delivery matter. Chapter six unveils the often heard (and always staggering) fact concerning nonverbal communication: when nonverbal factors conflict with verbal content, listeners overwhelmingly trust the nonverbal (p. 109). What this means, in terms of the book’s thesis, is that the morose sermon supposedly on joy will often fail to stir the memory of the congregation (p. 114).

Thankfully, this conclusion does not require the preacher to be transformed weekly into a public thespian. Rather, “To stir others, you must first be stirred. You can go no further in the act of delivery if this principle is missing, and in many ways if it is present, you need go no further” (p. 116). The truths to be preached must first affect the preacher.

The final chapter zooms out to reveal the role of the entire worship service in stirring congregational memory. In one thoughtful paragraph after another, Arthurs discusses the role of singing, public prayer, the reading of Scripture—and most convincingly—the Lord’s Supper in facilitating these reminders (pp. 134–44). This chapter is worth reading if only for the comical, yet stinging, chart Arthurs uses to critique the often laissez-faire approach to welcoming and dismissing congregations (pp. 138–39). According to Arthurs, those elements of the worship service ought to be leveraged also in stirring the memory of the congregation.

Given Arthurs’s thesis, one of this book’s many strengths is just how often he deliberately stirs the memory of his readers. Chapter one’s first word is “memory” (p. 11). Chapter two’s first sentence begins this way: “You will remember ...” (p. 27). Chapter three’s first sentence references, or better reminds of, an illustration from the introduction (p. 47). Then the reader reads another eighty pages before Arthurs returns to that same illustration in the final chapter, where the first sentence begins, “Remember Jimmie ...?” (p. 125).

Why point all that out? Because Arthurs hammers home his point by doing in this book precisely what he instructs the reader to do in the pulpit. When he writes about using vivid language, he uses vivid language. While instructing the preacher to employ effective imagery and illustration, he does so masterfully. The reader will also find historical references, thoughtful allusions to films, repeated interaction with C. S. Lewis’s *The Silver Chair*, intelligent consideration of the sciences, and relevant personal anecdotes. In short, the author asks nothing of his readers that he doesn’t model himself.

To enumerate even half the strengths of this book, this review would need to double in length. Its weaknesses can be quickly detailed, however. The least convincing chapter of the book is chapter five on employing story in sermons, in part due to the potential risks of story largely being left untold. Having said that, part of the reason for chapter five’s relative mediocrity might be due to the surrounding stellar context of chapters four and six.

I was cautious about Arthurs’s slight aversion to using a full manuscript in the pulpit. Though he’s fair to those using extensive notes, he suggests taking no more than a sheet of paper into the pulpit (p.

121). But this begs a seemingly obvious question: How can someone who struggles to remember use vivid language and employ well-crafted sentences without more than a page of notes? Nonetheless, as someone who almost always preaches from a full manuscript, the fact that I felt the challenge of Arthurs's point speaks to the persuasiveness of his argument.

The introduction to this review was, admittedly, an overgeneralization. Indeed, a number of authors have written helpful books on preaching that emphasize both content and delivery. But this reviewer is not aware of any as well-written and concise as this one. For Arthurs, both content and delivery truly matter. You don't even have to hear him preach; his book is exhibit A.

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Steve Bloem. *The Pastoral Handbook of Mental Illness: A Guide for Training and Reference*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018. 166 pp. £14.99/\$18.99.

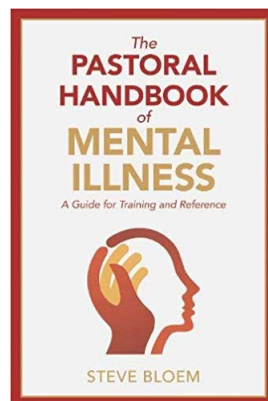
Steve Bloem has written a fascinating handbook with the aim of resourcing pastors to be more sensitive and informed when caring for those living with mental illness. He writes from both a personal and professional perspective. Importantly, he describes his own experience of depression and suicidal thoughts. He refers to his work with Heartfelt Counseling Ministries and Christians Afflicted with Mental Illness (CAMI).

The book opens with a passionate appeal to pastors to approach people living with mental illness with compassion and not condemnation. He argues that illnesses of the brain are to be expected following the Fall and that one cannot assume that mental illness corresponds to spiritual immaturity or disobedience. He turns to the gentle ministry of the servant in the book of Isaiah and the image of a shepherd to indicate the attitude that one needs to bring to those with mental illness. He echoes the words of the apostle Paul: “encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thess 5:14).

Among the tables of resources, Bloem provides a list of mental health professionals, explaining their role in treating illness and supporting people. This is useful but is situated exclusively within the North American health system. Some wider awareness of practices in other countries would give the handbook broader relevance.

The major substance of the book is an easy-to-read survey of major mental illnesses. Bloem provides helpful information on conditions such as Anorexia Nervosa, Borderline Personality Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, and Social Anxiety Disorder. There is also a discussion of suicide. For each disorder, the handbook offers medical perspectives and complements these with pastoral tips. For pastors who have had little exposure to mental illness in study or in life, there is real benefit in having lots of information in one handy reference work.

Bloem has also written a lengthy section (pp. 118–40) giving answers to 58 frequently asked questions about mental illness. The depth and scope of these questions is highly variable. Bloem tackles topics such as lack of insight in people with mental illness, treatment options for those living with



depression, medication, the differences between professionals and their approaches to treatment and the experience of care givers. His answers are generally informative and would be valuable in many conversations in congregational life. He makes a point of noting the differences between secular and Christian thinking, sometimes with stark polarity. These comments would be enriched by a nuanced biblical theology of wisdom.

Finally, in a series of appendices, the book includes some useful reference tables. One of these is the life-events stress scale, which is often illuminating in helping people to make sense of the emotional impact of their experiences. Bloem includes extensive information about medications that may be used to treat various conditions. I suspect these medication tables offer details beyond the needs of most pastoral workers.

While the book's goals are admirable and its marshalling of information is valuable, it occasionally evidences a naivety that diminishes its credibility. There are assertions that need to be stated with greater reserve (e.g., regarding the precise dating of the exodus and the composition of the book of Isaiah). There are appeals to Scripture that seem somewhat arbitrary, if not moralistic. Bloem claims, for example, that pastors should study carefully like the sons of Issachar who knew what Israel should do (1 Chron 12:23, 32), or like Ezra who set his heart on studying the law (Ezra 7:9–10). There are also hermeneutically questionable claims. For instance, he connects the darkness experienced by Abraham in the covenant cutting event of Genesis 15 to the experience of depression. However, the darkness is more likely a feature of the theophany than a symbol of Abraham's mental state.

The topics covered in the book raise highly complex questions about the nature of humanity and how it is that body and mind relate to one's relationship with God and spiritual forces. Bloem has stimulating suggestions that are worthy of consideration. Early in the book he provides a helpful glossary of psychiatric terms and then proposes an accompanying list of spiritual terms. He describes states such as demon possession, demoralization, and apparent desertion by God. He uses the emotional portraits offered in Job and the Psalms and the accounts of demon-possessed people in the Gospels to generate ways of differentiating between psychiatric and spiritual conditions. Appendix A ("Diagnostic Differentials") develops this distinction with lists of symptoms or characteristics that may help in diagnosis. The spiritual categories have real potential to provide focus to pastoral conversations, but they also require fuller validation. This highlights another shortcoming of the handbook: it lacks a clear theological anthropology to provide the theoretical underpinnings for the presentation of potential spiritual states.

Bloem's work also lacks sophistication in synthesizing biblical texts and psychiatric diagnoses. There is no clear discussion of how hard it is to generate a phenomenology of illness from an ancient text and to map this onto diagnostic labels taken from contemporary psychology and medicine. Bloem's writing shows no evidence of interaction with the volumes of work currently attempting to integrate medical, scientific and theological anthropologies (e.g., John Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person: Friendship and Care of People with Mental Health Problems* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2000]; Eric L. Johnson, ed., *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010]; Jennifer Anne Cox, *Autism, Humanity and Personhood: A Christ-Centred Theological Anthropology* [Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2017]). There is also an absence of engagement with the critical theory that informs the work of disability theologians. Bloem does not interrogate accounts of mental illness that privilege medical diagnoses over social, political and ethical analysis.

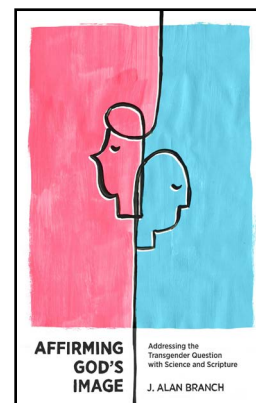
Stylistically, the book has an uneven quality. The flow of ideas is not always clear, and there is frequent repetition. Several paragraphs seem to be in the wrong place. I was left with the impression that the text still needed the work of a careful editor. In the chapter on suicide, for example, the handbook reads more like an advertising brochure: “Pastor, do we have a seminar for you! We can train your staff and other groups in your church to be aware of this epidemic” (p. 113).

Bloem’s *Pastoral Handbook* is a warm-hearted volume that could serve as an accessible introduction to mental illness for pastoral workers. To that end, I commend it. However, it also needs to be supplemented by further reading of works offering greater biblical and theological depth.

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J. Alan Branch. *Affirming God’s Image: Addressing the Transgender Question with Science and Scripture*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018. ix + 183 pp. £13.39/\$16.99.

