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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| EDITORIAL: Why the Local Church Is More Important Than TGC, White Horse Inn, 9Marks, and Maybe Even ETS | 1 |
| <i>D. A. Carson</i> | |
| OFF THE RECORD: Courtier Politicians and Courtier Preachers | 10 |
| <i>Michael J. Ovey</i> | |
| Editor's Note: Abraham, Our Father | 13 |
| <i>Brian J. Tabb</i> | |
| 'Fathers of Faith, My Fathers Now!': On Abraham, Covenant, and the Theology of Paedobaptism | 14 |
| <i>David Gibson</i> | |
| The Abrahamic Covenant in Reformed Baptist Perspective | 35 |
| <i>Martin Salter</i> | |
| Romans 4 and the Justification of Abraham in Light of Perspectives New and Newer | 50 |
| <i>David Shaw</i> | |
| Evangelical History after George Marsden: A Review Essay | 63 |
| <i>Nathan A. Finn</i> | |
| PASTORAL PENSÉES: Irrational Violence? Reconsidering the Logic of Obedience in Genesis 22 | 78 |
| <i>Matthew Rowley</i> | |
| Book Reviews | 90 |

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EDITORIAL

Why the Local Church Is More Important Than TGC, White Horse Inn, 9Marks, and Maybe Even ETS

— D. A. Carson —

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Most of us, I'm sure, have heard the adage, "The church is the only human institution that continues into the new heavens and the new earth."¹ It's the sort of adage with which no Christian can thoughtfully disagree, even though it is spectacularly fuzzy. Does "church" in that old adage refer to the universal church? If so, is the universal church rightly thought of as a "human institution"? It is certainly made up of humans, but it was not designed by humans. Is the universal church usefully thought of as an institution? Organism, company, body, assembly, yes—but institution? We all agree, I imagine, that Christians continue into the new heavens and the new earth, but if that's all we mean, why mention the church? The *body of Christians* continues into the new heavens and the new earth, the *assembly of Christians* continues into the new heavens and the new earth, but is it coherent to assert that the *institution of all Christians* everywhere continues into the new heavens and the new earth?

Suppose, instead, that "church" in the adage "The church is the only human institution that continues into the new heavens and the new earth" refers to the local church. But does the local church continue into the new heavens and the new earth? The answer to that question is going to depend pretty heavily on how we define "local church." Suppose, for argument's sake, that we adopt the three marks of the church defended by much Reformed thought: the church is the assembly where the gospel is faithfully preached, the sacraments are rightly observed, and faithful discipline is carried out. Will such a church continue into the new heaven and the new earth? Will the sacraments—or, if you prefer, the ordinances—then be practiced? If baptism is tied to conversion, surely no one will be eligible for baptism if no one is getting converted. If the Lord's Supper points forward "until he comes," what evidence is there that it will still be celebrated after he has come?

In short, the old adage with which I began this address is so beset with terminological challenges that its sole benefit lies in the domain of sentimental reassurance rather than in the domain of clear-

¹This editorial was first delivered as a paper at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in San Diego, CA (November 2014), alongside presentations from Mark Dever and Michael S. Horton on "The Local Church: Its Message, Marks, and Mission."

headed theological reflection. In exactly the same way, the slightly cheeky affirmation advanced by the title of this address easily becomes indefensible unless some terminological clarifications are introduced right away.

Terminological Clarifications

The title speaks of the relative importance of the local church, not the universal church: “Why the *local* church is more important than TGC [and all the rest].” No Christian would dispute the importance of the universal church. But two factors weigh against the practical ecclesiastical significance of such an avowal. *First*, there are surprisingly few references to the universal church in the NT. The overwhelming majority of the occurrences of the word “church” refer to local churches. *Second*, many Christians think of the universal church as the conglomerate collection of believers drawn from every age who ultimately gather around the throne of God; but, as wonderful as this notion is, such a definition provides little scope to assess the relative importance of the local church and of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) since both the local church and ETS, we hope, are made up of such believers. To derive lessons on the importance of the local church from the relatively few passages that refer to the universal church presupposes that one has sorted out the relationships between the two at a deeper level. That is an important subject worth exploring, but, at least at the popular level, it is not one that is well understood.

For instance, although the set of contrasts built into the relevant passage in Heb 12 is immensely evocative, precisely how do they help us think through our subject?

You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire: to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain it must be stoned to death.” The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.” But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, *to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven*. You have come to God, the Judge of all to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Heb 12:18–24)²

The driving contrast in these verses is between, on the one hand, the Mosaic covenant, and, more broadly, the approach of the people of God in OT times going all the way back to Abel, and, on the other, the privileges of “the church of the firstborn,” who gather not at Sinai, nor in the temple in Jerusalem, but in the presence of God, in the presence of Jesus the mediator of a new covenant. The identification with him is so strong that the language is reminiscent of Ephesians: just as he is at the right hand of the Majesty on high, so those who are in union with him are seated in the heavenlies. The focus, in other words, is on the universal church. There are, I contend, connections between the local church and such passages in Ephesians and Hebrews, but they are not widely recognized, so it is difficult to appeal to them in support of the title of this paper. Perhaps we may return to that in a few moments.

²All Scripture quotations are from the NIV.

At the other end of the scale lies a different definition of the church that will equally lead us astray in our considerations. Instead of focusing on the universal church, some circles argue that the (local) church is the “assembly” of any Christians gathered together in Jesus’s name. For example, two Christian businessmen meet on the platform of the Libertyville *Metra* station to commute to work in downtown Chicago. On the train they enjoy a quiet Bible study together. Here, surely, is the church. Did not Jesus say that where two or three are gathered together in his name, he himself is present in their midst?

Under such a definition of church, of course, it is impossible to argue that what we refer to as “the local church” is any more important than the assembly of Christians meeting on a university campus under the Cru banner, or the assembly of Christian doctors and nurses at a meeting of the Christian Medical Fellowship, or the assembly of Christians at the 2014 ETS conference. They are all “the church.” In practice, this view of the definition of the church, intelligently held by relatively few but unthinkingly adopted by many, serves to reinforce Western individualism. We may rejoice in the presence of Christ when two or more Christians get together for Christian purposes, but it has little bearing on the church, or on the importance of the church as a body, as an institution.

Methodologically, this approach depends on creating a definition of “church” that relies on too narrow a selection of biblical texts, notably passages that speak of the presence of Christ where two or three are gathered together.

Suppose, however, we attempt a definition of church that is far more integrative—that depends on cautious and careful inferences drawn from the wide range of the use of ἐκκλησία in the Greek Bible, and from other passages that contribute to the theme of the church even where the word ἐκκλησία is not found. How would our two businessmen on the *Metra* train look then?

For example, in Matt 18 Jesus insists that where there is some sort of fault between two of his disciples, the way to deal with it ascends from personal discussion to the use of others who serve as witnesses, to the final appeal, “tell it to the church” (Matt 18:17). This church then has the authority to excommunicate the guilty party. In the concrete case of discipline portrayed in 1 Cor 5, the crucial step is taken “when you are assembled” (1 Cor 5:4). “Tell it to the church” does not mean “Tell it to two Christian blokes on the *Metra* train.”

Or again, from the pages of the NT it is reasonably transparent that there are offices in the church denoted by such labels as elder, pastor, overseer, and deacon. We may disagree on exactly how these offices are configured, but certainly the Pastoral Epistles, to go no farther, outline their roles and characteristics in the local church—something that the “assembly” of our two blokes on the *Metra* train seem to be missing. If someone were to point out that on the first Pauline missionary journey recorded in Acts, the apostle and Barnabas plant churches in a number of cities, and get around to appointing elders in those churches only on the return leg through the same cities (Acts 14:23), and therefore infer that one can have churches without the well-known designated officers, it’s a bit like trying to list the characteristics of human beings by referring only to babies. We want to insist that babies are human beings, but we don’t think that the characteristics of babies constitute an adequate definition of the characteristics of human beings. In other words, to sustain the thesis in the title of this address, we need to avoid definitions of church that are indefensibly reductionistic.

That leads me, then, to offer four further considerations on the nature of the church:

(1) We must say at least a little about what are traditionally called the marks of the church. In the Reformed heritage, borrowed nowadays by many others, there are three: the church is the assembly where the Word is rightly taught, where the sacraments (some would say “ordinances”) are rightly

celebrated, and where discipline is practiced. These three were, of course, shaped in part by the experiences of the Reformers in the sixteenth century. On any “thick” reading of them, however, they presuppose synthetic argumentation. For example, the right teaching of the Word of God, for the Reformers, not only questions the magisterial authority of the Pope, but presupposes the careful and controlling exegesis of Scripture, and the importance of the teaching office in the local church. This does not mean there is no sense in which lay Christians admonish one another, nor does it belittle the ways in which Christians edify one another even in the singing “to one another” of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (all part of what is today called Word-based ministry), still less the importance of teaching the Word of God, whether by catechism or other means, within the family, but it does recognize a distinctive role for pastors/elders/overseers who have been tested and set aside as those who rule over the church by means of the Word.

(2) The third mark, the discipline of the church, presupposes the urgency of preserving the church in faithfulness to God in both doctrine and life. One’s understanding of how such discipline should be carried out will vary, depending not least on whether one is convinced by what is today called “the believers’ church tradition” or by the typically Presbyterian view that holds the local church is made up of the new covenant community that is somewhat larger than the assembly of the elect and regenerate. Regardless of which view you take, discipline is nevertheless needed so that the church is not destroyed by the admission of purely nominal converts, false doctrine, and rampant immorality.

(3) Whatever the debates among us, not only over the relative suitability of the words “sacraments” and “ordinances” but also over the precise significance of both baptism and the Lord’s Supper, it is very important to our discussion to bring together three things which, in much current evangelical practice, are frequently separated—viz., conversion, baptism, and church membership. A word about each might be helpful. I am using “conversion” not in a purely sociological or phenomenological sense, in which one may convert to, say, Islam or Buddhism or Christianity with exactly the same semantic force, but in a theological sense in which Christian conversion is distinctive and frankly miraculous and works out in allegiance to Jesus Christ. One may convert to Islam by a simple act of will, without any pretension of, say, Spirit-enacted regeneration. But in Christian conversion there is a decisive act of God in which an individual is regenerated and justified, and this works out in a change of allegiance and a change of direction. That can take place at any age; it may or may not be experienced as a remembered decisive moment. Nevertheless we insist that a person either is or is not justified, either is or is not regenerated, even if we cannot always tell when this change occurs. In much evangelical life today, however, this conversion, regardless of when it takes place, is separated from Christian baptism. Ostensible converts declare they are not yet “ready” for baptism. The chronological gap between conversion and baptism may arise out of faulty understanding of both conversion and baptism, but also, as in the case of converts from Islam who live in Islamic cultures, out of the far more portentous and decisive significance of baptism in such cultures. But what is quite clear is that in the NT, all believers this side of Pentecost were baptized, and, so far as it was possible for the church to discern, only believers were baptized. For the sake of simplifying the argument, I shall not here wrestle with the baptism of infants born into new-covenant families, but shall focus on the conversion of those with little or no connection with Christians or the church, for here both credobaptists and paedobaptists alike agree on the connection between conversion and baptism: from the pages of the NT it is difficult to warrant a substantial temporal disjunction between the two.

An example I frequently use with my students is drawn from the life of Billy Sunday. Sunday was a foul-mouthed but popular baseball player who was soundly converted in the 1880s. Soon he was crisscrossing the country preaching a potent mixture of evangelistic gospel and prohibition (eventually passed in 1919) under the shade of a huge tent. Experience soon taught him that if he pitched his tent on dry ground, when hundreds of people came forward at the end of his meetings enough dust was kicked up that some people started coughing and sneezing and thereby spoiling the decorum. Alternatively, if he pitched his tent when the ground was wet, the advancing hundreds could churn the walkways to mud, and it was not unknown for some would-be converts to slip and fall. So it became the practice to put sawdust down in all the aisles, making them both dust-proof and slip-proof. Out of this expedient arose the expression “to hit the sawdust trail.” If you professed faith at a Billy Sunday meeting, your experience could be labeled “hitting the sawdust trail.” So ubiquitous did that expression become that even secular journals sometimes referred to born-again types as those who had hit the sawdust trail. Ask a person when he or she was converted, and they might reply, “I hit the sawdust trail in Cincinnati in 1913”—even though that person had never attended a Billy Sunday meeting. In other words, to hit the sawdust trail stood, by metonymy, for conversion.

Although baptism in the NT has far more resonances with conversion than does hitting the sawdust trail in the ministry of Billy Sunday, it can stand by metonymy for conversion. “[F]or all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:27), Paul writes, and this does not speak to the efficacy of baptism but to its closest association with conversion. Ask someone in the first century when they were converted, and they might well reply, “Oh, I was baptized in Corinth in 57” (though that would not have been their calendar). Paul can of course *distinguish* preaching the gospel from baptism (1 Cor 1:17), which of course shows that in Paul’s thought baptism does not have the same logical status as, say, faith. (It is impossible to imagine Paul saying that he did not come to urge faith but to preach the gospel.) Nevertheless, such biblical texts show that baptism and conversion are co-extensive in their referents: those who (so far as can be ascertained) are converted are also baptized. Baptism can stand by metonymy for conversion.

I should venture an aside before pressing on with the argument. The close connection between turning to Christ and being baptized in the NT does not require that those who make profession of faith be baptized within ten minutes of their profession, or upon walking forward at an evangelistic meeting, or the like. The close *theological* connection between conversion and baptism forbids an open-ended delay, and it also forbids a kind of two-step mentality, with baptism associated with a second step in grace or maturity, but it does not forbid a delay until the next baptismal service, or until some elementary Bible teaching has taken place as part of the change of life that attends conversion. The point is that baptism in the NT is associated with conversion; it is not perceived as an optional extra.

In exactly the same way, this side of Pentecost everyone who is converted also becomes a member of the local church. It is impossible to find anyone saying, in effect, “Yes, I believe in Christ Jesus, I have been regenerated, and I may decide to get baptized as well, but there is no way I’m going to join a church. I’ve been burned by previous religious experiences. You should have seen what a fiasco I faced in connection with the temple of Asklepios. This organized religion stuff is not for me. Perhaps some day I’ll find a really good church, and then I may join, but for the moment I rather like my independence. Besides, isn’t that *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* stuff [“outside the church, no salvation”] the detritus of medieval Catholicism?” One cannot find such voices in the NT. In other words, in the pages of the NT,

to be converted, to be baptized, and to join the local community of believers are all part of the same thing.

If we had more time and space, we could examine afresh the distribution of the singular and plural forms of ἐκκλησία, from which Presbyterians and Baptists draw slightly different inferences, to say nothing of other groups. In both heritages of interpretation, however, the point of interest to this address is that when first-century folk were converted, they were not joining only the universal church. They were joining the empirical church, the local church. Anything less was simply unthinkable.

(4) In what follows, then, the assertion that the local church is more important than TGC, White Horse Inn, 9 Marks, and maybe even ETS, depends on a faithful NT understanding of what the church is, not what we sometimes assume the church to be, based on some contemporary practices. To put this another way, if the thesis of my title is valid, it becomes a call to reform our churches in line with NT patterns.

So Why Is the Church More Important?

The following points are not listed in any order of intrinsic importance.

(1) The first answer to the question surely falls out of the terminological discussion in which we have been engaged. The local church is sublimely important because it is the only body made up of all the converted, the only body characterized by certain NT-sanctioned identifying “marks” that reflect its essential constitution. Faithful seminaries and ETS may, like churches, undertake commitment to teaching, and be made up of Christians, but they do not embrace all the local believers, nor do they typically practice baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Both ETS and confessional seminaries have been known to exercise discipline, but also to exclude many people who rightly belong to local churches (e.g., those without the requisite theological training). One might reasonably ask the question, “Isn’t it as true that members of ETS [and even, dare I say it, of The Gospel Coalition] are as converted as the members of the local church?” Yes, but the exclusions are quite different. In short, our terminological discussion marks out the locus of the local church, and implicitly points to its importance.

(2) The local church, understood along the lines already laid out, is repeatedly shown to be the fulfillment of many trajectories drawn from antecedent revelation. The church is the community of the Messiah (“I will build *my* church,” Jesus says, not simply “I will save a lot of individuals”), calling to mind the assembly in the wilderness (cf. Acts 7:38). This church, in the usage of Peter and of the Apocalypse, is the ultimate kingdom of priests, language ultimately drawn from Exod 19. In its passion to bring Jews and Gentiles together to constitute one new humanity (Eph 2)—and, in principle, men and women from every tongue and people and tribe—it is drawing to fulfillment trajectories set by the promise to Eve, by the Abrahamic covenant, by prophetic voices like that in Isa 19:23–25 and Ps 86:9, by surprising patterns of election already established in OT times to be independent of human merit, and much more.

(3) When the apostle repeatedly speaks of the diversity of gifts in the body (1 Cor 12; cf. Rom 12), the body to which he is referring is the local church (whether in Rome or Corinth), not the universal church. Thus Christians who want to be independent of the local church are (to extend Paul’s metaphor) declaring that they are sufficient to themselves, when in fact they are nothing but an eyeball, or an ear, or a big toe. They know little of how the body works together, as each part does its work. In explaining the difference between OT priests and NT pastors, I have often tried to show that the role of the pastor-teacher in the NT is not that of a special-class mediator, but something akin to the role of a stomach

within the body: the stomach takes in a lot of food and distributes it to the rest of the body. I lose all my dignity (and, better, any pomposity) when I am seen, not as a priest, but as a stomach. And in this light, ETS is made up of a significant collection of stomachs—but that does not make it a church. And that’s one of the reasons why the local church is more important than ETS: it is the body of Christ.

In a similar way, we ought to be alarmed when churches set out to be made up of one race, or one age demographic, or one group of people with an exclusive style of worship, or one economic demographic. The challenge of diversity, already experienced in the early chapters of Acts and in such epistles as Galatians and 1 Corinthians, did not lead the apostles to establish a Jewish church and a Gentile church, but to oppose such trends tooth and nail with an integrating theology. This is *much* more difficult than establishing a group of Christians made up of some updated version of the homogeneous unit principle much loved a generation ago, but at the end of the day we have to return to what the church *is*.

(4) So many of our sins are fundamentally relational. To go no farther than the “acts of the flesh” listed in Gal 5, the listed sins are grouped: three might be dubbed sexual (sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery), some are tied to paganism (idolatry and witchcraft), two are tied to excess (drunkenness and orgies), and all the rest reflect social dysfunction (hatred discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy). Sanctification that mortifies such sins simply cannot take place in splendid isolation, nor even with a group of socially acceptable peers. It takes place in the church, made up of people some of whom are unlike us and with whom we would have little in common, people who would certainly not be our friends, much less our brothers and sisters, were it not for the grace of God in the gospel.

(5) A properly functioning church, precisely because it is concerned for the whole church, is concerned for each member of the church. That includes not only discipline in the ultimate sense, but mutual admonition, the instructions of the church-recognized pastors, the kinds of correction, mutual encouragement, instruction in righteousness, and rebuke that equips the servant of God for every good work. Inevitably, this means more than a sermon a week. It means, to pick up language from Acts, studying and teaching from house to house, and examining the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

Indeed, it means a full-orbed teaching ministry, a teaching and living out of the whole counsel of God. Specialist parachurch ministries may have their place—I’ll come to that in a moment—but they tend to focus on one or a few areas of biblical truth, sometimes to the exclusion of complementary biblical truths. To take an interesting example, the recent and challenging essay by Andrew Heard, “A Dangerous Passion for Growth,” makes a telling point.³ Our passion to evangelize and grow may become dangerous if it becomes so driven by pragmatics that, in the name of winning more people, we start to trim or domesticate the gospel (after all, we don’t want to offend anyone, so we’ll stop talking about hell), or prove unconcerned about putting the flesh to death, or about sanctification and the building up of the body. But it is the local church that is much more likely to preserve this balance. A parachurch ministry whose goal is outreach is far less likely to perceive the dangers because it does not see itself as responsible for building the entire local church.

(6) Perhaps it should be said that this vision of the local church becomes progressively more important as our culture loses whatever Judeo-Christian moorings it held in the past. It was not that long ago that the Ten Commandments were widely viewed as healthy societal norms. Marriage between one man and one woman, with a vow to preserve it “as long as we both shall live,” were seen as good things,

³ Andrew Heard, “A Dangerous Passion for Growth,” *The Briefing*, 22 December 2014, <http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2014/12/a-dangerous-passion-for-growth>.

and the laws of the state tended to back such ideals. But just as Dorothy is no longer in Kansas, we are no longer in the 1950s. Even then, we needed more biblical teaching than we sometimes thought we did, but now the urgency is even more pressing. We need to build a Christian counter-culture, local churches that, however much they preserve lines of civility, courtesy, and communication with the larger world, nevertheless live differently, radically differently. And it takes teaching, lots of it, to shape a faithful, fruitful, gospel-centered, Bible-shaped counter-culture. To take but one small example: R. R. Reno has recently written an essay, “A Time to Rend,” in which he argues, “In the past the state recognized marriage, giving it legal forms to reinforce its historic norms. Now the courts have redefined rather than recognized marriage, making it an institution entirely under the state’s control. That’s why it’s now time to stop talking of civil marriage and instead talk about government marriage—calling it what it is.”⁴ He then teases out some of the implications. But none of this will prove convincing to millions of ordinary Christians unless the local church builds mental structures that are shaped by what the Word says about men and women, marriage, and the like. Many Christians are being sucked into exegetically irresponsible views on many topics—money, the purpose of life, suffering, prosperity, sex, joy, and much more—for lack of teaching. It is the local church that constitutes the body of the counter-culture. Or, to put the matter another way, the church is the body that is not only getting ready for the new heavens and the new earth, but, owing to the drumbeat of inaugurated eschatology in the Scripture, it is the outpost of the new heavens and the new earth. That demands a much more holistic and organic view of Christian life and thought than we have sometimes imagined. But that is the view of the church that courses its way through the NT.

(7) If we hold that the sacraments/ordinances are a mark of the church, we must stop treating them as optional extras. And similarly, we should avoid treating them as the prerogatives of individuals. A friend of mine likes to tell the story of how a Christian in his purview led someone to Christ on a beach in California. She promptly took her friend out into the sea and baptized her. Her zeal was wholly admirable, but if Philip in Samaria is happy to see the arrival of Peter and John tie together his new converts with the mother church, perhaps we ought to reflect a little more on how sacraments/ordinances function ecclesialogically. Much more needs to be said on that theme, but I rush forward for want of space.

(8) The Bible asserts that “Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). The context of Ephesians strongly suggests that Paul has both the universal church and the local church in mind—or, better put, the assembly of the local church is a kind of outcropping in history of the assembly of the church of the living God already gathered in solemn assembly before the throne in union with Christ. This is true of several passages that presuppose a porous interface between the universal church and the local church. For example, in Matt 16, Jesus says, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it,” while two chapters later disputants are to tell it to the church, which can scarcely be the universal church. The local church is the historical manifestation, under the new covenant, of this massive, blood-bought assembly. It is characterized by certain marks and order, yet behind it all lies the love of God, the love and sacrifice of the Son, and the life-giving and transforming power of the Spirit. It is important to see the place of individual conversion in the NT, and that might be particularly important to emphasize in cultures that think in terms of people movements, tribal movements (as, for example, in northern India). But always, and not least in the individualistic West, it is important to underscore the corporate vision of the church, embodied in the local church, that repeatedly surfaces in the Scriptures.

⁴ R. R. Reno, “A Time to Rend,” *First Things*, 18 November 2014, <http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2014/11/a-time-to-rend>.

Concluding Reflections

None of what I have said should be taken as a plea to abolish TGC, 9Marks, White Horse Inn, or even ETS. Were we to do so, we would also have to abolish Westminster Theological Seminary, SIM, Christian schools, Tyndale House, Feed the Children, Crossway, and a host of other parachurch organizations. Arguably, some of these organizations God has raised up to strengthen the church. Many of those who work in such organizations put in more hours each week in these organizations than they do in their local church—as I do in connection with Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and The Gospel Coalition, though I am a member of a local church in the town where I live. But I believe with every fiber of my being that such organizations must serve the church, not the reverse, or they lose their *raison d'être*. What is especially to be deplored are those specialist, focused parachurch ministries that operate with the arrogance that condescendingly tells the church to follow the lead of the parachurch organization. What is to be pursued is the interest and glory of Christ and his gospel, which is irrefragably tied up with his blood-bought church, the church he is resolved to build until the consummation, when current tensions between the universal church and the local church will be no more.

OFF THE RECORD

Courtier Politicians and Courtier Preachers

— Michael J. Ovey —

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Let's begin with a word in defence of the UK's politicians. We are at the moment in the throes of a General Election campaign, and for some time it has been *chic* to be cynical about the truthfulness of our politicians. It is a familiar pattern in the Anglophone West. One senses the exasperation of citizens who want to be told the truth and feel it is being withheld somehow, whether it is the truth about world economics or the truth about Russia's international intentions. It implies a certain moral integrity on 'our' part (we just want the truth!), and a lack of integrity on the part of our politicians ('they' are somehow conniving to withhold truth from 'us').

Some words of Alexis de Tocqueville make me question this. Writing about American democracy he observes the way the absolute power of a democracy introduces a 'courtier spirit'. He describes the way that in an absolute monarchy there starts to be a huge problem in how to speak to the monarch. Those who do speak to the absolute monarch risk reactions that are unrestrained and ungoverned. That is the whole point, one might say, of being an absolute monarch—that one can indulge whim and caprice. Hence one addresses an absolute monarch with a 'courtier' spirit. De Tocqueville goes on: just as in an absolute monarchy nobles are reduced to flattering a monarch rather than genuinely advising, so too in a democracy those who want to be leaders are courtiers rather than guides. He writes:

It is true that American courtiers do not say "Sire," or "Your Majesty," a distinction without a difference. They are forever talking of the natural intelligence of the people whom they serve; they do not debate the question which of the virtues of their master is pre-eminently worthy of admiration, for they assure him that he possesses all the virtues without having acquired them, or without caring to acquire them.¹

De Tocqueville's point is not confined to American democracy but applies to any democracy where the democracy is, so to speak, absolute. But de Tocqueville's point is also more subtle than we might initially think. He is not simply saying that democratic politicians have the courtier spirit which does not dare to tell the electorate an unpleasant truth because the politicians are too servile. He is saying this courtier spirit will infuse the people as a whole, and that it is not entirely the 'fault' of politicians that they have become courtiers. The unrestrained nature of the tyranny of the majority in absolute democratic regimes means it will be very hard for a politician to be anything but a courtier. How does one tell the

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve, repr., 2 vols. (New York: Langley, 1841), 1:291, <https://archive.org/details/democracyiname01tocq>.

majority that it is not as clever, or virtuous as it thinks it is, or that a hard truth about itself and its manner of life (whether that it is its spending patterns or its morals) must be faced?

De Tocqueville makes us face the way we in democracies contribute to the corruption of our leaders, even though we may also feel cynically that they require little assistance from us in this regard. And he links this to the extreme claims we implicitly make about the ultimately unrestrained competence of democratic power. Thus in the UK an integral part of constitutional theory used to be the competence of the UK Parliament to legislate on any topic whatever it liked. Now, current relationships with the rest of Europe may have limited the UK Parliament in various ways, but in fact the claim to omni-competence persists: it has simply shifted geographical location. Similarly one might observe that even if one thinks the constitutional settlements of the US protect the individual citizen, the settlements themselves remain ultimately vulnerable to the will of the majority, even if one needs a super-majority. That after all, was precisely de Tocqueville's reason for speaking of the 'tyranny of the majority' with regard even to the Constitution.

Given this, de Tocqueville would, I think, analyse our situation in modern western democracies as having just the formula of absolutist democratic power, and would predict that we would be afflicted with the courtier spirit which dares not tell the truth. The reason in part why our politicians do not tell us the truth, he would say, is that they dare not because we handle truth so badly. It is not simply that we have the leaders we deserve; we have made them so.

This broadens into a more general question about how we can tell unwelcome truths and here I want to move to the question of shifting theologies. Over the last twenty-five years we have seen church leaders shifting their ground over God's sovereignty and knowledge of the future (Clark Pinnock), God's wrath (Steve Chalke), universal salvation (Rob Bell), same-sex relations and the nature of Scripture (Steve Chalke again) as well as the essence of Christianity (Brian McLaren).

These shifts take place against a backdrop where even the way we argue and discuss things is shifting. Conservative evangelicals do get criticised in Web chatter for arguing in a cold and unfeeling way, and for an underlying harshness. No doubt there is some truth in that on occasion, and no doubt it is not a sufficient response to suggest that there is a fair amount of harshness coming back the other way.

What does interest me is how I am supposed to communicate an unpleasant reality under these conditions. Let us suppose, just for a moment, that God is genuinely angry at the UK's abortion policy on the grounds that an unborn baby is indeed a human being from conception. What would be an appropriate way to tell the truth about that, given that the numbers of unborn babies killed since our laws were liberalised in 1967 now run into millions? Just how angry might God be? If I point out that the UK has passed Hitler's Holocaust in numbers terms and is fast catching up on Stalin's terror famines in the Ukraine, would that be seen as distasteful hyperbole or simply fair comparison? I strongly suspect that this would be seen as distasteful hyperbole not just in the wider secular culture, but in mainstream churches too.

Why is this so? No doubt because we are seeing 2 Timothy 4:3–4 being fulfilled in our time as the itching ears of the Christian community demand particular approaches and accordingly reward particular teachers with celebrity status. In other words, just as our democratic political culture incentivises the courtier politician, so our church culture incentivises the courtier Christian preacher. Of course we are going to find God's wrath denied or same-sex marriage defended and encouraged. We send out too many messages that we will not accept hard truths for anything else to happen.

What 2 Timothy 4:3–4 opens up for us is an unhappy co-dependence between pastor and people: the pastor who cannot afford to tell the truth to an over-indulged people and an over-indulged people who are deprived of truths that might bring them to repentance. After all, the courtier cannot afford to tell the absolute monarch the truth, and the absolute monarch remains in blissful ignorance that an enemy is at the gate. But unfortunately to the outside and untutored eye this will look like a remarkably successful church where pastor and people hold each other in high regard. It will probably be rich, conscientious and passionate about those causes the congregation finds acceptable (fashionable good works), attractive to decent non-believers since it does not disturb, well-regarded even, since it blends so effortlessly into the surrounding culture, offering God's therapy but not God's forgiveness of sins, and an inclusion that bypasses anything so demeaning as repentance and amendment of life. A beautiful church with beautiful people and nothing so ugly as a God who demands things from us that we do not already wish to give. Such churches will thrive (dare I say, are thriving?) in the modern UK, and, for all I can see, elsewhere in the cultural west. And at that point we realise the courtier preacher has helped fashion a courtier church, not a light on a hill, nor salt for the world.

Viewed this way, it is not at all surprising that we have seen the theological shifts we have amongst self-identifying evangelical leaders. And while I disagree profoundly with the shifts I have referred to above, I think de Tocqueville would remind me of what makes for a courtier spirit. And he would also remind me that if I do not want to be on the receiving end of a courtier spirit, I must dare to let people tell me truths I do not want to hear. And at that point as a modern Christian teacher, I must confront my own appetite both to be on the receiving end of the courtier spirit (it is nice to be flattered) and to offer it, because courtiers do get rewards. In this life, anyway.

Editor's Note: Abraham, Our Father

— Brian J. Tabb —

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It is difficult to overstate Abraham's importance in the biblical story and in Christian theology. The first verse of the New Testament identifies Jesus as "the son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1). Paul explains to his predominantly Gentile readers, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal 3:29). The four gospels, Acts, three Pauline letters, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and James name Abraham a combined seventy-one times. The patriarch is at the center of New Testament teachings concerning God's faithfulness to his covenant promises, the identity of God's people, justification by faith apart from the law, and obedience that pleases God.

In this issue, pastor-theologians David Gibson and Martin Salter explore the place of Abraham in paedobaptist and credobaptist theology, building upon their earlier *Themelios* exchange on baptism.¹ David Shaw reflects on the patriarch's significance in Romans and Paul's doctrine of justification. Shaw critically interacts with the influential interpretations by N.T. Wright and Douglas Campbell, among others. This essay, along with those by Gibson and Salter, was originally presented in September 2014 at the conference "Abraham in the Bible, the Church, and the World" held at the John Owen Centre for Theological Study in London. Finally, in the Pastoral Pensées column, Matthew Rowley addresses the problematic reception history of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac and offers guidelines for interpreting and applying Gen 22.

In addition to these four articles dealing with Abraham, this issue features Nathan Finn's "Evangelical History after George Marsden: A Review Essay." Finn critically engages with three recent books by Steven Miller, Matthew Sutton, and Molly Worthen. He then invites *Themelios* readers to learn from this scholarship on the history of evangelical Protestantism in America and apply it to their various ministries in the church and academy.

¹ Martin C. Salter, "Does Baptism Replace Circumcision? An Examination of the Relationship between Circumcision and Baptism in Colossians 2:11–12," *Them* 35.1 (2010): 15–29; David Gibson, "Sacramental Supersessionism Revisited: A Response to Martin Salter on the Relationship Between Circumcision and Baptism," *Them* 37.2 (2012): 191–208; Martin C. Salter, "Response to David Gibson," *Them* 37.2 (2012): 209–10.

‘Fathers of Faith, My Fathers Now!’: On Abraham, Covenant, and the Theology of Paedobaptism*

— David Gibson —

David Gibson is the Minister of Trinity Church, Aberdeen, Scotland. He is author of Reading the Decree (T&T Clark, 2009) and co-editor of From Heaven He Came and Sought Her (Crossway, 2013).

Abstract: The figure of Abraham creates a covenantal framework for biblical theology that allows baptism to be considered in relation to the Bible’s developing story line. On this credobaptists and paedobaptists agree. I suggest, however, that reflecting on Abraham also requires baptism to be located in relation to the doctrines of Christology and anthropology, and the theology of divine agency in covenant signs, in a way which points to the validity and beauty of infant baptism. Locating baptism in this way sketches a theology of paedobaptism which has a richer view of Jesus, a more attractive understanding of creation, and a more powerful conception of what God is doing in the sacraments than is present in credobaptist theology.

‘That feeling of a baby’s brow against the palm of your hand—
how I have loved this life.’

Rev. John Ames, in *Gilead*.¹

Collin Brooks wrote that the difference between David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill in a debate was that while Lloyd George had the gift of getting on the right side of a man, Churchill had the gift of getting on the right side of a question.² Christian brothers in debate are charged with emulating both British Prime Ministers: there is a need to be on the right side of our brethren *and* the question. The former is surely not difficult; the latter is arguably more difficult.

* My main title is from Graham Kendrick, ‘O What a Mystery I See’ (Make Way Music, 1988).

¹ Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (New York: Picador, 2004), 56.

² Collin Brooks, ‘Churchill the Conversationalist’, in *Churchill: By His Contemporaries*, ed. Charles Eade (London: Reprint Society, 1955), 245.

Debating baptism—its mode, its subjects, and its meaning—is notorious ground for speaking past each other, precisely because the folly of standing on any other ground can seem so self-evident to both sides. Furthermore, changing one’s mind on the issue is connected to so many more issues than merely theology. Livelihoods, family relations, professional careers, and even ministries are often weighty factors in how one reaches decisions. Upton Sinclair said, ‘It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it.’³ In light of this, some may suggest the waters are best not muddied any further.

Martin Salter and I have a good track record of ignoring such suggestions, and have previously thrown ourselves into each other’s shallow and deep waters respectively in the attempt to convince that the other position is mistaken.⁴ Now we are going to try again. Perhaps this is naïve. But we are going to try boldly. Churchill said, ‘Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm.’

The task in our essays is to explore the place of Abraham in the theologies of baptism espoused by paedobaptists and credobaptists.⁵ In this article I will treat Abraham in paedobaptist theology by suggesting that the question we need to be on the right side of is this: *Who is a child of Abraham?* We could inflect it slightly: *How does one become a child of Abraham?* Some may feel this is the wrong question and that it skews the whole presentation; others will think it is the right question but that I am on the wrong side of the right answer. But I ask it precisely because I take it to be the question which Paul is engaging and answering in the polemical sections of Romans and Galatians. Any perspective on Abraham and the theology of baptism can emerge only on the other side of trying to answer this question first of all.

I will make my case with three points, and for the sake of interest will frame my points polemically against the credobaptist position. I will argue that the credobaptist approach to the Abrahamic covenant has, first, an inadequate Christology; second, an unbiblical anthropology; and third, a reductionist theology of baptism. Put differently, Abraham in paedobaptist perspective reveals credobaptists to have an impoverished view of Jesus, a dualist doctrine of creation, and an anemic conception of divine agency in covenant signs. These points are intended to widen the lens of a potentially moribund debate and to provoke a spirited-but-smiling interchange among brothers, not a bitter exchange among opponents.⁶

³Upton Sinclair, *I, Candidate for Governor: And How I Got Licked* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 107.

⁴See our previous exchange: Martin Salter, ‘Does Baptism Replace Circumcision? An Examination of the Relationship between Circumcision and Baptism in Colossians 2:11–12,’ *Them* 35.1 (2010): 15–29; David Gibson, ‘Sacramental Supersessionism Revisited: A Response to Martin Salter on the Relationship between Circumcision and Baptism,’ *Them* 37.2 (2012): 191–208; Martin C. Salter, “Response to David Gibson,” *Them* 37.2 (2012): 209–10.

⁵Some of this material was first presented in the context of a debate between Martin Salter and myself at the conference ‘Abraham in the Bible, the Church, and the World,’ which took place at the John Owen Centre, London, on 9–10 September 2014. I am grateful to the Director, Dr. Garry Williams, for permission to rework and publish my paper, to Martin for his gracious interaction and stimulating challenges to my argument, and also to Jonathan Gibson and Alastair Roberts for further comments.

⁶What follows is a sketch of the theology of paedobaptism that builds on my earlier exchange with Salter which had a more narrowly biblical-theological focus with a particular passage in view (Col 2:11–12). The present article intends to flesh out some of the dogmatic implications of such a reading of the Bible. The aim is a fluent presentation of a big picture, not a detailed defense of all the exegetical brush strokes within the portrait. What I

1. *The Christology of Baptism: Its Covenantal Structure*

Credobaptists argue that Christ as *the* seed of Abraham is a fulfillment motif which renders invalid the genealogical principle on which the practice of paedobaptism rests so heavily. The genealogical principle is what we find in Gen 17:7 and *passim*: ‘I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you *and your descendants after you for the generations to come*.’ What God establishes with Abraham, as head of his family and household, God also establishes with his family and household, and that principle within the covenant of grace continues across both old and new administrations. But here is the credobaptist objection:

[T]he covenantal argument for infant baptism also fails to see that the genealogical principle is transformed across the covenants; it does not remain unchanged. Under the previous covenants the relationship between the covenant mediator and his seed was primarily *physical-biological* (e.g., Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, David). But now, in Christ, under his mediation, the relationship between Christ and his seed is no longer physical but *spiritual*, i.e., it is brought about by the work of the Spirit, which entails that the covenant sign must be applied only to those who in fact profess that they are the *spiritual* seed of Abraham.⁷

With such highlighting of the spiritual seed of Abraham, one could easily get the impression that this aspect of biblical theology is unknown to classic Reformed theology. In fact, it is not a challenge to paedobaptism, precisely because the Reformed understanding of how the covenant is fulfilled in Christ is far richer and more nuanced than many standard Baptist presentations.

Although the contexts are not identical—and there are important differences and nuances in argument—Abraham is a major player in the argument of Paul’s letters to the Galatians and Romans.⁸ In each case, Paul is concerned to show that the righteousness which justifies comes from God through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by works of the law. Douglas Moo argues that Paul singles out Abraham as the reference point for expanding his argument, not just because the Jews saw him as their father, but because he was esteemed as the exemplar of Torah-obedience with his righteousness tied to that obedience. In contrast, Paul seeks to show this was not in accord with OT Scripture. More than this, Paul focuses on Abraham ‘because of the decisive role the OT gives to him in the formation of the people of Israel and in the transmission of the promise. Both Paul’s insistence that justification is by faith alone and his concern for the full inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God make it necessary for him to integrate Abraham into his scheme.’⁹

contend for here is dependent on the connection between circumcision and baptism argued for in my first article, and readers are encouraged to take both as part of one thesis.

⁷ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 697, emphasis original.

⁸ See N. T. Wright, ‘Paul and the Patriarch: The Role of Abraham in Galatians and Romans,’ *JSNT* 35.3 (2013): 207–41, reprinted in *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978–2013* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 2013), 554–92. Wright outlines six possible options for why and what Paul is doing by including Abraham in his argument (555–56). Editor’s note: for further analysis of Wright’s treatment of Abraham in Rom 4, see the essay in this issue by David Shaw, ‘Romans 4 and the Justification of Abraham in Light of Perspectives New and Newer.’

⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 256–57.

In Galatians, the particular context is table-fellowship with Gentiles and the argument from Abraham is introduced with the issue of whether the reception of the Spirit is based on observing the law or faith in Christ. In Romans, the argument from Abraham is connected to how the circumcised and uncircumcised are justified. In both cases, Paul is expounding Gen 15:6 against his interlocuters: “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” The matter of sequence is absolutely crucial: Abraham believed God and was counted righteous *before* he received the sign and seal of circumcision. This sequencing of faith first, and everything else second, is at the heart of Paul’s argument as to why the Gentiles can now be treated as righteous in God’s sight without being circumcised or observing the law. For it was always so.

In Galatians, however, the matter of sequence is tied to a bigger issue of chronology. It is not just important that faith came before circumcision; it is just as important that the promise came before the law. Paul’s understanding of biblical chronology is the key to Gal 3, and it is what we need to see in examining v. 16, which is one of the central verses credobaptists use in developing their fulfillment critique of the genealogical principle: ‘Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say “And to offsprings”, referring to many; but, referring to one, ‘And to your offspring’, which is Christ.’