With the expressed goal of joining “conviction and compassion in an evaluation of transgenderism” (p. 4), J. Alan Branch’s *Affirming God’s Image* is a wide-ranging investigation of the social, historical, theological, ethical, medical and pastoral dimensions of the transgender phenomenon. Branch’s basic conviction is that transgenderism is “an identity rooted in multiple causes and is completely inconsistent with Christian ethics” (p. 4). Nevertheless, given the mysterious aetiology of gender dysphoria, as well as the fact that people do not choose to experience it, Branch is also deeply concerned that “a Christian response should always be expressed with a tone of mercy” (p. 130). This combination of clear-headed conviction and heartfelt compassion is successfully maintained throughout the book.



The book begins with two chapters that set the stage: “The History of Transgenderism” (ch. 1) and “The Vocabulary of Transgenderism” (ch. 2). As well as alerting us to the challenge of doing Christian ethics on a changing playing field, these chapters helpfully explain how the massive shift in the sexual ethics of western culture has occurred and what all the new terminology means (e.g., transgender, cisgender, neutrois, agender, bigender, genderqueer, gender fluid, gender expansive, etc.).

True to the word “science” in the book’s subtitle, and displaying an impressive degree of familiarity with and insight into the mounting body of scientific literature on the subject, the book also contains four important and carefully researched chapters on “Genetics and Transgenderism” (ch. 4), “The Brain and Transgenderism” (ch. 5), “Hormonal Treatment of Gender Dysphoria” (ch. 6) and “Gender Reassignment Surgery” (ch. 7). On the basis of his findings in these chapters, Branch draws two important conclusions. The first is this:

No one knows what causes gender dysphoria. No one has discovered a transgender gene. No one has discovered a transgender brain. What have been found are some variables that correlate with a higher incidence of transgenderism in certain cases. But

no biological or genetic trait has been found that is both necessary and sufficient to cause transgenderism. (p. 129)

In other words, Branch is not denying the possibility of their being a biological component to the experience of gender dysphoria, but simply stating the current state of scientific play: none of the suggested biological factors (e.g., the interstitial nucleus of the anterior hypothalamus 3 [INAH3], the bed nucleus of the stria terminalis [BNST], or having a certain brain type) has been shown to be either necessary or sufficient to *cause* gender dysphoria. In other words, acknowledging the possibility of “a biological *component* as a contributing factor to transgenderism ... is a far cry from affirming biological determinism” (p. 79).

The second conclusion is that “the best research to date indicates that mental health outcomes do not improve in the long run for postoperative transgender people when compared to transgender people who have never had surgery” (p. 139). Therefore, while Branch appreciates that “someone must be quite desperate indeed if they think such a procedure will end their suffering” (p. 139), the path of Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS) is not only riddled with risks and complications, but it also “does not resolve underlying issues for many people and the surgery in fact does not bring the hoped-for peace” (p. 105). Furthermore, GRS “is not a morally acceptable option for Christians experiencing gender dysphoria” (p. 94). The better treatment path for all who are afflicted with this burden and its attendant temptation is “to find ways to help them cope with their condition in a manner consistent with God’s design as opposed to reordering their bodies via surgery” (p. 139).

The theological heart of Branch’s argument is found in chapter 3: “Scripture and Transgenderism.” Here he briefly examines the meaning of humanity’s creation in the divine image, the significance of the male and female form of that image, the impact of the Fall, and the reality of disorders of sex development (i.e., intersex conditions). He devotes a little more space to exploring the Old Testament’s teaching on the importance of maintaining and expressing gender-appropriate distinctions (e.g., Deut 22:5), the New Testament’s reaffirmations of sex-based gender roles (e.g., Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:18–21; 1 Pet 3:1–7), and the relevance of Jesus’ teaching about eunuchs (Matt 19:12). He also explores the possible overlap between those with disorders of sex development and those whom Jesus describes as “eunuchs from birth” (Matt 19:12). Branch wisely concludes that “it is difficult to narrow Jesus’ first category of eunuchs to this specific class of people alone, as the category could also possibly include congenital impotency” (p. 47).

Given that some transgender people desire “to play the part of the opposite sex in sexual intercourse” (p. 48), Branch also investigates the biblical connection between transgenderism and homosexuality, especially via Paul’s linking of “homosexuals” (Gk. ἀρσενοκοῖται) with “the effeminate” (Gk. μαλακοί) in 1 Corinthians 6:9. This leads him to a specific conclusion and to a more general conclusion. The specific conclusion is that, because of its pairing with ἀρσενοκοῖται, Paul’s use μαλακοῖν in this context is a specific reference “to the passive partner in male homosexual intercourse” (p. 49). His more general conclusion is that “the New Testament offers no option for transgender behaviour as a legitimate form of sexual expression” (p. 52).

In regard to the relationship of body and soul in Scripture, Branch concludes that “we are a body-soul unity” (p. 41). Consequently, whenever anyone claims to have “the soul of one gender trapped in the body of another gender, they are making a false claim based on an inadequate understanding of Christian anthropology” (p. 50). This, however, does not mean that a gender dysphoric male has to deny

his experience of incongruence. Rather, he can honestly say, “I am a male made in the image of God with both a body and soul, but I am experiencing confused feelings about [my] gender right now” (p. 50).

In his final chapter (ch. 9), “Transgenderism, Christian Living, and the Church,” Branch addresses a range of pastoral challenges, including pronoun use, bathroom use, how to support parents with a gender dysphoric child and how to counsel someone who has undergone gender reassignment surgery and has now come to faith in Christ. On this last point, Branch offers the following advice:

First, we must be very clear that when a Christian receives Jesus as Lord, that means he is Lord of every aspect of a person’s life, including gender and gender expression. Second, our consistent message should be that God’s plan is for people to embrace their birth sex. Third, we must emphasize that being a Christ follower means we live a life of repentance. For someone who has altered his or her body through GRS, this means acknowledging the sin of bodily mutilation and rejecting God’s design. Genuine repentance will find a way to embrace one’s natal sex in an appropriate way. (p. 140)

Affirming God’s Image provides a model of faithful, evangelical, ethical reflection with a critical scientific eye and a keen pastoral edge. In terms of the balance between scientific investigation and Scriptural exploration, however, it is heavily weighted toward the first. This is clearly intentional but highlights my only (mild) disappointment with the book. In my view, it could easily do with another (or perhaps a longer) biblical chapter, rather than one of only seventeen pages. (A suggestion for the second edition perhaps?) This would give the work even deeper exegetical roots and greater theological strength.

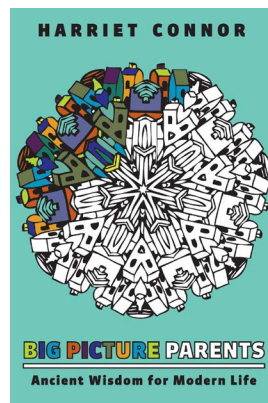
Nevertheless, as it is, the book is a timely gift to the church. It is carefully researched (the endnotes are extensive), accessibly written (with “Key Points” at the end of each chapter), scripturally sound and pastorally wise. Highly recommended.

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Harriet Connor. *Big Picture Parents: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Life*. Eugene, OR: Resource, 2017. ix + 158 pp. £12.00/\$21.26.

Harriet Connor juggles three roles: she is a wife, a mother of three, and a Bible teacher. Connor holds degrees in International Studies (Languages) and Theology. Her book, *Big Picture Parents*, forgoes the superficial “should and should not’s” that permeate many parenting manuals. Connor’s objective is to arm parents and guardians with a better understanding of the biblical metanarrative. A firm grasp of this “big story,” she argues, will help both parents and children find their true and meaningful place in God’s plan.

The book is composed of an introduction, four main parts, a brief conclusion, a very thorough recommended reading list, and questions for group study. The first part of the book probes the theme of purpose. Connor explains that humans were made for much more than the pursuit of happy feelings; we were designed to find meaning in relationship with others. The “big purpose” of both parents and children is



to honor God, our Creator, and to show God's love to others. "We and our children were made for more than happiness—we were made to be in relationship with God, his creation, and each other" (p. 22).

In part two of the book, Connor introduces the idea of the "big problem." She follows the story of our first parents, Adam and Eve, who rebelled against God, thereby causing humanity's fellowship with God, the earth, and each other to be fractured. All parents and children are now prone to sin; our sinful nature works against us living out our "big purpose" in the world. But the good news of the "big story" is that God the Father sent Jesus the Son to deal with the problem of our sin.

Following her clear declaration of the gospel as God's definitive solution to our "big problem," Connor discusses the "big values" that characterize God's spiritual family. She freely admits that many of these values challenge the modern lifestyle: "God asks us to put him before our family, to prioritize rest, and to be content with what we have. He asks us to love our neighbor, to be faithful to our spouse, and to tell the truth" (p. 98). Connor both challenges and encourages families, urging them to remember that all people are imperfect beings dwelling in an imperfect world, and thus we will at times fall short of these "big values." But God, our loving Father, stands ready to forgive us and to empower us in our journey toward Christlikeness.

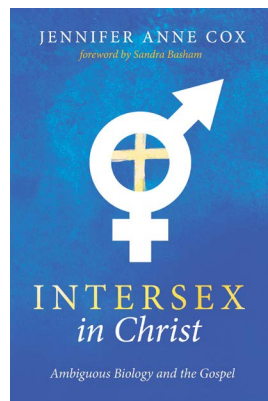
The final part of the book unpacks the idea of the "big family." Connor explains that the Bible sets out God's ideal structure for the family: children will be raised by their biological parents, who are permanently committed to each other in marriage, and who exercise loving authority over their children. Fathers and mothers deserve equal honor, though they have different and complementary roles within the context of the family. Connor concludes by affirming that the Bible stretches our modern definition of family. "From the beginning, God has called individuals to be part of something bigger, to be part of a community that extends beyond our family or even our nation. Jesus redefined the concept of family to mean the community of those who had, by faith, become God's spiritual children" (p. 133).