The strangeness here is not really Paul’s singular understanding of the collective plural noun—there are good ways of understanding this.¹⁰ Rather, the question here is: why does Paul need to make this point at all? Why does he need to say the promises were spoken to Abraham *and Christ*? Answer: chronology.

For if chronology is the linchpin of Paul’s argument—which came first, promise or law?—then notice that by so arguing, Paul has a problem. It is easy to prove that the Abrahamic covenant came before the Sinai covenant, that promise came before law, but then did not the law come before Christ? Paul is going to argue in v. 17 that the covenant came first and the law (430 years later) cannot annul what came first. But Paul’s own argument about chronology could be turned against him by the Judaisers; it does not help to argue that what comes earlier is more foundational when the law comes earlier than Christ.

This is why v. 16 is so important. Paul is saying that the promise, which came first, was in fact a promise given to Christ and not just to Abraham. F. F. Bruce says that the prefix *προ* in *προκεκυρωμένην* (v. 17) indicates that the covenant was validated at the time it was given, long before the law, and was complete in itself with all the confirmation it required from the authority of the God who made it.¹¹ That covenant, validated before the law arrived, was a covenant with Christ. So if Christ is the seed of Abraham who received the promises as well as him, then there is a vital sense in which, while Christ appeared after the law, he nevertheless also preceded it. I think this point is essential to Paul’s argument. Before Moses ever appeared on the scene, before Sinai, Paul is arguing that Abraham’s covenant was also Christ’s covenant.

This means we need to nuance the language we use when speaking here about Christ and the promises given to Abraham. Salter uses the word ‘fulfillment’ on several occasions, and that is right and

¹⁰ Cf. T. Desmond Alexander, ‘Abraham Re-assessed Theologically: The Abraham Narrative and the New Testament Understanding of Justification by Faith’, in *He Swore an Oath: Biblical Themes from Genesis 12–50*, ed. R. S. Hess, P. E. Satterthwaite and G. J. Wenham (Tyndale House: Cambridge, 1993), 7–28; idem, ‘Further Observations on the Term “Seed” in Genesis’, *TynB* 48 (1997): 363–67.

¹¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), 173.

proper, but I would argue that staring at Gal 3:16 leads us to say not just that Christ fulfills the promise to Abraham but that the promise was made to him as well. To be clear, I am not suggesting that Paul is here arguing for, or dependent on, belief in Christ's pre-existence; that is not his point. Rather, the assertion is simply that when Christ appeared in time he did so as the one with whom the Abrahamic covenant was made, not simply as the one who fulfilled it. For that is what the text actually says. Christ's relationship to the promise is twofold: he received it, as well as fulfilled it.

As far as I can tell, this perspective has been all but lost in modern biblical studies. But a text like Gal 3:16 was fertile ground for the development in classical Reformed theology for the belief that the covenant of grace was made with Christ in a way which structured the way in which it was also made with Abraham and his seed. This verse funded the belief that Christ is not just the fulfiller of the Abrahamic covenant; he is also the foundation of it. The position is well expressed in *The Westminster Larger Catechism*:

Question 31. With whom was the covenant of grace made?

The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.

This is not exegetically unwarranted. Bruce says of Paul's surprising point in Gal 3:16: 'In the first instance the reference is to a single descendant, Christ, through whom the promised blessing was to come to all the Gentiles. In the second instance the reference is to all who receive the blessing; in v. 29 all who belong to Christ are thereby included in Abraham's offspring.'¹²

In the great federal passages Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15, Paul does not argue from Adam and Abraham, but from Adam and Christ as the two great covenantal heads. In Isa 42:6, the LORD addresses his servant: 'I will keep you and *will make you to be a covenant* for the people and a light for the Gentiles.' Christ is a covenant representative, the second Adam who restores what the first Adam lost, and so he is the mediator of the covenant of grace and the head of a new humanity. Focusing on Adam and Christ is a startling bypassing of the whole story of Israel and the promises to Abraham, unless, of course, what God was doing redemptively in Abraham and the promises is somehow included in what God was doing in Christ.

This is what Reformed theology has argued. Bavinck, for instance, says that Noah, Abraham, Israel and others were not the actual parties and heads in the covenant of grace (although we might say that the choice of 'actual' is infelicitous): 'On the contrary, then and now, in the Old and New Testaments, Christ was and is the head and the key party in the covenant of grace, and *through his administration it came to the patriarchs and to Israel*. He who had existed from eternity, and had made himself the surety, also immediately after the fall acted as prophet, priest, and king, as the second Adam, as head and representative of fallen humankind.'¹³

This understanding within Reformed theology itself became the soil in which grew the idea of a covenant of redemption, the *pactum salutis*, which helped to distinguish within the covenant of grace as it was 'ready-made from all eternity' between the three persons of the Trinity with Christ as head

¹²Bruce, *Galatians*, 172. In other words, by saying that the seed of Abraham is singular at this particular point in his argument, Paul is not denying that it also had a plural sense, as he himself expresses in Rom 4:18.

¹³Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Vol. 3, Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 228 (emphasis added).

and guarantor, and as it was applied and executed in time with Christ as mediator.¹⁴ The covenant of grace is founded on Christ, fulfilled in Christ, and bequeathed by Christ.¹⁵ This understanding is nicely expressed in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter eight, on Christ the Mediator:

It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King; the Head and Saviour of his Church; the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world; *unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed*, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.¹⁶

The credobaptist critique of the genealogical principle works by focusing on Christ as the fulfillment of the covenant of grace, but it is undermined by not reflecting at all, as far as I can see, on the fact that Christ is its foundation before he fulfills or bestows it. Salter and others, such as Gentry and Wellum, argue that the covenant of grace is a story with a destination that paedobaptists have failed to arrive at: it is heading somewhere, namely, to fulfillment in Christ. But I wish to suggest that the covenant of grace is a story with a beginning that credobaptists have failed to start: it is founded on Christ before it ever progresses to Christ. The credobaptist traces a line from Abraham to Christ, but in reality the line to be traced is from Christ to Abraham to Christ again. Abraham is Christ's seed, before Christ is ever Abraham's seed.

Two implications follow. First, notice what this does to Gentry and Wellum's argument that under the previous covenants (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, David) the relationship between the covenant mediator and his seed was primarily physical-biological. That simply cannot be true. If from all eternity the Father gave to his Son a people to be his seed, the foundational relationship has always been spiritual, not physical (although I hasten to add that I dislike Gentry and Wellum's distinction between physical and spiritual, at least as they understand it). In other words, the primary relationship between God and his people is a decretal one, primary in the sense of being logically and chronologically prior to any outworking of that relationship in space-time history. The seed are in Christ before they are in the world. Arguing for 'physical-biological' in the old covenant and 'spiritual' in the new is first and foremost the result of an inadequate Christology.

This leads to the second implication. It is this understanding of the covenant of grace which provides a deep covenantal foundation to the way that Paul is arguing in Galatians and Romans. What we find in Salter's work, and also at the heart of Gentry and Wellum's critique of paedobaptism, is that in the new covenant the primary relationship between God and his people is a spiritual one based on faith: 'all of the realities of the new covenant age and the benefits that come to us are because of our faith union in Christ.'¹⁷ Paedobaptists, of course, do not disagree with this. On the contrary, if the covenant of grace is made with Christ and his people who are his seed, then it follows that he does not save them in two

¹⁴ Ibid., 212–216. Cf. also the discussion in Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 2, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1994), 176–78.

¹⁵ This understanding of the covenant of grace closely resembles the way that Christology and election have been construed in the Reformed tradition: election is by Christ, in Christ, and known in Christ. Cf. David Gibson, 'A Mirror for God and for Us: Christology and Exegesis in Calvin's Doctrine of Election,' *IJST* 11.4 (2009): 448–65.

¹⁶ Emphasis added. The Scripture proofs in the *Confession* attached to the phrase concerning a people as Christ's seed are John 17:6, Ps 22:30 and Isa 53:10. The Scripture proofs for *The Larger Catechism*, Question 31, are Gal 3:16, Rom 5:15–21, and Isa 53:10.

¹⁷ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 700.

different ways, either physically in the old covenant and spiritually in the new covenant, or by the law or works or circumcision in the old covenant and by faith in the new covenant. Paul's whole point in both Romans and Galatians is that there has only ever been one way of salvation, and it is by faith, and neither by bloodline nor Torah-obedience.

To try and put this even more clearly, Paul cannot be arguing that because Christ is the fulfillment of the promise, the genealogical principle is therefore invalidated. For the very promise, being founded on Christ, in itself and from the moment it was given, showed that genealogy was never a guarantee of inheritance or true sonship. The genealogical principle could be as invalid at the time of Abraham as it was around a meal-table in Antioch, as Peter says, 'thanks, but no thanks,' to the ritually unclean. Paul rebuked Peter because it was his very genealogy ('we who are Jews by birth know that . . .') which should have taught him that neither it nor the law makes him clean: he was not justified by being either a Jew, or a law-keeper, or by being both together (Gal 2:15). The repeated rebuke of the prophets to Israel was that genealogy as a source of religious pride was an insult to the God who himself had instituted the genealogical principle!

From the beginning of the covenant with Abraham onwards, you could be a son of Abraham and a child of God. From the beginning, you could be a son of Abraham and a child of the devil. From the beginning, you could be a Jew and yet not be a Jew (Rom 2:28–29). You could be a son of Abraham and yet not be a son of Abraham. From the beginning, you could be circumcised and have Abraham as your father, or not have him as your father, depending on whether you walked in his footsteps of faith or not. From the beginning, you could be *uncircumcised* and have Abraham as your father, or not have him as your father, depending on whether you had his faith or not. It is not that there is now a spiritual understanding of the genealogical principle—it was always there.

This is an attempt to argue that if Paul is saying that the promise fulfilled in Christ introduces something fundamentally new into the Abrahamic covenant, then Paul's argument in Romans and Galatians falls apart, for its very logic depends on him giving the Judaisers their own Scriptures and showing them that what he is saying is not, in fact, new but has always been the case. Rather, what is new now is that because the curse of the law has been removed in Christ, the gates to God's family are taken off their hinges. In Christ, the genealogical principle is not abandoned; it is recalibrated to a truly international scale.

One of N. T. Wright's chapter headings in his latest book on Paul, where he treats Rom 4 and Gal 3, is 'The People of God, Freshly Reworked'.¹⁸ I think the Reformed, with our stress on the one people of God throughout all of Scripture, can be comfortable with this. For as a concept, at least, the idea of a fresh reworking of God's people is not in the introduction of something radically new into the covenant, but in how the death of the Messiah under the curse of the law allows what was always there now to be drawn out and come to fruition: a single family of Jew and Gentile in covenant relationship to the God who made the world. The gospel announced in advance to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him can now in fact be taken to the nations—the death and resurrection of the Seed of Abraham sets free a world imprisoned by sin by lifting the curse pronounced against it. But this is a change in scale, not in soteriology. It is a change of administration, not a change of substance or structure. The Mediator is one. The covenant is one. Salvation is one. 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' For Jew, Gentile, Christian, it is and always has been so.

¹⁸N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols., Christian Origins and the Question of God (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 2:774–1032 (ch. 10).

Who is a child of Abraham? Abraham and Paul both return the same answer to our question. Old covenant and new covenant, the answer is the same: a child of Abraham is one who has the faith of Abraham in the God who gives righteousness to those who believe. A child of Abraham is one who has faith in Christ and belongs to Christ (Gal 3:29). *How do you become a child of Abraham?* By coming to Christ and believing in him. You become a child by having faith.

2. The Anthropology of Baptism: Its Covenantal Subjects

I am aware, of course, that the final lines of the above point are precisely where my credobaptist brothers and sisters remain perplexed. They may wish to point out that the title of my article has a follow-on line, ‘Fathers of faith, my fathers now! *because in Christ I am*.’¹⁹ If you become a child of Abraham by faith in Christ, then how is it possible to regard children who do not have this faith as Abraham’s children and therefore worthy recipients of covenant signs?

In his lovely exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, Karl Barth expresses just such incredulity when he comes to Question 74. *Are infants to be baptized?* The Catechism’s positive answer to this question ‘comes as a surprise’ because up to now ‘we have heard that baptism is the confirmation or establishment of faith by the assurance of its origin in the blood and spirit of Jesus Christ.’ In Barth’s view, ‘All the previously discussed constitutive marks of baptism (especially the faith of the baptized) are suddenly ignored.’²⁰ At the same time, Barth admits of the Catechism’s position that ‘Baptism is handled in this unexpected and unfounded way in all classical Protestant theology, even in Calvin.’²¹ The sheer breadth and impressive pedigree of the mistake must at least give credobaptists pause. What is going on when justification *sola fide* can be as highly prized as it is in Reformation theology and when baptism as sign and seal of that faith is as joyfully administered to infants as it is in Reformation theology? One clue is that *sola fide* is understood covenantally.

I will argue in this second point that if the genealogical principle is not invalidated in the new covenant, then it is one part of forming a biblical anthropology of fathers and children, and covenant heads who act in representative ways towards their progeny. In credobaptist theology, by contrast, an unbiblical category of human person opens up: the autonomous individual who relates to God outside of the normal web and complex of family relationships, societal location and covenantal structures. The way to enter a relationship with Christ is only by personal volition, and this is because faith must be personal and individually real. The latter is true, of course, but the means of reaching that point in credobaptist theology is crudely modern and divorced from how the Bible conceives of the family, and in particular the father.²²

¹⁹ Kendrick, ‘O What a Mystery I See’

²⁰ Karl Barth, *Learning Jesus Christ through the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 102–3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

²² For more on this, see the insightful reflections of Alastair Roberts, ‘A Biblical Gender Essentialism?’, <http://alastairadversaria.wordpress.com/2014/09/01/a-biblical-gender-essentialism>. Roberts argues that whereas anthropology in the liberal philosophical tradition focuses on the individual as the fundamental unit of analysis, biblical anthropology, by contrast, is framed by four integrating dimensions: humanity is a kind; humanity is unified as a corporate personality; humanity is sexually dimorphic; humanity is a race. On this latter point: ‘We are born with a particular lineage and as bearers of a legacy. We are a particular node on a family tree. We take up

Pause for a moment and think how strange our evangelical concept of ‘asking Jesus into my heart’ as a decisive conversion moment would be in the world of OT covenant relationship. Do we see anything resembling a normative crisis moment conversion of children to Yahweh in the OT? We do not. Rather, faith in the God of the covenant as the heart of the covenant relationship is meant to be passed down through the generations to those born within the covenant. One of the primary means for this is education (Deut 6:4–9). In Ps 78, Asaph is determined to pass on ‘what our fathers have told us’ (v. 3). The things learned from those who went before him will not be hidden from the children who come after him: ‘we will tell the next generation’ (v. 4).

Another means of transmission that God uses—along with nurture, inculturation, and education—is the sign and seal of the covenant. In my view, this is where so many credobaptist critiques of paedobaptism founder. Credobaptists often struggle to understand paedobaptism for the simple reason that their conception of circumcision is inadequate. Salter’s explanation of the meaning of circumcision in the OT gives subordinate importance to the apostle Paul’s explanation of its meaning in Rom 4:11: circumcision is the sign and seal that God gives righteousness to the one who has faith. Instead, while credobaptists typically admit there was a spiritual meaning to the rite, the weight of emphasis falls on its meaning being tied to land, blessing, dynasty, and the provision of a male line to Christ.²³

This mistake marks a decisive fork in the road between credobaptist and paedobaptist theology, not least as far as the place of Abraham within each is concerned. With Barth, for instance, there is significant stress on circumcision as a physical marker of national distinction, such that this premise has interpretive influence over his understanding of Israel and the church.²⁴ Paedobaptists, however, contend that it is impossible to read Gen 17 all the way through and conclude that circumcision’s physical or national significance is primary. Circumcision was always a gospel sign. It was a mark of the everlasting covenant. In 17:10, God even calls circumcision itself ‘my covenant’ (more on this below), and in 17:13, this covenant in the flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.

So when Gen 17 is read alongside Rom 4:11, a theological premise of paedobaptism emerges. Abraham had faith and then was circumcised. It was sign and seal of the righteousness he had by faith, and yet it is that same sign and seal which he is told to place on his male offspring. Same sign, same meaning: his children do not receive a circumcision which meant something different for them than it meant for Abraham. It was for Abraham the mark in his flesh of the eternal covenant, which had at its heart the truth that God counts as righteous the one who has faith—which he did. It was for his children the mark in their flesh of the eternal covenant, which had at its heart the truth that God counts as righteous those who have faith—which they did not. Yet.

our position within the passage of the generations, within a particular matrix of relations, being conceived within and as a union between our parents, passing on a legacy to our own children in turn.’ See also Alastair Roberts, ‘The Politics of Abraham’s Foreskin,’ <http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog/the-politics-of-abrahams-foreskin-genesis-17-1-7-15-16/>

²³ See, for example, Shawn D. Wright, ‘Baptism and the Logic of Reformed Paedobaptists,’ in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 207–56. In the same volume, Stephen J. Wellum’s essay is more nuanced, ‘Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants,’ 97–162. See my discussion of both in ‘Sacramental Supersessionism Revisited,’ 191–208; cf. also O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 147–66.

²⁴ Barth, *Learning Jesus Christ through the Heidelberg Catechism*, 103–4.

Paedobaptists read and love the same biblical texts as credobaptists that portray baptism as a death and resurrection with Christ, and as a sign of putting off the sinful nature and putting on Christ to show the new man in faith-union to him. Rom 6, Col 2, and Gal 3 really are in our Bibles. But none of these stop us from baptising our babies because we see Abraham giving the sign of spiritual realities—the everlasting covenant, no less!—to those as yet incapable of cognitively embracing those realities. And he is our father. I baptize my children because I am a Christian father who has Abraham as my father. Rather than just being connected to him out there, somehow, in the biblical ether, in Christ he is our covenant father. So we should do what he did. We should walk in his footsteps. We should have his faith. And therefore we should sign and seal our children as belonging to that same covenant of faith.

Perhaps it helps to identify this as the heart of the paradigm shift from reading the Bible as a credobaptist to reading it as a paedobaptist. I read Gal 3:26–29, for instance, and see the clear definition of the true Abrahamic family as marked by faith in Christ, and I see the close proximity of baptism to this spiritual reality, but I understand baptism here to function in a parallel way to circumcision in the OT. The true Abrahamic family was always defined by living faith and, just like baptism, circumcision was a sign and seal of that living faith. And from Abraham onwards it was applied to the children of those who were justified by faith. More could be said about this paradigm. In John 1:12–13, for instance, my understanding is not that it used to be possible to be a child of God by natural descent in the old covenant, whereas it is now impossible in the new covenant. Rather, the children of God according to promise and spiritual rebirth, a line which was always there in the OT, is now being climactically displayed as the line to which Jesus holds the rights of entitlement.

Our father Abraham circumcised, and Christian fathers baptize, because in biblical anthropology, cognition does not have to be the first step towards belonging. Personal understanding is, of course, a necessary step towards embracing the reality of the covenant, but within families it does not come first. For not only is the genealogical principle not invalidated in the new covenant because that covenant is in fact founded on Christ, not just fulfilled by him; so too it is not invalidated in the new covenant because the genealogical principle is Adamic, not just Abrahamic. Maybe better: it is creational, not just redemptive. The genealogical principle is simply how God has made the world to work.

In Gen 17, God leads Abraham into the covenant home to show him hanging on the wall a portrait of redemption as ‘a renovation of creation spoiled by Adam rather than a new creation *ex nihilo*.’²⁵ How so? N. T. Wright observes that the promises to Abraham directly echo the commands to Adam and Eve (‘be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth’), only the reverberation is now gift not command. The original divine mandate, seemingly thwarted by the fall into pride, rebellion and sin—not to mention fratricide, barren wombs, and patriarchal misbehavior—will be realized through divine faithfulness.²⁶ Bavinck says that the covenant of grace ‘pronounces the deep and beautiful truth’ that because Adam has been replaced by Christ, the humanity that fell in the person of the first is restored in the person of the second; it is not just individuals who are saved but the whole structure of an organism that is saved, and the structure of the organism that the elect form in Christ is derived from the original creation in Adam. The covenant of grace does not ‘leap from individual to individual but perpetuates itself organically and historically.’²⁷ In making the covenant with Abraham *and his offspring*—we must note the recurrence of

²⁵ Peter J. Leithart, ‘The Sociology of Infant Baptism,’ in *The Baptized Body* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2007), 116.

²⁶ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2:785–86.

²⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, 231.

that phrase all the way throughout Gen 17:1–14—God is not, in soteriology, imposing a new structure on created order but rather, in soteriology, using that created order to achieve his redemptive ends.

At the heart of this structure is federalism, one expression of which is this: dads dominate. To be a husband, to be a father, is to be a head, and to be a head is to shape the life of those who are joined to you, whether in voluntary union in marriage or adoption, or in their involuntary union to you in paternity. Husbands and fathers do not choose to be a head—you *are* one—the only choice you make is what kind to be. And for our little ones, we do it without one bit of their say so. What I do as a father, forms. What I do as a dad, dominates. Douglas Wilson argues this even holds when a father abdicates responsibility to the extent of desertion, for now his instrument of choice for dominating a home is the empty chair.²⁸

The family is the chief organism in world culture and its inherent federalism runs counter to at least some credobaptist understandings of voluntarism. Barth protested that infant baptism is ‘arbitrary and despotic’, and is ‘an act of violence’, because it is an unwilling imposition on the child of something they have not voluntarily chosen.²⁹ But, as Peter Leithart points out, this is surely a naïve proposition: ‘Infants are never brought up in a religiously neutral setting, having no religious identities or biases imposed on them. If imposing religion on a child is an act of violence, every child is a victim of violence.’³⁰ Instead of imposition, the biblical worldview is that of inclusion. Scripture teaches ‘that all our generations are connected to one another—humanity is more like a river than a series of ponds.’³¹ It is not strange for David to say, ‘You made me trust in you even at my mother’s breast’ (Ps 22:10). The reality of belonging to God from the very start of life is beautifully expressed: ‘From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother’s womb you have been my God’ (v. 11). Elsewhere in the Psalms, trust in God is traced back to its earliest foundations: ‘For you have been my hope, O Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth. From my birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother’s womb’ (Ps 71:5–6). ‘The promise of the covenant nation that is sealed with the claiming of Abraham’s sexual organ will be realized through the loving pedagogy of the family. Politics and society are conceived in the bedroom and are cradled in the family.’³²

It is not an exaggeration to suggest that such including of the helpless within a world of care and love, and the nurture and instruction of the ignorant and unformed, is a reflection of the hospitality displayed by the gospel itself. In a striking essay, B. B. Warfield examines the place of children in the Gospels and concludes that ‘the most vivid emblems provided by society to image the dependence of God’s people on his loving protection and fostering care’ are the helplessness of infancy and the dependence of childhood. He goes so far as to say that because the family was to Christ the nearest of

²⁸ Douglas Wilson, *Reforming Marriage* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 1995), 24. The choice of ‘dominate’ is deliberately striking, but I am in agreement with Wilson that on Christological grounds it should not be feared. What kind of Lord—*Dominus*—is Jesus our Head?

²⁹ Karl Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, trans. Ernest A. Payner (London: SCM, 1948), cited in Leithart, *Baptized Body*, 121.

³⁰ Leithart, *Baptized Body*, 122.

³¹ Douglas Wilson, *Father Hunger: Why God Calls Men to Love and Lead Their Families* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 13 (emphasis original).

³² Roberts, ‘The Politics of Abraham’s Foreskin’.

analogues to the divine-human relationship, his teaching about God and his people was largely only ‘a transfiguration of the family’.³³

Helplessness and dependence mark the littlest in our homes—yet Jesus says the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as them (Matt 19:13–15). I know that credobaptists are often perplexed about the relevance of this text to the issue of baptism, but its bearing lies in the fact that paedobaptists work from a theology of *infants* before we develop a theology of infant *baptism*. Jesus does not say that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are *like* little children; rather it belongs to ‘such as these’ (v. 14). When Calvin argues, in discussion of this passage, that Christ came to enlarge not restrict the Father’s mercy, he is working from a covenantal frame of reference. A biblical theology of covenant charts the drama of exclusivity developing into increasing inclusivity, as the gospel to Israel progresses towards its intended fulfillment as the gospel to the nations. If children were included in covenant promise in the OT, would we really expect Jesus to exclude them as he comes to fulfill all that had been promised?

However, if it is a question of separating what Jesus Christ did from baptism, which ought to be considered the greater? That Jesus Christ receives them, lays His hands on them in sign of sanctification, and prays for them, showing that they are His own, or that we, by baptism, testify that they belong to His covenant?³⁴

Martin Salter and other credobaptists argue that the fundamental problem with my line of reasoning here is its failure to take into account the substantial discontinuities that exist between the covenants, not least when it comes to children and families, as evidenced by passages such as Jer 31:29–34.

One argument is that the tribal-familial structure of the old covenant disappears at the coming of the new covenant.³⁵ Jer 31:29–30 says, ‘In those days they shall no longer say: “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” But everyone shall die for his own sin. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.’ This proverb relates to children bearing the consequences of their fathers’ sins from a previous generation (cf. Ezek 18:2–3; Lam 5:7). Credobaptists interpret this to mean that God was doing away with the tribal-familial system that was so integral to the old covenant, in which the actions of an older generation had consequences for the next generation. In this case, the sins of pre-exilic Israelite fathers meant that their children suffered in exile. And so, by implication, the same holds for God’s blessing in the new covenant: no longer can the fathers be blessed by God and children automatically receive the same blessing as it was in the old covenant: ‘to you and to your children after you.’ Rather, blessing would now work the same way as curse: on the individual level only. In relation to sin, ‘everyone shall die for his own sin. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge’ (Jer 31:30). In relation to grace, it no longer runs in families, but only comes to each person individually as they respond to the gospel.

This interpretation, however, does not sufficiently attend to the passage’s own context, both within Jeremiah and wider afield within the OT itself. The context of the proverbial saying is the exile: the generation in exile are bearing the consequences of a previous generation’s sins. Jeremiah’s point is simply that future generations in the new covenant will not experience an exile again like this for the

³³ B. B. Warfield, ‘Children’, in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter, 2 vols. (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1970), 1:232–33.

³⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1541 French Edition*, trans. Elsie Anne McKee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 525.

³⁵ See Wellum, ‘Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants’, 141–44.

sins of a previous generation. Note what Jeremiah says just prior to the saying: never again will God uproot, tear down, overthrow, destroy or bring disaster on his covenant people as he did with this exilic generation (Jer 31:27–28). Second, the words “But everyone shall die for his own sin” (v. 30) is an allusion back to Deut 24:16—an old covenant text. Within the old covenant with Israel, the people were held personally responsible for individual sins—this is not a new element in the new covenant. Rather, there is continuity between the old covenant and the new covenant in regard to personal responsibility for sin, and in this particular context, this means that God will not bring about another exile. That there is a change in the familial structural within the new covenant does not follow.

Closely connected to this is the contention of credobaptists that in the new covenant, the essentially mixed nature of the old covenant disappears: “No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD’ (v. 34). It was part of the old covenant to have people within it who did not know the Lord in a saving way, but in the new covenant this will be impossible. Naturally this cuts against the grain of children being included in the way I have been arguing. However, the credobaptist reading of these verses is again vulnerable when their context is examined, both narrowly and more widely.

The phrase ‘they will all know me’ (v. 34) could either mean they will all know me without exception, or it might mean they will all know me without distinction. The immediate context suggests the latter meaning because the phrase is followed straight away by the totalizing merismus phrase ‘from the least of them to the greatest.’ The ‘all’ of v. 34 is being interpreted in a particular way even within the same verse.

It is important to realize the new covenant is here being contrasted not with the Abrahamic covenant, but with the Mosaic covenant (vv. 31–32), and so therefore the ‘no longer’ constituents of the new covenant should be seen in opposition to certain constituents of the Mosaic covenant. In that context, we can understand ‘no longer will a man teach his neighbor’ as an explicit reference to the ceremonial law, because the matter of a man teaching his neighbor or brother to know the LORD was the distinctive duty of the Levitical priesthood (Deut 33:8–10). They had this duty by virtue of occupying a special place as those known by, and who knew, the LORD (Num 3:12). When this language, then, is itself immediately followed by ‘from the least of them to the greatest,’ a strong case can be made that what is being referred to is classes or ranks of persons who were intimately connected to the Levitical priesthood.³⁶ This is why the presence of Jer 31 in Heb 8, a text specifically concerned to develop the nature of Christ’s non-Levitical priesthood, makes perfect sense. It is not that the coming of Christ introduces something radically new into the nature of the Abrahamic covenant by now making it entirely ‘pure’ as opposed to ‘mixed.’ When Jesus inaugurated the new Israel with twelve apostles was it wholly regenerate, or mixed? Rather, in the new covenant, Christ renders obsolete the particular ministry of Levitical priests which was a defining feature of the Mosaic covenant.

But a wider reading of Jeremiah’s new covenant promise is also significant. Regularly overlooked is the parallel promise of the new covenant in Jer 32: ‘They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them’ (vv. 38–39).³⁷ The Hebrew phrase ‘for good’ (לְטוֹב) occurs only once

³⁶ Cf. Jeffrey D. Neill, ‘The Newness of the New Covenant,’ in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), 127–55.

³⁷ Gentry and Wellum recognize this as a second treatment in Jeremiah of the promise of a new covenant, but provide no discussion of the presence of children in the promise. Cf. *Kingdom through Covenant*, 520–22.

here, not twice, as in most English translations, so that, as Neil Jeffers says on this passage, ‘The good to the people cannot be differentiated from the good to the children.’³⁸ There is one good to both.

Jeffers says he can find only one credobaptist treatment of this new covenant promise to children, Fred Malone in *The Baptism of Disciples Alone*, who argues that the ‘good’ being referred to here is that it will be good for those children who are raised in a heart-changed home. But is that likely to be the deepest meaning of the good that God is offering here? In the very next verse we learn that this covenant made with them is ‘an everlasting covenant’ (v. 40). Given the presence of the covenant formula (‘my people, their God’), the repetition of the phrase ‘everlasting covenant’, and the repetition of the genealogical principle (‘them and their children’), then surely here we are seeing the Abrahamic covenant, the everlasting covenant, being promised in a new administration, and with all the blessedness that God intends for those who belong to him—and it includes the children of his people. This reading of the passage is consistent with other ‘new covenant’ passages, nearly all of which are noticeably absent from credobaptist treatments of the new covenant.³⁹

In the New Testament, then, it cannot be a coincidence that the threefold categories for circumcision in Gen 17 (Abraham, his seed, foreigners in his house) is matched by the threefold categories for baptism in Acts 2:39: ‘The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call’ (you, your children, the far off). This is because the genealogical principle is redemptive and it is creational. It is how God made the world to work.

The significant thing about the household baptisms in Acts is not arguing *ad infinitum* over whether there were or were not infants in those houses—the best we can say is that we do not know. The significant thing, rather, is that there were such phenomena as household baptisms at the very point in redemptive history when, apparently, the structure and blessing of households had been abolished: what the head of the house did, or what a parent did, everyone did. In Eph 6:1–2, children are told to obey their parents in the Lord, to honor them in keeping with the first commandment with a promise (cf. Exod 20:12). Quite apart from what Paul must be assuming about their covenant status to be applying a covenant promise to them, this is the application of creational and redemptive federalism all at the same time: parents as head and Christ as Lord, and children do what both require.

My argument is that credobaptists need to account for the fact that God has chosen to use created means to enact his sovereign decrees, and that one of the means he uses is the family. At stake is the proper relationship of nature and grace: does the natural world have anything in common with the spiritual world?

Michael Horton argues in his recent book, *Calvin on the Christian Life*, that there are at least three models of relating God to the world. The medieval and Roman model blended God and the world, most visibly in the sacraments, with the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Reformed got the relationship between God and the world right, not least in the sacraments, by arguing that God and the world are

³⁸Neil G. T. Jeffers, “‘And Their Children After Them’: A Response to Reformed Baptist Readings of Jeremiah’s New Covenant Promises,” *Ecclesia Reformanda* 1.2 (2009): 149. Jeffers provides a similar but not identical treatment of the totalizing merismus phrase in 31:34 to that of Neill.

³⁹Cf. Ezek 37:25; Isa 65:23. Deut 30:6, ‘The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live,’ is tautologous if the descendants are spiritual seed, because by definition spiritual seed are already circumcised in heart.

distinguished but not separated.⁴⁰ On the other side of these two views, however, grew up the Anabaptist tradition, and Horton points out that at least one prominent Anabaptist scholar acknowledges that the movement was indebted to a Greek dualism between spirit and matter.⁴¹ Anabaptism displays a theological commitment to discontinuity ‘between God and creaturely reality that is evident also in relating spirit and matter, soul and body, church and state, invisible and visible church, God’s saving work and the external means of grace. In short, the bond between God and the world is broken.’⁴²

Here Horton is seeking to penetrate the philosophical presuppositions latent in the more commonly known Anabaptist discontinuity thesis, that is, between the Old and New Testaments. This notion—that the old covenant consists of inferior earthly, physical promises as opposed to the new covenant with its superior spiritual promises relating to eternal life—has encountered a long history of Reformed rebuttals.⁴³ But its presence lingers on in subdued form as I have shown in my earlier response to Salter’s original essay and, as we have seen here, in the work of Gentry and Wellum. In Salter’s Reformed Baptist worldview, and in Gentry and Wellum’s progressive covenantalism thesis, the bond between God and the world is broken because they make it only spiritual when it comes to the new covenant in Christ. That cannot be the biblical outlook, because in Abraham and his offspring—the covenant founded on Christ and his elect—the bond between God and the world is redeemed, not broken.

The credobaptist worldview is, I submit, in the end a fundamentally unattractive aesthetic. It sees less in the world than God intended by so radically separating nature and grace. In Marilynne Robinson’s novel *Gilead*, the elderly Rev. John Ames is writing down all the things he will never be able to say to his young son. The novel has some charming cameos on baptism. When Ames says in a description of infant baptism, ‘That feeling of a baby’s brow against the palm of your hand—how I have loved this life,’ he is not talking about the ministerial life, or church life, but simply *life*.⁴⁴ He is talking about the sheer blessing of the genealogical principle, physically and spiritually, and what it feels like to be a human being in deep bonded relationship to another human being. So conceived, baptism is not itself the gospel, but its function as sign and seal of the gospel is being enacted within the created order. Indeed, in *Lila*, the third of Robinson’s Gilead vignettes, Lila’s first encounter with the gospel is when she gatecrashes a baptism. In an achingly beautiful moment, her own lost and destitute childhood, spent as a wandering outcast, stands in stark opposition to a world of tender inclusion and adopting grace. In seeing more than she understands, Lila speaks better than she knows: ‘He was going on about baptism. A birth and a death and a marriage, he said. A touch of water and these children are given the whole of life.’⁴⁵

Such a vision of life prompts this question: if the bond between God and the world is broken in credobaptist soteriology, does credobaptism risk being sacramentally docetic? For, necessarily,

⁴⁰ Michael S. Horton, *Calvin on the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 41. Horton’s argument is that Calvin’s Christology worked with the ‘distinction without separation’ maxim for understanding the union of natures in the person of Christ and that this had a direct influence on several other aspects of his thought.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 86. Horton is referring to Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Constructive* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 563.

⁴² Horton, *Calvin on the Christian Life*, 87.

⁴³ See especially the fine treatment by Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, trans. William Heynen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), who attends to the historical context underlying the polemic towards Anabaptists in the developing editions of the *Institutes*, as well as the inner logic of Calvin’s theological thinking.

⁴⁴ Robinson, *Gilead*, 56.

⁴⁵ Marilynne Robinson, *Lila* (London: Virago, 2014), 222.

credobaptism downplays the creaturely situated-ness of the subject of baptism, abstracting him or her out of the living organism of generational lines and familial bonds and instead views the baptized as an autonomous agent who engages in an individualized, spiritual, soteriological transaction between themselves and God only.

Paedobaptist anthropology, in contrast, prompts this question: can the bond between my children and me be only a bond of nature, or can it be a bond of grace as well? Abraham and Christ in the covenant of grace show it can be both-and, not either-or. 'Grace does not remain outside or above or beside nature but rather permeates and wholly renews it . . . [Christianity] creates no new cosmos but rather makes the cosmos new. It restores what was corrupted by sin. It atones the guilty and cures what is sick; the wounded it heals.'⁴⁶

3. The Theology of Baptism: Its Covenantal Significance

A dualist account of spirit and matter can take different forms. There can be the separation of spiritual and physical in terms of the *recipients* of baptism, as I have hinted at above; there can also be a separation of spiritual and physical in terms of our *definition* of baptism.

In this section, I will argue that credobaptism's understanding of baptism as a *covenant sign* is so thinly drawn that the physical act of baptism can come to be separated from what it spiritually signifies. Where this happens, persons who have been baptized with water in the triune name can nevertheless come to be regarded as not having been baptized, most likely due to the absence of faith at the time of the baptism or subsequently, perhaps evidenced in willful apostasy. The spiritual and the physical are disentangled from each other, and the former trumps the latter as in some way expressing the 'essence' of the sacrament.

The classical Reformed view of the sacraments, however, is that God's saving work and the external means of grace are to be distinguished but not separated. That is, being baptized is not identical to being saved, but being baptized might have something to do with being saved (1 Pet 3:21). God's saving work is not separated from his signing and sealing work, and because the way in which God saves, signs and seals is covenantal, then physical and spiritual cannot be separated.

Consider the wording at the introduction of covenant signs. There is often more on view than we expect. In Gen 17, circumcision is itself called 'my covenant' (v. 10). In v. 13, God says, 'My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.' This is striking. At face value, there seems to be some kind of identification between the sign and the thing signified, so that it is not just that circumcision points to the covenant, but that the covenant itself is somehow cut in the flesh. At the same time, circumcision is also called a 'mark' or 'sign' of the covenant (v. 11), so that there is another sense in which the sign is not the thing signified. There is a reality to the covenant that is more than circumcision itself.

But notice what this means. It is not that there is physical circumcision over here which is just that, purely physical, and then the spiritual reality over there which it points to, the eternal covenant. Rather they are joined together in some kind of union. In Matt 26:26, Jesus says, 'Take and eat; this is my body'; and then offering the cup he says, 'this is my blood of the covenant' (v. 28). We know how much ink (and blood) has been spilt on the meaning of 'is' in these words. But we observe Jesus does not say the bread is *like* his body, or *points* to his body, nor likewise the wine: he says each *is* his body and blood, respectively.

⁴⁶Herman Bavinck, 'Common Grace,' trans. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, *CTJ* 24.1 (1989): 59, 61.

This language ensures the signs of the covenant actually *are* something, before they are subjectively appropriated by those who receive them. There is an objective aspect to the sacrament, not diluted by the absence of faith nor concentrated by the presence of faith. The mark in the flesh *is* the everlasting covenant, yet the crying child knows nothing but the pain of the blade. What makes circumcision a covenant, and what makes bread and wine a body and blood, is not the elements themselves (for many nations circumcise and not all bread and wine are sacramental), nor the response of the recipient to the elements, *but rather the words spoken about the elements*. This is why Calvin, for instance, can say ‘Baptism was given to us by God, first to serve our faith in Him, secondly to serve our confession before God.’⁴⁷ The order is significant. God is serving us in baptism before we serve him by being baptized. This means that ‘the proper substance of baptism’ is found by ‘understanding the promises which are given in it.’⁴⁸ God is speaking a visible word in water, and that word remains his word regardless of whether or how we hear it.

God is the primary actor in the sacraments who speaks his covenant promises to his children. Michael Horton has attractively developed the promissory nature of the sacraments:

As in secular treaties, biblical rites are means of binding strangers to the Other who summons them to his fellowship: “I will be your God and you will be my people.” Particularly in the case of a royal grant, the ratification ceremony is the handing over of a gift. Neither, on the one hand, is it the testator’s transformation of the physical instruments (i.e., the parchment and the wax seal) into his personal body, nor, on the other hand, is it merely a symbolic event. Rather, it is an official, public, and legally binding rite according to which the inheritance is delivered to the beneficiary. It is not the transfer of substance, but the transfer of title to an inheritance that the covenantal context presupposes.⁴⁹

This is an attempt to rescue sacramental ontologies from alien philosophical categories, where the emphasis in protracted debates tended to fall on the issue of substance and accidents, and in various ways some kind of transformation of the physical matter was believed to take place. Instead, ‘words and signs together constitute an act of covenant making, analogous to political unions or personal unions, as in marriage or adoption.’⁵⁰ Baptism and the Supper are signs of the Abrahamic covenant of grace, and so they are the sign and seal of the divine promise to be our God and to have us as his people. In water, bread and wine, we literally feel with our bodies and taste with our mouth his bountiful promise to wash us clean and bind us to him. Therefore, in a covenantal framework,

Sacraments involve a giving of gifts from one person to another, not an exchange of substances. Its interest is not in what happens *to the signs* but in what happens *between persons through them*, not *how* Christ is present in the sacraments, but *that he is present in saving action towards us*. Grace is God’s favor, and the sacraments ratify God’s favor towards us. Their purpose is to reconcile enemies, not elevate nature beyond itself.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1541 French Edition*, 510.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 521.

⁴⁹ Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 777.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 778.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 784 (emphasis original).

At the same time, Horton's stress on the personal divine-human relations displayed in baptism and communion rightly points to the fact that the signs and seals of the covenant oblige the human partner to faith and obedience. This itself has been developed in J. V. Fesko's biblical theology of baptism.⁵² Fesko shows, in light of its OT antecedents, that an exegetical and theological account of baptism locates it in the wider biblical themes of new creation, covenant judgment, and eschatological judgment. Just as covenants were made with words of promised blessing, so too there were promised curses if the terms of the covenant were not obeyed. The signs of the covenant are performative words which visibly enact both aspects of the covenant. Just as circumcision pointed to the cutting away of the hardness of heart required by a covenant received entirely by faith, so too the breaking of the covenant leads to an individual being cut off from the people (Gen 17:14). Just as baptism points to the outpouring of the Spirit—the eschatological fulfillment of God's covenant promises bringing new life and new creation to God's people—so too the same Spirit 'comes upon the creation like a flood. Like the waters of the Noahic deluge, the outpouring of the Spirit drowns the wicked in judgment.'⁵³ The sacraments are sign and seal of God's promises of blessing and cursing.

In many forms of credobaptism, however, two important things which I have been arguing for above are often missing, with deleterious effects for a theology of baptism. First, by tending to emphasize Calvin's second point about baptism over his first, that is, by making baptism primarily a sign of our faith displayed before God and the world, and thereby allowing the promissory nature of God's action in baptism either to recede into the background or disappear altogether, the definition of what baptism actually is tends to be drawn more from the realm of human response than divine agency. By effectively making the connection between personal confession and true baptism individual and not covenantal, the close union between sign and thing signified becomes suspended on human action not the word of divine promise. Second, by tending to focus on the blessing aspect of baptism, but not its signification of covenantal sanctions, baptism comes to lose some of its pedagogical and hortatory potential within the life of the believer. In both respects, in different ways, the dualism of spirit-matter is present.

Evidence of this can be seen in Karl Barth's powerful fragment on baptism at the end of the *Church Dogmatics* in IV/4. Leithart is right to say that Barth's interaction with infant baptism should be carefully considered by anyone attempting a theology of baptism;⁵⁴ certainly Barth has been strangely under-utilized in this regard by evangelical credobaptists. At the same time, however, the Achilles heel of Barth's account is his relentless determination to safeguard the integrity of human action in baptism, such that he radically separates water baptism and Spirit baptism in an untenable manner. As John Webster says, 'The exegesis is sometimes surprisingly shoddy, dominated by special pleading, as well as by what seems to be at times an almost Platonic distinction between water baptism (an exclusively human act) and baptism with the Spirit (an exclusively divine act).'⁵⁵

Recent credobaptist exegesis represents an advance in this regard on Barth's handling of certain texts, for it is recognized that 'Spirit baptism and water baptism were part and parcel of the complex

⁵²J. V. Fesko, *Word, Water and Spirit: A Reformed Perspective on Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010).

⁵³*Ibid.*, 246.

⁵⁴Leithart, 'The Sociology of Infant Baptism,' 122

⁵⁵John Webster, *Barth* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000), 157. For an alternative account which sees more dexterity in Barth's position, see W. Travis McMaken, 'Definitive, Defective, or Deft: Reassessing Barth's Doctrine of Baptism in *Church Dogmatics* IV/4,' *IJST* 17.1 (2015): 89–114.

of saving events that took place at conversion.⁵⁶ In texts like Rom 6:3–4, 1 Cor 12:13, Col 2:11–12, Paul does not neatly delineate water baptism and baptism in the Spirit as separate entities. Salter follows Douglas Moo in arguing that ‘The NT connects faith and repentance, the gift of the Spirit, and baptism closely together, implying the presence of all of them in each instance.’⁵⁷ Salter can even affirm that ‘for Paul, baptism effects a vital union with Christ.’⁵⁸

At first glance, this sort of language seems to overcome Barth’s problematic dualism of spirit-matter. Indeed, it appears counter-intuitive to claim that it is credobaptists who risk separating the physical and the spiritual in baptism, for it is not they who insist on applying water to infants (physical) separated by several years from living faith in Christ (spiritual); rather, the credobaptist seems closer to Paul in recognizing that ‘baptism sits within a complex of events including regeneration, cleansing, incorporation, repentance, faith, reception of the Spirit, and so on.’⁵⁹

On the contrary, however, I submit that Salter, for instance, errs not in what he holds about the complex of events, but in the lack of a covenantal context for this complex of events. For his understanding of the complex leads him to this position: ‘Without faith, of course, the subject of baptism is simply getting wet, nothing more.’⁶⁰ Note what is happening here: the definition of baptism is dependent on the position of its subjects. Without faith, baptism is not baptism. It is just getting wet. In this construction, one form of spirit-matter dualism is overcome by another. For the union of sign and thing signified has become so separate that without the thing signified the sign has actually ceased to exist. Here, the absence of faith effectively unbaptizes the baptized; it is able to do so because baptism only is what it is according to how the recipient responds to it. Furthermore, because the word of promise in baptism has only been heard as a word of blessing, then where the baptized either have yet to respond or where they eventually turn their back on the blessing, there is nothing left to say. God is gagged, the promise is voided, and the now unbaptized travels alone again in the world.

It should be obvious by now how far removed this is from a Reformed paedobaptist conception of baptism as a sign of the Abrahamic covenant of grace. You can no more undo a baptism than you can uncircumcise a son. You cannot undo a gift which has been given. You may return the gift, but in so doing the defining properties of the thing you were given do not change. Covenant signs are something, independent of the response of the recipient, even though the response of the recipient is vital. This does not deny the metaphorical sense in which circumcision can become uncircumcision (Rom 2:25). Paul’s meaning is that there is a way of behaving which treats circumcision *as though* it had not happened. This should never be so in the covenant of grace. Circumcision of the body was an outward sign of what was required inwardly, and therefore for a Jew to live as if inward circumcision of the heart was optional was to live as though the outward had not happened at all. But a law-breaking lifestyle did not mean, of course, that the outward circumcision had not actually happened.

Paul’s admonition in Rom 6:1–4 is to believers in danger of living *as though* their baptism had not happened. Throughout the life of faith baptism remains present, perpetually in the hortatory

⁵⁶ Thomas Schreiner, ‘Baptism in the Epistles’, in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 75.

⁵⁷ Salter, ‘Does Baptism Replace Circumcision?’, 28

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁰ Martin Salter, ‘The Abrahamic Covenant in Reformed Baptist Perspective’, *Them* 40.1 (2015): 44n52.

mood. The baptism in water into Christ's death must correspond to the baptism in the Spirit into new life. The outward must line-up with the inward. It is because paedobaptists understand baptism, like circumcision, to be the speaking of a promise *before* it is the confession of its receipt, a gift given to be received in solemn faith and profound joy, that we believe it can be administered as a covenant sign to the children of believers. 'The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered.'⁶¹ But every baptism speaks a promise which requires an answer. Regeneration, cleansing, incorporation, faith, the Spirit, union with Christ, justification, these are the gifts given by the covenant Lord which baptism signifies and seals, and to reject the gifts of the King is to reject his rule. It declares an end of friendship and the birth of covenant hostility. Calvin says, 'We receive nothing from this sacrament except as much as we get by faith. If we are lacking faith, it will be a witness to us to accuse us before God that we have not believed the promise which is given in baptism.'⁶² Which is a way of saying we always get *something* from this sacrament.

To baptize an infant is to elevate the seriousness of baptism and to highlight the importance of faith as part of the covenant of grace. For without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). With faith, baptism becomes an effectual means of grace. Without faith, with grace spurned, the sign of covenant blessings becomes the promise of covenant curses, and the baptized in their unbelief live continually as a marked man or woman. Once baptized, always baptized. From baptism onwards, a child bears the family name of the triune God and he or she either brings shame on the household of God and judgment on themselves, or lives within the Father's care and show themselves to be inheritors of the kingdom of light.⁶³

Gentry and Wellum say, 'The New Testament knows nothing of one who is "in Christ" who is not regenerate, effectually called of the Father, born of the Spirit, justified, holy, and awaiting glorification.'⁶⁴ This is not just explicitly false when viewed in the light of what Christ himself says (John 15:2); it also guts the Christian life of its covenantal context publicly proclaimed in baptism. It seems that the New Testament does know of those who have been sanctified by the blood of the covenant, and yet who expose themselves to more severe punishment by spurning the Son (Heb 10:29). God cannot be gagged, his promise cannot be voided, and no one who has been baptized with water in the triune name ever travels alone again.

Let God be true and every baptized person a liar.

⁶¹ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 28.6.

⁶² Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1541 French Edition*, 517.

⁶³ For a moving and winsome example of how to let baptism speak in the hortatory mood, see Douglas Wilson's challenge to Christopher Hitchens in the conclusion to *Is Christianity Good for the World? A Debate* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2008). Wilson calls Hitchens to see that he carries in his person 'the standing obligations of repentance, belief, and continued discipleship. Your Christian name *Christopher* means "bearer of Christ," your baptism means the same thing, and the Third Commandment requires you not to bear or carry that name in vain. Some, as you have done, revolt against the terms of this discipleship, but it does not mean that the demands of discipleship are somehow negated or revoked' (66). This is a strongly applied form of what *The Larger Catechism*, Question 167, means by the 'needful but much neglected duty of improving our baptism.'

⁶⁴ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 692.

4. Conclusion

Karl Barth argued that unless infant baptism can be shown to be of the very essence of the doctrine of baptism itself then it lacks all theological credibility. This is an insightful challenge to those who gladly confess paedobaptism, and I think Barth is entirely right to demand it of us. Infant baptism is not an appendix to baptism proper. 'It ought to be a visible part of the very foundations of the doctrine of baptism and of Christian doctrine in general.'⁶⁵

I am the first to admit that what I have written here is far from equal to the challenge of Barth's words. I have attempted to locate, however, where such a defense of infant baptism might start from and how it may answer the questions asked of it. As a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, any doctrine of baptism must begin with that covenant and with Abraham our great covenant father. Explored within that context, we see that Abraham is subservient to Christ, and we see that in Abraham God works to renew Christ's people by giving in grace what Adam had surrendered as command, the mandate to fill the earth with godly seed. The doctrine of covenant signs is, at every turn, the doctrine of grace—what we receive from God is his promise to be our God and to have us as his people. We do not self-constitute as members of his family; we are included under his wings as he spreads them over us in covenant love. And so at the heart of baptism is a theology of Fatherly care and lavish blessing, hand in hand with an anthropology of helplessness and dependence. These things are nowhere more visibly demonstrated than in the baptism of infants.

For you, little child, Jesus Christ has come, he has fought, he has suffered. For you he entered the shadow of Gethsemane and the horror of Calvary. For you he uttered the cry, 'It is finished!' For you he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and there he intercedes—for you, little child, even though you do not know it. But in this way the word of the Gospel becomes true. 'We love him, because he first loved us.'⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Karl Barth, *CD IV/4*, 169.

⁶⁶ French Reformed Baptismal Liturgy.

The Abrahamic Covenant in Reformed Baptist Perspective

— Martin Salter —

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Abstract: Within the intra-Reformed debate over baptism, covenant theology is a crucial aspect in determining one's position. This paper argues that a proper understanding of the trajectory of the Abrahamic covenant necessitates credobaptism. In particular it explores the idea of covenant fidelity, noting the requirement and failure under the old administration, and the fulfilment in Christ as he exhausts covenant curses, and fulfils the righteous requirements. As a consequence, New Covenant children of Abraham are born of the Spirit, and trace their Abrahamic sonship through faith-union with Christ. The result is that their covenant status is sure and unbreakable.

The debate between the classically Reformed and the Reformed Baptists regarding the proper subjects of baptism has raged for the last 400 years. While it shows little sign of being resolved this side of the *Parousia* headway can be made by a careful consideration of God's covenant with Abraham. B. B. Warfield once famously stated, 'God established His church in the days of Abraham and put children into it. They must remain there until He puts them out. He has nowhere put them out. They are still then members of His Church and as such entitled to its ordinances.'¹ This, of course, raises questions over terminology. What does it mean to be in the 'church'; or for that matter in the covenant community? It is the contention of this paper that a proper understanding of the fulfilment trajectory of the Abrahamic covenant leads to a Reformed *credobaptist* theology.

1. The Covenant, The Signs, and The Things Signified

Biblical covenants consist of parties, promises, stipulations, and signs. In that respect the Abrahamic covenant is no different. The parties are God and Abraham along with his seed and their households (Gen 17:7). The promise is that God will bless Abraham with land and a dynasty (Gen 17:4–7). More specifically Abraham is promised, in vv. 4–7 that he will be the father of many nations (וְהָיִיתָ לְאָב) (Gen 17:4–7).

¹ Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Polemics of Infant Baptism," in *Studies in Theology*, The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, 10 vols., repr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 9:408.

(המון גוים). The stipulation is that Abraham and successive generations ought to walk before God and be blameless (Gen 17:1, 9–13), and the sign of the covenant is circumcision—a seal of the promise God made to Abraham (Gen 17:10–13). Creation themes occur at a number of points in the passage. First, Abraham, like Adam, is given a name by God (Gen 1:26; 17:5). Second, Abraham, like Adam, is to be fruitful (פרה – Gen 1:28; 17:6). Third, circumcision is to be administered on the eighth day, the beginning of a new week—indeed, the beginning of a new creation.

Three elements of this covenant are particularly noteworthy here: the scope of the promise, the stipulations, and the sign. First, the scope of the promise to Abraham appears to contain a wide and a narrow focus. In Gen 17:1–8 the promise contains both a universal and more localized national perspective. Abraham will be the father of ‘many nations’ (המון גוים), as his name change signifies.² Both nations and kings will come from Abraham, and successive generations will become a people possessing the land of Canaan. Williamson argues for three distinct identifiable groups within the promises of Gen 17:4–8. These are the multitudinous nations (vv. 4–6b), Abraham’s royal progeny (v. 6c), and Abraham’s physical seed (vv. 7–8).³ Williamson argues that it is with the ‘royal line’ of Abraham’s seed that God will perpetuate and fulfill the everlasting covenant.⁴ Sarna, commenting on the phrase ‘multitude of nations,’ notes that it may refer to the Edomites, Midianites, Ishmaelites, and other peoples descended from Abraham, but ‘the phrase has a more universal application in that a larger segment of humanity looks upon Abraham as its spiritual father.’⁵ DeRouchie notes that ‘throughout the OT, the plural form “nations” [גוים] most commonly refers to political entities larger than tribes and usually not including Israel.’⁶ The detail is significant as we have here an early indication that Abraham’s fatherhood will be more than merely biological. Through Abraham’s offspring all the nations would one day come to know God’s blessing (cf. Gen 12:3), and have Abraham as their adoptive father. Indeed the switch from the second person singular (v. 9) to the second person plural (v. 10) suggests a distinction between God’s universal plan for the nations (and spiritual descendants for Abraham), and the particular administration with Abraham’s physical descendants.⁷ While circumcision is given for an era of this covenant’s administration, there are already signals within the Abrahamic covenant that a new sort of creation is the trajectory of the narrative.

Second, the stipulations and conditions are important to note here. In v. 1 Abraham is instructed to ‘walk before me and be blameless’ (התהלך לפני והיה תמים) In vv. 9–13 Abraham and his descendants are instructed to keep the covenant (ואתה את־בריתי תשמר אתה וזרעך אחריך לדורתם), and any

²T. Desmond Alexander, “Abraham Re-Assessed Theologically: The Abraham Narrative and the New Testament Understanding of Justification by Faith,” in *He Swore on Oath: Biblical Themes from Genesis 12–50*, ed. R.S. Hess, P.E. Satterthwaite, and G.J. Wenham (Cambridge: Tyndale, 1993), 17–18.

³Paul R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and its Covenantal Development in Genesis*, JSOTSup 315 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 151–74.

⁴Ibid., 173–74.

⁵Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1989), 124.

⁶Jason S. DeRouchie, “Father of a Multitude: New Covenant Ecclesiology in Old Testament Perspective,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Mediating Position Between Dispensational & Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, forthcoming).

⁷Hamilton highlights the switch between second person singular and plural in the section. Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 468.

uncircumcised male will be cut off as a covenant breaker (ונכרתה הנפש ההוא מעמיה את־בריתי', v. 14). Bruce Waltke is alert to this important narrative tension as he notes, 'the implicit question of this scene—"Will Abraham respond with righteousness and covenant fidelity?"—forms the underlying tension.'⁸ The covenant with Adam ended in curse due to disobedience. The covenant with Noah ended with the curse of Babel for the same reason. With Gen 1–11 in the background of God's covenant with Abraham a huge question mark looms over the outcome of this relationship if it is in any sense dependent upon human obedience. Notable here is the real threat and possibility of covenantal infidelity. The everlasting covenant (vv. 7, 13, 19), while guaranteed by the faithfulness of God, also requires the faithfulness of the human parties. The various administrations of the covenant of grace heighten the tension between God's faithfulness and the unfaithfulness of the people, as successive generations prove themselves unfaithful. This tension is only resolved by God himself as both the covenant requirements and covenant curses are exhausted in Christ.

Third, the sign, circumcision, serves to signify a number of things. First, the sign testified to God's promise of land, blessing, and a dynasty.⁹ Second, the sign reminds the people of the stipulation to walk blamelessly before God. Third, in the progression of salvation history it served to mark out a physical seed, a nation, and a male line to the Christ.¹⁰ In addition, the prophetic application of the rite, as well as Paul's words in Romans 4:11, suggest a spiritual meaning to the rite—that righteousness comes by faith.¹¹ Thus, the sign of the covenant contains national, typological, and spiritual realities.¹² As a sign it was given to all male members of a Jewish household, including slaves. Genesis 17:12 reads: "For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring." It is not just biological children who bear the sign, but any male within the household. We are told in Gen 14:14 that Abraham had 318 trained men in his household—this was, quite literally, a major operation. Ethnicity is non-determinative. Slaves bought from foreigners are part of the household, partakers in the covenant God made with Abraham, and are therefore, to be circumcised. The genealogical principle

⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 257.

⁹ Hamilton describes circumcision as a 'confirmation sign' testifying to belief in the promises to Abraham. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 472. It is simply worth noting at this stage that of the many references to the Abrahamic covenant in the OT almost all refer to land as the primary promise of the Abrahamic covenant. See Gen 28:4, 13; 35:12; Ex 6:8; 32:13; 33:1; Lev 26:42; Num 31:11; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 30:20; 34:4; Josh 24:2–4.

¹⁰ Stephen J. Wellum, "Baptism and the Relationship Between the Covenants," in *Believer's Baptism*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 155.

¹¹ Rom 4:11 is made to some heavy lifting by paedobaptists. While I am not entirely persuaded of the argument, I will concede the point, since it does not detract from my argument.

¹² This explains why Ishmael receives the sign of the covenant, yet the writer is explicit that the covenant is not with him, but with Isaac (Gen 17:20–27). Ishmael is, as Jewett puts it, the fox which spoils the paedobaptist vineyard. 'If circumcision "embraces one in the covenant exactly as Christian baptism," . . . then how is it possible that *both* the son born of the flesh and the son born of the promise were circumcised?' Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism & The Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 100. It is precisely because of the multiple signification of circumcision that Ishmael can be circumcised. The interest of this paper is in the covenant trajectory and fulfillment, and the implications of that covenant's *telos*.

encompasses ‘those who are not your offspring’ (Gen 17:12). It may be better to view the Abrahamic covenant as containing a ‘household principle’ rather than a strict ‘genealogical principle.’¹³

In summary, within the Abrahamic covenant, in Gen 17, we can observe three important things. First, a trajectory toward Abraham’s adoptive fatherhood of many nations; second, the stipulation to walk blamelessly and keep covenant faithfully, which raises an implicit tension for the unfolding narrative; and third a covenant sign which signifies national, typological, and spiritual realities. Whilst the covenant entails a temporal administration it points beyond itself toward a typological and spiritual fulfillment, at which point the old wineskins may not be useful any longer.

2. Trajectories and Fulfillments

What becomes of the seed of Abraham? How does Abraham’s grand narrative fit into God’s grand narrative? The covenant of grace, as a theological concept, is useful, so long as it is remembered that God’s covenant with Abraham is a narrative with a trajectory.¹⁴ The tragedy of Israel’s history is that, despite the repeated prophetic call to circumcise hearts (Deut 10:16), the call went unheeded in large-scale fashion. In the eighth-century BC Isaiah declares God’s testimony that “Israel does not know, my people do not understand . . . a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption!” (Isa 1:3–4). Subsequently Jeremiah delivers God’s verdict: “even the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart” (Jer 9:26). In Deut 30:6 God promised that post-exile he would be the one to circumcise Israel’s heart.¹⁵ The only hope for the children of Abraham is a new heart and new Spirit (Ezek 36:26)—nothing short of a new creation.

The prophecies of Deuteronomy 30:6, Isaiah 52, Ezekiel 36, and Jeremiah 31 reveal the problem and the solution. In short, the problem is the people. While some were regenerate it seems many were not. Their hearts were hard, and their necks stiff. They broke the covenant. The tension intrinsic to Gen 17, that of covenant infidelity, is amplified in successive generations, culminating in the crisis of exile. The solution, according to the prophets, is a New Covenant, which will be unbreakable unlike the old administration.

¹³ This is an area where much modern paedobaptist practise is inconsistent. For example, how would such a principle be worked out with regard to foster children, or live-in nannies, or even multiple generations. Would an aged father who came to live with the family be expected to be baptised, or if a grandfather was considered the head of the family would grandchildren be baptised if their parents were not professing Christians? It is in such areas where the genealogical principle is appealed to but not applied in the fashion stipulated in the Abrahamic covenant. Booth’s chapter on ‘Household’s and Redemption’ in *Children of the Promise* is illustrative of the point. He consistently fails to draw out the implications of his assertion that covenant privileges come to entire households. He moves from the OT household, to NT children of believers, but never addresses the issues raised above. See Robert R. Booth, *Children of the Promise: The Biblical Case for Infant Baptism* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1995), 120–38.

¹⁴ Wellum, “Relationship Between the Covenants,” 12627.

¹⁵ DeRouchie observes that circumcision was used metaphorically to signify covenant fidelity or infidelity. See Jason S. DeRouchie, “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor.” *BBR* 14.2 (2004): 196–200.

Moon, in his analysis of Jeremiah's New Covenant prophecy, notes that in Jeremiah the 'new covenant' is never contrasted with the 'old' or 'first' covenant.¹⁶ The contrast presented is not between 'old' and 'new,' but between 'broken' and, by implication, unbreakable. Moon states 'the way in which that contrary covenant is presented is as a broken covenant . . . the contrast to the new covenant is infidelity.'¹⁷ In Jeremiah 7:21–28 and 11:1–13 covenant breaking is expressed in terms of failing to give ear, and it has been a universal problem since the beginning.¹⁸ The book of consolation (Jer 30–31) promises to overturn the state of affairs created by the people's infidelity. As Moon states, 'universal infidelity is overturned into universal fidelity.'¹⁹ YHWH will make the people into what they always ought to have been.²⁰

This leads to the positive description of this new covenant (vv. 33–34). The emphasis is on what YHWH will do to transform his people from covenant breakers to faithful covenant people. YHWH promises to do a number of things to make the vision a reality. He will put his law (תורה) in their inner parts (בקרבים) and write it upon their hearts (ועל-לבם אכתבנה). The former, בקרבים (the inner parts) could mean 'in the midst' but given the parallel in the second half of the promise, 'inner parts' seems the more likely sense. Given the imagery of a written *torah* it is perhaps most likely that the Decalogue is in view, though this is not specified.²¹ This action overwrites the sin engraved on the people's hearts referred to in Jer 17:1.²² The internalization of *torah* makes covenant membership more personal and individual, and is the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 6:6: 'these words which I command you today shall be upon your hearts.' YHWH will be their God and they will be his people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour saying 'know YHWH' for they will all know YHWH, from the smallest to the greatest. Lundbom suggests that the phrase 'know YHWH' is an echo of Jeremiah's own mission to the people outlined in Jeremiah 5:4: כי לא ידעו דרך יהוה משפט אלהיהם. This would further suggest that to 'know YHWH' was akin to the calls to listen, remember, and obey in Deuteronomy 5:1, 32; 6:3, 25, *et passim*.²³ Jeremiah envisions a day when his role, calling people back to covenant fidelity, will no longer be necessary. The fulfillment of God's covenant promise to Abraham will require a law written on

¹⁶ Joshua N. Moon, *Jeremiah's New Covenant: An Augustinian Reading*, JTISup 3 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 185.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 185–86. It should be noted that Moon's analysis of Jer 31:31–34 is not arguing for a covenant that is chronologically or qualitatively new, but rather for a future idyllic state of faithfulness in contrast to infidelity. It is thus possible to be part of such a covenant with YHWH at any moment in Israel's salvation history. Moon's thesis does not adequately deal with the temporal language in Jer 31 (vv. 1, 6, 17, 22, 27, 29, 31, 34) and his exegesis better supports the argument being made in this paper.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 186–202. Both passages speak of covenant breaking. The term שמע is used five times in Jer 7:21–28 and nine times in Jer 11:1–14, the last two of these speaking of YHWH's refusal to listen to the people. The phrase ולא יהטו את-אזנם is also used eight times (Jer 7:24, 26; 11:8; 17:23; 25:4; 34:14; 35:15; 44:5).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 226.1

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

²¹ Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 468.

²² In Jer 17:1 the sin is engraved on the 'tablets' (לוח) of their hearts. The same word, לוח, is used to describe the tablets of stone in Exod. 24:12; 31:18; 32:15–16, 19; 34:1, 4, 28–29.

²³ Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 469.

minds and hearts, not tablets of stone. Each person will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. Sin will be forgiven and remembered no more.²⁴ That is the promise of Jeremiah 31:31–34.²⁵

This raises a question regarding the continuity and discontinuity within administrations across the covenant of grace. Almost all of the elements mentioned in Jeremiah's prophecy are already attested within the OT. For example, the righteous OT believer had the law in his heart (Ps 37:31). People knew the Lord (Ps 9:10), and forgiveness of sins (Ps 32:1–2). For this reason Booth views the New Covenant as the expansion and renewal of the old covenant—they are essentially one covenant.²⁶ Whilst agreeing with Booth's point on the essential unity of the covenant of grace there is also significant discontinuity in Jeremiah's New Covenant. Jeremiah 31:34 states "they will *all* know me from the least of them to the greatest."²⁷ It could be argued that what is meant here is all without distinction—that is, all types of people, not just kings, prophets, or priests. The phrase 'least to the greatest' may echo Jeremiah 5:4–5 where Jeremiah speaks of the poor and foolish, and the great (הגדלים). The phrase, least to the greatest (מקטנם ועד־גדולם) also appears in 6:13 and 8:10 where the whole community is characterized as greedy for gain. This is contrasted with the new covenant 'where the *whole community* will be characterized by the knowledge of God.'²⁸ However, there were members of the Old Covenant who did not hold office, yet were, apparently, regenerate. Hannah would be a good example of someone who did not hold office or special appointment, yet, on the face of things, knew her Lord (1 Sam 1:10–16). Interestingly Samuel, her son, and a covenant member who ministered before the Lord in the Tabernacle, apparently did not know the Lord until he was probably an adolescent (1 Sam 3:7). The new thing about the New Covenant is not regeneration; it is that *every* member of the New Covenant without exception will experience

²⁴ Horton states that 'it is possible to be in the covenant externally but not actually be united to Christ through faith.' See Michael Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 185. It is difficult to square such a statement with the description of Jeremiah 31. Nehemiah Coxe states 'I conceive the limiting of a new covenant interest to the grant of an external and temporary privilege only, to be utterly inconsistent with the promises of the covenant itself (such as these: Isaiah 54:13; 59:21; Jeremiah 31:33, 34; Ezekiel 36:26, 27 with Hebrews 8 and many others of like import)!' Nehemiah Coxe, *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ*, repr. (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic, 2005), 81.

²⁵ Reformed Baptists often point to the promises as including children in Jer 32. This is true and much of the language also speaks about the restoration of Jerusalem and the land. The agrarian principle, like the genealogical principle is typological. Dispensational and Covenantal paedobaptist schemes both fail to grasp the typological fulfillment—in one case with respect to 'the land', in the other with respect to 'the seed.' Another common argument is the appeal to the promise to 'you and your children' at the end of Acts 2. In response it is worth noting that the promise is '*repent and be baptised* and you will receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.' This obviously poses no problem to a Baptist theology. Further, Peterson points out the last clause includes 'those who are far off' and notes the descriptor, πᾶσιν τοῖς εἰς μακράν, refers to those far off geographically. See Ps 64:6; Isa 57:19; Acts 22:21; Eph 2:13, 17. David G. Peterson, *The Acts of The Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Nottingham: Apollos, 2009), 156.

²⁶ Booth, *Children of the Promise*, 45.

²⁷ Cf. also Isa 54:13: 'All your sons will be taught by the Lord.'

²⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Jeremiah*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 330.

regeneration.²⁹ Each and every member of the New Covenant will personally know the Lord.³⁰ As Bozak states, ‘every person will be changed; the merismus *lmq nm w’d-gdwlw* [‘from the least of them to the greatest’] expresses totality by two extremes as well as by polysemy.’³¹

The ׀ at the end of v. 34 is causal, giving the actuating principle for the all of the aforementioned.³² Shead concludes, ‘the true power of new covenant forgiveness is exerted inwardly, universally, and individually,’³³ and Moon states, ‘Forgiveness is a *prerequisite* to the new relationship.’³⁴ As Brueggemann puts it ‘this line states the basis for all the foregoing.’³⁵ In other words YHWH’s decisive act of forgiveness makes the new covenant possible, and all the associated blessings follow (i.e. law written on heart, knowing the Lord etc.). It is this decisive act of forgiveness which also serves to make the new covenant unbreakable. To anticipate the direction of argument, it is because Christ (*the seed of Abraham*) exhausts the covenant requirements and curses, that those in union with him are viewed as perfect and perpetual covenant keepers. To put the force of Jeremiah 31:31–34 most bluntly, without forgiveness new covenant membership is not possible. Definitive forgiveness opens the way to inner transformation. It cannot be maintained that an individual may be viewed as partaking of the new covenant in an external sense only, without any experience of its transformative blessings.

In summary of this section, the promise of the New Covenant is that it will be, in contrast with the ‘broken’ covenant, unbreakable. It is secured by the definitive forgiveness of God, and brings with it inner transformation and personal knowledge of God for all within the New Covenant community. At this point let us examine one NT passage, Gal 3, to see if this thesis fits with Paul’s argument regarding the seed of Abraham.

²⁹ See also Eph 1:13–14 which views the gift of the Spirit as universal, in the sense of all God’s New Covenant people without exception.

³⁰ Samuel E. Waldron and Richard C. Barcellos, *A Reformed Baptist Manifesto: The New Covenant Constitution of the Church* (Palmdale, CA.: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004), 71–77. *Contra* Neill who argues that the New Covenant’s ‘newness’ lies in its form since Jesus fulfils the ceremonial law. While Neill’s interpretation attempts to situate itself within the context of Hebrews, to do so it must tear Jer 31 from its own context since any mention of ceremonial law is entirely absent from Jer 31. See Jeffrey D. Neill, “The Newness of the New Covenant,” in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), 127–55. And *contra* Richard Pratt who, in essence, sees the promises of the New Covenant as only being fulfilled at the consummation, which would seem to completely undermine the purpose of citation by the author of Hebrews. See Richard L. Pratt Jr., “Infant Baptism in the New Covenant,” in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, 15674.

³¹ Barbara A. Bozak, *Life “Anew”: A Literary-Theological Study of Jer 30–31*, *Analecta Biblica* 122 (Rome: Edizione Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991), 122.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Andrew G. Shead, *A Mouth Full of Fire: The Word of God in the Words of Jeremiah*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 29 (Downers Grove, IL.: Apollos, 2012), 203.

³⁴ Moon, *Jeremiah’s New Covenant*, 242, emphasis mine.

³⁵ Brueggemann, *Jeremiah*, 294.

3. Types and Seeds

Typology is the study of OT realities (persons, events, institutions, etc.—types) which God has designed to correspond to, and prefigure, their antitypical fulfilments in the NT.³⁶ Abraham’s ‘seed’ is the type which finds fulfilment in Isaac, the nation, the Davidic King, and ultimately the Lord Jesus. He is Abraham’s seed—the antitypical fulfilment of the type. This is the argument employed by Paul in Gal 3:6–29. Paul affirms that God gave promises to Abraham’s seed and immediately clarifies that the referent of the promise was an individual—Christ.³⁷ Yet Paul must surely know that the promise included the physical descendants of Israel. It is clear from Gen 12:7 that the land is promised to the seed (γενεα/σπέρμα) of Abraham. In Gen 13:16 and 15:5 Abraham is promised that his seed will be as the dust of the earth and the stars of the heaven. That naturally refers to more than one man. In Gen 15:13 the seed will be oppressed for 400 years—a clear reference to the nation in Egypt. In Gen 17 the covenant is to be between God and Abraham and his seed through the generations (דור). Circumcision is a sign for each male in subsequent generations, not one individual who is the seed. Paul is aware of this but his explanation in Gal 3 makes clear that, if we may put it like this, there is seed and then there is seed. Wellum identifies four ways in which ‘seed’ language is used with regard to the Abrahamic covenant. Seed may be natural (including people like Ishmael and foreign slaves in the household), special (the elect line running through Isaac, Jacob, and the nation of Israel), Messianic (as in Gal 3:16), and spiritual (used to refer to believing Jews and Gentiles).³⁸ Alexander argues that Paul is developing Genesis’s interest in the royal line of seed (Gen 17:6; 49:8–12), which comes to a climax in the Davidic Messiah.³⁹ There are multiple referents in fulfilment of the promise with the ultimate antitypical fulfilment being Christ himself. Infant baptism is often appealed to on the grounds of the continuity of the genealogical principle espoused in Gen 17. That principle, it is argued, is nowhere annulled and is therefore in perpetuity. However, if Christ is the fulfilment of the seed type, then it is legitimate to ask whether a change in the genealogical principle has in fact occurred across covenants. If, historically speaking, all of the promises of Abraham come to a climax in Christ then we need to consider how those promises flow out the other side. Perhaps, the question is not so much whether the genealogical principle is still in force, but how it is applied if Christ is *the* seed.

Paul’s argument in Gal 3 is illuminating at this point. In Gal 3:14 we learn that the blessing given to Abraham (presumably justification in context)⁴⁰ came to those not in Jewish households through Christ, by faith, and with the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ Romans 8:9 reminds us that ‘if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ’ (NIV). As Fung notes, there is ‘an intimate relationship between these three ideas: justification by faith, sonship to Abraham by faith, and reception of the Spirit by faith.’⁴²

³⁶ Definition take from the discussion in Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 103.

³⁷ Jason S. DeRouchie and Jason C. Meyer, “Christ or Family as the “Seed” of Promise? An Evaluation of N.T. Wright on Galatians 3:16,” *SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 36–40.

³⁸ Wellum, “Relationship Between the Covenants,” 133–35.

³⁹ Alexander, “Abraham Re-Assessed,” 25.

⁴⁰ Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 150.

⁴¹ The genitive τοῦ πνεύματος at the end of v. 14 is exegetical—i.e. the promise, that is the Holy Spirit.

⁴² Fung, *Galatians*, 152.

The forensic and experiential come together in this relationship of sonship to Abraham through Christ.⁴³ We see in the Abrahamic (and subsequently the Mosaic) covenant the possibility and threat of covenant breaking through infidelity. In Jeremiah 31 we noted the solution was to be a covenant which could not be broken by the infidelity of the people. The question remains as to how this can come to pass; that question is answered by Paul here in Gal 3:6–29. Paul begins by restating the promise to Abraham (cf. Gen 12:1–3) that all nations would be blessed through Abraham (vv. 8–9). Verses 10–14 demonstrate how covenant breakers can find themselves under covenant blessings instead of covenant curses. In v. 10 Paul affirms that those who rely on observing the law are under a curse, quoting Deuteronomy 27:26, the *locus classicus* on covenant curses. Significantly, the Hebrew word, אָרַר (curse), appears twelve times in Deuteronomy 27. The LXX equivalent is ἐπικατάρατος. In the NT it only appears here in Gal 3:10, 13. In v. 13 Paul explicitly connects the covenant curses with Christ’s atoning death. The conclusion in v. 14 is that the blessing given to Abraham comes to the Gentiles precisely because Christ has exhausted both the covenant requirements and the covenant curses, and therefore the Spirit is given to those who have faith.⁴⁴ *The crucial observation here is that Paul, in Gal 3, has connected the promises to Abraham, the Mosaic administration, the promise of the prophets, and the work of Christ into a coherent narrative, centered on the question of covenant fidelity.* The consequence is that Gentiles now find themselves members of the covenant community through the work of Christ. With the covenant requirements and curses exhausted in Christ covenant infidelity is an impossibility for those in the covenant community. As we shall see below, this covenant membership is inextricably connected to union with Christ and all that entails. At this point it may be objected that Old Covenant members, in the same way, by faith, were partakers of Christ and the Spirit. Yet, under the old administration it was the real threat and possibility that a person could be a member of the covenant community and yet break covenant. This is the situation addressed by the prophets. Now Christ has come and fulfilled the covenant requirements and exhausted the covenant curses the promise to Abraham is fulfilled. As a consequence new covenant members find themselves connected to Abraham *through* Christ. The spiritual adoption into Abraham’s family is by virtue of faith in Christ. There is no connection to Abraham other than *via* Christ, by faith. Christ’s covenantal mediatorship means covenantal infidelity is now impossible because in him the requirements are met and the curses exhausted. This is no mere legal fiction, but an experienced reality based upon the faith-union and incorporation into Christ as Paul develops in vv. 26–29. In vv. 15–23 Paul is defending himself against the charge of antinomianism and merely asserting the purpose of the old administration. The Law was a good thing, and in no way opposed to the Abrahamic promise, but its purpose was temporary, to act as a guardian and guide toward the fulfillment in Christ.⁴⁵ The promise is everlasting but the administration temporary.

⁴³ A. Oepke, “βαπτίζω,” *TDNT* 1:541.

⁴⁴ Jeffrey R. Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law: Paul’s Citation of Genesis and Deuteronomy in Gal 3:8–10*, *WUNT* 2/133 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 183–200.

⁴⁵ Moo, *Galatians*, 225. Here I disagree with those who see the Abrahamic covenant as a covenant of promise and the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of works. Grace and obligation are present across all the covenants and the subtle tension between them is often unnoticed. A good example of carefully observing both promise and obligation can be seen in J. Gary Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 6 (Nottingham: Apollos, 1998), 41–66. For more on this discussion, opposing viewpoints can be seen in O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 54–57; and Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology*, 35–50.

In vv. 26–29 we see that believers are sons of God through faith in Christ.⁴⁶ Paul’s polemic has been building to this point. If any person is in any sense a son (or daughter) of God it is because they have faith in Christ Jesus—sonship comes through faith (Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). The διὰ here functions instrumentally and most likely describes the faith (τῆς πίστεως) of the Galatians, not the faithfulness of Christ.⁴⁷ That faith is the means by which our union with Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) is secured and maintained.⁴⁸ The γάρ (for) in v. 27 serves to introduce further clarification as to the nature of this new relationship. They have clothed themselves with Christ in baptism (ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε).⁴⁹ As Beasley-Murray notes: ‘the concept implied in Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε (“to put on Christ”) can hardly be represented by such renderings as “to think oneself into the role of another and act accordingly” for ethical conditions are not in view in this passage.’⁵⁰ The force of Paul’s argument is to assure the Galatian Christians (and refute the opponents) that those who have faith have genuine spiritual union with Christ. ‘Putting on Christ’ speaks of the Spirit-wrought union with Christ.⁵¹ Baptism signifies that incorporation of the subject into union with Christ.⁵² Similar language and imagery is also found in Rom 6:3–4, 1 Cor 12:13, and Col 2:11–12. In Rom 6:3–4 baptism is a death and resurrection. Colossians 2:11 has a ‘putting off of the sinful nature’ and the death/resurrection motif of Rom 6:3–4. 1 Cor 12:13 says we were baptised into one body and given one Spirit to drink.⁵³ Putting these texts together gives us a picture of what it means to be baptised into Christ; it means a putting off (Col 2:11) and putting on (Gal 3:27); it means a death and resurrection (Rom 6:3–4; Col 2:11–12); and it means drinking of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). These things bring us into that living faith-union with Christ, by baptism, which also unites us to Abraham as his children.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ The phrase Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ could be translated in one of two ways. Either ‘in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith’ or ‘you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Whichever way it is translated the point remains the same, namely that sonship comes by faith.

⁴⁷ Moo, *Galatians*, 250

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁴⁹ While ‘spiritual baptism’ is possible the first readers would have surely thought the *rite* of water baptism is in view. See Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 155.

⁵⁰ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972), 147.

⁵¹ James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (London: T&T Clark, 1998), 453–54; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 225. Further see Isa 61:10 and Zech 3:3 for new clothing as a metaphor of salvation, cleansing, and renewal.

⁵² Cf. Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 12:13. That is not to say that baptism functions *ex opere operato*, but rather that, for Paul, faith, justification, Spirit-reception, and baptism all belong together, such that he can say baptism unites the believer to Christ. Without faith, of course, the subject of baptism is simply getting wet, nothing more. Like the Lord’s Supper, the efficacy of the sacrament depends upon it being anchored to faith, Christ, and the Spirit.

⁵³ Schreiner notes, ‘Paul does not argue against circumcision in Galatians by saying that baptism replaces circumcision as an initiation rite. Therefore, even though baptism and circumcision are both initiation rites they are not analogous in every respect. If Paul believed that baptism merely replaced circumcision, he almost surely would have made such an argument in Galatians, for it seems that such a declaration would have settled the debate over circumcision in Galatia decisively.’ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 257.

⁵⁴ *Contra* Douglas Wilson, who states ‘neither circumcision nor baptism primarily testifies concerning the inward state of the individual who bears the sign’ (*To A Thousand Generations* [Moscow, ID: Canon, 1996], 49). Such a statement can only be maintained by ignoring texts like Rom 6:3–4; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26–29; Col 2:11–12.