As I've argued in my own book, *Give Them Jesus* (New York: FaithWords, 2018), Christian parents must come to think of themselves as parent-*theologians*. This means that parents must learn to think Christianly about the world and everything in it, to live faithfully by displaying the beautiful truth of the gospel in every sphere of life, and to train their children to do the same. The task of parenting certainly *involves* things like determining the best bedtime and providing a balanced diet, but it cannot be *reduced* to these things. Parenting is about something much bigger: it's about sending our children out into the world as faithful participants in the great gospel story. Connor's book moves us toward the realization of this true goal of parenting, and for this reason it is a uniquely helpful resource. Where many books in this field focus (exclusively) on parenting practicalities, this volume does the more difficult and more needed work of helping parents think theologically about their roles in the home. This is not to suggest that Connor's work is devoid of practical matters. Readers will find discussions of the influence of television, the internet, and advertising, for example. But these discussions do not dominate the book; they're the side salad, not the steak. What sets Connor's work apart as one of lasting value is her lucid articulation of the metanarrative of Scripture and her insistence that both parents and children will find their true purpose as they come to see themselves within this story.

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Jennifer Anne Cox. *Intersex in Christ: Ambiguous Biology and the Gospel*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018. 188 pp. £19.00/\$24.00.

Intersex, once a hidden reality, now attracts a good deal of attention and presents questions for Christians—theological, ethical, pastoral, and maybe even political. The two significant theological discussions, Megan DeFranza’s, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015) and Susannah Cornwall’s, *Sex and Uncertainty in The Body of Christ: Intersex Conditions and Christian Theology* (London: Routledge, 2014), have not been satisfactory for most evangelicals. So, we should be thankful that Jennifer Cox, an Australian theologian, has written *Intersex in Christ*.



Cox writes with compassion and a clear awareness of the pain and struggles of intersex people. Every chapter includes thoughtful accounts of the intersex experience which are then engaged with thoughtful gospel reflections. This work is evangelical, it focusses on redemption in Christ. Cox also gives fine summaries of contentious biblical, theological and ethical debates in the field and succinct responses.

The opening chapter offers a useful review of the nature of “intersex” conditions. Cox records some of the heartbreak and pain associated with the condition for many intersex people. This has been exacerbated by the common practice of surgical intervention to “assign” a sex to newborns. Cox favors the newer paradigm of slower and more conservative interventions which usually leave genital surgery until adult life, apart from a medically compelling reason (p. 22). Yet she also notes the view of some intersex people, especially in non-Western nations, who would have preferred to have had surgery as infants (p. 23).

Intersex people often experience gender dysphoria—they feel uncomfortable with the gender assigned to them as an infant (often surgically). This leads to a wider question of identity for many intersex people (p. 27) and related stigma and shame are only heightened by repeated examinations, surgery and insensitive treatment (pp. 27–31). Parents of children with an intersex condition face a high level of stress and can often make their child’s experience even worse.

Historically, intersex conditions have often been presumed to be related to homosexuality. More recently, they have been used by a radical “gender agenda” to deconstruct binary gender. Cox argues against this and points out that this agenda often uses intersex people as “pawns for ... political ends” (p. 36). So “intersex, homosexuality and transgender are three separate matters” (p. 38).

The bulk of *Intersex in Christ* applies insights from creation, the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection to the discussion of intersex.

Chapter 2 emphasizes that we are embodied creatures, made in God’s image and fundamentally relational. Cox affirms that “all humans, however sexed, are created in the image of God” (p. 43) and that “having a body is good” (p. 44).

The Fall means that “the world is broken by sin,” though this does not remove “the goodness given ... by God.” Congenital defects, including intersex conditions, are one of the manifestations of brokenness and physical death (p. 46). Cox notes that congenital defects particularly highlight the communal impact of sin: “we all experience the consequences of humanity’s sin, even before we are born, due to our intrinsic connection to other humans” (p. 46).

Cox considers arguments that humanity is not made “male and female” and concludes that Genesis 1–2 affirm binary sex (pp. 50–53). Intersex cannot be considered a third sex or gender, nor can we conclude that gender is on a continuum (p. 57). Intersex conditions are one of a number of ways in which human sexuality is affected by the Fall.

Chapter 3 deals directly with contemporary views of gender—mainly drawing on Virginia Ramey Mollenkott’s *Omnigender* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2007). Cox “cannot endorse the idea that we should do away with male and female, nor ... that gender is fluid” (p. 67). Much of the chapter sets out her case for this. While I agree with Cox’s conclusion, I’m not convinced it is either necessary or helpful to attempt to ground binary gender in the doctrine of the Trinity. Her argument from biblical eschatology is better. Here she argues that since marriage points us to our destiny of union with God and it does so as people created male and female, so binary gender is important in God’s purposes.

Tying to the incarnation, Cox confronts feminist objections to God’s incarnation as a man. She makes the important point that this is not to claim that God the Son is male—we must not project the Jesus’s maleness into the Godhead. Furthermore, the New Testament emphasizes Jesus’s representative humanity, far more than it speaks of his maleness (p. 77). Cox notes the important parallel with Adam. Jesus’s maleness is part of the “scandal of particularity” and “we have no right to decide that we would like this to be otherwise” (p. 76).

Cox argues that complementarianism is difficult for intersex people because it requires them to determine which sex they are before they can fully participate in church life. I can see this may be so and it is a good caution for complementarian churches. It is not, though, a defeater for complementarianism.

Cox holds that intersex people do not have “to choose” their sex—an intersex person may be content to present as that, without fitting the binary pattern. “The only definitive reason that would require an intersex person to adopt male or female is when entering marriage” (p. 89). She recognizes that practically it is often easier for someone to live as male or female. This can be done without surgical treatment but can be a difficult decision and “the first choice may not be the best one” (p. 89) so a person may transition from one to another.

I appreciate Cox’s call for patience and care, and the recognition of the complexity of such decisions. Yet, as she acknowledges, God’s pattern is binary sex. It therefore seems best to help a person determine which sex they are and help them to live according to that. The process of reaching this decision and the decision itself will vary from person to person, depending on the details of their condition and on their life history.

Chapters 4 and 5 relate Jesus’s life to intersex conditions. Cox reminds us that Jesus shared in the sufferings of the human condition and offers forgiveness, salvation and a new identity to sinners, including those on the edges of society (pp. 100–9). She then considers and dismisses the argument that Jesus, as the product parthenogenesis (virgin birth) was intersex. She points out that the Virgin birth is not an explanation of the mechanism of Jesus’s conception (just as the resurrection is not a biological explanation). Jesus’ death heals broken human sexuality (Eph 5:25–27), since sex is primarily about relationships. So, in restoring us to God, Jesus “healed all that is broken in regard to sex, gender, and human sexuality” (p. 125). This would be a thin view of redemption but that the next chapter turns to the resurrection.

Chapter 6 argues that sexuality will be preserved but transformed in the resurrection. Resurrection is physical, but our bodies are transformed: “our bodies will be bodies still, but bodies of a different kind ... with a greater glory than anything we can presently imagine. (p. 132). As part of this discussion, Cox

reviews the arguments of DeFranza and Cornwall that the resurrection transcends the binary structure of “essentialist” views of sex and gender. Cox’s reply, in brief, is that resurrection affects the whole person, not just perceptions and relationships (p. 133). She insists that sin has changed the creation and affected all of our bodies: “no bodies ... are perfect now. Every body dies and needs healing in the resurrection” (p. 135). There will be continuity of identity in the resurrection but also glorification—which could include genetic changes. (Cox wisely refuses to speculate about the biology of resurrected bodies.) She affirms the classic Christian view that humans will be raised as men and women. Intersex person will be raised with healed bodies “restored to male or female” (p. 140) as all find a transformed identity in Christ.

Cox argues that the resurrection affirms the goodness of bodies and so the value of restoration, including restorative surgery. In contrast, cosmetic surgery is often about making bodies “look” better, which doesn’t affirm the goodness of the body. She argues that intersex is already good and does not require surgery or hormone treatment to make it “acceptable,” though treatment might be recommended to deal with impaired function and enhance well-being (p. 144). I think her approach here is wise, though I’d argue that healing bodies is a good act, where it is possible. We often lack the wisdom to know what is truly restorative and/or the ability to deliver it—hence her proper caution.

On sexual ethics, Cox notes that some intersex people may not be able to have intercourse (due to malformed genitals or because they’ve been scarred by treatment), but may have a sexual relationship, and that this must be ordered by Christ. She affirms that sexual activity is only proper in heterosexual marriage. Her position is that intersex people should marry according to their gender. She insists that is not appropriate to transition gender after marriage (p. 152).

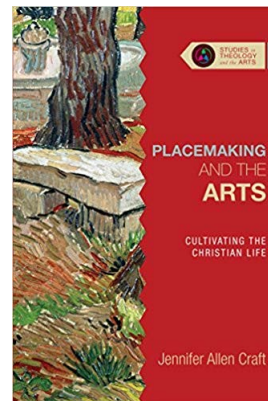
The book concludes with a call to the church to move from fearing intersex people to welcoming and valuing them in Christ.

Although I’ve noted some points of disagreement, I want to stress that *Intersex in Christ* is a helpful and stimulating read. It offers a fine model of applying gospel insights to a painful and confusing condition. I hope that evangelicals will heed Cox’s plea for understanding and compassion for intersex people.

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Jennifer Allen Craft. *Placemaking and the Arts: Cultivating the Christian Life*. Studies in Theology and the Arts 6. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018. 280 pp. £23.66/\$30.00.