These things are nothing less than the full privileges of the new birth in salvation.⁵⁵ Moo notes that union with Christ is a central building block in Paul's theology: 'it is by believing in Christ that one is joined with him and thus receives all the benefits of that union.'⁵⁶ Wellum states, 'The New Testament knows nothing of one who is 'in Christ' who is not regenerate, effectually called of the Father, born of the Spirit, justified, holy, and awaiting glorification.'⁵⁷ According to v. 29, those who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed, and, as such, heirs according to the promise. The seed of *the seed* of Abraham will not fail to inherit the full eternal riches of salvation.⁵⁸

Therefore anyone who is now in Christ is, like Christ, one of Abraham's seed. This is the conclusion of Paul's argument in this section—it is relationship with Christ which 'relates Gentile Christians directly to Abraham and God's covenantal promise.'⁵⁹ The seed is born of Christ, but by the Spirit and water, not by physical conception and birth.⁶⁰ Paul's point in context is that Abrahamic sonship is by virtue of Christ sonship. Fung summarises nicely:

[Believers] are collectively the true seed of Abraham since, by virtue of their faith-union with Christ, they are one person in him who is the true 'issue' of Abraham (cf. v. 16) . . . justification by faith, reception of the Spirit by faith, and becoming sons of God by faith are intimately linked together as different expressions for the fulfilment of the promise.⁶¹

The sum of the argument of Gal 3 can be outlined as follows: Who are the children of Abraham? Those who are in Christ. What does it mean to be 'in Christ'? Union with Christ consists of saving faith, justification, and Spirit-reception, signed and sealed in baptism.⁶² Such a relationship is a work of the Spirit and that work effects justification. There are no non-justified, unregenerate children of Abraham

⁵⁵ Brannon Ellis rightly notes the way in which 'union with Christ' covers the whole of the application of redemption. As a Reformed paedobaptist he then ends up in a position where he denies the traditional Reformed paedobaptist distinction between external visible covenant participation and internal invisible covenant participation. Instead he offers covenant participation as always external and internal, visible and invisible, which means such a participation is either genuine or false. Brannon Ellis, "Covenantal Union and Communion," in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 79–102. Practically this means there is a deliberate admittance to new covenant blessings of those who do not show, nor may ever show, any signs of genuine covenant participation. Of course Baptists also admit people to new covenant participation knowing that they may prove false, but it is done so on a credible profession of faith. Thus Baptists attempt to preserve the purity of new covenant community at entry where paedobaptists make no such attempt.

⁵⁶ Moo, *Galatians*, 194.

⁵⁷ Wellum and Gentry, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 6–92. Of course John 15 and 1 Cor 7 do suggest a way in which it is possible to have relationship with Christ and yet fall away. Yet, whatever those passages refer to, it is less than the Pauline motif of 'ἐν Χριστῷ' here in Gal 3, otherwise a denial of the perseverance of the saints would be required. The question is whether, in the NT, you can apply the term 'covenant' to describe the relationship between Christ and the elect only or Christ and the visible church. Given Jeremiah's description of the New Covenant, the term 'covenant' only applies to the elect in the New Covenant administration.

⁵⁸ Moo, *Galatians*, 256.

⁵⁹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 158.

⁶⁰ Cf. John 3:1–20.

⁶¹ Fung, *Galatians*, 177.

⁶² N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols., Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: SPCK, 2013), 2:863–76.

in the New Covenant era. The fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant removes the dual-aspect of the covenant present in the pre-Pentecost era.⁶³ Wilson summarises the difference between credobaptist and paedobaptist accounts:

The baptistic assumption is that the covenants are *unlike* in this respect. Some Old Covenant members were regenerate, some were not. All New Covenant members are regenerate. The paedobaptist assumption is that the covenants are *alike* in this respect. Some Old Covenant members were regenerate, some were not. Some New Covenant members are regenerate, some are not.⁶⁴

This captures a crucial distinctive between the credobaptist and paedobaptist positions. The trajectory of the New Covenant points to a wholly regenerate covenant community. The sign of the old covenant anticipates, *inter alia*, the need for a circumcised heart, the promise that righteousness comes to those who have faith, and *the* seed who would open up blessing to the nations. The sign of the New Covenant celebrates all of those things as fulfilled realities. What circumcision anticipates, baptism celebrates.

The paedobaptist appeal to the dual-aspect of the covenant, while clearly present in the Old Covenant, is alien to the New Covenant. The pact is between God and Christ (Abraham's true seed) and Christ's seed (who are also Abraham's seed). The difference between Reformed paedobaptists and Reformed credobaptists lies here. Where the Reformed paedobaptist would affirm the dual-aspect of the covenant across covenants, the Reformed credobaptist would argue that in the New Covenant, there is no dual-aspect any longer. The covenant signs belong to the children of Abraham. For the paedobaptist that will necessarily include household members regenerate, as yet, or otherwise. For the credobaptist the sign is only for the household of faith.⁶⁵

⁶³ Cornelius Venema outlines the argument for the 'dual-aspect' of the covenant: Cornelius P. Venema, "Covenant Theology and Infant Baptism," in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, 212–15. Of course this raises the question of how to understand apparent apostasy in the NT letters. While space prohibits a full defence of the position I find the work done on speech-act theory in regard to warning passages, and phenomenological faith in addressing apostates as generally persuasive. See Thomas R Schreiner and Ardel B. Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001). R. Fowler White writes, 'Peter does ascribe to apostates blessings that literally belong uniquely to the elect, and he does so on the basis of their confessed faith' ("Covenant and Apostasy" in *Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros and Cons: Debating the Federal Vision*, ed. E. Calvin Beisner [Fort Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004], 212).

⁶⁴ Wilson, *To A Thousand Generations*, 34–35.

⁶⁵ Of course this raises the question of the 'credible profession' which, I believe, can come from very young children and those with learning difficulties. I do not think that a credible profession requires some kind of 'testing' as is sometimes suggested. In practise, an often overlooked point is that both sides of the debate require a credible profession of faith—the paedobaptist simply removes it one generation. This is a further inconsistency in the covenant household position. In all paedobaptist churches I know my grandfather's faith is insufficient to admit me to the font—only my father's (or in fact mother's) faith counts, which raises further questions about the consistency of the theology applied. These are exactly the sort of problems Solomon Stoddard faced in New England when he proposed the 'half-way covenant' as a solution.

4. *The Difference Between ‘Merely’, ‘Primarily’, and ‘Partially’*

As with many theological discussions, semantics play a key part. In discussion with my paedobaptist friends there is often little between us, and that difference is frequently around the varying emphasis laid on the physical and spiritual aspects of the Abrahamic covenant. Caricatures abound, and both sides of the debate can misrepresent the opposing viewpoint. Some Baptists, it is claimed, characterise the Abrahamic covenant as merely physical, while its fulfilment in the New Covenant is entirely spiritual. Some paedobaptists on the other hand wish to view the Abrahamic covenant as being primarily spiritual, as it is in the New Covenant. Booth’s *Children of the Promise* is a good example of the need to use words carefully. He quotes with approval Hodge who states “circumcision was not the sign *exclusively* of the national covenant with the Hebrews” and “circumcision was not *merely* a civil or national institution.”⁶⁶ No dissent from this dissenter. This leads Booth to his conclusion, oft repeated, that, therefore, circumcision’s *main* or *primary* purpose was to “signify and seal the promise of deliverance from sin.”⁶⁷ Booth’s claim is a *non sequitur*. The claim that circumcision does not *exclusively* signify physical privileges, does not lead to the conclusion the circumcision *primarily* signifies spiritual privileges. More nuance and care would move the discussion forward to recognise that the difference between Reformed paedobaptists and Reformed Baptists revolve around the relative emphases of words like ‘partial’. Words like ‘merely’ and ‘primarily’ flatten out the nuances and complexities present in the story of the Abrahamic covenant. Within the Abrahamic covenant there are both physical and spiritual elements present.⁶⁸ The precise nature and relationship of those elements, however, needs careful investigation if we are to understand the New Covenant developments in terms of the covenant signs and things signified. While circumcision and baptism signify spiritual realities, circumcision signifies more under the Old Covenant; namely physical descent, and a male line to Christ. Baptism is ‘not a sign of physical descent, nor is it a sign that anticipates gospel realities. Rather it is a sign that signifies a believer’s union with Christ.’⁶⁹ The sign of the New Covenant marks out the spiritual seed of Abraham, and the spiritual seed only, identified in union with Christ.⁷⁰ Another accusation often leveled at Baptists is that we deny grace to our children and treat them as little pagans (or at least we should if we are being consistent).⁷¹ In Gibson’s paper he asks, ‘can the bond between my children and

⁶⁶ Quoted in Booth, *Children of the Promise*, 100, emphasis mine.

⁶⁷ Booth, *Children of the Promise*, 99, 100, 104.

⁶⁸ A question I posed to Gibson in a previous exchange is, I think, still pertinent: ‘Does the faith of the Israelite’s parent have any bearing on his entitlement to the sign? In other words, should an unregenerate Israelite have his son circumcised? If so, why? That question, for the Baptist, reveals the difference between the old and new covenant and, therefore, between the signs of the old and new covenant.’ Martin Salter, ‘Response to David Gibson,’ *Them* 37.2 (2012): 209–10. As Coxe says “The right of the remotest generation was as much derived from Abraham and the covenant made with him, as was that of his immediate seed, and did not at all depend on the faithfulness of their immediate parents’ (*Covenant Theology*, 97).

⁶⁹ Wellum, “Relationship Between the Covenants,” 157.

⁷⁰ The reason for the change in the federal position is revealed in the practise of baptising females. In the OT era the federal representation of the covenant head (the seed of Abraham—her husband or father) did the job. In the new covenant she still requires union with the covenant/federal representative—in this case *the* seed of Abraham, Christ.

⁷¹ The Bible tells us to train our children in the fear and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4) and that God listens to the prayers of the, as yet, unregenerate (Acts 10:4). Further we recognize that conversion often happens at a

me be only a bond of nature, or can it be a bond of grace as well?⁷² The real question here is ‘what sort of grace?’ No protestant paedobaptist I know believes that their children receive *special* grace simply by virtue of being born to believing parents. If they did, experience would teach them to deny the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Baptists recognize the enormous amounts of common grace enjoyed by those within the visible church, our children included. While we are ever thankful for such common grace, we simply do not presume upon God’s special grace. In Gibson’s paper he accuses Baptists of possessing an inadequate anthropology, one of ‘the autonomous individual who relates to God outside of the normal web and complex of family relationships, societal location and covenantal structures.’⁷³ Again, Baptists, along with paedobaptists, hold in high regard the importance of family relationships, societal location, and the power of the ordinary means of grace.⁷⁴ Yet, we do not thereby minimize the importance of personal faith and the need for individual conversion. These, along with many others, are areas where charitable dialogue, the genuine desire to understand one another, and the careful use of language, would bring paedobaptists and Baptists much closer together.

5. Conclusion

A popular and helpful way to think about covenant trajectories is to ask the questions ‘who are God’s people?’, ‘where is God’s place?’, and ‘how is God’s rule and blessing manifest?’ God’s covenant with Abraham would answer those questions as follows. God’s people are Abraham and his seed. God’s place will be the Promised Land. God will rule and bless by means of his law. As the trajectory of fulfilment is traced we can see that the answers change with the inauguration of the New Covenant. God’s people are the spiritual seed of *the* seed of Abraham, Christ. God’s place is in Christ and in the church by his Holy Spirit. God rules by his law written on human hearts. For the same reason Reformed theology rejects the dispensational view of the land promises, Reformed Baptists reject the classically Reformed view of the genealogical principle. The promise is fulfilled in Christ, and then spiritually in Christ’s body, the church.

As Richard Hays has noted,

The ‘Israel’ into which Paul’s Corinthian converts were embraced was an Israel whose story had been hermeneutically reconfigured by the cross and resurrection. The result was that Jew and Gentile alike found themselves summoned by the gospel

young age (maybe even *in utero*—Luke 1:41?). In reality we believe many of the things about our children that paedobaptists believe, we simply do not presume upon their regeneration, and therefore, do not apply the sign of New Covenant membership without a credible profession of faith.

⁷² David Gibson, “Fathers of faith, my fathers now!’ On Abraham, covenant, and the theology of paedobaptism,” in *Themelios* 40.1 (2015): 29.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁴ Scripture is clear on this. Unbelieving spouses and children enjoy a special blessings of their familial relationship to believers (1 Cor 7:14). Unbelieving spouses may even be won over without words (1 Pet 3:1). But no protestant, so far as I know, thinks that the status of the spouse (ἡγίασται) or children (ἅγια) in 1 Cor 7:14 is a state of regeneration. It is something, and something significant, but it is less than regeneration, and therefore less than (in the view of this author) New Covenant membership, given all that we have observed about the nature of New Covenant membership.

story to a sweeping re-evaluation of their identities, an imaginative paradigm shift so comprehensive that it can only be described as a ‘conversion of the imagination.’⁷⁵

Such a conversion requires new symbols and new praxis for a new community—new wine requires new wineskins. The narrative trajectory of the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant leads toward a Reformed Baptist theology.

⁷⁵ Richard Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 5–6.

Romans 4 and the Justification of Abraham in Light of Perspectives New and Newer

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Abstract: Romans 4 remains a central text in the debate over the New Perspective on Paul. This article locates that debate in the context of a wider discussion concerning the place of justification in Paul's theology before responding to a fresh reading of Rom 4 by N. T. Wright. His proposal that Abraham's belief in the God who justifies the ungodly refers to God's promise to include the Gentiles is outlined and critiqued with the aid of Wright's earlier and rather different readings of the chapter. In closing, the article accounts for Abraham's role within the argument of Romans and the place of justification in Paul's theology.

As if justification in Romans 4 were not already an overly-ambitious subject, I want to begin with a word about justification in the 20th century.¹ Naturally this demands gross oversimplification, but I persist in the hope that it will accomplish three helpful things. First, in a complex and diffuse debate, it might help to orient the reader to its most basic shape and character. Second, and more specifically, it might offer a framework in which to understand the significance of what is being said about justification in Romans 4. Third, it will highlight areas of the current discussion of justification we can only touch on in this article but are worth at least being aware of.

Narrowing the focus somewhat, but still dealing in generalisations, I will then sketch the present state of the New Perspective on Paul (NPP) discussion. Despite the fact that interest is growing in perspectives yet newer, perhaps this is timely given the long-awaited publication of N. T. Wright's *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*.² While the seeds of much that it contains are sown in earlier works,

¹This article is based on a conference paper delivered at the John Owen Centre Conference 2014. The brief requested "A study of Romans 4 setting out the significance of Abraham in the chapter, its wider theological significance for debates on justification especially the NPP, and its application to the believer today."

²N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols., Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: SPCK, 2013).

there are a few new elements which distinguish Wright further from fellow proponents of the NPP and which (perhaps on account of its formidable length) seem to have largely gone unnoticed, not least a provocative new approach to Rom 4. That being the case, I will outline Wright's new reading before critiquing it, aided not least by Wright's own earlier exegesis of the chapter. In so doing there will be an opportunity to reflect upon the significance of Abraham in Romans, and justification in Paul.

1. Justification in the 20th Century

Put simply, the doctrine of justification in the 20th century has endured one of two fates. It has either retained its traditional meaning but been declared peripheral to Paul's concerns, or it has remained central by undergoing a degree of redefinition.

The former of these can be traced back to William Wrede and Albert Schweitzer for whom justification by faith was a 'polemical doctrine'³ and a 'subsidiary crater'⁴ respectively, serving only the limited purpose of justifying Paul's Gentile mission and his stance vis-à-vis the Law. To their minds, the fact that Paul only spoke in such terms when engaged in the defence of that mission (principally in Galatians and Romans) signals its secondary importance, as does the fact that his opposition of works to faith makes it impossible to derive an ethic from the doctrine of justification. Despite lying fallow for a time, the view was championed by E.P. Sanders who exchanged Schweitzer's terminology of mysticism for his own preferred term 'participatory eschatology,' but retained his basic thrust.⁵ Like Wrede and Schweitzer, Sanders was content to label Paul's arguments concerning justification (especially Rom 1–4) as somewhat self-contradictory, confident that Paul's theological heart lay elsewhere. More recently still, the view is enjoying a renaissance and has found a champion in Douglas Campbell, who contributes a chapter to the recent *Four Views on the Apostle Paul*.⁶ He identifies Paul's theological centre with the acronym PPME: *pneumatologically participatory martyrological eschatology*.⁷ Not content to see justification relegated to a Pauline periphery, Campbell attempts the 'exegetical elimination' of several key texts in Paul—chiefly large portions of Rom 1–4—by ascribing their forensic framework to his

³William Wrede, *Paul*, trans. Edward Lummis (London: P. Green, 1908), 122.

⁴Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (London: A&C Black, 1931), 225.

⁵Sanders expresses his debt to Schweitzer throughout the discussion of Paul that constitutes part two of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977).

⁶Douglas A. Campbell, "Christ and the Church in Paul: A 'Post-New Perspective' Account," in *Four Views on the Apostle Paul*, ed. Michael F. Bird, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 113–43. Although they discuss Paul under the much disputed term 'apocalyptic,' and differ in their approaches, Martinus de Boer and Beverley Roberts Gaventa make common cause with Campbell against justification by faith as a major theme in Paul. See e.g. Martinus C. de Boer, "Paul's Mythologising Program in Romans 5–8," in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 1–20; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "The Cosmic Power of Sin in Paul's Letter to the Romans: Toward a Widescreen Edition," *Int* 58.3 (2004): 229–40. Further back, the figures of J. Louis Martyn, J. Christiaan Beker and Ernst Käsemann loom large and are frequently cited, although their very deep differences are masked by a common appeal to 'apocalyptic' as the key to Paul's thought.

⁷Wrede's *Paul* is cited as a classic statement of the view in all but acronym. This is somewhat surprising given Wrede's emphasis on demonology and on liberation from the physical sphere as the essence of salvation; in neither respect does Campbell follow Wrede.

opponents. He thereby seeks to neutralise justification as a rival to PPME at the centre of Paul's thought and to distance Paul even further from forensic categories of forgiveness, atonement and judgment.⁸ The thought expressed by Wrede re-emerges, therefore: 'God does not appear before man as judge at all; he shows himself rather as giver;⁹ or, in Campbell's terms, as liberator from the powers of sin and death. Of course for those of us who never supposed that participation with Christ and justification by faith in Christ are opposed to one another (nor God's generosity and his role as the world's judge) this combative way of setting things up may come as a surprise. This is, however, we should note, a view that goes back to Schweitzer who insists that 'progress always consists in taking one or other of two alternatives, in abandoning the attempt to combine them.'¹⁰ As much as anything, the persistence of that rhetorical strategy is his bequest to New Testament studies, as we shall see.

To sum up then, one of justification's fates has been to retain its traditional meaning but to be cast to the edges of Pauline thought. At best it has an occasional and defensive quality, defending his mission to the Gentiles (Wrede, Schweitzer, Sanders), at worst it is a form of soteriological contractualism he actually opposes (Campbell). Either way, Rom 4 holds little interest for Sanders and Campbell compared to the participatory riches of Rom 5–8.¹¹

The second experience of Paul's doctrine of justification is that it has kept its place at the heart of Paul's theology but it has been redefined to at least some extent. That would be true in the case of Ernst Käsemann, for whom *the righteousness of God* became a kind of catch-all term, describing God's gift *and* transformative power, and the *justification of the ungodly* became a pin to burst all manner of religious and secular ideologies.¹²

More recently, in a different form, it is the position of James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright as advocates of the NPP. The Old Perspective on Paul (OPP), in their view, misunderstood Paul's doctrine of justification, but, rightly interpreted, it is still central to Paul. The supposed error was to assume that Paul was asking sixteenth century questions—'how can I find mercy from an angry God?'—when actually justification addresses a very different first century set of questions—'how are the people of God marked out and so on what terms are Gentiles to be admitted?'¹³ Suitably redefined to speak of covenant membership,

⁸ For the language of "exegetical elimination" see Douglas A. Campbell, *The Quest for Paul's Gospel: A Suggested Strategy* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 4. For a penetrating review of Campbell's major tome *The Deliverance of God* see especially R. Barry Matlock, "Zeal for Paul but Not According to Knowledge: Douglas Campbell's War on 'Justification Theory,'" *JSNT* 34 (2011): 115–49.

⁹ Wrede, *Paul*, 131.

¹⁰ Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, ed. John Bowden (London: SCM, 2000), 198.

¹¹ When he does discuss the passage, Campbell argues that the significance of Rom 4 lies in the way that Abraham functions as a type of Christ, embodying a faithful trust in God for resurrection. He does not provide an example for believers to follow, therefore, but foreshadows the saving event in which we participate. See *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 715–761.

¹² Complicating matters somewhat is the fact that several members of the apocalyptic school, J. Louis Martyn and Douglas Campbell among them, simultaneously reject the doctrine of justification and reinterpret at least some of Paul's justification language as if it denotes liberative and non-forensic actions, translating δικαιοῶ as 'to rectify' and δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as 'the deliverance of God.' Sanders would not approve, however, for he rightly saw that confusion would ensue from extending or reassigning justification language to participatory categories. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 508.

¹³ The classic early statement of this case, of course, is Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56 (1963): 199–215.

it follows that the doctrine of justification was dear to the heart and central to the thinking of the man who knew himself to be the apostle to the Gentiles.¹⁴

These then have been the twin fates of justification in recent times; relocated by some to the edge of Paul's thought to be replaced by participatory categories, redefined by others to address ethnic and social concerns. Given the significance of Rom 4 to the latter approach we now begin to focus our attention there. Needless to say there has been all manner of debate over the extent to which NPP's redefinition of justification clarifies or obscures Paul's true meaning and how comfortably the proposed reading sits within the bounds of Protestant orthodoxy. We will not settle those debates here, but my intent is at least for us to gain a sense of the lay of the land and, as it happens, Rom 4 currently offers one of the best views as we will see. By way of a run up to that passage, I want to make some more general observations about the state of the New Perspective debates.

2. The Current State of the New Perspective Discussion

First, Schweitzer casts a shadow over the NPP debate as well. Remember: *Progress always consists in taking one or other of two alternatives, in abandoning the attempt to combine them.* In this case the debate was frequently engaged in antithetical terms: OPP versus NPP; individual salvation versus Jew/Gentile relations. Is Rom 4 about how people are saved or how Gentiles are included?

Second, more recently there have been some attempts to combine them, or at least to turn down the rhetorical volume. On the OPP side there is now widespread appreciation for the first century context in which Paul's doctrine of justification arose and it is a welcome thing that the regrettable caricatures of Judaism and the overly individualised versions of the OPP (Bultmann's existentialism is often in the background) prevalent in the early 20th century have been laid to rest.

On the NPP side too there is a growing sense of the OPP lion lying down with the NPP lamb, most notably in the case of Dunn. Although he rejects claims that he has considerably modified his position, he confesses to setting up his arguments in ways that were 'misleading and unnecessarily provocative' at the birth of the NPP.¹⁵ Dunn now insists his intent was not to nullify the Reformed doctrine of justification, but rather to establish it on a firmer and broader basis.¹⁶ Dunn writes, 'If the New Perspective sparks off a renewed attempt to do justice to the whole Paul, it will have been a worthwhile hiccup in the ongoing process of receiving what Paul has still to say about the gospel for today.'¹⁷ Note that. What was once hailed as a Copernican revolution is now a 'worthwhile hiccup'. N. T. Wright also seems ready to beat

¹⁴ Thus Dunn and Wright agree with Wrede and Schweitzer that justification is a polemical doctrine but would argue that their German predecessors missed the centrality of that polemic to the vocation and mission of Paul.

¹⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 19. The suggestion that he has significantly modified his position is made by Timo Laato, "Paul's Anthropological Considerations: Two Problems," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Vol. 2, The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, 2 vols., WUNT 181 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 2:356n71.

¹⁶ See e.g. James D. G. Dunn, "A New Perspective on the New Perspective on Paul," *Early Christianity* 4 (2013): 157–82; "What's Right about the Old Perspective?" in *Studies in the Pauline Epistles: Essays in Honor of Douglas J. Moo*, ed. Matthew Harmon and Jay E. Smith (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 214–29.

¹⁷ Dunn, "A New Perspective on the New Perspective on Paul," 182.

his sword into a ploughshare in the spirit of Isaiah 2. In *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* he believes that if by his approach

We manage to get beyond the false stand-off between ‘salvation history’ and ‘apocalyptic’, and also between ‘participatory’ and ‘juristic’, we should also manage, with this analysis, to transcend the low-grade either/or that has been taking place between ‘old’ and ‘new’ perspectives. I have no interest in perpetuating such a squabble.¹⁸

Similarly, in an article published in 2012 he characterises the NPP as a *Reformed* protest against a Lutheran theology, suggesting that ‘had Reformed scholars like Herman Ridderbos been listened to, the protest might never have been necessary.’¹⁹

On the other hand, however, at least in the case of Wright, things are a bit more complicated. A more recent article still, published in 2013, is written more in the spirit of Joel 3 with ploughshares beaten back into swords as the knives come out for the OPP: He writes that his argument ‘strikes exactly against a position which has become one of the last strongholds of the “old perspective” on Paul’, going on to declare that his reading means that ‘this last refuge of the “old perspective” is dismantled, leaving the occupants nowhere to hide.’²⁰

So, what is this last refuge of the old perspective? Answer: It’s Rom 4 and in particular 4:4–8. This is significant for a few reasons. First, and not before time, it brings us to Abraham. Second, this passage is regularly identified as problematic for the NPP. It is the Achilles heel, the smoking gun. Pick your metaphor. So this makes a fresh attempt to read the passage within a NPP framework worth attending to. Third, this is a passage Wright has changed his mind on and the result is two quite different readings of Rom 4; one that may be found in his commentary on Romans and in *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision*,²¹ and one that is first proposed in the 2013 article entitled ‘Paul and the Patriarch’²² and taken up into *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*.²³ Two quite different readings of Romans; both are Wright but at least one of them is wrong, and either way it is worth having a sense of where he now stands. Fourth, the spirit of Schweitzer has once more descended and the antitheses have re-emerged. As we just heard, the OPP is not to be accommodated but to be dismantled. Or to give but one example

¹⁸N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols., Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: SPCK, 2013), 2:1038. More widely he bewails the either/ors that beset the field, urging that “serious study of Paul must put away childish antitheses.” *Ibid.*, 1:44.

¹⁹N. T. Wright, “Paul in Current Anglophone Scholarship,” *ExpT* 123 (2012): 369; cf. N. T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan & Paul’s Vision* (London: SPCK, 2009), 53, where he expresses the same thought in relation to Calvin, ruing the influence of Luther.

²⁰“Paul and the Patriarch: The Role of Abraham in Romans 4,” *JSNT* 35 (2013): 215–16.

²¹“Romans,” in *Acts, Introduction to Epistolary Literature, Romans, 1 Corinthians*, ed. Leander E. Keck, NIB 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 393–770; Wright, *Justification*, 190–97.

²²“Paul and the Patriarch: The Role of Abraham in Romans 4,” *JSNT* 35 (2013): 207–41, now reprinted in *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978–2013* (London: SPCK, 2013), 554–92. He himself acknowledges “I am here developing, in some cases taking further and in other cases significantly modifying, positions I have argued earlier,” “Paul and the Patriarch,” 208n1.

²³*Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2:995–1007.

from *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, we learn that “Romans 4 . . . is through and through covenantal; hardly at all soteriological.”²⁴

3. N. T. Wright’s New Reading of Romans 4

In keeping with his earlier interpretations of Rom 4, Wright rejects (as most do) the view that Paul is proof-texting his doctrine of justification by faith or selecting Abraham at random from the gallery of the heroes of the faith. Rather, ‘Paul is expounding the covenant-making chapter (Gen 15) in order to show that the revelation of God’s righteousness in the gospel is (however shocking and paradoxical it may be) the fulfillment of this ancient promise.’²⁵

Taking into account the context of Gen 15, Wright believes the promise has two elements which are developed throughout Rom 4. First, ‘Abraham asked God about an actual physical offspring; this is answered by God “raising the dead”, giving life to his and Sarah’s “dead” bodies by giving them a son of their own.’ Second, ‘God promised in addition, something far more abundant than Abraham’s specific request: a family consisting of many nations, like the stars of heaven.’²⁶ Paul alludes to these two successive developments in reverse order in 4:11–12 (Abraham is the father of the uncircumcised, and the father of circumcised who combine their circumcision with faith), and in their proper order both in 4:16 (those of the law, and those who share Abraham’s faith) and in 4:17 where Paul alludes to the “life-out-of-death Isaac and . . . the created-out-of-nothing ‘many nations.’”²⁷ Taken together these substantiate the truth of God’s words at the opening of Gen 15 that ‘your reward will be very great’ (ὁ μισθός σου πολὺς ἔσται σφόδρα).²⁸

Crucial for Wright’s argument moving forward is the presence of that term μισθός (reward) in Gen 15:1 and Rom 4:4, for he thinks it re-orientes our reading of Rom 4:4–5. Apart from that observation it might be supposed that Rom 4:4–5 offers an everyday example of a general principle that one who works receives what is due and one who does not receives anything he has as a gift.²⁹ However the use of the term μισθός shows that “Paul is still talking about the patriarch himself.”³⁰ He receives the promise of innumerable offspring as a gift and therefore neither he nor his physical descendants have any right to boast of their role in God’s plan to bring salvation to the world. “Yes” Wright concedes,

Paul does then develop a very brief book-keeping metaphor in verse 4. But the reason for the metaphor itself (‘working’ for a reward which is then ‘owed’) emerges not from an underlying implicit Second-Temple Jewish soteriology of ‘doing good works’ to earn

²⁴ Ibid., 1002. The reader at this point is well-advised to acquaint themselves with the rules of Theological Ping-Pong, for which see Basil Mitchell, “How to Play Theological Ping-Pong,” in *How to Play Theological Ping-Pong: And Other Essays on Faith and Reason* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 166–83.

²⁵ Wright, “Paul and the Patriarch,” 208.

²⁶ Ibid., 214.

²⁷ Ibid., 215.

²⁸ Bible translations are taken from the ESV.

²⁹ Wright in “Romans,” 491 adopts this position but states that “this is the only time he uses this metaphorical field in all his discussions of justification, and we should not allow this unique and brief sidelight to become the dominant note, as it has in much post-Reformation discussion.”

³⁰ Wright, “Paul and the Patriarch,” 215.

God's favour . . . but from Genesis 15 itself which is innocent of all such notions, and which speaks instead, as Paul does, of covenant and family. Verse 4 embroiders this with a particular colour, but this embroidery carries no weight in the passage as a whole.³¹

At this point Wright turns to the question of how to read 'the justification of the ungodly' in Rom 4:5 and answers it in the most novel way. He first outlines a traditional approach: Abraham is an ungodly, uncircumcised sinner in need of justification and, by believing that God will justify the ungodly, he is justified. "One may summarize this view point by saying that Abraham is justified because he believes in justification by faith."³²

By contrast, Wright proposes that the passage should be read thus:

- a. God makes a promise to Abraham that his 'reward' will be a colossal, worldwide family, like the stars of heaven in number and occupying not just 'the land' but 'the world';
- b. In order to believe this promise, Abraham must believe that somehow God will bring into this family people from all sorts of ethnic and moral backgrounds, i.e. the 'ungodly';
- c. Abraham thus 'believes in "the one who justifies the ungodly"', i.e. the God who has made this promise to him about his 'ungodly' descendants, not in the sense that he has believed in his own justification;
- d. Abraham is therefore himself 'justified by faith', not in that he was previously 'ungodly' (still less that he continued to be 'ungodly' after being justified, as some have suggested), but that God has reckoned him 'righteous'—with a meaning yet to be determined;
- e. Abraham is 'justified by faith', not because he has believed in an abstract system of justification or soteriology, but because he has believed in the God who has made promises about his enormous multi-ethnic family.
- f. The chapter is thus explaining that what God has done in the events concerning Jesus (3.21–26) is the fulfilment of the covenant promises made to Abraham in the beginning;
- g. Romans 4 thus explains the way in which the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, the covenant faithfulness of God, is revealed in the gospel (3.21, cf. 1.15–17).³³

There is something remarkably ironic here, but first we ought to note the way Wright goes on to determine the meaning of righteousness. Once again the context of Gen 15 is invoked, but in this case to confirm a view Wright has held for many years. The fact that the reckoning of righteousness to Abraham comes between the promise of the great reward in 15:1 and the covenant-making ceremony in 15:7–21 "strongly suggests that 'reckoned it to him as righteousness' means, more or less, 'God reckoned this in

³¹ Ibid., 216. Or as he puts it later "Paul has picked up μισθός from Genesis, which is firmly in the front of his mind, and allows an illustration to develop sideways out of it, which by coincidence happens to overlap with one way of expounding an 'old perspective' view of justification." Ibid., 233.

³² That Wright summarises the view this way is remarkable for at least two reasons. First, John Piper has offered a nuanced response to the oft-repeated caricature that the traditional view requires belief in justification by faith for justification. See *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 20, 85–86. Second, one might have thought that he would have taken more care not to caricature a view that *he himself once held*. See e.g. Wright, *Justification*, 193: "Yes, of course he is arguing that Abraham was ungodly when God called him, and that it was his faith in 'the one who justifies the ungodly'. . . that simply clung on to the promises despite that ungodliness." Clearly Wright once took a more traditional line in Romans 4 but now that reading is caricatured in order to push the reader towards his new interpretation.

³³ "Paul and the Patriarch," 218.

terms of covenant membership, or perhaps ‘God made a covenant with him on this basis.’³⁴ If there is any development here it is in the expansion of δικαιώω (‘to justify’) to denote not only being declared a member of a covenant but to have someone make a covenant made with you. The irony alluded to a moment ago is that while the opposing view of Rom 4 is caricatured as justification by believing in justification by faith, Wright’s view of Abraham’s justification is that he was justified for believing in someone else’s justification by faith (namely his future Gentile children)!

We are getting ahead of ourselves, however. One last feature of Wright’s argument merits coverage before we turn to any further critique, namely the role of David in Romans 4.³⁵ Does the citation of Psalm 32 demonstrate that Paul after all, has soteriological and not covenantal matters in mind? Wright thinks not for two reasons. First, he insists that these are not mutually exclusive after all, but that the covenant with Abraham, in the context of Gen 1–12, was established in order to deal with sin in some way.³⁶ Second, Paul’s “strenuous emphasis on the inclusion of the Gentiles” explains the citation, once it is noticed that Ps 32:1–2 and 32:6 generalise the experience of forgiveness. Thus Paul makes the psalm

Point to God’s determination to ‘justify the ungodly’, to bring pagans into his family. . . . David here is not, any more than Abraham, spoken of as himself a sinner (though no doubt Paul could have said that too) but rather is invoked as one who gives testimony to the blessing of forgiveness on anyone who has no works, no outward sign of belonging to God’s people.³⁷

To that extent Wright could summarise Rom 4:6–8 in the same way he summarises the chapter as a whole, it “is about the bringing of Gentiles into the one family, a theme repeated again and again from different angles.”³⁸

4. Response

As we noted earlier, there is the danger of accepting the antithetical premise of his argument. We don’t actually have to choose between Rom 4 being about soteriology or the covenant. In a sense Wright does not want us to either and in this article as elsewhere he insists that since the covenant was designed to deal with sin it is false to play covenantal themes off against soteriology.³⁹ No doubt we wonder why then he so frequently does so, and we might like to hear some more specifics on what it actually means for Israel to be the place where the world’s sin was meant to be dealt with, but soteriology is there, and the wisest thing to do is to ignore some of the antitheses he sets up and dig around behind them.

That said, the illuminating question remains why justification is not by works but by faith. For Wright the answer is still that if justification were by works then the Gentiles would be left outside. If by works of Torah it would mean “the end of the promise, the end of the *multi-ethnic* seed, the end of

³⁴ Ibid., 219.

³⁵ Wright also devotes space to restating his arguments in favour of translating Rom 4:1 as ‘What shall we say, then? Have we found Abraham to be our ancestor in a human, fleshly sense?’ Ibid., 225–31.

³⁶ Ibid., 233–34.

³⁷ Ibid., 235–36. Further support is found in 4:9–12 where Wright sees Paul arguing that the blessing of forgiveness “is intended not primarily for the circumcision but for the uncircumcision.” Ibid., 236.

³⁸ Wright, “Paul and the Patriarch,” 223.

³⁹ Ibid., 216–17.

the *worldwide* inheritance.”⁴⁰ But, as I shall argue, there is more at stake than the *extent* of God’s people. If justification were not by faith there would be no people of God at all. That becomes clear when we attend to a number of connections between this chapter, the surrounding argument in Romans and some intertextual connections elsewhere. As we do this we can actually lean quite heavily on Wright’s Romans commentary which is alert to many these connections. What seems to have happened more recently is that the one allusion to Abraham’s ‘reward’ in Gen 15:1, if there is an allusion to it at all, has drowned out all the other references to which he once drew attention. Many of those revolve around the phrase concerning the justification of the ungodly.

First, as many commentators note, God is here said to do what he forbids judges to do. In a striking parallel to Rom 4:5 the Greek text of Isa 5:23 pronounces a woe on οἱ δικαιοῦντες τὸν ἀσεβῆ (“those who justify the ungodly). In Prov 17:15 “he who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD.” In Exod 23:7 the Lord himself swears that he will not justify the ungodly.⁴¹

In light of these texts it seems very farfetched indeed to say that the justification of the ungodly in Rom 4 is a reference to the inclusion of Gentiles. The clear context of the phrase is of the forensic acquittal of the guilty. To justify the ungodly in Isaiah and Proverbs and Exodus is not to extend the boundaries of the covenant community but to allow an injustice to occur within it.

Confirmation of that view is found in the connections between the justification of the ungodly in 4:5 and its surrounding context in Romans. As Rom 1–3 has developed, human unrighteousness is universal, placing all in the category of the ungodly. The wrath of God (1:18) is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (ἀσεβεία) and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. Jew and Gentile alike are under wrath (1:18). Jew and Gentile alike are under sin (3:9). Jew and Gentile alike are unrighteous (3:10).

At this point in the argument of Romans we are, of course, at an impasse. The only candidates for justification are ungodly and yet God has sworn not to justify the ungodly. “But now,” Paul writes in 3:21, “God’s righteousness has been revealed.” In the presentation of Jesus as a propitiatory sacrifice God is able both to be just and the justifier of the wicked,⁴² and it is to this account of the atonement and the preceding account of the human plight that the description of God as the one who justifies the ungodly looks back, for only there is the circle squared. Equally relevant is the later reference to the ungodly in Rom 5:6, for again there it denotes not Gentiles but all believers, regardless of the background in their pre-Christian existence: “while *we* were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly (ὕπερ ἀσεβῶν). . . . But God demonstrates his own love for *us*. . . .”

To return to 3:21–26 for a moment it also seems to me to be the most likely source of Paul’s illustration in 4:4–5. In truth the reference to μισθός is actually rather incidental, permitting a contrast between the one who works and receives what he is due as such and not as a gift (i.e. it is not κατὰ χάριν) and the one does not work but, by implication, receives as gift anything that comes his way. This, surely,

⁴⁰ *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2:1005, emphasis mine.

⁴¹ In the LXX the 2nd person form is present, carried over from the first part of the verse, but the vocabulary parallels are striking nonetheless: οὐ δικαιοῦσεις τὸν ἀσεβῆ ἕνεκεν δώρων (‘do not justify the ungodly for a gift’). On these connections see Wright, “Romans,” 492.

⁴² A propitiatory understanding of Jesus death, even if not derived from the term ἱλαστήριον in 3:25 must be implied by the context for before Rom 3:21 there is wrath and after there is peace (5:1)

is an echo of 3:24 where those who have fallen short of God’s glory—that is to say, all of us—may be justified freely by his grace (δωρεὰν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι).

‘May be justified’, we say, and *can* only be justified on those terms. The background of universal sinfulness makes it certain that by works of the law no flesh will be justified (3:20) and in support of this thesis there can be little doubt that Paul introduces Abraham as Exhibit A.⁴³ This introduction has both a defensive and offensive character to it. Defensive, in two ways. First, Paul is clearly defending his thesis, showing that the argument advanced in 3:19–31 finds support in 4:1–17, as Table 1 demonstrates.

Table 1.

Rom 3:19–20	Rom 3:27–31	Rom 4:1–17
Every mouth stopped (3:19)	Boasting is excluded (3:27a, cf. 2:17, 2:23)	<i>Abraham</i> has no right to boast (4:1–2)
By works of the law no human being (σάρξ) will be justified	because a person (ἄνθρωπος) is justified by faith not works of the law (3:27b–28)	because <i>Abraham</i> was justified by faith, not works (4:3–8)
	Circumcised and uncircumcised are united under the one God through faith (3:29–30)	Circumcised and uncircumcised are united as children of <i>Abraham</i> through faith (4:9–17) ⁴⁴

Defensive, secondly, with the characterisation of Abraham in second Temple Judaism in mind where the patriarch’s obedience (either in connection with the command to sacrifice Isaac or in proleptic obedience to the Torah) was ascribed some role in Abraham’s justification. For example:

Sirach 44:19–20: ‘Abraham was a great father of many nations, and no-one was found like him in glory, who kept the Law of the most high and entered into covenant with him, and established the covenant in his flesh, and was found faithful in testing.’

Damascus Document 3:2–4: ‘Abraham did not walk in evil, and he was accounted a friend of God because he kept the commandments of God and did not choose his own will.’

1 Maccabees 2:52: ‘Was not Abraham found faithful in temptation and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?’

In light of such readings, Paul carefully and characteristically attends to the order of events, insisting on the significance of the fact that Gen 15:6 occurs prior to Abraham’s circumcision in Gen 17 and prior

⁴³Not, it is worth emphasising, as a random proof-text or arbitrary example but rather “as ‘our forefather’ he is *the* example. If Paul’s theology cannot accommodate him, it *must* be false” Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 233, emphasis original.