The literature on the positive intersection of contemporary art and Christianity is small; more often, the two are pitted against one another. Since 2016 InterVarsity Press Academic has responded to this dearth with a series called Studies in Theology and the Arts, which includes Jonathan A. Anderson and William A. Dyrness's *Modern Art and the Life of a Culture* (2016), and Cameron Anderson's *The Faithful Artist* (2016). The most recent addition, Jennifer Allen Craft's *Placemaking and the Arts: Cultivating the Christian Life* addresses notions of place and artmaking to a predominately academic, broadly Christian audience that includes art novices, art practitioners (artists, curators, art critics, art museum professionals, art history professors, etc.), art patrons and collectors, and finally, cultural scholars who may see art, craft, and visual culture as supporting examples for other theoretical investigations. Craft advances an argument for the value of the arts and art (terms she uses interchangeably) in the natural world, the home, the church, and society. Her central thesis is this:



The arts are a form of placemaking, that they “place” us in time, space, and community in ways that encourage us to be fully and imaginatively present, continually calling us to pay attention to the world around us and inviting us to engage in responsible practices in these places. (p. 2)

Therefore, art, according to Craft, uniquely allows Christians to become producers and sharers in the global economy, and to responsibly care for the land and sojourner.

Two questions drive her study: why place and why art? In the first chapter, she defines place, placemaking, a sense of place, and art. Place is “a location, an experience, a community, a set of relationships, memories, and habits, a measurement of time and history” (p. 8); placemaking is “our actions in a place” (p. 11); and a sense of place is “our imagining of and love for the places the communities in which we are called” (p. 16). However, art is never fully addressed (except strangely by novelist Wendell Berry). This underdeveloped definition of art is especially pronounced when contrasted with the scholarship, for example, on place and space, or, in chapter three, craft. Instead, art is understood as “one particular and paradigmatic form of this type of hospitable placemaking ... [or as] a significant catalyst for the development and practice of a theology of home” (p. 87), or as a “characteristic feature” (p. 219) of placemaking. Functionally, it “help[s] us participate more deeply and meaningfully in the corporate life of worship in the church” (p. 124) and “also teaches us to love, our sense of place being defined as love of place” (p. 229). In short, art’s definition hinges on place. In other parts of the book, art is related to beauty and the handmade, two tricky strands of inquiry. Finally, while Craft uses case studies at the end of each chapter to advance her theory, the art examples appear as illustrative rather than unfolding alongside her argument.

The second chapter considers placemaking and theology in relationship to the natural world of creation, incarnation, and new creation. Asking how the arts can expand that theological framework, Craft points to the *imago Dei* (“image of God”) as “part of the theological root system for a theology of the arts and placemaking” (p. 31). Citing the Genesis creation story, Craft explains creation and the process of naming as a kenotic act of love amongst the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Artists (whether

identifying Christians or not) mimic this trinitarian, kenotic love through the act of making. Moreover, because the *imago Dei* is best reflected in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, this allows people the freedom to accept their identity as placemakers in the natural world who give order to nature and places. Land artist Christo and the late Jeanne Claude's installations are cited because their wrapping of buildings, land, etc., changes people's perspectives and the way they see the world.

Craft and craftmaking are highlighted alongside the domestic home in chapter three, which also considers homelessness and consumerism. The author's thesis is that art, which is concerned with a theoretical understanding of home and the cultivation of a beautiful home, can combat the negative effects of modernity, including homogenization, individualism, and anonymity. By making art in or about the home (a foundational site for identity and memory) and beauty, it allows one's most intimate space to be put on display for others as an act of hospitality.

In chapter four, Craft focuses on the role of temporary art installations and permanent art in church buildings. Cementing her analysis of art in relation to divine beauty, Craft argues that art in liturgical spaces aids worship, encourages divine-human encounters, helps one feel a sense of belonging, enables mission mindedness, and conveys an eschatological sense of home. Since art fosters people's sense of belonging corporately in the church, it frees people to invite others to feel welcome and simultaneously points to the tension of living as sojourners on earth while longing for the fullness of God's kingdom.

In chapter five, Craft discusses the role of art in society by looking at political, ethical, and social issues surrounding displacement, refugees, and borders. Similar to its role in the church, art in the public sphere—as something that contributes to people's sense of place—has, for Craft, the ability to motivate actions in community because art navigates paths of placement and displacement while pointing to the hope of a new creation. Art—she gives an example by Ai Weiwei—can transform the public square by creating spaces for ethical social practices and reimagined beautiful public spaces as a tool for kingdom living.

In her final chapter, Craft outlines a theological model for the arts. Generally, she calls Christians to engage with the arts more deeply in all spheres of their lives on earth. Specifically, for artists, she contends that as they make art and engage in responsible placemaking “they can share in the creative and redemptive work of Christ in the world” (p. 227).

Overall, Craft's study foregrounds placemaking and art by conceiving of art as a helpful tool that allows Christians to be productive citizens in the public and private spheres. The book's goal is to motivate Christian audiences “to cultivate an aesthetically engaged sense of place, along with the development of a placed theology and practice of the arts” (p. 201). There are many useful nuggets here, especially in relationship to theories of place, displacement, and practical application. Moreover, Craft's theological arguments are spot on, although her eschatological reading of place for the Christian could have appeared earlier in the book.

At the same time, however, the book appears to display an understanding of art tied to function. This diminishes its engagement with the broader conversation happening outside Christian circles about contemporary art in the gallery, the museum, the marketplace, and the art world, and the complex art historical and theoretical paradigms framing those debates. In 1967, Susan Sontag wrote, “Once the artist's task seemed to be simply that of opening up new areas and objects of attention. That task is still acknowledged, but ... art is certainly now, mainly, a form of thinking” (Sontag, “Aesthetics of Silence,” *Aspen* 5–6). That division between the cerebral and functional continues to inform much of contemporary art practice. Chapter five hints at this complicated situation inviting curious readers

to begin with Craft and then dive much deeper into the discourse surrounding visual art, orthodox Christianity, and the space between the two in the twenty-first century.

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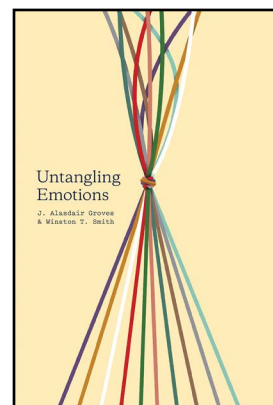
J. Alasdair Groves and Winston T. Smith. *Untangling Emotions: God's Gift of Emotions*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 240 pp. £13.38/\$16.99.

Emotions are too hot to handle. Equanimity in all circumstances seems a much better friend. That sums up the awkward relationship that many of us have with our feelings. Should we love them? Should we hate them? We are uncomfortable with negative emotions and wary of positive ones. Emotions feel like a liability, or we rarely even notice them. Some of us gravitate to early Christians like Clement and Origen who believed the perfected Christian would be completely free of any emotions.

In *Untangling Emotions*, J. Alasdair Groves and Winston Smith show how emotions are, in fact, an essential way humans bear God's image. Emotions reflect what we love—and what we love supremely, we worship. Emotions can help or hinder us from fulfilling the Great Commandment to love God and neighbor. Engaging our emotions is therefore not peripheral to the Christian life. The authors recognize this as they seek to help Christians handle emotions in a way that honors God. The book is divided into three parts: Understanding Emotions, Engaging Emotions, and Engaging the Hardest Emotions. A helpful appendix also looks at God's emotions in light of the doctrine of impassibility.

The first section helps readers understand emotions by dispelling some of the common myths we believe about them. It's easy to think we should embrace positive emotions and suppress negative ones. We might label joy and peace as good and fear and anger as bad. Instead, the authors argue that all emotions are good *in their proper place*. We *should not* feel happy when a loved one is in pain, and we *should* feel fear when a car almost hits us. As the first chapter makes clear, sometimes it's good to feel bad and sometimes it's bad to feel good! Emotions don't come "single file" either (p. 41). We usually have many feelings at once. The reason we have various and often conflicting emotions is because we "love lots of things" (p. 42).

The second section explains how to respond to our emotions and the emotions of others. Two pitfalls we often fall into are believing emotions are everything and thus embracing all that we feel, or believing they are nothing and trying to suppress what we feel. Groves and Smith offer a better option: we should engage our emotions. We engage our emotions with four helpful steps: (1) *identify* what you are feeling, (2) *examine* why you are feeling it, (3) *evaluate* the good and bad aspects of the emotion, and (4) *act* according to the evaluation. Engaging emotions ultimately means engaging God, the Giver of emotions. Our emotions are not something we should keep to ourselves—to truly engage our emotions, we need to bring them to God in prayer and to others in vulnerability. We should also empathetically help others as they try to do the same. Empathy says, "I want to know what this situation



was like for you, rather than just imagining what your situation would be like for me” (p. 115). Emotional connection is important for intimacy with both God and others.

The third section lays out how to engage the hardest emotions: fear, anger, grief, guilt, and shame. The authors analyze the good purpose of each of these emotions and the way our sinful nature steers them in the wrong direction. Fear, for example, motivates us to seek safety, control, and certainty. In a moment of danger, fear is necessary to cause us to flee what will harm us. Often however, fear contemplates “what-ifs” and worst-case scenarios while “writing the presence and help of God out of the picture” (p. 158). Nevertheless, even sinful fear can point us back to the truth of Scripture that God cares for each of us, that he is “a Person you can trust with your very life” (p. 164).