⁴⁴Adapted from Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 245.

to his obedience in Gen 22.⁴⁵ That is to say, Abraham's justification arises from nothing in Abraham. The account of his faith towards the end of the chapter makes the point most forcefully. In faith he looks away from his own body and from that of Sarah which are lifeless and deathly; in faith he looks to God who brings life out of death and yes, the God who justifies the ungodly.⁴⁶ That his faith becomes the model for us in these respects tells strongly against N. T. Wright's proposal. In Rom 4 Abraham and David do not stand on the solid rock of their own covenant membership and look beyond themselves to anticipate the granting of the same to Gentiles. Rather they regard their own footing as far from secure, casting themselves on the God who, in the absence of works and the presence of sin, answers with forgiveness and justification. And those are the blessings under discussion in Rom 4.⁴⁷

The fact that those blessings are available beyond Israel, as 4:9–17 argue, brings us to the offensive aspect of Paul's argument. The offense lies in the way that Paul relates Abraham to the Gentiles, and here we can take up Wright's earlier readings of the chapter. As he highlights, the fact that 4:9–12 describes Abraham receiving justification while in uncircumcision and goes on to list him as the father first of the Gentiles (4:11) then of the Jews (and then only of those who follow in the footsteps of his uncircumcised faith, 4:12) "is the beginning of a daring theme: that Abraham is actually more like believing Gentiles than he is like believing Jews."⁴⁸

There is a hint of it also in the way Abraham's faith is described as a reversal of the ungodliness and idolatry in Rom 1 that especially characterises the Gentiles. This is another insight from Wright's earlier work, building on an article by Eddie Adams, which is left aside in Wright's more recent publications.⁴⁹ Consider the following parallels in Table 2.

⁴⁵ As D. A. Carson has frequently pointed out, this attentiveness to matters of chronology is characteristic of apostolic exegesis in general, and that of Paul in particular. See e.g. "Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and the New," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Vol. 2, The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, 2 vols., WUNT 181 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 393–436.

⁴⁶ That the promise's progress from one patriarchal generation to the next relies upon God to open the wombs of Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah highlights human weakness and forms part of the context of the Genesis narrative. So too does Abraham's attempt to accomplish the fulfilment of the promise with Hagar by fleshly means in Gen 16—as Paul highlights in Gal 4:21–31, such works of the flesh cannot secure freedom and only perpetuate slavery. Such details show that a strong case for the traditional reading of Rom 4 can also be made from the literary context of Gen 15:6.

⁴⁷ The point is illustrated specifically in the lives of David and Abraham but Paul's comment in 4:15 to the effect that 'the law brings wrath' recalls the earlier section and demonstrates that Israel as much as the Gentiles stands in need of salvation. It is striking that Acts makes a similar point and in similar terms. Peter addresses the "Men of Israel" in Acts 3 and speaks of God sending Christ in order for them to participate in the blessing promised to the Gentiles, namely forgiveness (3:25–26). Likewise Luke's Great commission speaks not of a covenant membership being extended to the Gentiles but of a message of forgiveness and repentance being preached beginning in Jerusalem and spreading from there (Luke 24:45–47).

⁴⁸ "Romans," 492.

⁴⁹ Wright, "Romans," 500; for more detail see Edward Adams, "Abraham's Faith and Gentile Disobedience: Textual Links Between Romans 1 and 4," *JSNT* 65 (1997): 47–66.

Table 2.

Humanity 'knows' God's eternal power but reject the Creator (1:20, 25)	Abraham recognised God's creative power (4:17, 21)
Refusing to glorify him or give him thanks (1:21)	And gave glory to God (4:19)
'Thinking themselves wise' (1:22)	Having no confidence in himself (4:19)
With the result that they turn away from natural, fruitful relationships resulting in dishonour and death (1:24–27, 32)	With the result that his and Sarah's bodies produce life and are fruitful

Abraham then provides the model for all while resembling a Gentile most closely in his circumstances prior to circumcision. If Wright's earlier reading is correct, as I believe it is, his more recent exegesis has it backwards. Abraham is not justified for believing a promise about someone else. He is justified for believing that God can do the impossible for him. If it were the former it is striking that Abraham in Gen 15 remains at one remove from those of us who are Gentiles, he simply believes a promise *about* us. If, however Rom 4 depicts Abraham as a model believer then he is more obviously a father whom I am to imitate and in whose footsteps I am to follow.

What then shall we say Wright has found in this chapter? Seizing upon the recurrence of the word 'reward' in Rom 4:4 and laying aside many far more audible echoes and allusions in the passage, he arrives at a position some distance from his own earlier readings and one in the footsteps of which it is hard to imagine many following. Despite some claim to the contrary he seems in no mind to transcend the "low-grade either/or" of perspectives old and new or to offer terms of peace. In this instance, rather, he has sounded the charge and gone over the top.

5. Concluding Reflections

As we draw to a close I want to return to the false antitheses that bedevil NT studies and suggest that progress often lies in rejecting Schweitzer's premise. Romans 4 is a case in point in any number of ways. While Campbell and his fellow advocates of the apocalyptic post new-perspective Paul want to champion God's generosity at the expense of his righteous judgment, Rom 4 holds them together; indeed they combine even in that pregnant phrase *the justification of the ungodly*. God's wrath at sin is the remarkable backdrop of God's generosity; to eliminate the former is to diminish the latter.

Perspectives new and newer are also united in wanting to displace an emphasis on the individual believer with wider horizons, be they ethnic or apocalyptic. But again Rom 4 holds them together. Abraham and David themselves know the blessing of forgiveness, and yet, given Abraham's role, his individual faith becomes the model for all his children and the grounds of their unity—he is the father of us *all* (4:16). However, the way in which Rom 4 accents the individual as well as the corporate dimension is one of the notable casualties in Wright's new reading. Abraham and David still testify that God justifies people, but Wright has removed any sense that they commend the Lord to us knowing that blessedness themselves. Abraham simply believes that God will justify the Gentiles *over there*, as it were. David is made to speak not from his own deep sense of blessedness but of what God will do for others.

Similarly, and finally, there is a need to hold together the vertical and horizontal aspects of justification. One of the blessings of the NPP has been to highlight Paul's use the doctrine of justification to argue for

the equal standing of Jew and Gentile within God's people, but as crucial as this observation is it does not force upon us a redefinition of the doctrine.⁵⁰ The evidence of Romans is that Paul emphasises a common unrighteousness under God's wrath and a common justification on the basis of faith alone. It is this fundamentally vertical dimension which provides the rationale for Paul's horizontal, ecclesiological application of the doctrine.

⁵⁰For further development of this point, see Thomas R. Schreiner, "Justification: The Saving Righteousness of God in Christ," *JETS* 54 (2011): 19–34.

Evangelical History after George Marsden: A Review Essay

— Nathan A. Finn —

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Abstract: In recent years, a growing cadre of younger historians has begun publishing significant books on the history of American evangelicalism. Professionally, these scholars have come of age in the shadow of the renaissance in evangelical history typified by historians of the previous generation such as Mark Noll, Nathan Hatch, Joel Carpenter, and especially George Marsden. This essay reviews three recent monographs: Steven Miller's *The Age of Evangelicalism*, Matthew Avery Sutton's *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*, and Molly Worthen's *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*. These works are representative of the "post-Marsden" historical scholarship that is reshaping our understanding of modern evangelicalism in America.

The way most historians interpret American evangelicalism changed about a generation ago. Prior to that time, the historical study of evangelicalism tended to fall into one of two broad categories. On the one hand, church historians, or even amateur chroniclers with ties to denominations or other affinity networks such as self-confessed fundamentalism or particular schools or parachurch ministries, wrote narrative histories. Because most of these works were written for movement "insiders," they often lacked critical reflection and engaged little with broader historical scholarship related to American Christianity.¹ On the other hand, secular historians tended to flatten distinctions

*I want to thank Justin Taylor and an anonymous reviewer for reading an earlier draft of this essay and offering several helpful suggestions for improvement.

¹Two recent anthologies have addressed these shortcomings and suggested ways forward for confessional historians and/or those interested in denominational history. See Robert Bruce Mullin and Russell E. Richey, eds., *Reimagining Denominationalism: Interpretive Essays*, Religion in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), and Keith Harper, ed., *American Denominational History: Perspectives on the Past, Prospects for the Future*, Religion and American Culture (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2008).

between various types of conservative Protestants and paint nearly all evangelicals and fundamentalists as predominantly rural, reactionary, and anti-intellectual, as best illustrated in the Scopes Trial of 1925. (Or, rather, popular assumptions about the Scopes Trial.) Mainstream historians interpreted evangelicals as peripheral to American culture, including its religious culture, the latter of which was allegedly dominated by mainline Protestants affiliated with the National Council of Churches.²

Around the same time journalists were taking notice of evangelicalism in the 1970s, historians were crafting new narratives that were more nuanced than the interpretations of earlier scholars, whether confessional or secular. Ernest Sandeen and especially George Marsden authored groundbreaking studies of the intellectual roots of the fundamentalist movement that engaged in denominational trench warfare in the 1920s and 1930s.³ The latter emerged as the most influential historian of born-again Protestantism of his generation, influencing dozens of other scholars. Marsden, Joel Carpenter, and Jon Stone examined continuities and discontinuities between fundamentalism and postwar evangelicalism identified with Billy Graham, *Christianity Today*, and a multitude of parachurch ministries.⁴ Grant Wacker, William Trollingier, Edith Blumhofer, Darryl Hart, and Barry Hankins (among others) wrote critical studies of key figures in modern American fundamentalism and evangelicalism.⁵ Blumhofer and Wacker also wrote on Pentecostalism and Charismatics, movements that paralleled and at times overlapped with evangelicalism.⁶ Betty DeBerg and Margaret Bendroth focused upon fundamentalism and gender.⁷ Mark Noll, Nathan Hatch, Harry Stout, Kathryn Long, and—once again—Marsden led the

²For example, see Stewart G. Cole, *The History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1931); Norman F. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918–1931* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954); Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963).

³Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). Sandeen's book has been reprinted several times. Marsden's book has been updated in recent years. See George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, new ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford, 1997); Jon R. Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997).

⁵Grant Wacker, *Augustus H. Strong and the Dilemma of Historical Consciousness* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985); William Vance Trollingier Jr., *God's Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1990); Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister*, Library of Religious Biography (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); D. G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Barry Hankins, *God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris and the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism*, Religion in the South (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

⁶Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Edith L. Blumhofer, Russell P. Spittler, and Grant A. Wacker, eds., *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁷Betty A. DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990); Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996)

way in reshaping how historians thought of evangelicals in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁸ Scottish historian David Bebbington and the Canadian scholar George Rawlyk authored important works that helped frame American evangelicalism within a broader transatlantic narrative.⁹ Randall Balmer, a noteworthy historian in his own right, popularized much of this scholarship in works aimed at a more general audience.¹⁰

As Doug Sweeney has pointed out, many of the historians who were leading the way in this project were themselves evangelicals who were “observer-participants” in the very movement they were attempting to interpret.¹¹ In a real sense, evangelical scholars were framing the way that most historians of religion interpreted twentieth-century evangelicalism. Their efforts became a key part of what might be called a rediscovery of religion among American historians during this same era.¹² The Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton College served as “ground zero” for many of the conferences that in turn generated many of the books and essays written by evangelical historians. Two charitable organizations, the Pew Charitable Trusts and Lily Endowment, funded much of this work through grants in the 1980s and 1990s. Evangelical historian Joel Carpenter led the former’s religion program for several years in the 1990s.¹³

⁸ Nathan O. Hatch, George M. Marsden, and Mark A. Noll, *The Search for Christian America* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1983); Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768–1822: The Search for a Christian Enlightenment in the Era of Samuel Stanhope Smith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Kathryn Teresa Long, *The Revival of 1857–58: Interpreting an American Religious Awakening: Interpreting an American Religious Awakening*, Religion in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁹ George A. Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists, and Henry Alline* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1984); David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989); Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond 1700–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁰ Randall H. Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). A companion three-part PBS documentary by the same name garnered Balmer an Emmy nomination.

¹¹ Douglas A. Sweeney, “The Essential Evangelicalism Dialectic: The Historiography of the Early Neo-Evangelical Movement and the Observer-Participant Dilemma,” *Church History* 60.1 (March 1991): 70–84.

¹² This rediscovery is discussed in Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart, eds., *New Directions in American Religious History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Not coincidentally, the volume editors and around a third of the contributors were evangelicals. According to the American Historical Association, religious history has become the most popular topic among its members. See Robert B. Townsend, “A New Found Religion? The Field Surges among AHA Members,” *Perspectives on History* (December 2009), <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2009/a-new-found-religion-the-field-surges-among-aha-members>.

¹³ For a recent overview of the influence of evangelical historiography on how the academy perceives evangelical history, see David W. Bebbington, “The Evangelical Discovery of History,” in *The Church on its Past: Papers Read at the 2011 Summer Meeting and 2012 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Peter D. Clarke and Charlotte Methuen (Martlesham, Suffolk, UK: Boydell, 2013), 330–64. See also Maxie B. Burch, *The*

We might consider the period from roughly 1970 to 2000 as representing the first generation of the new scholarship devoted to American evangelicalism. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, a second generation of historians of evangelicalism has come of age. Like their predecessors, many of these younger historians are themselves evangelicals or have roots in evangelical traditions. Many of them studied with some of the leading lights of the previous generation, writing dissertations under the supervision of Marsden at Duke University or later University of Notre Dame, Wacker at Duke, Stout at Yale University, or Bebbington at University of Stirling in Scotland.¹⁴ Some have interacted personally with members of the earlier generation through one of the professional organizations they influenced so much, including the American Society of Church History and especially the Conference on Faith and History. All of them have grappled with the scholarship they have inherited from the historians who came of age in the years after Watergate. In doing so, these younger scholars are building upon, revising, and sometimes rejecting the interpretations offered by the previous generation.¹⁵

This essay considers three recent studies of modern evangelicalism. Each is representative of what might be called the “post-Marsden” era of evangelical history. Each expands upon previous studies in significant ways, makes an important contribution to the literature in the field, and challenges received interpretations—at times, provocatively so. Finally, and most importantly, taken together these three books are broadly representative of the insightful work that is being undertaken by the current generation of historians who have come of age professionally in the past ten of fifteen years.

1. Evangelicalism at the Center of American Culture

Steven Miller has quickly emerged as one of the most insightful historians of the post-Marsden era. Miller teaches at Webster University and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. His first monograph, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*, along with Grant Wacker’s recent study, is arguably one of the two most significant historical studies of Graham written in the past twenty years.¹⁶ Miller argued that Graham partnered closely with Richard Nixon to bring southern evangelicals into the Republican Party a decade before the birth of the Moral Majority, then distanced himself from the

Evangelical Historians: The Historiography of George Marsden, Nathan Hatch, and Mark Noll (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996).

¹⁴Marsden’s students have recently published a *festschrift* in his honor. See Darren Dochuk, Thomas S. Kidd, and Kurt W. Peterson, eds., *American Evangelicalism: George Marsden and the State of American Religious History* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014).

¹⁵I consider myself to be a part of this second generation of evangelical historians. I became interested in the history of modern evangelicalism through reading the works of Marsden, Carpenter, and Noll when I was an undergraduate history major in the late-1990s. I later focused my own doctoral research on postwar fundamentalism among Baptists in the South.

¹⁶Steven P. Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2009). In his review of *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*, Miles Mullin argues Miller’s monograph is the best book on Billy Graham in years. See *Fides et Historia* 42.1 (Winter-Spring 2010): 113–15. My own review of the book can be found in *North Carolina Historical Review* 87.1 (January 2010): 120–21. See also Grant Wacker, *America’s Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). In a recent personal conversation with Wacker, I asked him the two or three most important books written about Graham since the 1990s. The first historical monograph he mentioned was *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*.

GOP and the newly emerging Religious Right in the aftermath of Watergate. The politically moderate Billy Graham of the 1980s was forged in the crucible of the more conservative and partisan Graham of the 1960s and 1970s.

Miller's latest monograph, *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years*, is a cultural history devoted to evangelicalism since the middle of the Nixon era.¹⁷ His argument is that evangelicalism is not only a movement (or group of movements) but is also an idea that captures the spirit of an age. In Miller's telling, evangelicalism was not a peripheral subculture but rather was central to American culture in the generation between 1970 and 2010. Miller argues, "During the Age of Evangelicalism, born-again Christianity provided alternately a language, a medium, and a foil by which millions of Americans came to terms with political and cultural changes."¹⁸ For the purposes of this review essay, I contend it is partly because of evangelicalism's prominent place in public life during these years that so many historians then and now have chosen to study evangelicals.

Miller divides his book into six roughly chronological chapters. Chapter one focuses upon the 1970s, which Miller argues was already an "evangelical moment" before *Newsweek* proclaimed 1976 the "Year of the Evangelical." Numerous phenomena witnessed to the growing profile of evangelicalism. Celebrities such as Chuck Colson, Eldridge Cleaver, and Ruth Carter Stapleton experienced evangelical conversions. The Jesus People attracted the notice of religious and secular commenters alike. James Dobson, Marabel Morgan, Tim and Beverly LaHaye, and especially Hal Lindsey wrote bestselling books with broad appeal. Chapter two discusses evangelicalism during Jimmy Carter's presidency. In the 1976 election, both Carter and incumbent Gerald Ford each ran as self-confessed evangelicals, ultimately dividing the conservative Protestant electorate. After initial appreciation for Carter, both evangelical progressives and evangelical conservatives—two movements that largely mirrored the values of non-evangelical political progressives and conservatives—each grew frustrated with Carter during the course of his administration. Progressive evangelicals such as Ron Sider and Jim Wallis waned in their influence while Francis Schaeffer and Jerry Falwell succeeded in channeling conservative frustrations into a coherent political movement. Simply put, most evangelicals cared more about repealing *Roe v. Wade*, pushing back against progressive views of gender and sexuality, and promoting a narrative of America's Christian origins than they did using government to alleviate poverty, promote civil rights for minorities, and de-escalate Cold War militarism.

Chapters three and four turn their attention to the period from 1980 to 2000. The Moral Majority in the 1980s, followed by the Christian Coalition in the 1990s, mobilized conservative evangelicals for political action on behalf of the Republican Party. The 1980 election witnessed three self-proclaimed evangelical candidates. The winner, Ronald Reagan, was far less involved in church life than his defeated opponents. As Miller wryly notes, Reagan "was more an evangelical's president than an evangelical president."¹⁹ Throughout the 1980s, evangelicals became a fixture in the Republican Party, though their agenda enjoyed mixed results in both the GOP and the wider culture. Falwell became a household name, followed later by Pat Robertson. By the mid-1990s, Robertson's lieutenant Ralph Reed was mobilizing conservative evangelicals to vote Republican at every level of government. As evangelicals increased their profiles, America went through the first of two of what Miller dubs "evangelical scares" wherein

¹⁷ Steven P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

leftwing scholars and journalists warned ordinary citizens of the threats of born-again Protestantism. Reed, Robertson, Falwell, Dobson, and Promise Keepers were frequently targeted as pernicious evangelical opinion-shapers. Progressive evangelicals remained on the periphery politically speaking, though moderate evangelicals such as Mark Noll enjoyed considerable influence among academics. Following the paradigm suggested by evangelical-friendly sociologist James Davison Hunter, most conservative evangelicals during the Clinton presidency believed they were in the midst of a culture war with (mostly) godless liberals. The stakes were nothing less than America's future.

The final two chapters focus on the first decade of the twenty-first century. George W. Bush represented the apex of evangelical influence in American culture. Personally, he was far more committed to conservative evangelicalism than his more mainline father (who was president from 1988 to 1992), the lukewarm Reagan, or the morally suspect Clinton. "Compassionate conservatism," the brainchild of evangelical Marvin Olasky, represented a key theme in the Bush Administration. Evangelical speechwriter Michael Gerson helped Bush articulate compassionate conservatism as public policy. Conservative Catholics and evangelicals networked together more closely than ever, largely through the efforts of evangelicals such as Colson and Catholics such as Richard John Neuhaus and Robert George. When conservative "values voters" elected Bush to a second term, American progressives went through their second evangelical scare, concerned that the Religious Right was theocratic and warmongering, opposed to both women's rights and science. Bestsellers like *The Purpose-Driven Life* and the *Left Behind* series, films such as "Passion of the Christ" (ironically, a Catholic movie), and kitschy trends such as the "What Would Jesus Do?" phenomenon represented evangelicalism in American pop culture. As Americans grew weary of Bush-era evangelicalism, Barack Obama offered a progressive alternative. Evangelical progressives enjoyed a comeback, though Wallis and company influenced the Democratic platform less than the Religious Right had Republicans; the latter comprised the GOP's base, whereas the latter was trying to persuade Democrats to reach out to evangelicals. Many younger evangelicals rallied behind Obama, who cast himself as a devout mainline Protestant who was unafraid to engage matters of faith. By 2010, the Age of Evangelicalism was seemingly over.

The genius of Miller's book is his insistence that evangelicalism should be considered a public movement at the center of American culture. Though evangelicals have often felt themselves to be a persecuted minority, they have succeeded in shaping public discourse, even in what might seem to many to be the wilderness years of the Obama presidency. Miller's book has little to say about grassroots evangelicals, aside from their reading tastes and movie interests (rapture-related books remain a sure bet). It also mostly ignores African-American and Hispanic evangelicals, who in general would have identified more with progressive evangelicals (even if often socially conservative on moral issues), yet who also had their own narratives in relationship to American culture. Nevertheless, as a work of cultural history, it is perhaps the best place to start for scholars who want to understand the place of (predominantly white) evangelicalism in the public square. *The Age of Evangelicalism* complements the work of other post-Marsden historians who have reshaped our interpretation of the origins of the

Religious Right,²⁰ rediscovered progressive evangelicalism,²¹ or examined popular spirituality among evangelicals.²²

2. Evangelicalism as an Apocalyptic Movement

Like Miller, Matthew Sutton has established himself as one of the most insightful of the post-Marsden historians. Sutton serves as the Edward R. Meyer Distinguished Professor of History at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. His first book, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*, demonstrated that McPherson was a precursor to the modern Religious Right in wedding patriotism and Christianity.²³ Though a controversial figure, McPherson helped to mainstream Pentecostalism, which by the time of her death was on the verge of becoming at least partly involved in the postwar evangelical coalition. Sutton also published a reader, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents*.²⁴ Both of these works lie very much in the background of his newest book, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*.²⁵

American Apocalypse is by far the most ambitious of the three titles reviewed in this essay in that Sutton attempts a comprehensive history of twentieth-century evangelicalism. He makes four interesting interpretive moves. First, he resurrects Ernest Sandeen's thesis that millenarianism is the central evangelical conviction, challenging the consensus proffered by the previous generation of historians of evangelicalism.²⁶ Second, Sutton suggests that born-again Protestants, inspired by their

²⁰Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 217–61; Seth Dowland, "Defending Manhood: Gender, Social Order and the Rise of the Christian Right in the South, 1965–1995" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2007); Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: Norton, 2010); Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²¹David R. Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Brantley W. Gasaway, *Progressive Evangelicals and the Pursuit of Social Justice* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

²²David Stowe, *No Sympathy for the Devil: Christian Pop Music and the Transformation of American Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); T. M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the Evangelical Relationship with God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012); Todd Brenneman, *Homespun Gospel: The Triumph of Sentimentality in Contemporary American Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Erin A. Smith, *What Would Jesus Read? Popular Religious Books and Everyday Life in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

²³Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

²⁴Matthew Avery Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012).

²⁵Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

²⁶Most historians of the past generation have followed Marsden, who argued that Sandeen's focus on millennial views and, to a lesser extent, Princetonian inerrancy, was far too narrow and that a range of intellectual trends helped to shape fundamentalism and subsequently evangelicalism. The two scholars debated their respective theses in print in between the publication of Sandeen's *The Roots of Fundamentalism* in 1970 and Marsden's *Fundamentalism in American Culture in 1980*. See George Marsden, "Defining Fundamentalism," *Christian Scholar's*

millennial views, consistently engaged culture—including politics—throughout the twentieth century. Third, he suggests that fundamentalists should not be considered “conservative” because their millennial views represented a theological innovation at the time they became so popular; fundamentalism was “radical apocalyptic evangelicalism.”²⁷ Finally, he flattens the distinctions between fundamentalists and evangelicals, focusing far more on continuity than discontinuity. He argues that outwardly focused, Armageddon-awaiting evangelicals profoundly shaped American religious life, popular culture, electoral politics, and foreign policy. He suggests that, “In anticipating the imminent end of the world, fundamentalists paradoxically transformed it.”²⁸

Sutton’s work bridges the gap between social history and intellectual history; it might be described as a social history of an intellectual trend. Over the course of eleven chapters, Sutton engages a wide group of mostly white fundamentalists and evangelicals, though he offers occasional corroboration and minority reports from African-American evangelicals and Pentecostal and charismatic outliers. In chapter one, Sutton discusses the nature of premillennialism and attempts to explain its appeal to so many conservative Protestants. Simply put, they believed their pessimistic outlook was both more biblical and more realistic than the sunny postmillennialism of mainstream Protestants. In chapter two, Sutton suggests premillennialists received powerful confirming evidence for their pessimism via the horrors of World War I. Fundamentalists interpreted the war through their apocalyptic worldview and many of them ostensibly demonstrated less blind patriotism than mainstream Protestants; they would change their tune in the Second World War.

Chapter three focuses on the fundamentalist-modernist controversies, emphasizing the importance of premillennialism to most fundamentalists. In Sutton’s telling, talk of the “fundamentals of the faith” was really strategic code language meant to convince all theological conservatives to buy in to the premillennial agenda for the mainstream denominations. Chapters four and five focus upon Prohibition and evolution, respectively. During this time, fundamentalists broadened their cultural engagement against perceived social ills. Though they awaited an imminent rapture, they interpreted Jesus’s command to “occupy till I come” (Luke 19:13, KJV) as a call to action in the public square. Chapter six suggests that the evangelical love affair with the Republican Party began at least a generation before the rise of the Religious Right in the 1970s. Fundamentalists were political conservatives who filtered their advocacy of small government and traditional morality through the lens of their apocalyptic worldview. Chapter seven focuses upon the growing Christian patriotism that came to characterize most fundamentalists during the Second World War. Of particular note was the tendency of premillennialists to identify figures such as Hitler, Stalin, and especially Mussolini with the Antichrist, and then subsequently revise their views based upon shifting world events.

Chapter eight revisits the fundamentalist commitment to political conservatism. Most of them opposed the New Deal because of its expansion of government. They also pushed back against President Franklin Roosevelt running for more than two terms; this was the sort of political tyranny that could be a precursor to the Antichrist. Chapters nine and ten focus upon mid-century fundamentalism and especially self-confessed evangelicalism. The latter were really still fundamentalist premillennialists, but savvy scholars and pastors reinterpreted fundamentalist history to suggest greater discontinuity between

Review 1, no. 2 (Winter 1971): 141–51, and Ernest R. Sandeen, “Defining Fundamentalism: A Reply to Prof. Marsden,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1971): 227–33.

²⁷ Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 3

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

the two movements. During this time, born-again Protestants emerged as hyper-patriotic citizens who advocated America's alleged "Judeo-Christian" character over-against the atheistic communism of the Soviet Union and its satellite states. Evangelicals and fundamentalists were committed cold warriors because of their millennial views. They longed for a revival of America's Christian heritage, even as they continued to ostensibly hope for an imminent rapture. Chapter eleven discusses the mainstreaming of fundamentalist/evangelical apocalypticism through the ministry of Billy Graham, Hal Lindsay's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and popular Christian music, among other means, despite a broadening of eschatological views among evangelical scholars.²⁹ Premillennial political engagement reached its maturity in the Religious Right and successfully elected a committed premillennialist (if not always a committed churchgoer) in Ronald Reagan. President Reagan caused alarm among many mainstream Americans with his interest in prophecy and its possible implications for foreign policy. A brief epilogue speaks to the enduring influence of evangelical millennialism as evidenced in evangelical interpretations of 9/11 and the popularity of the *Left Behind* novels.

American Apocalypse is simultaneously remarkably insightful and flawed. Let me first acknowledge the many positives in Sutton's book. First, like Miller, Sutton is a good writer who knows the power of clear prose and the clever turn-of-phrase. More importantly, he demonstrates that there was far more continuity between the older fundamentalists and the new evangelicals than was often admitted by historians of the earlier generation. As mentioned above, the emphasis on discontinuity has deep historical roots; Carl Henry and Harold Ockenga had a vested interest in perpetuating a particular narrative about fundamentalist declension and evangelical renewal. Furthermore, evangelical historians of an earlier era had a vested interest in identifying far more with evangelical moderation than fundamentalist separatism. There obviously were continuities and discontinuities between fundamentalists and postwar evangelicals; to emphasize continuities a bit more adds some needed nuance to our understanding of the era. However, Sutton's emphasis on continuity seems less plausible once the second generation of evangelicals exhibit more theological and even ethical diversity than the Henry-Ockenga generation.

Another strength is Sutton's argument that there has often been a gap between the diverse millennial views held by evangelical scholars and the popular dispensationalism of the "people in the pews." Of course, premillennial scholars since George Eldon Ladd have been committed to challenging some of the dispensational assumptions of grassroots evangelicalism. Furthermore, there were always more amillennialists and even the occasional postmillennialist among evangelical scholars, especially those who worked in confessionally Reformed or Arminian settings, rather than the cadre of non-denominational schools founded by dispensationalists.³⁰ Finally, Sutton understands that evangelical political engagement long predated the Moral Majority. Few historians would affirm the popular

²⁹ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970). Zondervan claims to have sold over 15 million copies of the book.

³⁰ The same is true among Southern Baptists, where dispensational thought did not become popular until the mid-twentieth century and where premillennialism of any stripe was arguably underrepresented in denominational schools until the 1990s. See James Spivey, "The Millennium," in *Has Our Theology Changed? Southern Baptist Thought Since 1845*, ed. Paul A. Basden (Nashville: Broadman, 1994), 230–62.

journalistic narrative that conservative Protestants (including dispensationalists) disengaged from politics in the 1920s and then reappeared with Jerry Falwell in the mid-1970s.³¹

Helpful as it is, *American Apocalypse* is not without its flaws—some of them rather serious. First, and perhaps most important, Sutton's revival of the Sandeen thesis is not persuasive. He collapses fundamentalism and evangelicalism into premillennialism, but to do so he has to write non-premillennial evangelicals out of his narrative. J. Gresham Machen and Westminster Theological Seminary are treated as fellow travellers rather than authentic fundamentalists or evangelicals precisely because they were Presbyterians who rejected premillennialism. The same goes for Southern Baptists, with the exception of noteworthy dispensationalists such as J. Frank Norris and Billy Graham. Furthermore, Sutton only emphasizes half of Sandeen's thesis (premillennialism) while downplaying the importance of biblical inerrancy among fundamentalists and evangelicals. Most surprisingly, Sutton says little about the fundamentalists and evangelical commitment to evangelism and missions. This is problematic for two reasons. First, spreading the gospel would have been a major theme emphasized by born-again Christians—arguably far more than either millennial views or even inerrancy. Second, and more curiously, dispensationalists in particular were strongly committed to personal evangelism and foreign missions and used the imminent rapture as a key motivation to spread the faith to as many unbelievers as possible before Jesus returns. Though premillennialism sits at the heart of Sutton's thesis, he glosses over nuances between historic premillennialists and dispensationalists and assumes premillennialism is a recent phenomenon rather than a modern revival of an ancient belief system.

American Apocalypse loses some steam in its later chapters, perhaps because evangelicalism had become so diverse by the 1960s that it became difficult for Sutton to sustain his thesis. Progressive evangelicals rejected the apocalyptic worldview of the older generation. As mentioned above, scholars especially began to demur from the dispensationalism that had been popular. The inerrancy battles—curiously absent from Sutton's narrative—dominated evangelical academic life, contributed to the founding of the Presbyterian Church in America, and led to a significant controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention. Sutton makes no mention of Theonomy, a small but influential movement that provided an alternative motivation for evangelical political engagement from the 1980s onward. A final shortcoming is Sutton's tendency to overemphasize the relationship of fundamentalists and evangelicals with the Republican Party prior to the 1970s. While he is correct that white born-again Protestants tended to vote for political conservatives, he misses that both Republicans and Democrats included more diversity along the conservative-to-liberal spectrum within their respective parties prior to the 1980s than has become the case since the Reagan years. While evangelicals tended to vote conservative, they did not always vote Republican—especially in the South, where the Democrats had a significant conservative wing that only began to wane after 1968.

American Apocalypse is probably the most ambitious history of evangelicalism to appear in the post-Marsden era. It is a deft combination of social history and intellectual history, which seems necessary in any attempt at a relatively comprehensive interpretation of evangelicalism. Sutton offers an interesting counter-narrative to the Marsden-Carpenter telling of the history of born-again Protestants in America. While the results are mixed, Sutton has still made a significant contribution that will inspire thoughtful

³¹ See note 19 above. See also Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983); Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004); Hankins, *God's Rascal*.

engagement from other historians, if for no other reason than to challenge his partial repackaging of the Sandeen thesis and applying it beyond the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the Interwar Era.

3. Revisiting the Evangelical Mind

In 1994, Mark Noll authored an influential scholarly jeremiad wherein he claimed, “The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind.”³² Molly Worthen both agrees and disagrees. For Worthen, there is indeed an evangelical mind—just a disappointing one. Worthen is Assistant Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is author of *The Man on Whom Nothing Was Lost: The Grand Strategy of Charles Hill*, but until recently was likely best known for her journalistic work for outlets such as *The New York Times*, *Slate*, *The Dallas Morning News*, and *Christianity Today*.³³ Her most recent book, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*, is a work of intellectual history that has already received significant media attention and elicited thoughtful reviews and sometimes-spirited commentary from evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike.³⁴ Worthen argues that postwar evangelicalism, though often considered anti-intellectual by cultural elites, is actually a movement that takes ideas very seriously. Yet, evangelicals struggle with an ongoing “crisis of authority” because of internal disagreements among themselves and an unwillingness to accept broader cultural canons of authority.³⁵ Worthen suggests evangelicals have never navigated the relationship between faith and reason in a way that has won the allegiance of all born-again Protestants nor captured the imagination of the wider American public.

Following a short introduction, Worthen divides *Apostles of Reason* into eleven chapters. She begins by recounting the origins of postwar evangelicalism. New evangelicals such as Carl Henry and Harold John Ockenga sought to provide a more thoughtful and winsome alternative to the older fundamentalism, though they miscalculated by assuming greater theological agreement than was actually present among self-confessed evangelicals. A commitment to the Christian worldview and biblical inerrancy was not enough to ensure evangelical unity; this latter theme is revisited in nearly every chapter. The second chapter begins to describe some of the differences in evangelical views of authority. Not all born-again Protestants saw the need for pan-evangelical coalitions such as the National Association of Evangelicals. Groups such as the Wesleys and Mennonites had mostly bypassed the fundamentalist-modernist controversies, so they were asking different questions than the mostly Reformed and/or dispensational neo-evangelicals. Inerrancy became a watchword among evangelicals, but scholars at Fuller Seminary and in the Evangelical Theological Society wrestled with the best way to reconcile a truthful Bible with higher criticism. Chapter three discusses mostly successful efforts to establish a serious evangelical periodical through *Christianity Today* and the failed effort to establish an evangelical research university. In all of these educational endeavors, internal debates about inerrancy and separatism seem to confirm Matthew Sutton’s aforementioned contention that there was more continuity between fundamentalists and evangelicals than either cared to admit.

³² Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 3.

³³ Molly Worthen, *The Man on Whom Nothing Was Lost: The Grand Strategy of Charles Hill* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007).

³⁴ Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

In chapter four, Worthen highlights the challenges raised by Mennonites such as John Howard Yoder and Wesleyans such as Mildred Bang Wynkoop to the Reformed emphases on worldview, inerrancy, and parachurch ministries. They bemoaned the fact that too many of their coreligionists were aping Reformed categories and introducing them into non-Reformed traditions. Worthen then turns her attention to the efforts of evangelical Bible schools to seek regional accreditation and become liberal arts colleges. This was controversial; Bible schools did not have to be as committed to academic freedom as traditional colleges. For many evangelical advocates of the liberal arts, C. S. Lewis emerged as a key influence in how the Christian worldview was compatible with serious scholarship and the life of the mind. Chapter six discusses the growing emphasis upon anthropology among evangelical missiologists, which helped create the Church Growth Movement, a field of study rarely recognized outside the evangelical subculture. Insights from missiology and heretofore-Pentecostal practices intersected in the charismatic movement within evangelicalism, especially at Fuller Seminary, which for some presented a challenge to evangelical cultural respectability. The charismatic movement and the ecumenical sensibilities of Vatican II also opened the door for closer cooperation between evangelicals and Roman Catholics, the topic of chapter seven. A growing number of evangelicals, especially intellectuals, became Catholics or identified with other High Church traditions, abandoning the evangelical mind for older traditions.

In chapter seven, Worthen discusses the rise of the evangelical left. Younger evangelicals and their Mennonite allies pushed back (ultimately unsuccessfully) against their elders' fussy debates about the Christian worldview and biblical inerrancy and sought to engage the great moral issues of their era: poverty, war, racism, and feminism. The latter especially was seen as a threat to traditional evangelical views of authority. Chapter eight gives sustained attention to evangelical debates over inerrancy between 1960s and 1970s and, in a vein similar to Randall Stephens and Karl Gibberson, discusses—often dismissively—evangelicals who challenged conventional understandings of a whole host of issues ranging from child-rearing (Bill Gothard and James Dobson) to the history of Western Culture (Francis Schaeffer).³⁶ In the following chapter, she discusses how a presuppositional form of the Christian worldview—associated with Abraham Kuyper and filtered through Gordon Clark and Cornelius Van Til—directly influenced the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. Young earth creationism, focusing on America's alleged Christian heritage, and (most ominously) Theonomy each drew upon the mostly Reformed evangelical understanding of the Christian worldview. The Inerrancy Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention emerged as a microcosm of the sort of intellectual dysfunction brought on by the evangelical crisis of authority. The final chapter discusses evangelical scholarly trends since the 1990s, noting the perennial appeal of Catholic intellectuals, the ongoing influence of pop “historians” such as David Barton, and the rise of newer evangelical protest movements such as the Emergent Church. Worthen concludes by noting that the “evangelical imagination” perhaps offers a more compelling way to account for evangelical intellectual trends and anti-intellectualism than the ever-elusive evangelical mind.³⁷

The thesis of *Apostles of Reason* carries a lot of explanatory power: evangelicals did indeed face a crisis of authority, both internally and in their posture toward the wider culture. However, Worthen's teasing out of her thesis is mixed. On the upside, she does a fine job of demonstrating tensions within evangelicalism—a concept that meant different things to different evangelicals. Her inclusion

³⁶ Randall J. Stephens and Karl W. Gibberson, *The Anointed: Evangelical Truth in a Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

³⁷ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 264–65.

of minority and/or overtly denominational voices—one of the most helpful aspects of her book—illustrates this quandary. The leaders of the postwar evangelical coalition were shaped directly by the earlier fundamentalism and “entered” evangelicalism primarily through the network of parachurch organizations created between 1930 and 1950. However, denominational evangelicals such as Wesleyans, Mennonites, and even Southern Baptists and Missouri-Synod Lutherans “entered” evangelicalism through their ecclesial identity. Thus, some of the priorities of evangelical elites made little sense in denominations that had different histories and (at times) different theological emphases. Worthen calls this phenomenon the “fundamental dilemma” of evangelicalism: “the tangled history with each strand of evangelicalism. Each was a blend of different theologies, personalities, and cultures, irreducible to any pristine essence of single authority.”³⁸

As another positive, *Apostles of Reason* goes a long way toward transcending the debate undertaken by the previous generation of historians over “Reformed” versus “Wesleyan” readings of evangelical history.³⁹ Worthen recognizes that evangelicalism as a movement contains both trajectories, as well as those who would reject identifying with either trajectory. Yet, all evangelicals were influenced in various ways by the crisis of authority and wrestled with the key concepts of the biblical worldview and scriptural inerrancy. In Worthen’s telling, the Reformed won the battle for the evangelical mind, at times to the chagrin of the non-Reformed, though there often remained a gap between the beliefs of evangelical scholars and the views of most rank-and-file evangelical believers. Historians will also appreciate her framing of the evangelical mind within the context of the wider postwar conservative intellectual movement. Henry especially resonated with some of the same themes being advocated by Richard Weaver and Russell Kirk, while *Christianity Today* echoed some of the same themes as *National Review*.⁴⁰

However, Worthen’s book is not without some shortcomings. One weakness is the “underside” of one of her strengths: her writing style. Of the three books being reviewed in this essay, all of which are examples of fine historical writing, Worthen wins the award for the liveliest prose. Unfortunately, this can be both winsome and off-putting. Sometimes, her words are evocative and memorable. At other times, she is condescending and less-than-empathetic in her interpretation of the evangelical mind. While Miller is evenhanded in his portrayal of the “Age of Evangelicalism” and Sutton is perhaps bemused by evangelical millennialism, Worthen shows little appreciation for the evangelical mind. Evangelical *resilience*, perhaps—those born-again types just keep trucking on. But she is almost never positive toward her subjects and is often quite negative: Gordon Clark and Cornelius Van Til steal the evil Nazi idea of worldview and pass it off on evangelicals; Carl Henry is a pitiful figure who is underappreciated by mainstream scholars because he is overcommitted to inerrancy; Francis Schaeffer is a historical huckster who is only surpassed in his crimes against the past by David Barton; really thoughtful evangelicals become Roman Catholics or Anglicans (or at least contribute to *First Things*).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁹ The central figures in this discussion were George Marsden (Reformed) and Donald Dayton (Wesleyan). Their interactions, with additional comments from Joel Carpenter, Clark Pinnock, Daniel Fuller, and Doug Sweeney, were published in *Christian Scholars Review* 23.1 (Spring 1993). The issue theme was “What Is Evangelicalism?” See also Michael Scott Horton, “Reflection: Is Evangelicalism Reformed or Wesleyan? Reopening the Marsden-Dayton Debate,” *Christian Scholars Review* 31.2 (Winter 2001): 131–55.

⁴⁰ See Jeffrey Hart, *The Making of the American Conservative Mind: National Review and Its Times* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2005), and George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, 30th Anniversary ed. (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2006).