Groves and Smith are balanced in the way they help readers engage their own emotions *and* the emotions of others. They help readers examine their own hearts, but they do not stop there. Even the reflection questions after each chapter enable readers to better relate to others’ emotions. They are also detailed in their explanation of emotions. For example, they touch on the issue of numbness and how those who experience it are usually troubled by their lack of emotion (pp. 61, 79). They give a nuanced explanation of anger by naming its subtler expressions of frustration, irritation, and annoyance (p. 175). They investigate both the objective and subjective realities of guilt and shame: sometimes we feel guilty when we are not, other times we do not feel guilty when we are (p. 202). Overall, their explanation of emotions is nuanced, reflecting the complex ways different people experience and process emotional responses.

I greatly enjoyed reading this book and only have a few suggestions for improvements. I struggled with the idea that “*every* emotion you ever feel reflects your loves, or what you worship” (p. 39, emphasis added). I appreciated the chapter explaining how emotions happen in our body, but what about how our body affects our emotions in ways that do *not* reflect our heart? For example, a woman may avoid coffee because every time she drinks it, the caffeine makes her anxious. While I’m not certain, I do not think the authors would say this anxiety stems from her disordered love for God, but instead is a physiological reaction to the caffeine. Or perhaps they would not classify this kind of “anxiety” as true anxiety (or a true emotion) since it is not a reflection of the heart. I agree that *most* of the time anxiety reveals the concerns of our hearts, but there could have been more clarification here for the few instances that our emotions do not reflect what we worship.

I also appreciate that the authors kept the book to a reasonable length, thus making it accessible for a wide readership. And yet, a chapter on joy would have been helpful. As the authors say in the beginning, “Christians are sometimes uneasy even with positive emotions” (p. 15). We often do not embrace happiness out of fear of idolatry, or we suppress feelings of accomplishment to keep ourselves from pride (p. 15). I have no doubt the authors could have helped us distinguish the difference between righteous and sinful joy. Along these lines, a section on the feeling of God’s absence in the “Engaging Grief” chapter would have been valuable, as many believers experience the sense that God is distant at some point in their life. Interestingly, the authors never tackle the role of cultural and ethnic diversity. Christians from other parts of the world often have a very different understanding and experience of emotions. Are these trivial differences? Do they point to shortcomings in non-Western contexts, or do they suggest that emotions in the Christian life have an even richer, more complex meaning than the categories developed in this book? I would have liked to hear the authors speak to these and related questions.

Amidst a culture of uncritical emotional expression and various Christian traditions of hyper-critical emotional suppression, this book is timely. Written by two CCEF counselors, *Untangling Emotions* is theologically nuanced and pastorally helpful, making it a must-read for any Christian. Groves and Smith recognize that emotions are not the ultimate end, only God is, but in order to worship God we cannot neglect the emotions he has given us. This book will enable many to better love God with mind, soul, and strength—emotions included.

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William P. Smith. *Parenting with Words of Grace: Building Relationships with Your Children One Conversation at a Time*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 224 pp. £11.81/\$14.99.

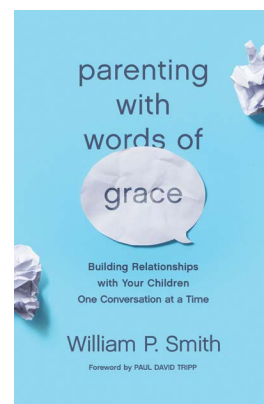
William P. Smith is a pastor and former faculty member of the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation (CCEF). His new book, *Parenting with Words of Grace*, is a call for parents to build lasting relationships with their children through gracious conversations. The book offers theological depth with a warm and personal tone. This book would be most relevant to parents of older children and teenagers.

Each of the short chapters of *Parenting with Words of Grace* begins and ends with the gospel. Smith shows how God has spoken graciously to us, how we ought to reflect that same grace to our children, and how we can rely on God's ongoing grace when we fail. Along the way, Smith pieces together a basic theology of speech. Speech reveals the character and commitments of the speaker: as God's image-bearers, our speech will either communicate the truth about our Creator flowing from a heart of worship or echo the lies of his enemy flowing from a heart of idolatry.

The first part of Smith's book sets out his vision: "Parenting involves countless interactions through which you invite potential future peers to an ongoing relationship if they should so choose" (p. 19). Smith encourages parents to understand their role in relational terms: parenting is not about finding formulas that "work," but about having interactions that "woo" our children into a lasting relationship with us and with God.

Smith illustrates this kind of gracious speech using Jesus' words to the seven churches in Revelation, along with some shorter examples. He concludes: "God pours out his kindness by speaking the words people need to hear even when he knows they will reject him. He now invites you to join him by giving yourself to conversations with others—especially your children—with that same exhausting, profligate abandon that's more interested in love than it is in guarantees" (p. 47).

Smith devotes a chapter to explaining why parents have to talk to their children so much. He writes, "By God's intent, we enter life knowing nothing, then are slowly brought to understand our world and our place within it through the very ordinary medium of people talking to us. With their help, over time, we mature into contributing, responsible members of society who in turn can support and nurture others" (p. 64).



The second part of *Parenting with Words of Grace* is called “The Hope.” These chapters consider why parents sometimes fail to speak graciously to their children, while reassuring them of God’s willingness to forgive. Smith illustrates this with an extended example from the life of Abraham. He urges parents to keep running back to Jesus, who intercedes with the Father on our behalf. We need to take words of repentance to God and need to listen to God’s gracious words to us in Scripture; only then can we speak graciously to our children.

Part Three of *Parenting with Words of Grace* focuses on the skill of encouragement. Smith teaches parents to search for the positive in seed form: “It’s too easy to focus on the goal and ignore the process by which someone is moving toward it. Learn to see the process with its countless steps and stages and you’ll quickly see many things you can encourage” (p. 145).

Part Four addresses the skill of honesty. Smith argues from Scripture that the goal of honesty is rescue: “God doesn’t confront to break relationships. He speaks honestly to restore them” (p. 156). Smith then draws from the wisdom of Proverbs, urging parents to think before they speak. Next, he encourages parents to follow the example of Jesus: our conversations should seek to uncover our children’s deepest needs, rather than just address the presenting problem.

The book finishes with a healthy dose of realism: we should expect our children to make mistakes. Smith writes: “Don’t wish those moments away. Don’t sigh or frown or look surprised when they come up. Don’t long for low-maintenance kids who never need you to step in and say anything. Stop wishing you were raising Pharisees—kids who look good on the outside but are in deep trouble inside” (pp. 195–96). In our imperfect human families, we need to develop a “lifestyle” of forgiveness (p. 201).

Parenting with Words of Grace has much to commend it. Smith uses Scripture well in developing a theology of speech that is illuminating and, over the course of the book, surprisingly comprehensive. Smith’s years of experience as a pastor and counselor have also given him deep insight into how people work—he understands the particular weaknesses and temptations that parents face; he gives wise advice on interpersonal communication and conflict resolution.

Smith’s basic message to parents is powerful: we should be careful to use words that strengthen, not weaken, our relationship with our children.

The book, however, is not without its weaknesses. One is that it does not adequately define the unique relationship between parents and children. Smith defines parenting as “the sum total of interactions between two human beings whereby I regularly invite a slightly younger person to a relationship that increasingly closes the maturity gap between us” (p. 24). This definition could equally apply to my relationship with the twenty children in my Sunday School class or soccer team.

Smith’s definition does not take into account the unique responsibility that parents have for their children’s maturity, and the unique authority that this entails. Smith does not use the concept of authority positively until chapter 26; even then, the idea is simply presumed, rather than explained. Likewise, Smith does not address the issue of how children ought to respond to their parents’ words. And yet, the Bible places great emphasis on the value of children honoring their parents by listening to and obeying them (e.g. Prov 1:8; 6:20–23; 1 Sam 2:25; Eph 6:1–3).

The Bible also describes many different kinds of parental speech (especially throughout Deuteronomy and Proverbs). These include recounting salvation history, answering questions, teaching, instructing, commanding, warning, and correcting. *Parenting with Words of Grace* does not look in detail at these different categories of speech.

Smith might also have drawn on the rich Scriptural paradigm of God as Father and Jesus as Son. Smith's examples switch between God and Jesus indiscriminately, even to the point of referring to us as Jesus's children (p. 162). Perhaps it would have been more helpful to examine how God speaks *as the Father* and how Jesus responds *as the Son*. Smith's main example of gracious speech comes from Jesus's words in Revelation, but here he speaks *as the Bridegroom* to his Bride-to-be. This typifies the book's failure to distinguish clearly between different types of relationships, and the different types of speech that might categorize them.

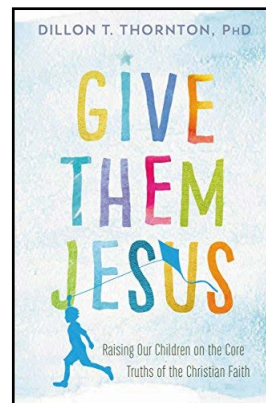
These criticisms notwithstanding, *Parenting with Words of Grace* is a welcome book that offers parents some very helpful and challenging ideas. It is simply not a comprehensive parenting book. It should be read alongside other books that offer a clearer explanation of a parent's unique role in the lives of their children.

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Dillon T. Thornton. *Give Them Jesus: Raising Our Children on the Core Truths of the Christian Faith*. New York: FaithWords, 2018. 217 pp. £12.99/\$10.19.

This is a book with its heart in the right place. *Give Them Jesus* starts from the conviction that it is parents who bear the primary responsibility for their children's spiritual development. This may well occur in the context of a church, but the responsibility lies first with the parents: the family is the first church.

After briefly establishing this foundation, Thornton then suggests that while most Christian parents acknowledge this responsibility, a majority spend little or no time discussing spiritual truths with their children. The reason offered for this is that their own grasp of the content of the Christian faith is shaky. *Give Them Jesus* aims to address this problem by encouraging and equipping "parent-theologians" who are better able to instruct their children in Christian truth and lead them to be disciples of Jesus.



Give Them Jesus does this by presenting an overview of the major basic doctrines of the Christian faith with an eye in their communication to children. The material is arranged according to six topics drawn from the Apostle's Creed: (1) The Father; (2) The Son: identity and first coming; (3) The Son: death and resurrection; (4) The Son: present ministry and second coming; (5) The Holy Spirit; and (6) The Church.

Each chapter outlines, discusses, and illustrates the core elements of a particular topic. Each treatment proceeds along classical reformed and evangelical lines, with help from writers such as Calvin, McGrath, Lewis, Bray, Morris, and Packer. Thornton sticks to the mainlines of the Bible's teaching on each topic and while some controversial areas are mentioned, these are not normally engaged (e.g. the timing of Christ's second coming). Rather, the focus of each discussion is especially on the implications of the topic for Christian life and practice. Helpful illustrations abound. The explanations are simple without being simplistic, and it is clear that what is written reflects the wealth of Thornton's experience and practice with his own family.

Each topic concludes with a family worship guide. This is the major innovation of the book and reflects Thornton's conviction that one of the key responsibilities of parents is to lead focused times of instruction within the context of family worship. Thornton gives detailed guidance for what this might look like under the four principles of teach, treasure, sing, and pray. Importantly this is not to replace a whole of life approach to Christian nurture, "every day is a string of teachable moments" (p. 8), but he suggests parents consider a regular time of family worship lasting for between 10–15 minutes for younger children, often around a meal time or bedtime. I think this would adapt and change as children get older.

The guides at the end of each chapter contain concepts to remember (e.g., the various sections of the Apostles' Creed) as well as memory verses. This is what Thornton means by his principle "treasure." Then follows a brief summary of the main concepts covered in the more extended discussion, with each providing a possible focus for a time of worship. There is also a series of suggested questions to raise with the family to spark discussion about the topic, as well as a number of suggested songs. Finally, each guide concludes with relevant prayer prompts.

Give Them Jesus is a reliable guide aimed at the average (Christian) parent. It is a kind of entry level systematic theology and would also double as a useful theological overview for leaders working in children's and youth ministry.

Part of the value of *Give Them Jesus* lies in the challenge it puts before parents to grow in their knowledge of their faith so they can more effectively, and deliberately, disciple their own children. Its usefulness is in the way it helps parents to do this. While the question is begged as to what this means for children in churches who come from unbelieving families, there are useful clues here for children's and youth ministers looking for ideas for topics and programs to be used in their groups and activities.

One intriguing sidelight is the choice of songs recommended for the worship times, which mainly consist of older hymns. Questions of language and syntax with younger children aside (e.g., *It is Well With my Soul*, *Crown Him with Many Crowns*), are these choices indicative of the relative dearth of more objective content-based songs in the contemporary scene? Perhaps. In my view, however, the author would have done well to cast the net wider to catch some helpful contemporary songs that have been written for younger believers.

Give them Jesus is a well-written and helpful book that identifies a genuine problem in many Christian homes and provides a constructive and thoughtful response.

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— MISSION AND CULTURE —

John H. Coe and Kyle C. Strobel, eds. *Embracing Contemplation: Reclaiming a Christian Spiritual Practice*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019. 304 pp. £25.24/\$32.00.

What is contemplation? Can the church biblically support this vague-sounding concept often seen in New Age mysticism and Eastern spirituality? John H. Coe and Kyle C. Strobel, seek to answer these questions in their new anthology, *Embracing Contemplation: Reclaiming a Christian Spiritual Practice*.

Coe and Strobel compiled thirteen essays spanning across evangelical persuasions in order to enter into a Christian conversation on contemplation. The editors define contemplation as “a call to the presence of God that has been made available in Christ by the Spirit” (pp. 6–7), and this definition essentially serves as the book’s theme. However, Coe and Strobel do not advocate a strict, unmoving definition of contemplation but intend to encourage discussion within the church, as seen in the nuanced treatments of the book’s contributors.

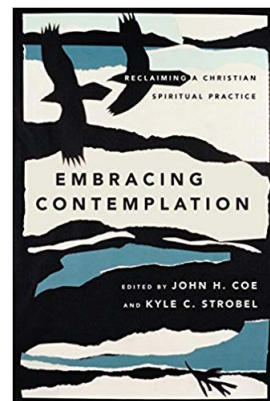
Every Christian, including myself, will come to certain essays and have some disagreement with, or qualification for, the writers. This is a strength of the book. It opens a dialectical space for Christians to discuss contemplation.

While each essay has much to be enjoyed and praised, a couple stood out as the most significant in the collection. Outside of Coe and Strobel’s contributions to their anthology, I found Ashley Cocksworth and Hans Boersma made the most illuminating contributions to this anthology.

Cocksworth’s essay, “Sabbatical Contemplation? Retrieving a Strand in Reformed Theology,” seeks to formulate a biblical theology of contemplation by looking to teachings on prayer and the Sabbath. He mainly draws from Scripture and the writings of John Calvin, in order to formulate a biblical view of contemplation. He begins his discussion of contemplation by looking at the concept and practice of prayer. Calvin says that prayer “at its deepest level is a practice of ‘pure contemplation’ before God” (p. 79). The connection here is that if the Christian life is a life of prayer, then the Christian life includes contemplation. After looking at prayer, Cocksworth draws the reader’s attention to the Sabbath as expounded in Genesis 2:1–3.

Calvin and Cocksworth both claim that God takes this rest from creation to reflect on, to contemplate, his works. He argues, then, that if we are to imitate God, we are to rest from our works in order to contemplate God and his works. Cocksworth explains, “Sabbatical contemplation is about gift: the sharing, by way of the son, in God’s own rest” (p. 88). He ends this essay with a call to action directly stemming from this Sabbath-formed contemplation. He states that “in sabbatical contemplation is to be found a peculiarly active sort of passivity: rest. On closer inspection, resting in God is hard work—it requires action, commitment, and even the countercultural reordering [of] our desire[s]” (p. 93). The reason I find Cocksworth’s essay so illuminating lies in its envisioning of what contemplation is, a way to commune with God and experience his Sabbath rest today.

Hans Boersma’s essay, “The Beatific Vision: Contemplating Christ as the Future Present,” concerns what it will look like to see God in glory. It aims to guide us in how to see God in the present. In such passages as 1 John 3:2, John shows us what heaven will entail—seeing God as he is (the beatific vision). Boersma looks backward to God’s past revelation of himself (e.g., creation, the covenants, the



incarnation). He then looks forward to the full and perfect revelation of himself in glory in order to form a biblical understanding of contemplation.

The reason we practice contemplation is to commune with God, which presents a partial image of perfect, heavenly communion with the triune God. Boersma shows us that “God gives ever-greater opportunity for contemplating him, so that we may get a foretaste of the beatific vision through these early sacramental anticipations of it” (p. 221). Boersma opens our eyes to the truth that we experience the fullness of heaven *now*, and one significant way of doing so lies in contemplation.

My review of this book has been more theological than practical. Yet, each writer puts forth tangible steps to practice contemplation. One practice mentioned in the book is *lectio divina*, or “divine reading.” Like many ancient practices, *lectio divina* evokes mixed responses from evangelicals. This review does not regard *lectio divina*, or any contemplative practice, as a replacement to sound biblical exegesis. Rather, it is a tool to still the mind so that one may reflect on the Bible.

In practicing *lectio*, one sits down with a short passage of Scripture, reading it four consecutive times. After the first time, readers get the surface-level sense of the passage. After the second time, a person observes and repeats words, phrases, and sentences that seem significant. After the third time, one prays about how the passage bears upon their life and the lives of others. After the fourth time, readers spend 5–10 minutes in silent contemplation. This is one practical step to open our minds and hearts to discern God’s presence, received by grace.

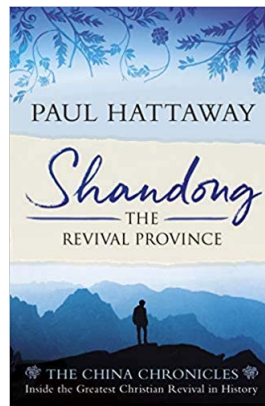
This book will be a conversation-starter for many Christians, whether pastors, scholars, or laypeople. Coe and Strobel conclude the anthology well when they write, “Scripture points Christians to real wisdom and discernment in the spiritual life, and the church must continually wrestle with the lived reality of that calling” (p. 286). *Embracing Contemplation* can and will assist anyone who wants to join in this task.

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Paul Hattaway. *Shandong: The Revival Province*. London: SPCK, 2018. 293 pp. £9.99/\$15.00.

Paul Hattaway served as a missionary in China for thirty years. He is the founder of Asia Harvest, an organization that supports the advance of the gospel and the development the church in China. Hattaway is a fluent Mandarin speaker and an authority on the history of the Chinese church.

Shandong: The Revival Province is the first book in *The China Chronicles* series in which Hattaway traces the history of the church in every province of China. Hattaway’s express purpose for this book (and all those in the series) is to tell the story of the spread of Christianity in China. As a result, “Multitudes would be strengthened, edified and challenged to carry the torch of the Holy Spirit to their generation” (series overview). Hattaway indeed fulfills his purpose. This book challenged this writer to love Christ in a deeper way and make him known in my generation.



A well-known saying among the Chinese states, “He who holds Shandong grips China by the throat.” In *Shandong: The Revival Province*, Hattaway chronicles the hand of God gripping China and shaking it for his glory. Written in an engaging style, the book traces the establishment of the church in Shandong Providence by the first evangelical missionaries. It ends with the state of the church in Shandong in 2016.