Though Worthen's intellectual history of postwar evangelicalism is by no means warm, it does represent what will perhaps in the long run be the most important of the three books under review in this essay. The sheer scope of her archival research is remarkable. Her emphasis on worldview and inerrancy is a sound method and the theme of a crisis of authority is helpful, even when her tone leaves something to be desired. Her exemplary writing style, combined with the attention her book has garnered, guarantee her work will continue to receive attention from historians, journalists, and even theologians. I hope Worthen's monograph will inspire future dissertations on twentieth-century evangelical intellectuals; she reminds us how much work remains to be done in understanding the evangelical mind(s) since World War II (and before!). Owen Strachan's recent dissertation, forthcoming later this year, will offer a complementary narrative of the postwar evangelical mind that is far less negative in its assessment.⁴¹

4. Conclusion

As these three books illustrate, the post-Marsden era is an exciting time to study the past. Not everyone in the new generation of historians of evangelicalism is as sympathetic to their subjects as many of their predecessors. In many cases, even those historians who are self-proclaimed evangelicals do not share the same apologetic tendencies of some of their generational predecessors. Religious history is now firmly entrenched as a popular field within American history, and unlike forty years ago, few scholars dismiss historical monographs simply because they are written by evangelicals or other people of faith. One blog recently noted almost fifty monographs or collections of essays that will be published by university or trade presses in the first four months of 2015.⁴² This does not count the other historical works that will appear in the second half of the year, studies that will be published by evangelical or Catholic publishers, forthcoming articles in scholarly journals, or dissertations that will be completed in the coming year.

American religious history—including the history of evangelicalism—is here to stay. As mentioned earlier, the American Historical Association is home to many scholars interested in the history of evangelicalism. The Conference on Faith and History continues to thrive as an organization specifically for Christian historians. While the American Society of Church History is perhaps less evangelical-friendly than a generation ago, there is still a place for evangelicals to participate meaningfully. Newer organizations such as The Historical Society and the Society for US Intellectual History include wide evangelical participation, while—closer to home—more and more historians are becoming actively involved in the Evangelical Theological Society. Blogs such as *The Anxious Bench* and *Religion and American History* are disseminating some of the best of contemporary historical scholarship on evangelicalism (and other topics) for a wider readership.⁴³

⁴¹ Owen Daniel Strachan, "Reenchanting the Evangelical Mind: Park Street Church's Harold Ockenga, The Boston Scholars, and the Mid-Century Intellectual Surge" (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2011). The dissertation is under contract to be published by Zondervan in fall 2015.

⁴² Paul Putz, "New Books Alert: 2015 Year in Preview, Part One (January-April)," *Religion in American History* (December 19, 2014), <http://usreligion.blogspot.com/2014/12/new-books-alert-2015-year-in-preview.html#more>.

⁴³ See <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/> and <http://usreligion.blogspot.com/>.

Evangelical history after Marsden remains a promising place for scholars—and future scholars. Steven Miller, Matthew Sutton, and Molly Worthen, along with historians such as Thomas Kidd, David Swartz, Elesha Coffman, Jay Riley Case, Brantley Gasaway, John Turner, Charles Irons, Kate Bowler, and Darren Dochuk—among many others—are doing an excellent job of building upon the previous generation and helping historians, journalists, pastors, and theologians to understand the history of born-again Protestantism in America. Hopefully, this review essay will persuade many readers of *Themelios* to learn from this scholarship and apply it to their particular ministries, whether in the local church, parachurch, academy, public square, or foreign mission field. Good historians know that there is no such thing as a past golden age; however, the post-Marsden era may just turn out to be a golden age for historians of evangelicalism.

PASTORAL PENSÉES

Irrational Violence? Reconsidering the Logic of Obedience in Genesis 22

— Matthew Rowley —

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Abstract: The account of Abraham’s near-sacrifice of Isaac *has been* and will likely *continue to be* violently applied so long as the dominant misunderstanding of the text prevails. The first section of this article argues that the Abrahamic narrative has been dangerous and has been used to promote unhealthy decision-making. The second section reconsiders the logic of obedience presented in Gen 12–22. The text has a dangerous reception history, in part, because many preachers, authors, and congregants have misunderstood the rational grounds given in the text for Abraham’s faith in Gen 22. The primary error is in separating the supreme act of faith (Gen 22) from the uniquely miraculous life of faith (Gen 12–21). The danger is not in the text itself but in the prevailing interpretation and application of the text. The third section gives five guidelines for preaching and applying Gen 22. These guidelines are more faithful to the entire Abrahamic narrative, and they guard against inappropriate and dangerous applications of this text.

Abraham’s near sacrifice of Isaac can be a perplexing account. Since it is foundational to Old and New Testament theology, it cannot be marginalized. Since it is a sensational narrative, it can be easy to preach and hold an audience. It is not only perplexing, foundational, and sensational, it can also be dangerous. The purpose of this article is twofold. First, I aim to persuade the reader that the Abrahamic narrative *has been* and will likely *continue to be* dangerous so long as preachers, authors, and congregants continue to misunderstand the rational grounds given in the text for Abraham’s faith in Gen 22. Second, I aim to show that the danger is not in the text itself, but in the prevailing interpretation and application of the text.¹

¹This article is not an exposition of the theological significance of this text. Elsewhere I have briefly listed over twenty theories put forward by scholars (Matthew Rowley, “Is It Possible to Imitate the Violence of Scripture?”

In this article I argue that Abraham's actions are outside the realm of imitation.² It is not my argument that makes the sacrifice of Isaac inimitable. It is the description of Abraham's entire life, as recorded in the Bible, that places its violence outside the realm of human imitation. I am simply setting the violence in the context that the text claims for itself.

1. *The Danger of Genesis 22*

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!"

And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a holocaust."³

In the book *Under the Banner of Heaven*, John Krakauer begins by telling a chilling story of a Utah man who killed his sister in law and 15-month-old niece at God's command. The murderer claimed that he had a hand written revelation from God that prompted his actions. After his arrest, he stated, "You would think I have committed a crime of homicide, but I have not.... I was doing the will of God, which is not a crime." As he was about to kill his 15-month-old niece with a ten inch boning knife, he told her, "I'm not sure what this is about, but apparently, it's God's will that you leave this world; perhaps we can talk about it later." He described his actions saying, "It was like someone had taken me by the hand that day and led me comfortably through everything that happened.... These lives were to be taken, I was the one who was supposed to do it. And if God wants something to be done, it will be done. You don't want to offend him by refusing to do his work."⁴ Every reader should be horrified at this.

The majority of non-Christian authors I have read treat Abraham's sacrifice as the irrational product of blind faith.⁵ They see blind faith as one of the greatest causes of religious violence.⁶ Thus they might

Prolegomena to the Reception History of the Bible's Scariest Texts" [ThM thesis, Bethlehem College & Seminary, 2014], 64–68).

² Imitation is the successful or failed attempt to copy or simulate something. If one adopts a loose definition of imitation, then one can "imitate" anything. I can imitate the president, movies, books, etc. If one adopts a strict definition of imitation, then I cannot "imitate" anything. For example, I will never be the president, and therefore I cannot *in any way* make decisions like he does. I take a middle road (moderately strict imitation) that recognizes that there is always some sense in which one can imitate events or persons.

³ Gen 22:1–2. "Holocaust" is taken from the LXX (ὁλοκάρπωσις) and is intended to drive home the jarring nature of this command in a text that is so familiar.

⁴ John Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* (New York: Anchor, 2004), xx–xxi. Even though the reader of Krakauer's work walks away thinking about Abraham, the author does not directly draw the parallel.

⁵ For example, Donald Capps writes: "He understands himself to be carrying out the will of God. He is a true believer, and true believers are not disposed to listen to reason.. / He is so sure of himself, so sure that he is acting in response to the command of God, that we necessarily wonder—precisely because he *is* so certain of himself—whether he is not deluding himself?" ("Abraham and Isaac: The Sacrificial Impulse," in *Sacred Scripture, Ideology, and Violence*, ed. J. Harold Ellens, vol. 1 of *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* [Westport: Praeger, 2004], 176, 182; cf. Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* [New York: Twelve, 2009], 53, 71, 206–7).

⁶ Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2005), 18; idem, "Rethinking Religious Violence: Fighting over Nothing," in *The Just War and Jihad: Violence in Judaism, Christian-*

believe that someone like this Utah murderer acted like Abraham. They recognize the bloody reception history of Gen 22 and wish that believers would purge this account from their Bible.

I suspect that most Christians, to one degree or another, have experienced anxiety about Gen 22. Moral disgust at something like this Utah murder comes into tension with the belief that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his beloved son as an act of obedience to God. Could God command something extreme of a modern Christian? How would they know? What if they misunderstood God? I believe this anxiety results from a wrong interpretation of the text. Many Christians have been taught that faith-devoid-of-reason is a good thing.⁷ Abraham believed God and raised the knife even when he could not have articulated good reasons for doing so. For them, it is beautiful when a believer performs radically abnormal actions for God even when their actions seem irrational. To this end, preachers often extol Abraham as the exemplar of blind faith who obeyed the inner prompting of God. The audience is assured that God stopped the knife for Abraham and that God will ensure that no harm comes to the obedient Christian.

It is a central contention of this article that many Christians and non-Christians make a similar error: They treat Abraham as irrational because they are not taking seriously the arguments put forward in the entire Abrahamic narrative.⁸ They divorce the supreme act of faith from the miraculous life of faith described in the text.⁹ Below I argue that Abraham had good reasons for his actions. When one reads Gen 22 in light of Gen 12–21 it becomes clear that Abraham's actions were not irrational.

Abraham's actions have been used to justify individual and national violence for millennia. This murder in Utah is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the bloody reception history of Gen 22.

ity, and Islam, ed. R. Joseph Hoffmann (Amherst: Prometheus, 2006), 99–120; idem, “Yahweh is a Moral Monster,” in *The Christian Delusion*, ed. (John Loftus; Amherst: Prometheus, 2010), 209–36; Capps, “Abraham and Isaac,” 176; Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 304, 306, 308; Hitchens, *God is Not Great*, 71; Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 71–99. John Teehan sees belief in the unverifiable as a dangerous problem. For him, this is not the result of religion, but of our evolved brains. Therefore, if we eradicate religion, we will not eradicate humanities dangerous faith impulse (*In the Name of God: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Ethics and Violence* [West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 201).

⁷ This belief was popularised by Søren Kierkegaard (“Fear and Trembling,” in *Fear and Trembling/Repetition*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983], 5–123).

⁸ Though President Obama showed respect for the text, he argued that public policy cannot be based on the Bible and used Gen 22 to make this point. Because Abraham's relationship with God was not verifiable to outsiders, we would all “call the police and expect the Department of Children and Family Services to take Isaac away from Abraham” (Barack Obama, “Obama's 2006 Speech on Faith and Politics,” *The New York Times*, June 28, 2006).

⁹ Kierkegaard (writing as Johannes de Silentio) frequently associated faith with absurdity (*Fear and Trembling*, 35, 37, 40, 46–50, 53, 56–59, 69, 115, 119). Abraham could not have explained the sacrifice of Isaac to outsiders (60, 115, 118). This makes him appear like a madman (76–77). This book has been extremely influential on the understanding of faith and reason and has shaped how people perceive Abraham's actions. Most English authors assume Kierkegaard's interpretation and use it as their starting point. Other fragmented readings of the narrative are the result of critical scholarship that does not allow the argument of the final form of the text to be considered. Konrad Schmid asks: “Some might wonder why such a contextual reading of Gen 22 has to be established. Is it not obvious to read biblical stories in context? Again, this necessity has to do with the long shadow of Gunkel [among others]. Gunkel split the book of Genesis into individual stories that were supposed to have existed independently from each other. In German-speaking scholarship, at least, the influence of that position is—in a conscious or unconscious way—still a given” (“Abraham's Sacrifice: Gerhard von Rad's Interpretation of Genesis 22,” *Int* 68 [2008]: 272–73).

Abraham's narrative is extremely dangerous! I will argue that the danger is not in the narrative itself. It is the prevailing interpretation, proclamation, and application of this narrative that is dangerous.

2. Rereading Genesis 12–22

How did Abraham arrive at the place where he believed that he really heard God tell him to sacrifice his beloved son? This driving question comes from Krakauer who was reflecting with disgust on the Utah child sacrifice. After recounting the horrendous double murder done by that Utah man in the “name of God,” the author asks: “How could an apparently sane, avowedly pious man kill a blameless woman and her baby so viciously, without the barest flicker of emotion? Whence did he derive the moral justification? What filled him with such certitude?”¹⁰ Krakauer asks this question of the Utah murderer, but I will ask it of Abraham. “Whence did *Abraham* derive the moral justification? What filled *Abraham* with such certitude?” Answering this question ironically gives us a solid ground from which to denounce the Utah murderer.

When God gave a new command for violence to Abraham, the command came to a person who experienced high levels of miraculous validation.¹¹ The miracles were large-scale, frequent, predicted, communal, variegated, long lasting, and multi-sensory. To the degree that the miraculous validation *increases*, the chance that one is deceived or exercising blind faith *decreases*. If there were certain types of miracles, then these miracles would function didactically. True (and well-grounded) knowledge of God's will could be communicated accurately through miracles.¹² We will now examine Gen 12–21 in an effort to see the miracles in Abraham's life that preceded the command to take life.

Abraham's recorded journey with God began with the command that he leave his homeland and travel to a new land (Gen 12:1; Acts 7:3; Heb 11:8). If we are to read Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in context, we must begin considering his entire faith journey, which began in Gen 11:27.¹³ We do not know exactly what means God used to initially disclose his will. According to Acts 7:2, “the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham.” God gave him promises, and he obeyed (Gen 12:2–4). It is crucial to note the fact that God did not command Abraham to commit violence in Gen 12. If God commanded violence at this point in Abraham's life then there would be many similarities between Abraham and the Utah murderer.

God continued his relationship with Abraham and appeared to him when he entered the land of Canaan (Gen 12:7). Later, when Abraham sojourned to Egypt a miraculous plague fell upon Pharaoh and his house. Because of this plague, a foreign ruler from a different faith affirmed Abraham as the

¹⁰ Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*, xxi.

¹¹ More precisely, X large-scale, frequent, predicted, communal, variegated, long-lasting, and multi-sensory miracles validated Y individual who commanded or performed Z violence. This pattern holds for the violence of the exodus and conquest as well (Matthew Rowley, “The Epistemology of Sacralized Violence in the Exodus and Conquest,” *JETS* 57 [2014]: 63–83).

¹² In theory, both theists and atheists should be able to conceive of events so unusual that it would be rational to believe they were caused by something supernatural (see Steve Clarke, “When to Believe in Miracles,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34 [1997]: 95–102). See also Richard G. Swinburne, “Miracles,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 18 (1968): 320–28.

¹³ It seems as if Abraham continued the trajectory toward Canaan that his father Terah began (11:32). His journey of obedience began with his father who likely saw God in a miraculously way. Abraham's personal call came later when he was in Haran (11:32–12:1). Since Nehemiah 9:7 speaks of God calling Abraham out of “Ur” it seems like Abraham was not initially a lone wanderer who heard from God (cf. Acts 7:2).

prophet of a powerful God (Gen 12:10–20). We do not know what type of sense-experience led Pharaoh to conclude that this plague was from Abraham’s God, but we do know that Pharaoh gleaned the proper lesson from the event. After this Abraham allowed Lot to choose his piece of land, and God visited him again (Gen 13:14–18). In Gen 15 God appeared in person and in a dream or vision. Later God visited Abraham, made a covenant with him, changed his name, and promised that the seed of promise *must* come through Sarah and through Isaac (Gen 17). Then God appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre (Gen 18). In Gen 20, God plagued Abimelech and then revealed himself to him in a dream with the result that Abraham was again affirmed as a prophet by a leader of a different ethnic and faith community (Gen 20:1–7, 17–18). After decades of waiting, Sarah miraculously conceived and gave birth to Isaac, the son that God would bless the world through (Gen 17:15–19; 18:10–14; 21:1–8). After Isaac was born, God appeared to Abraham, the miraculously validated prophet, and promised to care for Hagar and Ishmael even after they were no longer under Abraham’s care (Gen 21:8–21). These texts highlight the peculiar nature of Abraham’s relationship with God. God has not placed another human in the same circumstances as Abraham.

The account of Abraham and the destruction of Sodom constitutes the greatest epistemic validation of Abraham’s belief in the entire narrative. The destruction of Sodom further validated God and Abraham’s ability to rightly interpret God’s revelation. In Gen 18:16–33 God appeared to Abraham and told him that he would destroy the city of Sodom. Verses 17–18 read:

The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do [to Sodom], seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”

When I reverse the ordering the logic of this statement becomes apparent:

Since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and *since* all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him, *therefore* I shall not hide from Abraham what I am about to do [to Sodom].

That word “seeing” shows that Abraham was to learn from Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁴ What was he to learn? The text suggests at least three things he could learn: (1) God was just in taking life; (2) God was powerful; (3) as a man, Abraham was able to rightly interpret God’s revelation. Further, the lesson Abraham learned is explicitly tied to the hope of the world through Abraham’s offspring.¹⁵ Abraham experienced the reality and power of God through what he heard, felt, smelled, and saw in the Sodom and Gomorrah event. God told him of the miraculous destruction and then performed this act before his eyes.¹⁶ Because Abraham learned from this event, he did not challenge God in Gen 22 in the same

¹⁴“Seeing” (ESV, RSV, KJV), “since” (NKJV, NASB). The NET Bible notes read, “And Abraham.’ The disjunctive clause is probably causal, giving a reason why God should not hide his intentions from Abraham.”

¹⁵The text makes it is clear that Abraham (who is the progenitor of the hope giving offspring) is to learn by witnessing this event. Abraham’s knowledge is to influence future generations so that they might obey Yahweh and receive the promises given to Abraham: “The LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For (כִּי) I have chosen him, that (לְמַעַן) he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that (לְמַעַן) the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him” (Gen 18:17–19).

¹⁶There was also the miracles with Lot (Gen 19:1–22) and Lot’s wife (Gen 19:24–28).

way that he did in Gen 19. Because Isaac knew his father had been miraculously set apart by God, he was willingly submissive. Because of the miracles, neither Abraham nor Isaac are examples of a normative parent-child relationship.

In Gen 22, Abraham's faith was tested by the apparent contradiction of God's *promise* with his *command*.¹⁷ God's promise to bless the world through the offspring of Isaac came into conflict with God's command to sacrifice Isaac before he had any offspring. God asked that Abraham sacrifice the heir through whom the world (including Abraham) would be blessed.¹⁸ It is likely that Abraham did not know how God would remain faithful to all his promises. However, because of the miracles, Abraham knew that God was trustworthy and that he could rightly interpret God's will.

Earlier I asked of Abraham the questions asked of the Utah murderer: "Whence did Abraham derive the moral justification? What filled Abraham with such certitude?" We have answered this question by showing that the Abrahamic narrative unites the command for life-taking obedience with large-scale miracles that provide strong evidence for God's faithfulness and Abraham's ability to rightly interpret God's will.

Peter Williams rightly situates God's command in Gen 22 in the context of the rest of the Abrahamic narrative:

[In] Genesis 22 when God tells Abraham to offer up Isaac . . . God has shown himself able to do remarkable things, and in the prior revelation given to Abraham already by the time we get to Genesis 22 we find that God has revealed to Abraham that through Isaac in particular he is going to have future offspring. Now at this point Isaac has not had any children and so Abraham has to know that Isaac is going to have some future existence beyond him sacrificing him and that has to be a future existence involving offspring. It is rather striking that he says to the servants at the bottom of the mountain "I and the boy will come back to you." So I don't need to read ahead to Hebrews and cheat and find the end of the story to find out that Abraham knew that God was able to raise him from the dead. I can get to where Hebrews got just on the basis of the Old Testament. In other words, in a miraculous universe where such things can happen there may be certain things which, in an atheist universe, can't really work.... The really big factor is the question of God's trustworthiness.¹⁹

Similarly Francis Schaeffer argues:

¹⁷ This position was held in various ways by Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Wolfgang Musculus (Jon Balsarak, "Luther, Calvin and Musculus on Abraham's Trial: Exegetical History and the Transformation of Genesis 22," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 6 [2004]: 362, 366–73).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 369–71; cf. Brian C. Howell, *In the Eyes of God: A Contextual Approach to Biblical Anthropomorphic Metaphors*, PTMS 192 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 267. This theory was put forward by Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks; rev. ed., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 237–45. Von Rad moves in the right direction by considering Gen 22 in light of what precedes. Konrad Schmid adopts von Rad's interpretation but does a better job allowing Gen 12–21 to inform the command in Gen 22 ("Abraham's Sacrifice," 268–76).

¹⁹ Peter J. Williams, "Moral Objections to the Old Testament" (paper presented at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC, 24 September 2013); cf. Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 50.

Kierkegaard said this was an act of faith with nothing rational to base it upon or to which to relate it. Out of this came the modern concept of a 'leap of faith' and the total separation of rationality and faith. In this thinking concerning Abraham, Kierkegaard had not read the Bible carefully enough. Before Abraham was asked to move towards the sacrifice of Isaac (which, of course, God did not allow to be consummated), he had much propositional revelation from God, he had seen God, God had fulfilled promises to him. In short, God's words at this time were in the context of Abraham's strong reason for knowing that God both existed and was totally trustworthy.²⁰

Given the entire Abrahamic narrative, Abraham should have believed that he really heard from God. The large-scale miracles lend credibility to Abraham's faith when he heard, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a holocaust."

Because God chose to unite new commands for life-taking obedience with large-scale miracles, there is solid ground from which we can critique the present day murderer who claims that God has commanded him to commit violence.²¹ People in the present day should doubt any mere vision that calls for Abraham-like violence because they have not become a recognized prophet with the large-scale miraculous validation required to pass the epistemological exam. Murderers and the deranged can borrow language from the sacrifice of Isaac, but they cannot repeat the context of the Abrahamic narrative. This discredits their appeals to comparable sacred violence. One misuses the climax of Abraham's story when they divorce it from the rest of the drama.

Abraham knew that Isaac would not remain dead. He knew that "we will return" (Gen 22:5). This was not a leap taken in despair but a rational faith-filled act. Because God promised that he would bless the world through the offspring of childless Isaac, and because God commanded that Abraham sacrifice Isaac, the burden of responsibility rested on God to make good on all his promises. Because of the large deposits already in Abraham's trust bank he knew with certainty that God would either stop the knife or raise Isaac up from the dead.²²

In the present day, invoking the Deity by saying that he declared violence does not say anything true about reality. The miracles surrounding the sacrifice of Isaac have never been historically repeated, and thus all close comparisons are false. God has not placed another human in the situation of Abraham. Therefore, violently imitating Abraham's story and actions are impossible. Gen 12–22 places the sacrifice of Isaac outside the realm of human imitation. If the events in the Abrahamic narrative, in its entirety, informed Abraham's actions in Gen 22, then the account of the sacrifice of Isaac poses no threat of violent imitation.

²⁰ Francis A. Schaeffer, "The God Who is There," in *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy: Three Essential Books in One Volume* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 15.

²¹ This is only one of many grounds whereby a violent "imitator" may be critiqued. For example, another valid option is this: Abraham's actions are intricately tied to the blessing of the world through the seed of Isaac. The ultimate fulfillment of this promise is the Messiah. Since the Messiah has come and given himself as a blessing for the world, we should not expect another parent to be called to a similar act.

²² Heb 11:17–19 says, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.' He considered (λογισάμενος) that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back." The text of Hebrews mentions faith, then it says, "he considered" that God was able to raise him from the dead. Abraham's act was not a blind leap of faith taken in despair.

3. How (Not) to Preach and Apply Genesis 22

This article has situated God's command to Abraham within the context of a unique and miraculous relationship with God. As a result, the modern Christians should recognize that God did not command irrational violence from Abraham. Since Abraham is considered an exemplar of faith, the logic of obedience in Gen 22 should inform preaching, writing, and, most of all, application. Many believers routinely apply Abraham's narrative in irrational (though usually harmless) ways. Many unbelievers, who are more aware of the bloody reception history of this narrative, consider the commendation of irrational obedience to be a game of high-stakes Russian roulette. Most who hear the narrative will be harmless "blanks" but a few will prove explosive. Believers and unbelievers alike have commonly failed to understand the logic behind Abraham's faith as recorded in the text. This misunderstanding stems, in part, from those who have expositied and applied this text in written and oral form. Believers and unbelievers should be able to agree that the Bible describes Abraham in a unique way that makes his actions impossible to imitate. The aim of the next section is to state five guidelines for preaching and applying this text in a way that is (1) more faithful to the narrative, and (2) less likely to encourage irrational behaviour. I will state each guideline negatively and positively.

3.1. Don't Separate Genesis 22 from Genesis 12–21

Stated positively: *Make every effort to place Gen 22 in the miraculous context of Gen 12–21. Strive to unite the climax of the story with the decades of miraculous backstory.*

If all you mention of the *Lord of the Rings* is Sam and Frodo at Mount Doom, bickering about throwing a piece of gold away, then you are missing the whole story. There is a huge difference between the climactic scene and the story in which the scene is situated. The climax needs the story in order to be coherent. Do not divorce Abraham's supreme act of faith (Gen 22) from the rest of his miraculous life of faith (Gen 12–21).

3.2. Don't Make Abraham the Exemplar of Blind Faith

Stated Positively: *Highlight the evidence given in the text for why Abraham should have believed that he could rightly interpret God's will.*

Believers and skeptics alike regard Abraham as the Bible's faithful exemplar.²³ My concern here is with Christians who believe that Abraham's sacrifice set *some sort of precedent*.²⁴ How one perceives

²³ Some make Abraham's example normative by focusing on the fact that God took Isaac rather than on the fact that Abraham raised a knife to kill his son. When this happens, one can go through the motion of relinquishing "Isaacs" to God on a daily basis (Carol Kent, *When I Lay My Isaac Down: Unshakable Faith in Unthinkable Circumstances* [Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004]; cf. Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* [New York: Dutton, 2009], 12–21). While Keller spiritualizes Abraham's narrative for a modern audience, he rightly argues against actual violent application and against Kierkegaard's interpretation of this narrative.

²⁴ Atheist scholar Edwin Curley notes the danger when a modern reader believes that they are in similar circumstances: "When someone in authority gives a command or permission, and cites a reason for that authorization, the person thus authorized will naturally take that reason to be a sufficient ground for similar action in similar circumstances in the future.... [God ought to have at least said], and made it clear that the combination of command and reason given in that case should not be regarded as setting a precedent for the future, apparently similar situations" ("The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," in *Divine Evil? The Moral Character of the God of*

the original narrative influences the way that one can follow the precedent set by the text. Those who interpret Abraham's faith to be "blind" apply Gen 22 as follows:

1. If Abraham in Gen 22 is the exemplar of faith,
2. if Abraham's faith was irrational or blind in Gen 22,
3. then I follow Abraham's example best when I exercise blind or irrational faith.
4. Thus I might use Gen 22 to support an action that requires blind or irrational faith.

The hermeneutical judgment about Abraham's blind faith influences modern applications of this passage. This reader may be prone to irrational decisions because of what he or she interprets to be a biblical precedent. Someone inhabiting this paradigm might kill their daughter after having a dream that God commanded this.²⁵

The following illustration shows how application would be different if the interpreter noticed the large-scale miracles mentioned in the whole Abrahamic narrative. I have argued that these miracles made Abraham's faith rational. If this is the case, then a Christian will apply Abraham's example to a different set of circumstances:

1. If Abraham in Gen 22 is the exemplar of rational faith,
2. if Abraham's faith was exercised in the context of strong reason in Gen 22,
3. then I follow Abraham's example best when I exercise faith in accord with reason.
4. Thus I might use Gen 22 to support an action that requires faith and strong reason.

Notice that the person in the present day will apply the Abrahamic narrative to a different set of situations. They are more likely to use the narrative as support *alongside* their strong reason. They might trust God to provide needed money to complete seminary. But they would consider killing their child based on a feeling or dream to be outside the realm what God would ask.²⁶ They would recognize that

Abraham, ed. Michael Bergmann, Michael Murray, and Michael Rae [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 72). This comment is in relation to the conquest. Given his entire essay I think he would apply this to the sacrifice of Isaac as well. Curley is concerned with the violent imitation of the Bible. He believes the text should caution against this sort of application. I have argued that, when the entire Abrahamic narrative is read, the miraculous life of Abraham recorded in Gen 12–21 cautions against the reappropriation that Curley fears.

²⁵ For more regrettable accounts of similar behavior, see Rowley, "Is It Possible to Imitate the Violence of Scripture?" 26–27; cf. Judith A. Boss, *Ethics for Life: A Text with Readings*, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004), 149–50; Capps, "Abraham and Isaac," 172–73; Carole Delaney, *Abraham on Trial: The Social Legacy of Biblical Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); idem, "Sacrificial Heroics: The Story of Abraham and Its Use in the Justification of War," in *The Just War and Jihad: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. R. Joseph Hoffmann (Amherst: Prometheus 2006), 217–30; Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 44–46; Randal Rauser, "I Want to Give the Baby to God: Three Theses on God and Devotional Child-Killing" (paper presented at the annual meetings of the EPS and SBL, Atlanta, November 2010), 6–7; Charles Selengut, *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 173; Yvonne Sherwood, "Abraham in London, Marburg-Istanbul and Israel: Between Theocracy and Democracy, Ancient Text and Modern State," *BibInt* 16 (2008): 148; Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 163. The vast majority of those who believe Abraham exercised blind faith will never do anything harmful with this passage.

²⁶ Many of the Christians that I have spoken with have said that God would never command something of them that went against the established ethical norm. God's will must conform to previous revelation. However, much of the point of Gen 22 is that God actually commanded something *abnormal* of Abraham (Gen. 9:6). Many Christians have a difficult time articulating convincing reasons why God would command violence of Abraham

they have not been miraculously placed, like Abraham, at a pivotal moment in redemptive history. They would see that Abraham had good reasons for his faith-filled actions.²⁷ Thus their faith-filled actions should also accord with reason. This is how one follows the faith of Abraham.

3.3. Don't Sacrifice Discontinuity on the Altar of Continuity

Stated Positively: *Labor to show Abraham's uniqueness before one draws out universal applications from his narrative.*

One of the pleasures and pitfalls of preaching is the need to apply the text of the Bible to the modern Christian. Making the Bible relevant is *pleasurable* because God works through the text to bring someone into a relationship with him. Thus there is a high level of continuity between all peoples and groups that have been in a covenantal relationship with God. This continuity provides fertile grounds for applying the Bible to daily life.

Application also opens up the door for misapplication. In the effort to maximize correspondence between Abraham and the modern Christian it might be easy to minimize Abraham's uniqueness. I am not arguing for a radical discontinuity between Abraham and the modern believer. There are many lessons that one can learn about God, faith, the human condition, and God's faithfulness to promises. Abraham properly fears God and has a faith grounded in the person and work of God (Rom 4; Heb 11:17–19; Jas 2:20–21). However, if discontinuities between Abraham and the Christian are not highlighted, the Christian might not be able to distinguish God's speaking to Abraham from the communications claimed by the deranged Utah murderer.

Christians have an additional reason why they should believe that imitating the faith of Abraham would not require violence. After the crucifixion, believers stand in a very different place in redemptive history. Many of the themes in Gen 22 are amplified in the New Testament relationship between Jesus and his Father.²⁸ Though some have argued that the crucifixion was divine child abuse, this charge evidences a fundamental misunderstanding of the person of Christ in relation to the Father and of their purpose in the incarnation.²⁹ On this side of the cross Christians can see Abraham's test of faith as foreshadowing ultimate redemption in Christ.

but not of them (Tanya Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* [New York: Knopf, 2012], 64).

²⁷ As I have hinted at many times, faith and reason are not opposed to each other. All human knowledge has "an irreducibly fiduciary character" (Murray Rae, "Incline Your Ear That You May Live: Principles of Biblical Epistemology," in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God*, ed., Mary Healy and Robin Perry [Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007], 164; cf. Lesslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995]).

²⁸ Mark 10:45; John 1:29; Rom 8:32; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 2:5–11; 1 Pet 1:18–19, 2:22–25.

²⁹ John Stott writes: "We must not, then, speak of God punishing Jesus or of Jesus persuading God, for to do so is to set them over against each other.... We must never make Christ the object of God's punishment or God the object of Christ's persuasion, for both God and Christ were subjects not objects, taking the initiative together to save sinners" (*The Cross of Christ* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006], 151). For a discussion of divine child abuse and a list of some who make this charge, see Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach eds., *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 226–37; cf. Richard J. Mouw, "Violence and the Atonement," in *Must Christianity Be Violent? Reflections on History, Practice, and Theology*, ed. Kenneth R. Chase and Alan Jacobs (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003), 159–71; Alvin Plantinga,

3.4. *Don't Make Abraham's Relationship with God Normative*

Stated Positively: *Treat Abraham as a character whom God uniquely called for a particular purpose. Abraham and the covenant God made with him are non-repeatable. The Christian is not constantly hearing new covenants from God or receiving new commands to sacrifice Isaacs.*

I believe that a large percentage of Christians do a disservice to their own experience of God and to Abraham's experience of God by treating his life as a pattern for Christian living. For example, Ben Campbell Johnson makes Abraham's experience of directly hearing from God normative. He does this by watering down the Abrahamic narrative itself:

We do a disservice to God, to Abram, and to our faith when we place Abram in a special category as a hearer of God's voice. [We imagine God speaking to Abram shouting through a megaphone] but what if God did not shout at Abram but spoke in a flash or a gentle flow of thoughts into his mind? In some ways these were normal thoughts like he had had before, yet in other ways they were very different. These thoughts about a land, a nation, and being a blessing were ideas he had pondered in the same way he had pondered the number of his sheep, his cattle, and his servants.³⁰

It would be unsettling if Abraham only heard God's voice through a "gentle flow of thoughts." Were Abraham's thoughts about sacrificing Isaac "normal thoughts like he had had before?" Had he pondered killing his son in the same way he "pondered the number of his sheep?" Johnson's sermonizing on Abraham is typical. In making Abraham's experience of God normative he has handicapped his own ability to provide solid grounds for Abraham's actions on Mount Moriah. It is ironic (but normal for this type of literature) that this book, which prominently features Abraham's hearing of God, never mentions the sacrifice of Isaac.

3.5. *Don't Casually Spiritualize Abraham's Actions*

Stated Positively: *When calling your audience to radical devotion, remember that devotion for Abraham required being willing to kill his innocent son. Therefore, you should give your audience good reasons for why God would not call them to act violently toward a human.*

One of the main methods of applying the Bible to modern life is to spiritualize the narrative and draw general applications from the example in the text. While there is validity in this approach, one must be very cautious as they carefully nuance application. Spiritualizing violent passages is extremely common because it is difficult to know what to do with these texts. Spiritualization allows the preacher to end a difficult sermon on a positive note that moves the audience towards action. Speaking of the conquest narrative, Jeph Halloway writes: "While [spiritualization] is personally meaningful, I would think it awkward to talk about my struggles with covetousness and worldly pleasures while standing in the midst of the rubble of Jericho. . . . The biblical material on holy war will have its spiritual lessons, but to seek them in indifference to the actual events of the conquest of Canaan ignores the harsh reality

"Comments on 'Satanic Verses,'" in *Divine Evil? The Moral Character of the God of Abraham*, ed. Michael Bergmann, Michael Murray, and Michael Rae (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 113–14.

³⁰ Ben Campbell Johnson, *The God Who Speaks: Learning the Language of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 6–7.

of bloodshed and violence.”³¹ Similarly, one could spiritualize the sacrifice of Isaac and say that God is calling the Christian to offer up to God their personal idols. If this approach is taken, one must always remember that Abraham was called to raise a real knife and sacrifice a real human. He was not called to raise a metaphorical knife over his lusts.³² One should not seek application while being indifferent to the actual events described in this narrative.

4. Conclusion

This article has argued that there is real danger in misunderstanding (and thus misapplying) Gen 22. This narrative *has been* and will likely *continue to be* dangerous so long as preachers, authors, and congregants continue to misunderstand the rational grounds given in the text for Abraham’s faith in Gen 22. The primary error is in separating the supreme act of faith (Gen 22) from the uniquely miraculous life of faith (Gen 12–21). The danger is not in the text itself but in the prevailing interpretation and application of the text.

I have argued that the Bible itself, in its very description of the contexts of violence, places the violence outside the realm of imitation. I have set Abraham’s obedience in the context that the text claims for itself. It is not my argument that makes violent imitation of the text impossible, rather it is the very claims of the Bible. Because Abraham had good reasons for believing that he stood in a unique relationship with God, the modern preacher should speak in a way that highlights the rational grounds for Abraham’s actions.

³¹ Jeph Halloway, “The Ethical Dilemma of Holy War,” *SwJT* 41 [1998]: 47).

³² Carol Delany rightly cautions against this approach: “Giving up something is quite different from taking the life of another” (“Sacrificial Heroics,” 224). It could be argued that Christians are not to kill their children because there are other post-Abraham commands condemning this. Certainly there is more revelation against child sacrifice after Abraham died, but as Louise Antony rightly notes, Abraham should be fully aware that what he is doing violates the normal ethical paradigm: “Abraham, of course, never saw the Ten Commandments, but we know, from God’s displeasure with Cain, that God expected humans to know that they were not to kill each other” (“Does God Love Us?” in *Divine Evil? The Moral Character of the God of Abraham*, ed. Michael Bergmann, Michael Murray, and Michael Rae [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 40). If the miracles that set Abraham apart are not emphasized, a congregant could reach the conclusion that God was also calling them to break an ethical norm.

Book Reviews

— OLD TESTAMENT —

- The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*. 2nd ed. 95
Reviewed by Andrew David Naselli
- Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes. *Biblical Hebrew Grammar Visualized*. Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 6. 97
Reviewed by Phillip S. Marshall
- Antoine Bret. *The World Is Not Six Thousand Years Old—So What?* 99
Reviewed by William D. Barrick
- Walter Brueggemann. *Ice Axes for Frozen Seas: A Biblical Theology of Provocation*. Edited by Davis Hankins. 101
Reviewed by Michael E. Littell
- Jerome N. Douglas. *A Polemical Preacher of Joy: An Anti-Apocalyptic Genre for Qoheleth's Message of Joy*. 103
Reviewed by Eric Ortlund
- Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Dorington G. Little. *Biblical Portraits of Creation: Celebrating the Maker of Heaven and Earth*. 104
Reviewed by Walter L. McConnell III
- Timothy Michael Law. *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible*. 106
Reviewed by Chee-Chiew Lee
- Cynthia Miller-Naudé and Ziony Zevit, eds. *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*. Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 8. 108
Reviewed by Douglas Stuart
- William Thomas Miller. *A Compact Study of Numbers*. 110
Reviewed by William A. Ross
- Jeffrey J. Niehaus. *Biblical Theology: The Common Grace Covenants*. 112
Reviewed by Bryan D. Estelle
- Iain Provan. *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters*. 114
Reviewed by Daniel C. Timmer

— NEW TESTAMENT —

- Per Beskow. *Rex Gloriam: The Kingship of Christ in the Early Church*. Translated by Eric J. Sharpe. 116
 Reviewed by Joshua W. Jipp
- Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. 2nd ed. 118
 Reviewed by Robert W. Yarbrough
- Sigurd Grindheim. *God's Equal: What Can We Know about Jesus' Self-Understanding in the Synoptic Gospels?* Library of New Testament Studies 446. 120
 Reviewed by Peter Orr
- Douglas S. Huffman. *Verbal Aspect and the Prohibitions in the Greek New Testament*. Studies in Biblical Greek 16. 122
 Reviewed by David Parris
- Craig R. Koester. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Yale Bible 38A. 124
 Reviewed by Brian J. Tabb
- Bruce W. Longenecker and Mikeal C. Parsons, eds. *Beyond Bultmann: Reckoning a New Testament Theology*. 126
 Reviewed by Joshua W. Jipp
- Ralph P. Martin. *2 Corinthians*. 2nd ed. Word Bible Commentary 40. 128
 Reviewed by Timothy L. Fox
- Mackenzie Mulligan. *Simon, Who Is Called Peter: Life as One of the Apostles*. 130
 Reviewed by Karen H. Jobes
- Peter R. Rodgers. *Text and Story: Narrative Studies in New Testament Textual Criticism*. 132
 Reviewed by Peter J. Gurry
- Christopher R. Seitz. *Colossians*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. 133
 Reviewed by Joel White
- Moisés Silva, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 5 vols. 2nd ed. 135
 Reviewed by Andrew David Naselli

— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

- Kevin Bauder and Robert Delnay. *One in Hope and Doctrine: Origins of Baptist Fundamentalism, 1870–1950*. 137
 Reviewed by Nathan A. Finn
- James P. Byrd. *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution*. 139
 Reviewed by Collin Hansen

-
- D. Eryl Davies. *Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Evangelicals in Wales: Bala Ministers' Conference, 1955–2014*. 141
Reviewed by David Ceri Jones
- Matyáš Havrda, Vít Hušek, and Jana Plátová, eds. *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis: Proceedings of the Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, October 21–23, 2010)*. Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*. 142
Reviewed by H. Clifton Ward III
- Thomas L. Humphries Jr. *Ascetic Pneumatology from John Cassian to Gregory the Great*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. 144
Reviewed by Andrew Selby
- Peter J. Morden. *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon*. 146
Reviewed by Jeremy Kimble
- Randall J. Pederson. *Unity in Diversity: English Puritans and the Puritan Reformation, 1603–1689*. Brill's Series in Church History 68. 148
Reviewed by Richard Snoddy
- Robert F. Rea. *Why Church History Matters: An Invitation to Love and Learn from Our Past*. 149
Reviewed by Shane Shaddix
- Ryan M. Reeves. *English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience, 1527–1570*. Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 167. 151
Reviewed by Jan Martijn Abrahamse
- Donald S. Whitney. *Finding God in Solitude: The Personal Piety of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) and Its Influence on His Pastoral Ministry*. 152
Reviewed by Kyle Strobel
- SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —**
- Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda. *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis*. 154
Reviewed by Andrew J. Spencer
- J. Kameron Carter. *Race: A Theological Account*. 156
Reviewed by Elizabeth Y. Sung
- Oliver D. Crisp. *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology*. 159
Reviewed by Forrest H. Buckner
- John V. Fesko. *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights*. 161
Reviewed by William VanDoodewaard
- John F. Kilner. *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*. 163
Reviewed by Joshua R. Farris

Donald Macleod. *Christ Crucified: Understanding the Atonement.* 165
Reviewed by Jonathan King

Jason S. Sexton, ed. *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity.* Counterpoints: Bible and 168
Theology.
Reviewed by Joseph H. Sherrard

— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Brian Brock. *Captive to Christ, Open to the World: On Doing Christian Ethics in Public.* 170
Edited by Kenneth Oakes.
Reviewed by Tommy A. Casarez

Gloria Furman. *Treasuring Christ When Your Hands Are Full: Gospel Meditations for 172
Busy Moms.*
Reviewed by Kristin Tabb

Jason B. Hood. *Imitating God in Christ: Recapturing a Biblical Pattern.* 173
Reviewed by C. D. (Jimmy) Agan III

Charles Marsh. *Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.* 175
Reviewed by Michael Littell

David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling. *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A 177
Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry.*
Reviewed by Benjamin D. Espinoza

C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison. *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the 179
Patient Way of Jesus.*
Reviewed by Christopher G. Woznicki

David Helm. *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today.* 9Marks: Building 181
Healthy Churches.

Bobby Jamieson. *Sound Doctrine: How a Church Grows in the Love and Holiness of God.*
9Marks: Building Healthy Churches.

Jonathan Leeman. *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represent Jesus.*
9Marks: Building Healthy Churches.

Jonathan Leeman. *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus.* 9Marks:
Building Healthy Churches.

Ray Ortlund. *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ.* 9Marks: Building
Healthy Churches.

Jeramie Rinne. *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God's People Like Jesus.* 9Marks: Building
Healthy Churches.

Mack Stiles. *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus.* 9Marks: Building Healthy
Churches.

Reviewed by Chris Bruno

– MISSION AND CULTURE –

- John Bowlin, ed. *The Kuyper Center Review (Volume 4): Calvinism and Democracy*. 185
Reviewed by Christopher G. Woznicki
- Ryan C. McIlhenny, ed. *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*. 187
Reviewed by Dave Moorhead
- Abraham Kuyper. *Scholarship: Two Convocation Addresses on University Life*. Translated 188
by Harry Van Dyke.
Richard Mouw. *Called to the Life of the Mind: Some Advice for Evangelical Scholars*.
Reviewed by Robert Covolo
- J. D. Payne and John Mark Terry. *Developing a Strategy for Missions: A Biblical, Historical, 190
and Cultural Introduction*. Encountering Mission.
Reviewed by Walter L. McConnell III
- Brian Steensland and Philip Goff, eds. *The New Evangelical Social Engagement*. 191
Reviewed by David Ceri Jones
- Brent Waters. *Christian Moral Theology in the Emerging Technoculture: From Posthuman 193
Back to Human*. Ashgate Science and Religion Series.
Reviewed by Earl Waggoner

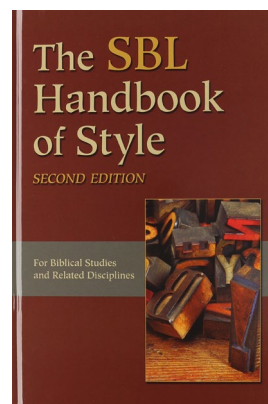
— OLD TESTAMENT —

The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines. 2nd ed. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. 351 pp. £26.37/\$\$39.95.

The SBL Handbook of Style (SBLHS) has become the standard guide for biblical studies. It first released in 1999, and the second edition released in November 2014. This handbook is particularly noteworthy for *Themelios* since it serves as the standard for our journal's style. While copy-editing all of the issues of *Themelios* from 2008 to 2014, I referred to the first edition of SBLHS hundreds if not thousands of times.

John F. Kutsko, SBL Executive Director, explains what's new in the second edition in its preface:

In addition to corrections, the revisions to the second edition of *The SBL Handbook of Style* are fivefold. First, this edition includes carefully selected stylistic changes based on the review and recommendation of the editorial board members and consultants. . . . Second, the new edition supplements and updates several areas. Third, the handbook has filled in gaps of coverage or added new sections. Fourth, the handbook has reordered chapters and moved the appendixes into the body of the handbook. Fifth, . . . [it] contains more complete information and requires less consultation of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. (p. xii)



I won't review the entire SBLHS here since this is a second edition. Instead, I'll highlight what I think are noteworthy additions and rule changes in this second edition.

1. *Additions*. The second edition is more clear, comprehensive, and organized. It is more up-to-date on how to cite electronic resources, and it updates and expands many of the lists and discussions in the first edition. For example, the section titled "Secondary Sources: Journals, Major Reference Works, and Series" (§8.4; pp. 171–260) is 26 pages longer in the second edition than the first. Yet SBLHS still fails to include some secondary sources that belong in this list such as *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (InterVarsity Press and Inter-Varsity Press), *Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans and Apollos), *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, and *Studies in Biblical Greek* (Lang). Also, one of the new secondary sources in the second edition is "BAFCS" for "The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting." Yet SBLHS keeps the old examples from the first edition that list *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* in italics and not abbreviated (pp. 89–90, 106–7).

New to the second edition is an expanded section titled "Names of Presses" (§6.1.4.1; pp. 76–82), which gets only half a page in the first edition. This section helpfully specifies how one should cite the names of presses along with their place of publication. Here are some examples: Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press (not Downers Grove: IVP or merely InterVarsity), Leicester (or London): Inter-Varsity Press (not IVP or merely Inter-Varsity), Grand Rapids: Baker Academic (not Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), and Wheaton, IL: Crossway (not Wheaton: Crossway Books). The entry for Rowman & Littlefield lists the place as "Lanhan, MD," but should say, "Lanham, MD" (p. 81).

One more issue here: Unfortunately, the second edition does *not* change what it says in the first edition about referring to God with "bias-free language." "In many cases," advises SBLHS, "the

assignment of gender to God is best avoided” (§4.3.1; p. 21). “Avoid using unnecessary gender-specific pronouns in reference to the Godhead” (§4.3.4.3; p. 34). This rule seems to embrace a politically correct theology without sufficient warrant. Needless to say, *Themelios* does not follow *SBLHS* here.

2. *Rule Changes*. Six changes are worth highlighting: (a) Add an apostrophe plus an *s* to all possessive names, including Jesus’s and Moses’s (§4.1.6; pp. 16–17). (b) Abbreviate series and journal titles in the bibliography as well as notes (§6; p. 70). See the below table for examples. (c) In notes, place the basic facts of publication (city, publisher, and date) *within* parentheses and all secondary publication information *outside* parentheses (§§6.2–6.4; pp. 84–108). The following table shows some examples:

Notes		Bibliography	
<i>SBLHS</i> 1st ed.	<i>SBLHS</i> 2nd ed.	<i>SBLHS</i> 1st ed.	<i>SBLHS</i> 2nd ed.
Douglas J. Moo, <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i> (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 25.	Douglas J. Moo, <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i> , NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 25.	Moo, Douglas J. <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i> . New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.	Moo, Douglas J. <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i> . NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in <i>Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament</i> (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 611.	Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in <i>Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 611.	Seifrid, Mark A. “Romans.” Pages 607–94 in <i>Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.	[same]
Jason S. DeRouchie, “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor,” <i>BBR</i> 14 (2004): 188.	[same]	DeRouchie, Jason S. “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor.” <i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i> 14 (2004): 175–203.	DeRouchie, Jason S. “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor.” <i>BBR</i> 14 (2004): 175–203.

(d) Use two-letter postal abbreviations rather than traditional state abbreviations (§8.1.1; pp. 118–19). For example, Eugene, OR, not Eugene, Ore. (e) Use all caps without periods rather than small caps with periods for chronological eras (§8.1.2; p. 119). For example, BC and AD rather than B.C. and A.D. (f) Use all caps rather than small caps to abbreviate Bible translations (§8.2; pp. 121–24). For example, ESV or NIV rather than *ESV* or *NIV*.

While it's good news that the new handbook is comprehensive and well-organized, some bad news overwhelms it: SBL Press is not immediately making the second edition available electronically. The website states, "As with the first edition of the handbook, we anticipate the *SBL Handbook of Style* will be made available [as a PDF] to members on the SBL website. But as with the first edition, we do not expect that to take place for a number of years" ("Questions Regarding Digital Editions of the *SBLHS 2*," http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/pubs/SBLHS2_FAQ.pdf).

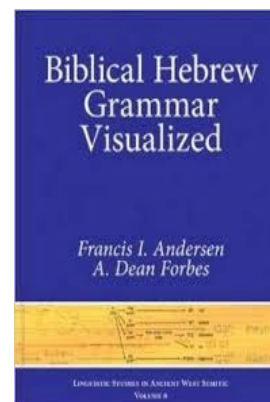
This is bad news for those of us who have enjoyed owning the first edition as a PDF. I consulted the first edition far more frequently than I would have if I owned it only in print. Two main advantages of owning this handbook in PDF format stand out. (a) *You can quickly search a PDF*. I don't know how many hundreds of times I searched the PDF of the first edition to see if it specifies how to abbreviate a particular journal or reference work or series or whether I should capitalize a particular word. Now that I own the second edition only in print, what used to take me five seconds now takes about five or ten times longer. Or even longer than that since I don't always have my print copy within arm's reach. (b) *You can access a PDF anywhere without needing a physical book*. Like most modern professors who research and write, my fundamental tool is a computer. And where there's a computer, there's a way to store and access a PDF you own—whether you are in your home office, your living room, your bedroom, your work office, a classroom, a hotel, or an airplane.

The second edition of *SBLHS* is a good and necessary tool for academics who research and write about biblical studies and related disciplines. It significantly improves the first edition, and it will be even more useful when it is available electronically.

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Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes. *Biblical Hebrew Grammar Visualized*. Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 6. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012. xvii + 394 pp. \$69.50.

Francis Andersen and Dean Forbes have done a valuable service over the years in providing both a searchable database of the text of the Hebrew Bible, tagged morphologically, semantically, and syntactically (as well as by genre and source!), and also a complete set of syntax trees (or phrase markers) that visually represent the grammatical structure of each phrase and clause of the Hebrew Bible. (Those who use Logos Bible Software might know the former as the *Andersen-Forbes Analyzed Text [AFAT]* and the latter as the *Andersen-Forbes Phrase Marker Analysis [AFPMA]*.) Working within the "burgeoning field of corpus linguistics" (p. xi), aided by these new electronic tools for researching Biblical Hebrew (BH) and by modern linguistic theories to describe grammatical phenomena, Andersen and Forbes offer this volume to begin filling a lacuna in the grammatical description of BH. That is to say, they demonstrate how, by employing their computer-assisted research tools, they are able to engage in a more rigorous and principled description of BH at the clause level and beyond (viz., syntax and discourse, and not just at the levels of phonology and morphology), and are now able to cover the scope of the entire corpus of BH (and not just focus on narrative texts). The "visualized" data that they provide to describe Hebrew



grammar come, not merely in the form of labeled phrase markers (although that is primarily what the authors mean by the term), but also in the form of incidence counts of various grammatical phenomena illustrated in tables, horizontal bar graphs, and vertical bar graphs.

Chapters 1–4 introduce the reader to the authors’ basic approach. Here they explain the textual basis for their data (the text of the Leningrad Codex with Kethiv readings when Qere variants exist), the eclectic linguistic framework undergirding their work (emphasizing corpus linguistics with a preference for functionalism and phrase-structure grammars), their process of segmenting the text into appropriate units for analysis, their method for specifying the BH parts of speech (or word-classes) in their analysis, and the concepts and terms necessary to understand the phrase markers (tree diagrams) used to illustrate their analytical work. Chapters 5–8 provide a description and visualization of the hierarchical constituent structure of BH in increasing levels of complexity. Chapters 5–6 deal with basic phrases, followed by complex phrases (phrases having phrases embedded within them), while chapters 7–8 cover main clauses, and then the kinds of embedded (or subordinate) clauses that can be found within main clauses. Chapters 9–17 together form the heart of this study, as Andersen and Forbes introduce the concept of clause-immediate constituents (called CICs—those constituents that combine together to form Hebrew clauses), explain their classification of the five major CIC types and the semantic roles played by many CICs (chs. 9–10), present their methodology for assessing the composition, incidence patterning, and ordering of CICs within BH clauses (ch. 11), and then apply that methodology by analyzing a corpus of four syntactically and semantically diverse verbs within the Qal stem: **נתן/עשה/היה/אמר** (chs. 12–15). Chapters 16 and 17 respectively analyze/visualize how CICs are composed (or realized) across all Hebrew verbs (irrespective of verbal root, as was done in chs. 12–15) and provide “methods for computing and representing the distances between verb corpora” (p. 232). In chapters 18–19, Andersen and Forbes analyze clauses whose predications are achieved by means other than verbal forms: through quasiverbals such as **שׁוּ, אֵין, and עוֹד** (ch. 18), or through verbless clauses (also called nominal clauses, or null-copula clauses; ch. 19). Chapter 20 explains and exemplifies how complex, discontinuous syntactic structures in BH give rise to phrase markers that are not true syntax “trees” since they break the normal rules for tree diagrams (these phrase markers are called graphs by AF). Finally, ch. 21 describes how the authors intend to approach discourse analysis and provides some illustrations of how their very rudimentary work in discourse analysis can be seen in the current phrase markers they have produced.

The authors are to be commended for providing readers a look “under the hood” of the visualized texts of BH provided in a tool like the AFPMA, for explaining the theory and methodology behind it, and for giving a taste of the amazing kinds of research in BH grammar that can be achieved by using it. The authors state in the Preface that “this book takes the first steps toward investigation of the grammar of the Hebrew found in . . . the Hebrew Bible” (p. xi) and that they intend to present “a few *sample* studies that will illustrate the potential of this approach for research” (p. xii). They have certainly delivered what they have promised. Their project is a beginning, a work in progress, and they openly acknowledge a number of areas where refinements and further work are needed. For example, by opting for a “mixed representation” of phrase markers (pp. 114–16), they acknowledge that “a price is exacted when semantic role information is squeezed out by grammatical function information” (p. 116), and later they admit that the existence of certain problems in the mixed-representation model “makes it all the more important that we implement the full representation as soon as possible” (p. 200). Such implementation would be a felicitous development, as the current structure can lead to the skewing of results when the search for certain grammatical functions yields an inaccurate number of hits because

semantic roles have been assigned to those constituents instead. Finally, a word of caution needs to be given. This volume should not be construed as a “how-to manual” in conducting searches using the AFPMA in Logos. However, with that caveat in mind, if someone wants to understand how to begin making use of the riches to be mined from the AFPMA, I can think of no better “pick-axe” than this volume, as it provides the linguistic background, terminology, and concepts necessary to understand how to query the database for all its worth.

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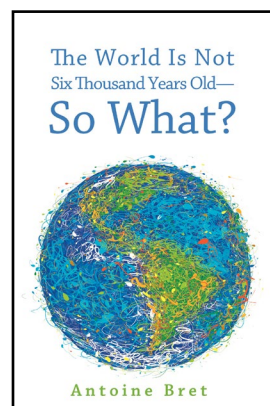
Antoine Bret. *The World Is Not Six Thousand Years Old—So What?* Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014. xx + 107 pp. £10.00/\$16.00.

A great amount of technical information, data, and formulae pack this relatively small volume written by Antoine Bret, who is Associate Professor at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain. He has also been a visiting scholar at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and authored more than seventy scientific articles. The author seeks to dissuade his readers of the validity of a six-thousand-year-old earth.

Ian H. Hutchinson, Professor of Nuclear Science and Engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, contributed the “Foreword” (pp. vii–xi), in which he suggests that Christians need to understand the OT the way Jesus understood it—non-literally (p. viii). He concludes that it is Scripture, not science, that must be reinterpreted. Hutchinson agrees that the young-earth advocates’ appearance-of-age argument represents legitimate logical reasoning, but he denies it theologically, because he believes it “makes God into a deliberate deceiver” (p. x). Throughout the body of the volume, Bret follows the same line of reasoning, buttressing his arguments from biblical interpretation and secular science.

Bret’s “Introduction” (pp. xvii–xx) sets out his assumptions: (1) the Bible is the inspired Word of God; (2) the Bible is internally consistent; and (3) since God is creator of both the Bible and the physical world, there can be no contradiction between the two (p. xvii). In order to demonstrate that consistency, Bret denies any historicity to the account of creation in Gen 1 (pp. xviii). He concedes that “the opinion that the universe is old eventually relies on . . . *trust*” (p. xx, emphasis his). However, I got the impression from the context and the remainder of the book that Bret considers observational science to be the necessary object of trust.

The chapter titles represent the flow of Bret’s argumentation. In chapter 1, “If God Did Something, Does It Have to Be a Miracle?” (pp. 1–6), he reasons that the Scripture depicts God as the one who makes events happen in both the sociological realm and the natural realm, even when no miracle or supernatural intervention is involved. The second chapter, “Must Genesis 1 Be a Literal Account?” (pp. 7–18), contends that the early church fathers took much of the Bible symbolically, thus eliminating problems arising out of a more literalistic reading of Genesis. Bret insists that the days cannot be taken as literal twenty-four-hour days (pp. 11–12) and that the early chapters of Genesis are filled with symbolic



and spiritualized truth, rather than being literal. He ignores Exod 20:8–11 (the Fourth Commandment), which states that the heavens, the earth, and the seas, and all that is in them were created by God in six days. God presented them to Moses on tablets of stone which He Himself had inscribed (Exod 31:18; 34:1), so the Fourth Commandment is not a human statement or observation. Some of Bret's examples for figurative language indicate that he builds a straw man depicting literalists as insensitive to figures of speech and metaphors. His argumentation not only mischaracterizes the vast majority of scholars taking a literal approach to Gen 1–3, it unnecessarily ridicules them.

Chapter 3, "Some Misconceptions about Science" (pp. 19–44), takes readers into the room with secular scientists who make objective observations in order to derive verifiable conclusions from the data. He explains that the scientific method accounts for anomalies in data and that scientists allow their conclusions to be tested by their peers prior to publication (pp. 38–39). Bret admits that some scientists (like Richard Dawkins) do engage in an anti-Bible and anti-Christian crusade (p. 20), but he insists that they are not representative of scientists as a whole. In fact, the author states, "The scientific community is *not* a select private club, where unexpected results have no chance at all to be heard" (p. 20, his emphasis). However, I am personally aware of situations where the scientific community has not been so open and has refused adamantly to even listen to evidence, much less allow publication of research contradicting cherished secular science views. For example, geologist John Whitmore of Cedarville University has attempted to obtain a hearing or to publish his geological analyses of the Grand Canyon's Coconino sandstone formation. Secular geologists have disregarded his work. He has demonstrated that published observations inaccurately describe the layer's texture, composition, and deposition (see John Whitmore, "Seven Misconceptions about the Coconino Sandstone, Grand Canyon, Arizona," The Research and Scholarship Symposium, Cedarville, OH, April 2013, http://works.bepress.com/john_whitmore/18/).

The last two chapters ("More Than Six Thousand Years Traveling" [pp. 45–60] and "Radio Dating and Astrophysics" [pp. 61–83]) come from Bret's own area of expertise. These chapters provide readers with detailed, but clearly explained, support for his contention for an old universe and old earth. He concludes that physical laws remain the same both on earth and in the distant universe, and that those laws do not change with time (p. 61). Such factors as chemical intrusion might produce variations in radiometric dating, but he claims the variations are minor (pp. 68–74). Readers should pay close attention to the restrictions required in order to have dependable outcomes: first, the subject material must be within a closed system (pp. 63, 68); second, we must know the initial ratio of the materials (pp. 65, 68). He adopts an assumption of uniformitarianism, disallowing any catastrophic event that might produce different environments affecting results. I assume that Bret would therefore deny that the Genesis flood was global and catastrophic.

In spite of the many technical mathematical formulae he inserts, Bret communicates well with non-scientific readers. His emphasis boils down to one basic point: observable data. For Christians wishing to read a well-written and clear scientific case for an old earth and an old universe, Bret's volume will not disappoint. Unfortunately, he fails to acknowledge or refer to publications like *Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth* (vol. 2), ed. Larry Vardiman, Andrew A. Snelling, and Eugene F. Chaffin (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 2005) or astrophysicist Jason Lisle's *Taking Back Astronomy* (Green

Forest, AR: Master Books, 2006) and any technical peer-reviewed journals produced by several of the creation-science organizations (e.g., *Answers Research Journal* of Answers in Genesis).

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Walter Brueggemann. *Ice Axes for Frozen Seas: A Biblical Theology of Provocation*. Edited by Davis Hankins. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014. vi + 424 pp. £49.99/\$59.95.

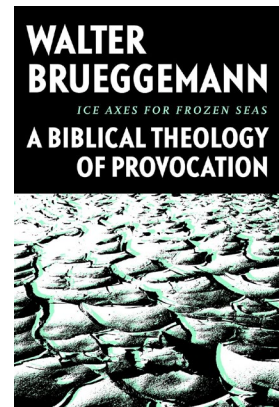
Since his so-called retirement from Columbia Theological Seminary, Walter Brueggemann has been releasing books in rapid succession, with seven in 2014 alone. His recent tome, *Ice Axes for Frozen Seas*, is a collection of essays from 2008–2012 that captures a broad swath of his thought in numerous areas but fails to live up to its subtitle, *A Biblical Theology of Provocation*.

In distinction from the majority of Brueggemann's edited collections, *Ice Axes* features a lengthy introduction from the editor, which attempts to treat the scope of Brueggemann's work. Davis Hankins, who is professor of philosophy and religion at Appalachian State University, uses the introduction to systematize the theoretical elements of Brueggemann's thought (e.g., the relationship between text and world) perhaps more than anyone else to date. The result, however, is strikingly different from the liveliness and faithfulness to which Brueggemann aspires.

For example, Hankins concludes that Brueggemann's refusal to speculate about the God beyond the text is due to the conviction that "there is no hidden, true substance or inner kernel of a God operating behind the scenes." Rather, says Hankins, there is nothing behind the biblical testimony except "various social, political, economic, and other interests" in contention with one another (p. 19). Thankfully, though, the articles within *Ice Ages* suggest alternative conclusions about Brueggemann's God.

The volume's eighteen essays are arranged in four categories: poetry, narrative, social policy, and concrete contemporary matters. Realistically, though, it is nearly impossible for Brueggemann to write anything without heavy doses of all four of these emphases, so most of the essays spill over into neighboring categories. This review will thus focus on individual essays without reference to their category.

One of the first essays, "Biblical Language" (ch. 5), will be among the most jarring to any reader, as well as problematic for Hankins' assessments in the introduction. Here, Brueggemann contrasts what he calls the "*covenantal-dialogical* rhetoric of the Bible" with the "*Cartesian-modernist* rhetoric" in which we are steeped (p. 115, italics original). He argues that all rationalist theological projects run up against the explosive language of God's active agency as found everywhere in the Scriptures. Tracing the emergence of historical relativism, and the reactionary development of "*absolutist propositional language*" (p. 127, italics original), Brueggemann asserts that rationalist theologians mistakenly wound up fighting fire with fire. He suggests that both approaches represent an affront to the God of the Bible, whom they have unwittingly "transposed from an active subject to a harmless object that is no more than an image, or an icon, or an idol that is completely without capacity for agency" (p. 127).



In an essay aptly titled “Food Fight” (ch. 6), Brueggemann recounts the scriptural theme of food monopolies, as epitomized in the policies of the great royal figures of the Bible. He demonstrates the mixed portrayal of Solomon, who ironically becomes both the exemplar of God’s favor on Israel, and the Israelite counterpart to Pharaoh in the book of Exodus, whose drive for accumulation ravages the country and drives the people into slavery. Brueggemann concludes by offering what he calls “The Other Way,” which is the way of contentment, as an antidote to the way of constant consumption through the enslavement of others (p. 162).

The essays in *Ice Ages* do grow progressively more oriented toward recent history and the present. For example, in a later essay titled “Obedience” (ch. 15), Brueggemann challenges readers to dream along with Martin Luther King, Jr., and he charts a prophetic inheritance from Moses and Jesus and finally to King. In ch. 17, intriguingly entitled “Bail Out,” Brueggemann contrasts our constructed world of autonomy, anxiety, and greed with the Bible’s offer of “covenantal existence,” “divine abundance,” and “generosity” (pp. 377–78). In his final essay, “Jubilee” (ch. 18), Brueggemann suggests that Walmart seize upon their fifty-year anniversary to enact the ancient Levitical prescription of the jubilee year for the people and places that have been diminished by its stores.

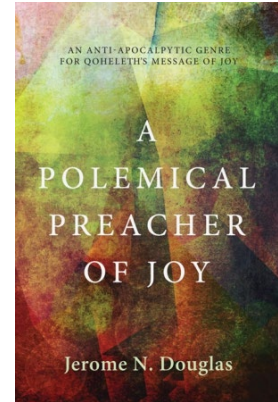
Without question, *Ice Axes for Frozen Seas* offers a scintillating array of essays from the perennially engaging mind of Walter Brueggemann. The expositions and challenges presented here will make any Bible student rethink a wide range of assumed interpretations. The book is thus well-suited to the needs of pastors and theological students, and really anyone who seeks to approach the Bible thoughtfully. However, it is not a “biblical theology” in any conventional sense of the word, and thus the subtitle is misleading. A more realistic (although much less marketable) subtitle would be “A Provocative Collection of Recent Essays,” or something along those lines.

While some of the essays in the volume are explosive, others, such as “Poems vs. Memos” (ch. 4), seem like a rehashing of themes that Brueggemann treats much better elsewhere. The unhelpful introduction, the variable quality of the essays, and the price tag make this book difficult to recommend to anyone on a budget. Those looking for an introduction to Brueggemann would do better with his classic titles like *The Prophetic Imagination* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) and *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress 1997), or the more recent *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009).

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Jerome N. Douglas. *A Polemical Preacher of Joy: An Anti-Apocalyptic Genre for Qoheleth's Message of Joy*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014. 186 pp. £14.00/\$22.00.

The central thesis of Douglas's revised dissertation at Marquette University is that Ecclesiastes represents a hybrid genre of "anti-apocalyptic" (pp. 1, 101) in that the book polemicizes against certain aspects of apocalyptic thought in order to recommend enjoyment of life in the here-and-now (pp. 1–2, 112). To establish this thesis, Douglas summarizes historical-critical and modern literary interpretations of Ecclesiastes, giving repeated attention to struggles of past scholars to understand Qoheleth's contradictions and possible quotations of opponents (pp. 3–14). Douglas summarizes the message of the book as a call to accept life's joys despite how life under the sun is short, the future is unpredictable, and we cannot change our lot in life (pp. 15–19). The first chapter finishes with a summary of previous suggestions for the genre of Ecclesiastes (e.g., a diatribe, a royal testament; pp. 19–24).



A discussion of the work of different genre theorists (such as E. D. Hirsch) constitutes the second chapter (pp. 25–45). Douglas's emphasis falls on his definition of genre around the twin poles of historical setting and message (pp. 3, 45). Wisdom themes in apocalyptic texts occupy Douglas next. He spends the third chapter defining wisdom (pp. 47–52) and apocalyptic (pp. 57–60), presenting John J. Collins's now-famous definition (*The Apocalyptic Imagination* [New York: Crossroad, 1987], 5–8). Douglas then investigates a number of Second Temple apocalypses, such as 1 Enoch and 2 Baruch, with regard to the presence of wisdom themes (pp. 62–100). Sirach is distinguished from other Second Temple Era texts as a wisdom text that argues against certain strains in wisdom thought (pp. 95–98).

The heart of the argument is found in Douglas's fourth chapter. Returning to his definition of genre, Douglas locates the historical setting of Ecclesiastes around 200 BCE according to linguistic factors and the probable social location of a marginalized group in a politically troubled setting (p. 110). Douglas then argues that, since Qoheleth is a fictional persona, his opponents probably are as well (pp. 110–11). Three possibilities for such opponents are presented: traditional sages, apocalyptic sages, or apocalyptic seers (at this stage Douglas registers his dependence on the work of Leo Perdue). Douglas opts for the last of these options without fully considering the alternatives (that is to say, the commitment to an anti-apocalyptic message to Ecclesiastes seems to drive his position on Qoheleth's opponents in a way that appears circular). On his reading, Qoheleth emphasizes the despair of his audience's situation and exhorts them to enjoy life in the here-and-now, turning his audience away from hope in a mysterious, final plan for all of human history as revealed to a prophetic figure (p. 111). According to Douglas, the historical setting of Ecclesiastes within the matrix of Second Temple apocalypticism and wisdom thought illumines its function and message as a polemic against the former (p. 112). Douglas applies this thesis to three passages in Ecclesiastes, discussing, in order, 7:1–10, 3:10–22, and 9:4–6. Commenting on 9:4–6, Douglas explains that, in contrast to apocalyptic texts that narrate God's special revelation of his mysterious plan for human history to a few seers, Qoheleth insists that human beings cannot know anything about the future except that they will die (p. 131). Similarly, Douglas is impressed with how different Eccl 3 is from apocalyptic texts that focus on the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked, immortality, and the knowledge of God and his plan for history. According to Douglas, Qoheleth does not think that God reveals his will to individuals (p. 122). A final chapter explores different rhetorical strategies in Ecclesiastes and their purpose (pp. 146–67).

Douglas's central thesis is contestable on several fronts. The argument for the date of Ecclesiastes does not appear to grapple sufficiently with how Qoheleth's gloomy statements about the human condition apply to all human beings in all times (e.g., 1:1–11; 6:10). It would have been interesting to see Douglas interact with C. L. Seow's influential argument for a date earlier in the post-exilic period (*Ecclesiastes*, AB 18C [New York: Doubleday, 1997], 21–36). Furthermore, Douglas does not discuss the concluding poem in Eccl 12:1–8. Although it is true that a wisdom book like Ecclesiastes differs markedly from a book like Daniel, the funeral procession that closes the book draws many images from apocalyptic depictions of cosmic judgment: the sun and moon darken, everyone is frightened and troubled by what is happening, and so on. The otherwise unnamed narrator who introduces Qoheleth in 1:1 and comments on his words in 12:9–14 then speaks of a final judgment (12:14) which manifestly does not happen in this life. It looks as if the difference between Qoheleth and apocalyptic has been exaggerated. One also wonders if Qoheleth's depiction of life under the sun—the ceaseless round of futile activity, year upon year, generation upon generation (1:2–11), without ever fully being able to grasp what God is doing in all of it (3:11; 8:17)—is really so discordant with an apocalyptic text that narrates revelation breaking in on the ceaseless round and revealing that divine work which man could never discover on his own. And is it necessary to interpret Qoheleth's insistence that the future is always opaque to those living under the sun (9:4–6) as an assertion that special revelation never happens? Or is Qoheleth only pressing us to accept that, on our own and within our natural powers, we will never be able fully to predict and thus master our lives? Finally, Douglas offers no reflections on what implications this putative contradiction between Qoheleth's view of the world and that of apocalyptic might have for our understanding of the canon and its theological consistency.

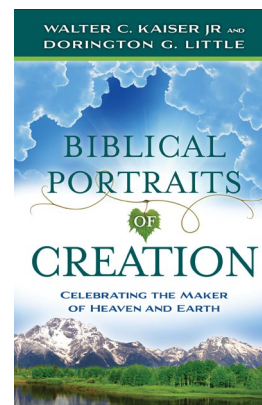
Douglas's thesis is interesting but does not finally convince that Qoheleth should be read as a hybrid genre of anti-apocalyptic.

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Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Dorington G. Little. *Biblical Portraits of Creation: Celebrating the Maker of Heaven and Earth*. Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014. x + 164 pp. £10.56/\$15.99.

Creation has become one of those doctrines that can erect walls to divide people who are supposed to be united in Christ. Despite our shared credal proclamation, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,” our stated views of how and when God created the cosmos and all it contains can quickly reduce the social temperature to a primeval chill. This is why a book like *Biblical Portraits of Creation* is so welcome. Instead of denouncing those who defend contrary interpretations, this book, as reflected in the subtitle, celebrates the Maker of heaven and earth by examining a series of biblical passages that exalt the works of his hands.

Wisely, the book begins, not in Gen 1, but in a study of Prov 3 and 8, passages that highlight God's exercise of wisdom before his acts of creation and portray personified wisdom as rejoicing to witness God's handiwork. Would that all of our investigations of creation reflect this kind of discernment. This account of God's creating before creation is followed by



two chapters on Gen 1, which Kaiser interprets as an overview of creation in its entirety being God's work that is recognized as "very good," and Gen 2, which he sees as an in-depth examination of the creation of humans and their placement in the Garden.

Five subsequent chapters focus on the treatment of creation in six Psalms (104, 8 and 19, 29, 33, and 148), followed by an exposition of the divine speech in Job 38–41 that silences the titular character when questioned about God's work in nature. In ch. 10, Little examines Matt 1:1–17 and discerns a new beginning in the birth and ministry of Jesus. Kaiser then describes the new heavens and new earth from the vantage point of Isa 65–66 and a number of New Testament texts (ch. 11). In ch. 12, Little examines 2 Cor 4:6 and 5:17 and shows that Paul's confidence for proclaiming the gospel and living the Christian life comes from his understanding of the new creation that we become in Christ. The book concludes with a short epilogue, an appendix that gives new life to Kaiser's classic 1968 essay, "The Literary Genre of Genesis 1–11," and name, subject, and Scripture indexes.

The chapters of this book originated as sermons and could serve as models for preaching, as they highlight key homiletical concepts found in each passage studied and provide expositional outlines for them. Even so, they have largely been reworked for the printed page. Taken together, they offer a biblical understanding of creation that is well-suited for Christian laity, though many will find some terms and concepts challenging (e.g., determining meaning by referring to the Hebrew Qal infinitive absolute [p. 13] or the type of Masoretic accent used [p. 17], or discussing the morphological development of the Hebrew language [p. 33]). It is therefore appropriate that readers are encouraged from the very beginning of the book to study it with a small group (or, I would add, an adult Sunday School class) and discuss the questions found at the end of each chapter (p. ix–x). This, I believe, would be the most fruitful use of the book.

I warmly recommend this book to others, chiefly because it centers its discussion of creation on the God who made all things. This is a welcome relief that distinguishes it from other works that are more intent on gaining points over opposing interpretations than bringing glory to the Creator. I am also glad to see that both OT and NT passages of a number of different genres are consulted in the examination of the book's theme, as this gives a much broader understanding than can be derived from a single text. Sympathetic readers will learn to discern the breadth of the Bible's discussion of creation and how it can be discussed amicably even when interpretations differ.

Though I like the book, a few niggling issues prove disappointing. First, while they may serve as markers for sermonic inflection, the pages are littered with far too many exclamation marks. Second, there are frequent mistakes in the transliteration of Hebrew words (pp. 13, 27, 28, 29, etc.). Third, do we really need to be told six times that light travels at the speed of 186,000 miles per second (four of them within three pages [pp. 53–55])? Finally, a minor issue is that the addition of Kaiser's essay, "The Literary Genre of Genesis 1–11," seems a bit out of place in a book that is more geared toward a lay audience, and that the article has not been updated to reflect the shift in the discussion that has taken place in the past forty-five years.

I hope that this book will be read widely and that it will, as the authors desire, "stimulate a whole new conversation on the Bible's extensive view on creation" (p. 8) that will lead many to celebrate the Maker of heaven and earth.

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Timothy Michael Law. *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. xii + 216 pp. £16.99/\$24.95.

A careful reading of this book is like sorting through the fruits after harvest, keeping the good ones and discarding the overripe ones. Law begins his presentation with four reasons why this book is relevant (pp. 4–6): first, “the Septuagint sheds light on the development of Jewish thought,” which is essential for understanding the NT; second, the NT authors use the Septuagint more often than the Hebrew Bible; third, the theology of the early church was shaped and derived from the Septuagint; and fourth, the Septuagint is an important witness to an alternative Hebrew text that was at times older than the MT.

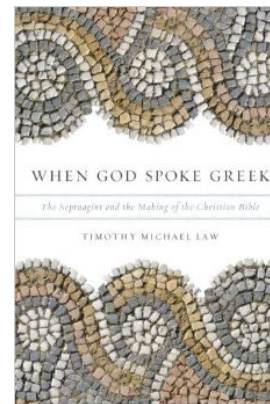
In chapter two, Law provides the historical background to explain how Koine Greek became the *lingua franca* of the Hellenistic era. In chapter three, by analyzing the form of Hebrew biblical texts found at Qumran and its surrounding areas, Law shows that there were multiple Hebrew text forms in circulation between the third century BCE and the second century CE. In addition, some texts in the Septuagint whose readings differ from the MT agree with a few of the Hebrew text forms found at Qumran. In chapter four, Law discusses how the author of the *Letter of Aristeas* sought to justify the use of the Septuagint as Scripture from both Greek and Jewish perspectives, even though the translation differed from the Hebrew texts in some ways. He also demonstrates that an Egyptian provenance in Alexandria for the Septuagint is the most plausible and that the majority of the Septuagint was translated by the second century BCE.

Chapter five notes some important differences between the text of the Septuagint and the Hebrew Bible (HB). Law notes that the translation tended to become more literal towards the end of the translation period. Chapter six describes the other books (later known as the “apocrypha”) that were included in the Septuagint but later excluded from the canonical HB. Chapter seven discusses the revisions of the Septuagint between the second century BCE and first century CE. Law proposes that these revisions were probably reactions to the phenomenon of multiple divergent text forms (both Greek and Hebrew), so as to bring the translation nearer to the Hebrew text form that was later received by the Masoretes.

Law discusses the relationship between the Septuagint and the NT in chapters eight and nine. Chapter eight lists examples of how the NT reflects the language and theology of the Septuagint (e.g., διαθήκη, εὐαγγέλιον, κύριος). Chapter nine probes how the explicit citations of the OT in the NT frequently come from the Septuagint, rather than the HB, and that the wording of the Septuagint, when different from the Hebrew, was sometimes more suitable for the purposes of the NT authors.

From chapters ten through thirteen, Law describes how the Septuagint was the Bible of the Christian church from the time of the apostolic fathers until Augustine and Jerome, with the only exception being the Syriac church at Edessa. In chapter ten, Law outlines how the early church fathers based their arguments on the distinctive wording of the Septuagint in their arguments against Jewish and pagan opponents. Law also opines that the Christian OT canon remained fluid (though with a core) until the Reformation. In chapter eleven, Law gives examples of patristic exegesis and theology based on the Septuagint and explores how the Septuagint became the basis for God’s Word in other languages when Christian missionaries translated it between the second and tenth centuries CE.

Chapters twelve and thirteen focus on the factors leading to the decline of the Septuagint in the early church. Law reckons that Origen’s work on the Hexapla and his concern to build his arguments



on scriptural texts that Jews would accept led later Christians, though unintentionally, to favor the HB. Eusebius of Caesarea later popularized Origen's Hexaplaric Septuagint text. However, Jerome was the key person in the Western church to advocate the HB's priority over the Septuagint through his Latin translation of the HB and his debate with Augustine. Eventually, it was "in the rise of Christian Hebraism in the Renaissance . . . [and] theories that privilege the Hebrew language in itself, which became a crucial component in the eventual triumph of the Hebrew Bible over the Septuagint in the church" (p. 162).

On the one hand, the "good" fruits: Law explicates clearly the various factors contributing to certain historical events and trends related to the Septuagint. While many scholars have written about the formation of the Septuagint and its importance for studying the NT, relatively few have written about its significance for the exegesis and theology of the early church. Therefore, Law has made a notable contribution in this respect. To some extent, Law has demonstrated the importance of studying the Septuagint in order to understand the theology of the NT authors and the early church fathers.

On the other hand, I note two "overripe" fruits. First, Law overstates the diversity of the various Hebrew text forms. He writes, "The view of a continuum with 'scripture' on one end and 'rewritten' works on the other should be abandoned. Instead, we now realize that there were books that sit all along the virtual continuum" (p. 27). While the examples that Law cites may show that the Hebrew *Vorlagen* of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint agree with a few of the Qumran manuscripts, it remains unclear whether all the "4QReworked Pentateuch" manuscripts, for example, have authoritative status as Scripture, although they certainly reflect the history of interpretation of these texts. Furthermore, there are still major differences between the "Reworked Pentateuch" compared with other "rewritten" works such as the *Temple Scroll* and the book of *Jubilees*.

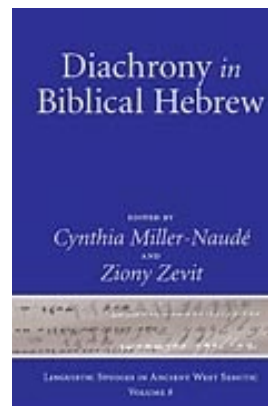
Second, while the Qumran manuscripts show multiple Scripture traditions for certain parts of some books, they also show how well the MT preserves most of the earlier tradition of the HB. Although Law is correct to show examples where the LXX may have followed an alternate Hebrew text form (see ch. 5 for examples), it is also important to keep in mind that the majority of the LXX is still based on a textual tradition quite similar to the MT. These similarities need to be emphasized so that the differences between the traditions do not become exaggerated. Third, Law should have acknowledged that this title was not original to him since Karen Jobes had published an earlier article entitled, "When God Spoke Greek: The Place of the Greek Bible in Evangelical Scholarship" (*BBR* 26 [2006]: 219–36).

Nonetheless, on the whole, Law has written a clear historical account of how the Septuagint became the authoritative OT Scripture of the early church.

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Cynthia Miller-Naudé and Ziony Zevit, eds. *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*. Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 8. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012. xviii + 525 pp. \$64.50.