Hattaway begins with a nine-page overview of Shandong history and development. Shandong means “East of the mountains.” He notes that Shandong is the home of Confucius and also the center of house church revival in China. This section provides a good overview on Shandong Province for the uninitiated.

Beginning in the 1860s, Hattaway traces the spread of the gospel in Shandong, decade by decade, ending in 2016. He gives attention to prominent missionaries from those earliest years of missionary activities, including those who are more obscure yet made a contribution in Shandong. Of course, Hattaway mentions prominent Chinese evangelists and pastors who made an impact in those pioneer years. For the period following the 1950s, his exclusive focus is on house churches and the indigenous pastors who led them. Hattaway highlights the faithfulness of house church pastor David Wang, who defied communists after the takeover. Hattaway writes, “Wang summoned his family into his study and them to pray for him. He then walked up the aisle of the church and removed the portrait of Mao and walked out” (p. 174). Wang became a marked man, but by the grace of God, he and his family were able to flee to Hong Kong and evade capture. Many other examples are given of house church Christians’ faithfulness to Christ at great cost.

A volume of this nature is long overdue. According to Hattaway’s introduction, almost a century has passed since such a comprehensive survey of the church in Shandong has been compiled (p. xiv). The Appendix contains an estimated number of evangelical Christians in every city and prefecture in Shandong. The chart identifies Christians in the house church and Three-Self Patriotic state church. This is an invaluable tool for researches, missionaries, and anyone interested in the study of the church in Shandong.

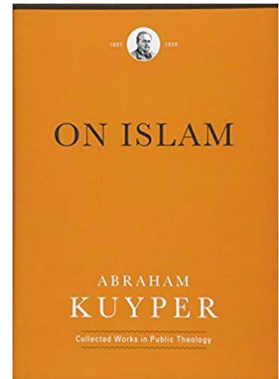
The rich history of the faithfulness of Chinese Christians amid persecution encourages the church inside and outside of China to remain faithful. Hattaway, being a fluent Mandarin speaker, makes extensive use of first-hand interviews with Chinese house church leaders. Through these interviews, Hattaway is able to preserve an oral history that otherwise might fade with time. Further enhancing the credibility of Hattaway’s research are bibliographical notes for each chapter and a bibliography that cites all of the major works of Shandong missionary and church history.

I highly recommend *Shandong: The Revival Province*. This book is relevant for a pastor, missionary, researcher of anyone interested in the history of the Chinese church. The reader who takes up this volume will be enriched by the story of faithful men and women whom God used to build the church in Shandong.

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Abraham Kuyper. *On Islam*. Edited by James D. Bratt and Douglas Howard. Translated by Jan van Vliet. Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017. 400 pp. £42.99/\$49.99.

Dutch polymath Abraham Kuyper is a giant in Reformed Protestant theology. He served as a pastor, politician, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, publisher, journalist and author. He founded a newspaper, a political party, and a university. The Abraham Kuyper Translation Society has made his collected works available in English, including *On Islam*, which recounts his tour around the Mediterranean (August 1905–June 1906). This volume spans a range of Kuyper’s interests. He makes observations about diverse topics, including education, economics, international relations, religion and theology, and spiritual trends in global politics. Nevertheless, the pebble in Kuyper’s shoe is the Muslim Umma and Islam.



What Kuyper writes about the future, including his repeated prophecies (and warnings), is particularly intriguing. In some instances, he was prescient. One example is his prediction that China will rise to greatness, throw off European shackles, with Japan leading the way: “Once awakened, China can develop a tremendous power that will overcome any resistance... great treasures lie hidden in this giant empire” (p. 5). Kuyper says this, not to cause anxiety, but “only to prevent surprise over this outcome” (p. 6). Even today, surprise over the rise and rise of China is not yet exhausted.

Another prophecy concerns the potency of what Kuyper calls the Pan-Islamic movement: the Islamic Awakening seeking to unite the Umma, restoring the glory and political dominance of Islam by establishing a caliphate. He warns that colonial regimes will have to contend with this movement in the not too distant future. Although he sees Islam politically as a spent force—“as a political force, Islam is no more” —yet he emphasizes its great spiritually potency. He says, “Islam remains in a strong position ... and Europe will have to reckon with it” (p. 215). In contrast to some of his contemporaries, Kuyper rightly discerned that Islam’s spiritual power would not easily dissipate, and the peoples of Islam even then were making preparations to rise again.

Some of Kuyper’s predictions fall wide of the mark. He anticipates the conversion of virtually all of Africa to Islam, with no success for Christian missions. Instead, Christianity is today the dominant faith in the Sub-Saharan.

Perhaps influenced by Romanticism, Kuyper has a mystical understanding of the spiritual character of nations and races. He tends to stereotype groups. For example, everything from Japan to the Middle East is for him “the East” and shares in the “Asian spirit,” in contrast to the “European spirit” (p. 28). He also waxes lyrical about “Semitic spirituality” (p. 38) and “the Semitic conception of life” (p. 175). Admittedly, there are some admirable features in the way he uses these tropes. For example, Kuyper laments the “Germanic Jesus” (p. 307) that infused Protestantism at the time, a tendency in German biblical scholarship to erase the Jewishness of Christianity. Countering this anti-Semitic trend, Kuyper sees the marrying of the Semitic and Aryan spirits in Christianity as a good thing. On the other hand, his tendency to seize on racial traits everywhere he turns can lead to mistakes. Kuyper often confuses linguistic identity with genetic inheritance. His linking of “Semitic” languages with “Shem” of Genesis (p. 302) is one example.

Kuyper's presentation of Islam is mainly sympathetic, although it is a "warts-and-all" approach. He even hopes that Islam, which he in many respects admires, will unite with Christianity to defeat paganism.

Kuyper's emphasis on Semitic identity causes him to consider it self-evident that Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are all children of Abraham, an association which deeply influences his approach to Islam.

When reading *On Islam*, one should keep in mind that Kuyper is a widely-read generalist, not a specialist in every topic he covers. As a result, he makes basic mistakes. For example, although concerned about Islam's treatment of women, he is under the impression that divorce is readily available for all in Islam. In fact, for women, divorce can be very difficult to secure if the husband opposes it.

A moving aspect of Kuyper's travelogue is his observation of vibrant Christian communities across Asia Minor and the Levant: two million Christians in Asia Minor alone, mainly Greek Orthodox and Armenian. He discusses the genocide of Christians in Damascus in 1860 and massacres of Armenians in the 1890s. Kuyper describes the obvious fear of Christians he met on his journeys. The prospect of being "overrun by bloodthirsty fanaticism from all sides" (p. 50) was soon to be realized in the Armenian, Greek, and Assyria genocides, reprised by Christian losses in Syria and Iraq of the past 20 years. Many of the vibrant Christian communities Kuyper encountered have disappeared or are a shadow of what he witnessed. In this sense, *On Islam* can be read as an elegy for a lost world.

A persistent theme of *On Islam* is Kuyper's perplexity about the success of Islam at the expense of Christianity. This troubles and challenges him no end. His explanation for why Christian nations turned to Islam is that humiliation under the *dhimma* was harder to bear than persecution. At the same time, Kuyper is pessimistic about the prospect of Muslims converting to Christianity. He laments that most missions to Muslim societies end up working only with pre-existing Christian populations.

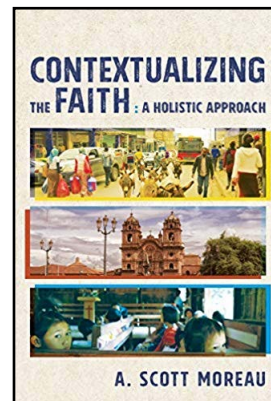
Kuyper's sense of hopelessness has not been vindicated by history. Today we live in a period when more Muslims are turning to Christ than ever before. It is also an irony that the very thing Kuyper feared as a force for conversion, the Pan-Islam movement, has been instrumental in paving the way for Christian mission in the 21st century. Muslims often have turned to Christ most readily where revival movements have secured political power, such as in Algeria or Iran, and utopian promises have come to nothing.

The editors have supplied this volume with many excellent footnotes, which adds to one's pleasure in reading. There is a glitch, however, when Kuyper's understanding of the Islamic *jihād* is corrected by a note pointing to the concept of the non-violent "greater *jihād*." In reality, the tradition upon which the "greater *jihād*" concept is based is not considered reliable by mainstream Muslim scholars. None of the six Sunni canonical collections of hadith include it. In all pre-modern Islamic jurisprudence, the word *jihād* refers to military efforts, so Kuyper's description of this doctrine is consistent with all schools of Islamic law.

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Scott Moreau. *Contextualizing the Faith: A Holistic Approach*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. 255 pp. £17.99/\$26.99.

Scott Moreau is Academic Dean and Professor of Intercultural Studies at Wheaton College Graduate School, where he has taught for twenty-eight years. Prior to that, he spent ten years serving cross-culturally in Africa. Moreau has published extensively on the subject of contextualization, including *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012). *Contextualization in World Missions* comprehensively summarizes the major presuppositions, orientations, and disagreements that have characterized the contextualization debate since 1972. The book furthermore maps a variety of evangelical approaches to contextualization based around the role of initiator (e.g., facilitator, guide, herald, pathfinder, prophet, and restorer). *Contextualizing the Faith* is a sequel to this earlier book, which both expands and applies Moreau's model.



In the Chapter 1, Moreau explains that contextualization lies at the intersection of faith and culture and “refers to how people live out their faith in light of the values of their society.” Rather than restricting contextualization to simply the kerygma or even theology, Moreau’s concept of contextualization is refreshingly broad and is said to occur in everything the church does, as well as the way it does it (p. 2).

From this broad conceptualization, Moreau organises his approach to contextualization by basing it around seven dimensions: Social Dimension (chs. 2–5); Mythic dimension (ch. 6); Ethical Dimension (ch. 7); Artistic and Technological Dimension (ch. 8); Ritual Dimension (ch. 9); Experience Dimension: The Supernatural (ch. 10); and the Doctrinal Dimension (ch. 11). The book concludes with projections on the future of contextualization (ch. 12). These seven dimensions “frame a holistic and healthy approach to planting, growing, discipling, developing, and nurturing a local gathering of believers into a healthy church” (p. ix). The burden of the book is to explain and illustrate each dimension, utilizing the general same approach for each: “(1) an introduction to the dimension (or component), (2) a discussion of how that dimension shows up in Scripture, and (3) selected examples of what contextualization of that dimension entails” (p. 10). A representative sample below of these dimensions will illustrate the book’s general approach.

The Social Dimension concerns “how people connect to each other” (p. 11). As the dominant dimension in Moreau’s model, it consists of four components: Association and Kinship; Exchange: Economics; Learning: Education; and Organizational: Politics. Association and Kinship (ch. 2) contains two related concepts needing contextualization. Association refers to the idea that human beings are created as relational creatures. Thus, their associations are determined by factors like choice and birth. Kinship relates to marriage and extended biological relationships.

The Social Dimension as Exchange: Economics (ch. 3) concerns different types of capital that exist in societies, such as: monetary, political, social, and spiritual. The Social Dimension as Learning: Education (ch. 4) favors the term “learning” over “education” to indicate that learning can be both formal/direct and indirect. It not only involves acquisition of knowledge, but also values and skills (p. 54). The Social Dimension as Organizational (ch. 5) considers how individuals organize themselves and their various leadership structures. This section is relevant to society and church settings.

In the Mythic Dimension (ch. 6), myth defined as “any real or fictional story, recurring theme, or character type that appeals to the consciousness of a people by embodying its cultural ideals or by giving expression to deep, commonly held beliefs and felt emotions” (p. 101). This dimension is an oft-neglected area of contextualization. Myths have important psychological and social functions. These include strengthening individuals and societies in times of uncertainty as well as being a “social glue” that holds society together (pp. 101–5). Common themes or paradigms in myths include adventure, brokenness and redemption, suffering and sacrifice, coming of age, heroism, and love. Identifying, understanding, and subsequently contextualizing societal myths are important. Doing so helps to locate “contact points” for evangelism and communication, “conflict points” between gospel and culture, and to identify syncretistic tendencies.

The Ritual Dimension (ch. 9) incorporates the ritual actions that are embedded in society for purposes such as establishing courtships, initiating us into new communities, caring for offspring, celebrating birth, mourning loved ones, and so on. Moreau highlights three categories of ritual. First, intensification rituals are designed to intensify a person’s identity or bonding to others or set of beliefs (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries, pilgrimages, national parades, Communion). Second, transition rituals mark a person’s transition from one state to another (e.g., birth, puberty/coming of age, graduation, marriage, parenthood, retirement). Third, crisis rituals deal with unexpected or unfavourable situations (e.g., drought, famine, illness, loss of job). One challenge for Christians in contextualizing rituals is determining whether a particular ritual can be practiced unchanged, adapted for Christian use, or replaced altogether (p. 173).

This book has many strengths. First, it approaches the topic from an evangelical perspective, consistently drawing readers back to a careful reading of Scripture as normative for contextualization. Second, it has a logical structure and layout, with sidebars included in each chapter containing questions designed to help people apply ideas from the chapter. Third, its approach is holistic (rather than atomistic). The book provides a richer, more nuanced picture of contextualization than is generally found in related literature. Fourth, whereas *Contextualization in World Missions* is theoretical in nature, *Contextualizing the Faith* has a stronger practical component, consistently focusing helping readers learn to contextualize. For example, many chapters have associated case studies to ground the material in a real-life situation. Fifth, it takes into account that many Majority World Christians live as religious minorities. *Contextualizing the Faith* is imminently practical, spurring Christians to consider how to contextualize their faith in the context of other religions and in ways understandable to adherents of those religions (p. 4).

The book poses more questions than it answers. In that way, it functions more as a workbook than a textbook. But for the thoughtful reader, it offers a wide lens for evaluating and exploring possibilities for contextualization in their particular context.

The breath of Moreau’s contextual approach gives room for a wide readership. This book will be particularly valuable for students and teachers of missiology, mission agencies, mission practitioners, and church leaders.

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I'Ching Thomas. *Jesus: The Path to Human Flourishing: The Gospel for the Cultural Chinese*. Singapore: Graceworks, 2018. xxii + 126 pp. £11.50/\$16.00.

As the self-sufficient inventors of paper, printing, compass, and gunpowder, cultural Chinese puzzle over why we westerners think they need Jesus. I'Ching Thomas is often asked by fellow Chinese Christians “how they can relevantly share with their loved ones that this man, who is from a foreign land and from a culture that is equally distant, is the Savior their heart is meant for” (p. 5). Great question! To answer, Thomas wrote *Jesus: The Path to Human Flourishing*. Formerly of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, Thomas is a Malaysian-Chinese Christian who speaks and writes on apologetics for Eastern cultural contexts.

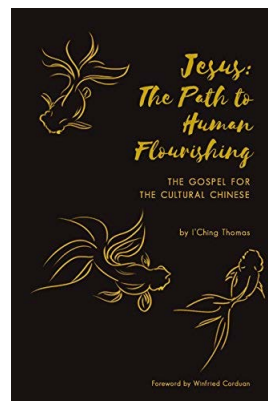
In Chapter 1 (“Why You’re Talking but We’re Not Hearing”), Thomas is realistic about the obstacles. Not only do cultural Chinese have trouble perceiving their need for Jesus, they also have difficulty forgetting the door into China was first blown open by Western colonizers and then used by Christian missionaries. According to the perception of one Chinese university president: “Buddha rode into China on a white elephant, while Jesus rode in on a cannonball” (p. 6). Thomas mentions another obstacle. Western Christians have done a poor job comprehending Chinese culture. Moreover, even when missionaries present the gospel in understandable terms, their tone does not accord with the subjective longings and traditional values of cultural Chinese.

Although the book is short, the solution is far from a shortcut. Thomas does not list easy-to-remember steps for an effective gospel presentation. Rather she walks us through the far more difficult—but far more rewarding—process of contextualization. Chapter 2 helps us in “rethinking the good news.” The key word in the chapter is “worldview.” We Christians must rediscover our faith as more than just a set of doctrines or a moral code. Rather, it is a view of all reality that should be lived out with passionate conviction. As such, we can present Christianity to cultural Chinese as something that is far more than a transactional, individualistic me-and-God relationship. It is a worldview that fulfills our deepest longings and harmonizes our estranged relationships.

Chapters 3–5 describe the three religions that most define Chinese culture: Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Daoism invites adherents to calmly return to the harmony of the indefinable *Dao*, as depicted by the interaction of yin and yang. Confucianism promises adherents a return to golden-age, holistic harmony as they follow the rules of propriety (*li*). Buddhism diagnoses reality as hopelessly permeated with suffering; yet, one can follow any number of buddhas and bodhisattvas into nirvanic escape.

In chapters 6–8, Thomas presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Chinese longings. She answers the question, “Why shouldn’t they find fulfillment in their homegrown religions?” Even through the collective wisdom of Buddha, Laozi, and Confucius, she says “Confucius’s Utopia” (ch. 6) has eluded them. Such a vision was built on the sands of over-optimism about humanity and over-reliance upon governmental benevolence.

Thankfully, not only is “Yahweh’s Shalom” (ch. 7) a grander vision, but it is actually realistic. Because Christians are naturally better people? No. Shalom works because it calls out sin and calls on God. And the God called upon is no mere noble ideal, but a real, historic person. Rather than blissfully banking on governmental officials to develop love for “the least of these,” biblical shalom originates in God himself,



who has entered into “our messy sin-infected world so that he can usher in the era of the new creation” (p. 85). In Jesus, “the homecoming to shalom has begun and humanity is on a path that anticipates and leads toward this vision” (p. 92).

Chapter 8 (“Jesus: The Noble Path to Human Flourishing”) gets practical. It highlights the gospel’s power to restore relationships in all areas of life. Thomas then invites us to locate biblical truths within Chinese culture. Finally, she explores what Christianity offers a people who want pragmatic, lived-out solutions.

What are the book’s weaknesses? All that comes to mind is that it has too many absorbing insights, personal stories, and helpful explanations to be branded as a typical textbook. You guessed it—these are all strengths. My only true complaint is that it could have been longer. Finishing the book makes me want to interview Thomas in order to glean any additional contextualizing tips she has that did not make it into the book. Furthermore, I would like her to further flesh out potential bridges to Chinese honor-shame culture such as “Christ’s shame-bearing death” and “honor-gaining resurrection” (p. 117).

The book left this reviewer feeling both encouraged and uneasy. I was encouraged because there are ways to help cultural Chinese discover how their longings are satisfied and their values are fulfilled in Jesus. There is no shame in being both Chinese and Christian. What an exciting and worthy challenge to take up!

Why would one be uneasy? Thomas concludes that the traditional Chinese religions do not work for them. She gives examples demonstrating moral inadequacies in Chinese culture (e.g., the Confucian ideal remains unmet). As lofty as their ideals are in theory, Chinese people need Jesus. The uneasy upshot of such logic, on the other hand, is that we Christians lose opportunities to argue that Jesus has showed us the true way to live, regardless of how inadequately we Christians live out our faith. To be fair—and to be faithful evangelists—we greatly need Jesus too.

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