Languages keep changing as the years go by. The English of Beowulf is incomprehensible to a reader who knows only modern English. Moreover, language features do not merely change gradually. Some can appear, flourish, and then fall out of favor in a short time. Allow me the following example: In 1966, in my first year of PhD studies, I lived in an apartment off Harvard Square. A young man who lived in the next apartment had long hair, dressed oddly, and wore an earring. On being asked about his appearance, he replied, “I’m a hippie.” That made no sense to me. I had never heard the word “hippie” before 1966. I eventually heard the word much more often, but after a few years, a strange thing happened. I stopped hearing the word. By the time I had my PhD, in 1971, I almost never heard the word “hippie” again. It had fallen out of favor in half a decade. Whether gradual or sudden, long of duration or short-lived, language features are not immune to change. The Hebrew Abraham spoke and wrote was not exactly the same Hebrew that Moses spoke and wrote, or that David spoke and wrote, or that Amos or Ezekiel or Nehemiah spoke or wrote. The continuities, fortunately for all readers of the Hebrew Bible, are many and important, but so also are the changes and variations—both over the centuries and within individual time periods, when varieties of Hebrew were spoken by different groups and in different locations. Any serious reader of the Bible in the original languages wants to be sure that old meanings are not being put to new words and constructions, or vice versa.



Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew is the eighth volume in a remarkably productive and comprehensive ongoing series, “Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic,” edited by Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé and Ziony Zevit and published by Eisenbrauns. The introduction to this volume, written by Miller-Naudé, bears the title, “Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Perspectives on Change and Variation,” which nicely sums up the purpose of the book: to help students of Hebrew appreciate the benefits of understanding the history of ancient Hebrew, from its proto-Semitic roots to its latest manifestations in Persian period texts (and sometimes, beyond). The book’s essays are concluded by Ziony Zevit’s “Not-So-Random Thoughts on Linguistic Dating and Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew.” In between are twenty-one essays on all sorts of aspects of the history of biblical Hebrew, from critical presentations on methodology, to examination of the evidence for orthographic change over time, to morphological developments, to syntactic developments, to lexical changes, to sociological/dialectal considerations, to text-critical developments over time, to comparative controls via other languages. These groupings constitute the major sections of the book.

Contributors to this volume, in addition to the two editors, are: Elan Dresher (dating linguistic forms); T. Givón (Hebrew as a diachronic continuum); Jacobus Naudé (theory of language change); John Cook (diachronic typology); Robert Holmstedt (historical linguistics); Dean Forbes and Francis Andersen (orthographic change); Yigal Bloch (the suffix *-mw*); Steven Fassberg (vocalizations of *hw’* as *hî’*); Martin Ehrensverd (change in the Hebrew verbal system); Tania Notarius (poetic verbal tenses); Elitzur Siegal (pronominal constructions); Na’ma Pat-El (syntactic Aramaisms); Avi Hurvitz (methodological guidelines); Jan Joosten (pseudo-classicisms); Shalom Paul (Isaiah 40–66); Frank Polak (sociological background of narrative); Gary Rendsburg (northern Hebrew); Chaim Cohen (textual analysis); Michael Sokoloff (Aramaic diachrony); Joseph Lam and Dennis Pardee (Ugaritic diachrony);

and N. J. C. Kouwenberg (Akkadian diachrony). These scholars are among the very best that could have been chosen. Having all of them together in one volume means that the reader gets a sense of the current state of the field of Hebrew language diachronic studies through the eyes of a very fine array of practitioners and theorists.

The contributors are well aware that the whole concept of definitive diachronic methodology has been called into question. Notably, Ian Young, Robert Rezetko and Martin Ehrensward have argued in their 2008 volume, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (London: Equinox), that forms of Hebrew called “early,” “middle,” and “late” by many scholars actually represent merely different styles of literary Hebrew that co-existed throughout the biblical period. In other words, say Young, et al, it is a mistake to force words, forms, syntactical structures, etc., into discrete periods of existence as if those phenomena prevailed only at certain times and not at others, on the basis of where such phenomena happen to show up in biblical texts. Indeed, one has to remain carefully cognizant of the fact that about a quarter of all Hebrew words in the OT are *hapax legomena*, reminding us that the Hebrew words we read in a certain context and in specific permutations represent only a small sampling among many others that may have existed commonly in the language but are not attested in the Bible, since all biblical writers were inspired to select carefully their topics and their words.

What is the practical value of a book like this? Is it merely erudite speculation on arcane technical linguistic topics or does it make a difference in how we view the origins or the reliability or the meaning of Scripture? To answer this question via an example, consider the so-called “Aramaisms” in the book of Jonah.

For a long time, skeptics of the historicity of the book of Jonah have pointed to the “Aramaisms” in Jonah as proving that the book was composed late in the pre-NT era, perhaps as late as the third or second century BC, long after the events it purports to describe. There are seven to nine supposed “Aramaisms,” depending on who’s counting, and these are thought to reflect a stage of Hebrew late enough to have become infiltrated with Aramaic vocabulary, when more and more people spoke mainly Aramaic and therefore those who could still speak, read and write Hebrew were increasingly using Aramaic words for the concepts they wanted to express. Diachronic studies, however, many of which have been done by the very scholars writing in this book, demonstrate that such a simplistic picture of the penetration of Aramaic into Hebrew is not reliable. Not only did virtually all literate Israelites know at least some Aramaic, from the days of Abraham to the days of John the Apostle, but many words identified in the past as “Aramaisms” turn out to be northernisms, or Aramaic-like west Semitisms, and so on. The articles in this book are geared toward helping illuminate the kinds of challenges illustrated by such an example.

A special feature of the book is the group of three essays (by Sokoloff, Lam and Pardee, and Kouwenberg) that look at diachrony in a comparative Semitic light, discussing the evidence and methodology for addressing diachrony in Aramaic, Ugaritic, and Akkadian literature. Such essays provide a kind of control factor on the methodologies and conclusions in the part of the book that concentrates on the OT Hebrew evidence.

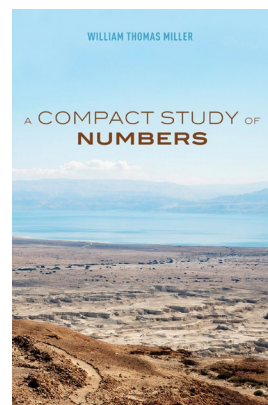
The old saying that “a book is only as good as its index” carries a lot of truth. Thoughtful, comprehensive indexes allow a reader to keep using a book over the years, as they facilitate finding one’s way back to a book’s previously-read but only partially-remembered contents. This book is distinguished by its excellent indexes, spanning 34 pages and five categories: authors, ancient sources, Scripture, Hebrew words, and subjects.

Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew is an anthology, not a monolith. It gathers different perspectives from different scholars, all of whom display the importance of the discipline, but many of whom disagree with one another in the specifics of application of the methods they describe, and some of whom flatly disagree with each other as to certain methods, procedures, and conclusions. In other words, the book tells you what people are working on within the discipline of diachronic linguistics as it pertains to Hebrew, but does not provide a single viewpoint or conclusion. Accordingly, it must be used cautiously and appreciated for the progress report on a lot of researchers' findings that, in essence, it is.

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William Thomas Miller. *A Compact Study of Numbers*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013. xv + 239 pp. £17.00/\$28.00.

Miller's volume on the book of Numbers delivers precisely what its title promises. This book proceeds through the text section by section, walking the reader carefully through various issues in a concise but readable format. Each section in the book treats a pericope of Numbers briefly, making this volume user-friendly considering its topic and aims. Adding to that is what Miller calls "the heart of this study guide," namely, the study questions provided in each chapter, for which answers are given at the back (p. xi). While this format takes some getting used to as an independent reader, it could be pedagogically effective in groups (see esp. p. xv.) Occasionally, Miller provides a "Conclusion" to a section or sections, and closes the book with a "Retrospective."



The stated purpose of the study is to make the "numbing cascades" of details in Numbers, like "ceremonies, fragmentary areas of jurisprudence, archaeology, geography, and history," more available to "average Christian readers" (p. ix). Miller rightly notes the relative lack of narrative structure to Numbers compared to other Pentateuchal books, along with its many genres and varied topics, and therefore sets out to help Christians gain a clearer sense of the book's purpose. Miller suggests that Numbers seeks to "credit God (working with Moses, the lawgiver) for as much guidance as possible as far back as possible" (p. x).

Miller depends heavily on Baruch Levine's two-volume Anchor Bible commentary, and thus adopts many of Levine's higher-critical views. Consequently, Miller's diachronic approach to Numbers makes critical issues a very prominent aspect of each chapter, and informs his evaluation of Numbers generally. Miller effectively adopts a tradition-historical approach to OT theology, viewing Numbers as a late book with multiple authors, editors, and community theologies whose particularities deserve primary focus over any unity within the book. For Miller, these sources are so numerous, ambiguous, and sometimes conflicted, that he bypasses a holistic approach as Levine does (*Numbers 1–20* [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 49), and treats "each chapter [of Numbers] on its own literary merit" (p. xii).

Some examples of the issues that occupy this study are in order. First, Num 5:1–31 contains several sections of Levitical laws, including the trial by ordeal for potential adulteresses in vv. 11–31. Miller colorfully points out this could strike modern readers as "superstitious and oppressive . . . useless for

us now as a rusted blunderbuss or a gruesome pile of damaged dinosaur bones,” and thus takes space to discuss it (p. 21). He briefly points to links between this text to the concept of breaking faith, but gives most space to probing the circumstances, procedure, and social rationale of the ordeal, even in the section’s answers (pp. 198–200). Amid the complexities of this text, it seems a missed opportunity to omit discussion of the holiness of God, his desire for a pure people, and the sanctity of the marriage covenant, even between God and Israel, much less forgiveness for the faithless.

Second, the narrative of Balaam is worth note, even if briefly. When it comes to the donkey’s rebuke of Balaam, Miller simply states that, while “amusing, [it] is a fable” that was awkwardly inserted and is easily skipped over (p. 105). Indeed, Miller largely does so (although see pp. 108, 222). Whether or not one thinks the donkey actually spoke, this scene is integral to the larger narrative, and therefore also to the point of the Balaam cycle. But Miller neglects even to offer possible reasons for its purportedly late insertion, or why it must be a fable. By contrast, over six pages are dedicated to a “review” of various Balaam traditions (pp. 118–24). In other cases as well Miller chooses not to discuss the possible narrative or theological significance of features of the biblical text broadly, but limits himself to narrow description.

To my mind, Miller’s target audience is unclear, which creates difficulties. He mentions his goal of providing “a cohesive guided tour or virtual classroom experience,” although this does not significantly illuminate the matter (p. xi). Miller goes on to speak of a “general reader” who is encouraged merely to “scan anything too technical” (ibid.), and later mentions designs for “study groups” more than “students in a traditional classroom” (p. xv). These statements suggest the indistinct purpose of this book. The heavy load of technical detail does not obviously complement Miller’s wish to help “average Christian readers” either (p. ix).

Unfortunately, it is precisely the average Christian reader who may be least helped by Miller’s study. He barely discusses how Numbers coheres with the themes of the Pentateuch, to say nothing of the rest of Scripture. Certainly the book of Numbers—its outline, composition, history, and theology—offers many complexities. But Miller seems to overcompensate, focusing so exclusively on a descriptive and genetic account of the book that he offers virtually no practical application for the Church. In effect, there is little about this compact study that is particularly Christian at all.

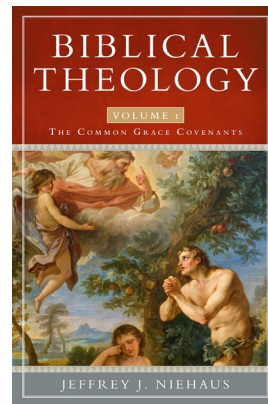
Indeed, this outcome is a general weakness of an exclusively tradition-historical approach to the OT. While he mentions praying and applying Scripture to life in a small group setting (p. xv), Miller’s presentation of the content of Numbers makes little appeal to any scriptural unity, much less authority, that might prompt such activity. Even the book’s “Retrospective” section is scarcely prescriptive, asking the reader to do most of the personal application as Miller focuses on social issues. The value of Numbers for Christian life and godliness is thus regrettably obscure, despite Miller’s thesis that the book credits God for Israel’s guidance.

In these ways Miller’s book seems somewhat lopsided, even while it provides useful scholarly information distilled from Levine. It seems that Miller’s study, neither a devotional nor a commentary, would be more useful for the interested layperson at least if read alongside, for instance, Gordon Wenham’s *Numbers*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

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Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: The Common Grace Covenants*. Wooster, OH: Weaver Books, 2014. xvii + 352 pp. £19.80/\$29.99.

Jeffrey Niehaus has wide-ranging interests, both in literature and Hebrew Bible. He holds a Ph.D. in English literature from Harvard and has taught at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary since 1982. He also did graduate work in Assyriology at the University of Liverpool and has contributed to peer-reviewed journals such as *Tyndale Bulletin*, *Vetus Testamentum*, and the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. His recently published *Biblical Theology* is primarily a study in covenant theology and the early chapters of Genesis. In some respects it is reminiscent of books by M. G. Kline, who is one of his former colleagues. This book is the first installment in an expected two-volume work on biblical theology. Though the volume has some strengths, it also has many linguistic problems and theological weaknesses that adherents of the Westminster Confession of Faith and classic, orthodox Federal Theology, such as myself, will find hard to affirm.



Niehaus begins with a section on prolegomena (i.e., first things), to which he alludes throughout his book. Here he claims that the Adamic and Noahic covenants constitute one “legal package” (p. 32) under which all humans live until the eschaton. Undoubtedly, the obligations of the Noahic covenant (cf. Gen 9:1–7) are grounded in Gen 1 and 2; however, Niehaus should have said more and also less in his book on this point (see below). The next three chapters cover the creation covenant. Chapter 4 covers Cain. Chapters 5 and 6 cover Noah and chapter 7 is a summary discussing “Life under Two Covenants,” that is, life under “one legal package” (p. 225). There are also a number of excursions along the way on a variety of topics. Moreover, there are four appendices at the end of the book.

The book has several strengths. First, the author’s background in English makes his prose clear and easy to follow. Indeed, sometimes his prose is laconic such as when he refers to the Serpent’s interaction in the garden as “[t]he question seems innocent, but is barbed.” Second, Niehaus recognizes a two-Adam typology scheme in Scripture (p. 96). Third, he is sensitive to the time-honored exegetical position that Gen 2:15 entails priestly functions operative in the garden. Fourth, he also rightly argues against N. T. Wright’s view of the much debated phrase, “the righteousness of God.” Fifth, he consistently pushes back against the overconfident pretensions of source-critical conclusions regarding Genesis.

Some of the weaknesses of the book are, first, given Weaver Books’ target audience of laypeople, more consistency would have been helpful in offering translations of foreign language words (e.g., pp. 50, 110), especially German. Second, sometimes the author falls into linguistic errors. For example, his discussion of “eternal” (Heb. *’olâm*) covenant is in part based on the etymological fallacy (pp. 210–213). Appeal should have rather been made to the work of Ernst Jenni’s entry on *’olâm* in the *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Third, the discussion of the possibility of a “consultative plural” (Gen 1:26 as spoken in the midst of the divine court with an attending retinue of holy angels) rather than a reference to the Trinity in Gen 1:26 is underdeveloped. Niehaus opts for a possible double entendre but then only discusses the potential implications for the Trinitarian interpretation and does not entertain the profound implications of the consultative plural for the *imago Dei*. The work of Randall Garr would have been useful here (see Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* [Leiden: Brill, 2003]).

Fourth, Niehaus claims repeatedly that OT saints were not indwelt by the Holy Spirit (e.g., pp. 137, 144, 174). Surely, there are biblical distinctions to be made between pre-Pentecost saints and post-Pentecost saints; however, not along the lines that Niehaus suggests. *Pace* Niehaus, it seems that OT saints were indwelt by the Holy Spirit (e.g., Exod 31:1; Ps 51:11; Luke 1:41) and the reader should consult WCF 16 to see that good works in Saints (OT and NT) occur through Spirit-wrought obedience. The magisterial work of Abraham Kuyper on the Holy Spirit is a helpful place to start for differences between pre-Pentecost and post-Pentecost believers.

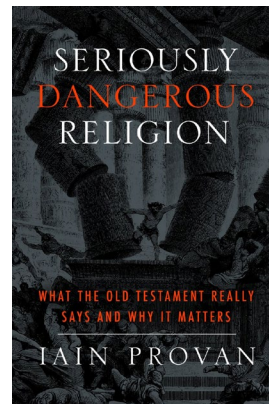
Fifth, the discussion about Noah's typology is less effective than it could be because Niehaus restricts functional typology to office rather than including character (see p. 179). The fallacy here is that historical essences cannot be left behind when doing biblical typology, including when analyzing Noah's righteousness (albeit imperfect and Spirit-wrought), which points to the antitypical Righteous One.

Sixth, more serious yet is the undermining of a bi-covenantal arrangement that is enshrined in the classic covenant theology of the Westminster Divines and elsewhere. This is embodied in the Covenant of works and Covenant of Grace scheme (most clearly denied on p. 224). Consequently, an entailment of this move is the loss of the law-gospel distinction. Furthermore, the book fractures necessary terminological distinctions. Although I suppose it is permissible to change the use of "common" to encompass the fact that all people are under the Adamic covenant as well as the Noahic; however, by this move Niehaus lacks the precision and clarification necessary (pp. 213–221). Common grace is actually the corollary to the common curse (see Gen 3:15ff.). It is meant to provide a stable platform within the world in which the purposes of redemptive history can be enacted. However, since Christ bore the curses of the broken covenant of works and fulfilled all righteousness by providing the obedience that Adam did not, Christians have been delivered from the dire consequences of that broken covenant of works. One can appreciate the efforts to clarify the nature and function of the much neglected Noahic Covenant, especially in respect to the Adamic administration; nevertheless the reader can find more reliable guides than Niehaus's book to do so (e.g., David VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014]).

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Iain Provan. *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014. x + 502 pp. £41.99/\$49.95.

This volume offers a multifaceted response to the belief, expressed in various contexts (axial age, dark green theology, new atheism, etc.) that the biblical story and worldview are neither true nor good. In many cases this belief has been based on a faulty understanding of the Bible, especially of the OT (p. 10), and it is this error that Provan intends to correct. Accordingly, he writes for readers who have been influenced by those who ignore or criticize the Bible's "Old Story" but who have not developed a satisfying response to such thinking (p. 19). The body of the work articulates ten questions that circumscribe the vast majority of the OT and of general philosophical reflection, then responds to them primarily on the basis of the OT, and of Genesis in particular. Provan assumes the truth (historical and otherwise) of the OT, attends to its final form rather than its putative sources, and focuses on what the text wants readers to be and to do.



This brief overview will unfortunately but unintentionally obscure the ten carefully integrated ten chapters, and their questions and answers, which can be summarized as follows: (1) *What is the world?* It is not eternal, but is created by a personal God, separate from him, and not divine. This distinguishes between the "one" and the "many." The world is good largely by virtue of God's presence in it. In this connection, Provan argues that the "garden" of Eden was in fact the whole world (pp. 36–40). (2) *Who is God?* Contrary to much ancient and modern thought, God is one, sovereign, incomparable, and good, exercising love, faithfulness, and deliverance (pp. 49–72). (3) *Who are man and woman?* They are human beings made in the divine image, created to rule and to coexist in society, and are equal in value irrespective of gender (contra Aristotle and John Locke, among others [pp. 96–97]). (4) *Why do evil and suffering mark the world?* Not all suffering is due to sin, though some is. God did not create evil, nor does it have an independent existence, so the OT is not dualistic in the sense posited by Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism (pp. 126–27). (5) *What am I to do about evil and suffering?* In Provan's own eloquent words, "I am to resist evil and pursue what is right. Where I cannot overcome evil, I am to endure it patiently in hope, while still pursuing what is right. In any event I am to pray that my fellow creatures and I will be rescued from it and to show compassion to others who find themselves the victims of it" (p. 152). (6) *How am I to relate to God?* By giving up my claim to divinity or autonomy, by trusting God's goodness, and loving and obeying him (p. 182). (7) *How am I to relate to my neighbor?* By redirecting my desire toward God and the good of my neighbor rather than toward myself (p. 209). (8) *How am I to relate to the rest of creation?* By "a wise balancing of earth keeping and earth subduing, accompanied by people keeping as well" (p. 249). (9) *Which society should I be helping to build?* While the OT allows various "good" societies, they (and especially their laws) are not necessarily the ideal (p. 266). Avoiding the extremes of passivity and utopianism, I should promote righteousness, restrain evil, and redeem all that I can (p. 289). Finally, (10) *what am I to hope for?* From Gen 1–2, immortality; and from the successive covenants with creation, Abraham, Israel, and David, the elimination of all suffering and of all human sin, and the full realization of the New Covenant through definitive divine intervention (p. 306).

In a following chapter Provan revisits these questions in light of the NT. Notable amplifications of his earlier answers include the divinity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit (cf. question 2), an egalitarian

development in gender roles (cf. question 3), Christ-conformity (cf. question 6), loving others as Christ loved us (cf. question 7), and the hope of immortality through Jesus' death and resurrection (cf. question 10).

In two final chapters Provan develops epistemological and ethical responses to the charge that biblical religion is dangerous, affirming that "[b]iblical faith is dangerous only in promoting the good" (p. 380). Scripture's claims stand over against immanentist worldviews, the decline of the value of human life, fatalism, amorality, reckless use of the created order, the exclusion of religion from the public square, and other contemporary values and arguments (which Provan critiques fairly).

This is a praiseworthy work. It interacts with a wide variety of views from ancient and modern times, from East and West. Not surprisingly for a work written by an OT specialist, its comparison and contrast of biblical and ancient Near Eastern worldviews is robust and careful (e.g., pp. 71, 73). The OT does indeed present unique challenges to Christians that Christianity's critics in turn exploit with verve (i.e., the charge of genocide in the conquest of Canaan, etc.; cf. p. 71), and Provan's response succeeds in sketching the larger context in which interpreters must place such problematic issues.

At the same time, an approach more influenced by biblical theology (i.e., giving more prominence to structures like promise and fulfillment, tracing the development of various themes across the OT) might have produced different results on some points. For example, if the OT "does not view the events of Gen 3 as *cataclysmic* events that inevitably changed everything about the world in which we live" (p. 140, emphasis original), what accounts for the entry of death into the narrative, the offering of sacrifices even in Genesis, the prominence of the sacrificial system later in the Pentateuch, and the explanatory power of the Adam-Christ typology of Romans 5? While the work's focus on the difficulties posed by the OT precluded, say, an answer to "how am I to relate to God?" that develops at length the NT's emphasis on participation with Christ in his death and resurrection, a stronger emphasis on the redemptive-historical dynamics evident in the OT itself may have enriched some aspects of the work.

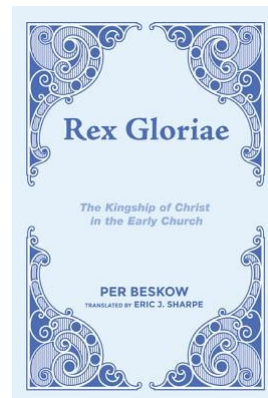
Despite this minor criticism, the work will be of great value to all who read it. It possesses enough sophistication and breadth to interest academically oriented readers, yet those whose study or reflection has not gone far beyond the ten questions posed will find it an accessible, patient, and nuanced guide. Provan also exhibits an affable pastoral spirit that comfortably and consistently expresses the believing, active response to the book's conclusions. It will be a particularly helpful read for those heading off to university or entering the workforce, but is broad and deep enough that every reader will find much to profit from and to reflect on.

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

Per Beskow. *Rex Gloriae: The Kingship of Christ in the Early Church*. Translated by Eric J. Sharpe. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1962. Repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014. 381 pp. £28.00/\$43.00.

The contributions of Scandinavian scholarship on Israelite notions of sacral kingship (i.e., the belief that the king is a divine or semi-divine figure who stands at the center of the people's religious and political life) are widely known to OT scholarship through the names of Sigmund Mowinckel, Geo Widengren, Ivan Engnell, and others. Less work has been done, however, to examine the influence of sacral kingship on depictions of Christ in the NT and the church fathers. The signal contribution (also standing in the same strand of Scandinavian scholarship on sacral kingship) remedying this lack is Beskow's monograph which presents "an account of the way in which the New Testament representation of Christ in royal categories lived on during the pre-Constantinian period; how it became enriched by its confrontation with Hellenistic culture; and how this development, in the course of doctrinal disputes of the 4th century, gave rise to that conception of Christ as King which dominated the theology of the Byzantine period and the Middle Ages in the West" (p. 9).



Beskow's treatment of Christ's kingship moves through three periods: the NT and post-Apostolic age, the pre-Constantinian period, and the period of the Arian conflict. His discussion of the NT's depiction of Christ's kingship is largely oriented to messianic titles (Christ, son of God, son of Man), and he demonstrates that almost all of them have a royal character. The NT authors typically associate Christ's royal functions, including ruling, judging, and conquering, with his ascension (seen as a royal enthronement) and his eschatological return. Beskow also provides a helpful discussion of the royal connotations of *κύριος* in the NT and its wider religious context, showing how the application of this title, among other titles, made its way into early Christian discourse through scriptural exegesis, particularly exegesis of Israel's Psalter. This insight segues naturally into his discussion of the so-called "testimonia tradition" and particularly Justin's and Irenaeus's defense of Jesus's Messiahship through a messianic reading of the OT, a reading that makes effective use of those texts where another figure alongside Yahweh is named as "Lord" or "God" (e.g., Pss 24:7–10; 45:7–8; 110:1). These OT texts are used polemically to show that no other Israelite king can be seen as truly embodying the royal-messianic prophecies. Beskow helpfully provides a window into the reception history of the messianic interpretation and use of OT texts that played a foundational role in the construction of early Christian dogma (e.g., Gen 49; Num 24; Pss 2, 109; Isa 9, 11).

Beskow notes, however, that the Alexandrian fathers (primarily Clement and Origen) are not as dependent upon a messianic application of OT texts to Christ as they are to Hellenistic kingship discourse as mediated through Philo. Thus, Clement and Origen depict Christ as the *Logos* who is a shepherd, charioteer, and pilot – all standard titles for a Hellenistic king. They apply these royal titles to Christ in order to say something about his cosmic role in creating, upholding, and sustaining creation and the church. But they also employ Hellenistic notions of the ideal king as the supremely wise and just lawgiver to speak of Christ as the incarnated *Logos* who as "shepherd-king is the one who gives mankind the divine law and leads man along the path of the royal wisdom" (p. 218).

When one reaches the period of the 4th century, one finds that both the Jewish messianic tradition *and* Hellenistic kingship ideology have been fused, for example, in the writings of Eusebius, the Arians, and the Nicene theologians. The Arians, Beskow argues, take Pss 2, 45, and 110 as indicators that Christ's kingship begins at his birth whereas Athanasius considered Christ to have a double kingship: "as God he is King by nature; as man he has become King through his work of salvation" (p. 277). Christ is exalted to kingship (e.g., Phil 2:9) not for his own sake but so that humanity's flesh may participate in his divine kingship—"he thereby make the Ascension into an enthronement of the human nature of Christ" (p. 279).

For whatever reason, Christ's sacral kingship in the NT and the following centuries of the early church has not, I think it fair to say, had the same amount of attention devoted to it as has the sacral kingship of the kings of Israel (including the Ancient Near East and the Hellenistic and Roman periods). Beskow's work, however, despite being dated now by some fifty years as well as perpetuating some outdated scholarly trends (e.g., positing a dichotomy between "the Alexandrians" and "the Antiochenes," focusing on NT Christology through the use of titles, etc.), provides an incredible wealth of primary sources that demonstrate that Christ's kingship was a theme that permeates the NT writings, the pre-Constantinian writers of the early church, and especially the portrait of Christ in the Byzantine period. Thus, those engaged in either the study of NT Christology *or* the patristic doctrinal formulations of the Trinity or the nature and identity of Christ cannot afford to ignore the depiction of him as a royal figure. There has been, as of late, a surge of interest in recovering the royal and messianic texture of Paul's discourse – both with respect to Jewish messianism (see, for example, Matthew V. Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], reviewed in *Them* 37.3 [2012]) and the perspective of Hellenistic kingship discourse (see now Julien Smith, *Christ the Ideal King: Cultural Context, Rhetorical Strategy, and the Power of Divine Monarchy in Ephesians*, WUNT 313 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012], reviewed in *Them* 37.2 [2012]). The reprint of Beskow's *Rex Gloriam* now makes this important work accessible to those pursuing similar research interests.

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Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013. xxxi + 1,088 pp. £39.61/\$60.00.

This volume updates the 1992 first edition, still a useful volume but increasingly outdated. This new version offers notable refinements.

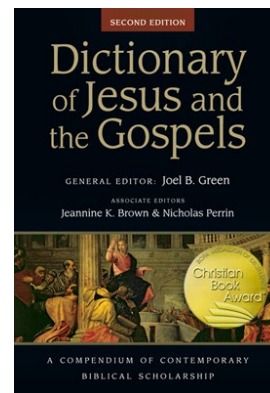
One is a number of contributions from scholars in or from nations outside the historic Europe-North America “Christian” axis. Examples would be Rekha Chennattu (India), Yuzuru Miura (Japan), and Maureen Yeung Marshall (Hong Kong). Scholars from Africa (apart from South Africa) are still at a dearth. Latin American scholars and scholarship are likewise sparsely attested.

Another refinement is a marked increase in contributions from women: Holly Beers, Stephanie Black, Helen Bond, Jeannine Brown, Holly Carey, Rekha Chennattu, Lynn Cohick, Awilda Gonzalez-Tajera, Edith Humphrey, Veronica Koperski, Louise Lawrence, Karoline Lewis, Maureen Yeung Marshall, Jocelyn McWhirter, Susan Miller, Suzanne Nicholson, Lidija Novakovic, Dorothy Peters, Caryn Reeder, Mitzi Smith, Marianne Meye Thompson, Catrin Williams, and Seung Ai Yang—some 23 out of a total of about 128 contributors total (about 18%). The first edition had barely a half-dozen female writers. The only one to write for both editions is Marianne Meye Thompson.

Another refinement lies in sophistication. The field of Gospel studies is more complex, varied, and nuanced than ever, but the *Dictionary* has continued its original aim of being “evangelical and critical at the same time” (p. x). Central here is a clearer idea of what “history” is and is not, and what it can and cannot provide, as evidenced, e.g., in the article “Historicisms and Historiography” (Joel Green). Similar pieces showing awareness of hermeneutical location are those covering “African American Criticism” (M. J. Smith), “Feminist and Womanist Criticisms” (M. J. Smith), “Gospels, History of Interpretation” (D. F. Watson), “Latino/Latina Criticism” (A. Gonzalez-Tajera), “Narrative Criticism” (J. Brown), “Postcolonial Criticism” (E. B. Powery), and “Social-Scientific Criticisms” (L. J. Lawrence).

The fairly recent development of “Theological Interpretation of the Gospels” (Andy Johnson) receives its due. Johnson notes that this initiative “is not a methodologically monolithic movement” (p. 965). It practitioners arrive at contrasting findings. But he affirms a significant “interpretive aim” shared by those affirming the outlook: that “their churches take on a more cruciform character, thereby giving public testimony to the living Christ, to whom the Gospels witness” (p. 965). This suggests that it is not only interpreters in this movement who practice “theological interpretation,” as many who interpret the Gospels champion this interpretive and missional aim.

Donald Hagner’s important treatment on “Anti-Semitism” concerns itself primarily with the NT data and their proper apprehension and application today. There is another whole dimension to the issue that is not touched: the anti-Semitism of some NT scholars and scholarship. (See comments below, however, on Colin Brown’s article “Quest of the Historical Jesus.”) Watson’s article “Gospels, History of Interpretation” also leaves this topic to the side. Anders Gerdmar’s important volume *Roots of Theological Antisemitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2009) and Christopher Probst’s *Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012) need to be consulted to give the fuller, sobering picture regarding interpreters and their guilds. As it stands,



Watson's treatment in particular accords a more innocent, intellectually honest air to Gospels studies than it deserves in too many cases.

An article on the virgin birth of Jesus is lacking, but there is succinct yet thorough treatment (by Stephen Young) under "Birth of Jesus." Young argues that the Gospel evidence furnishes ample ground for affirming this Christian teaching at least as ancient as Matthew and Luke (and their sources). Young interacts primarily with E. Freed (*The Stories of Jesus' Birth* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001]) who is skeptical of the Gospel accounts.

Some 21 articles are longer than ten pages: "Archaeology and Geography" (15 pages; R. Riesner), "Birth of Jesus" (13 pages; S. Young), "Death of Jesus" (22 pages; J. Dennis), "Disciples and Discipleship" (12 pages; M. Wilkins), "God" (14 pages; M. Thompson), "John, Gospel of" (18 pages; C. Keener), "Kingdom of God/Heaven" (14 pages; J. Green), "Law" (11 pages; J. Dunn), "Luke, Gospel of" (13 pages; J. Green), "Mark, Gospel of" (14 pages; N. Perrin), "Matthew, Gospel of" (15 pages; J. Brown), "Miracles and Miracle Stories" (11 pages; G. Twelftree), "Old Testament in the Gospels" (11 pages; D. Pao), "Parables" (13 pages; G. Anderson), "Quest of the Historical Jesus" (39 pages; C. Brown), "Rabbinic Traditions and Writings" (11 pages; D. Instone-Brewer), "Resurrection" (16 pages; K. Anderson), "Revolutionary Movements" (11 pages; W. Heard and K. Yamazaki-Ransom; W. Heard is missing from the "Contributors" section [p. xxviii]), "Rich and Poor" (11 pages; C. Hays), and "Sermon on the Mount/Plain" (11 pages; S. A. Yang).

This tally shows that in addition to a wide range of subjects (175 articles total by my count), the dictionary goes into considerable depth at numerous junctures. The extended length of Colin Brown's "Quest of the Historical Jesus" marks it as a sheet anchor contribution to this *Dictionary* and indicates that readers should be careful to check there for discussion thought to be lacking due to its absence elsewhere. Brown includes helpful discussion of regard for Jesus in patristic thought and Judaism (pp. 719–20) and in "Quests before the Quest" (pp. 720–24) before taking up the "quest" as usually linked with Reimarus (p. 725). Recognizing Albert Schweitzer's role in framing "quest" discussion, Brown makes three important preliminary comments: 1) Schweitzer's views were largely pre-determined by Kant's influence; 2) Schweitzer's celebrated book *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* was actually his second attempt to come to grips with the subject; and 3) Schweitzer's celebrated book took shape in conscious opposition to William Wrede's *The Messianic Secret of the Gospels*. Brown points out that Schweitzer's book "offered two different forms of 'thoroughgoing skepticism' with regard to the historical Jesus," Schweitzer's or Wrede's (pp. 724–25). Brown emphasizes: "It was not that Schweitzer himself believed in eschatology" (p. 725).

Another important section of Brown's article concerns "The Shadow of the Third Reich." Brown gives a balanced assessment of Adolf Schlatter's view of Judaism, Jesus, and his times (p. 730). He analyzes at considerable length Walter Grundmann, "the scholar who merits the title 'the Jesus specialist of National Socialism'" (pp. 730–31).

Perhaps the most important section of Brown's voluminous treatment is the conclusion, in which he makes a number of pithy first-person observations about the unique identity of Jesus and role of the Gospels in both their Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts (p. 752).

This dictionary splendidly succeeds at giving a snapshot of scholarly evangelical assessment of Jesus and Gospels studies *circa* the years leading up to its publication date. In many cases this involves confirming, consolidating, and extending previous scholarship. An example here would be H. Bayer's update of his article in the first edition of the *Dictionary*, "Predictions of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection."

The same holds for R. Riesner's reworking of several topics (i.e., "Archaeology and Geography," "Galilee," "Teacher"). In other cases, scholarship has moved on: the late David Scholer's one-sided essay on "Women" in the first edition gives way to F. Spencer's more balanced verdict that "Jesus was not, and historically could not have been, a 'feminist' by modern standards" (p. 1004). Still, it is unfortunate that the bibliography that contains Spencer's own 2012 book *Dancing Girls, 'Loose' Ladies and Women of the Cloth: The Women in Jesus' Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004) could not make room for Margaret Elizabeth Köstenberger's important study *Jesus and the Feminists* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

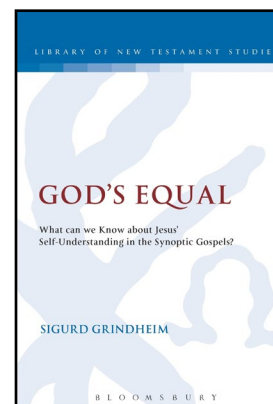
But no single volume can cover all that might and should be said about Jesus, the Gospels, our knowledge of them, and their implications for us and our world (cf. John 21:25). *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* comes as close as could be hoped and deserves wide usage . . . and a third edition by the early 2030s.

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Sigurd Grindheim. *God's Equal: What Can We Know about Jesus' Self-Understanding in the Synoptic Gospels?* Library of New Testament Studies 446. London: T&T Clark, 2011. xviii + 270 pp. £27.99/\$49.95.

More mainstream academic consensus concerning the Christology of the NT has traditionally held that early writers operated with a low Christology and that any kind of divine Christology (as found in John's Gospel) is a later development. More recently, however, works like Kavin Rowe's *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009) and Simon Gathercole's *The Pre-Existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), as well as others by Bauckham, Hurtado and Tilling, have challenged this assumption and showed that high Christology can be found earlier than John. In this volume Grindheim similarly argues that the Synoptics portray Jesus as saying and doing that which only God himself could say and do, thus portraying him as claiming to be God's equal. To establish his thesis he shows how the Synoptics present Jesus as acting in ways that in the Second Temple period were reserved for God himself. At the same time his thesis is distinct from those of Rowe, Gathercole, etc., in that he focusses on Jesus's own self-understanding, not simply the Christology of the gospel writers themselves. The project thus shows some affinities to N. T. Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

Grindheim deals with two objections to his approach, namely the question of our access to the historical Jesus and the problem of speaking about the self-understanding of a historical person. The latter he suggests is overcome simply by suggesting that though we have no direct access to Jesus's thoughts, we can legitimately (if cautiously) infer Jesus's self-understanding from his words and deeds. The question of historical access is perhaps more fundamental and Grindheim employs the traditional criteria (embarrassment, dissimilarity, etc.). He does attempt to employ the criteria of dissimilarity in a more developed way than normal by suggesting that "elements of the Jesus tradition that play no role in early Christian theology are unlikely to be the creation of the early church" (p. 5). The fact that many



of the aspects in the Synoptics that Grindheim examines did not play a significant (if any) role in early Christological debates suggests their originality.

Chapters 1 and 2 consider Jesus's miracles. The central thesis of the former is that Jewish expectations regarding the kingdom of God focussed on the direct intervention of God himself rather than the actions of a human intermediary. In an extended discussion of Luke 11:17–23 (and parallels) where Jesus associates his own activity (particularly the exorcisms) with the kingdom of God, Grindheim suggests that Jesus is claiming that "God's unmediated intervention . . . takes place through his own actions" (p. 39). Chapter 2 considers the miracles more broadly. Jesus's interpretation of his miracles in response to John the Baptist (Matt. 11:5 and parallels) associates his acts with the acts of God himself.

The rest of the book proceeds in similar manner. Chapter 3 examines Jesus offering forgiveness of sins, thus assuming an authority that for second temple Jews was reserved for God. Chapter 4 examines how Jesus expected to be the eschatological judge, determining people's eternal future (Matt 25:34–46), a role, once again, reserved for God alone. Chapter 5 considers how Jesus presents his teaching as having the same authority as God's Word (particularly in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus's teaching transcends the Torah). Chapter 6 considers the exceptional demands that Jesus places on the disciples in how they are to follow him. In chapter 7, metaphors that Jesus uses in speaking of himself (e.g. as the bridegroom) are shown to be exclusively used of God in the OT. Chapter 8 shows how although there are parallels between the portrayal of Jesus and that of other mediatory figures in second temple Judaism, the differences are more significant in that Jesus saw his own authority as inherently equal to that of God himself. Chapter 9 examines statements that Jesus makes where he specifically relates himself to God particularly as Son of the Father. Grindheim here examines the seeming tension in the Synoptics in that Jesus seems to simultaneously express equality to God as Father and submission.

Chapter 10 considers the important Son of Man sayings. This is a controversial and complex area and Grindheim deals with it more for completeness. He argues that there are good arguments for the originality of the saying and for understanding that Jesus was referring to himself as the Son of Man figure in Dan 7. This complements the findings of the rest of the book. In a similar vein, chapter 11 examines the temple sayings. Grindheim again acknowledges that this chapter complements rather than advances his thesis in that the temple sayings *can* be convincingly understood to suggest that Jesus saw himself as fulfilling prophecies regarding God coming to earth to dwell with humanity.

Grindheim presents a strong, well-organized and clearly argued thesis. Most readers of *Themelios* will no doubt already be convinced of the central argument before even reading the book. Nevertheless I think this book is extremely valuable in its exceptionally clear presentation of the high Christology of the Synoptic Gospels. Further, it is very encouraging to see such a high Christology being argued for in an academic monograph series. Even readers with a more sceptical stance will, I think, have to admit that Grindheim's thesis has strength. Whether the underlying historical assumptions will be accepted remains to be seen. Perhaps one area of minor critique is that some of the language remains a touch underdeveloped. What exactly does equality with God mean and how does it relate to Jesus's submission to the Father? These questions are dealt with but could perhaps have been developed a little more. This minor point aside, this is an important book that deserves wide circulation.

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Douglas S. Huffman. *Verbal Aspect and the Prohibitions in the Greek New Testament*. Studies in Biblical Greek 16. New York: Lang, 2014. xxiv + 571 pp. £37.00/\$59.95.

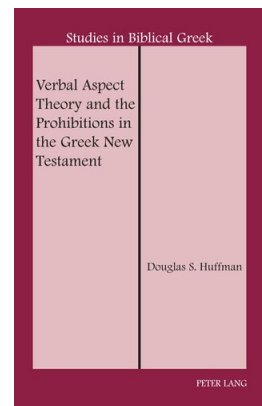
Five years ago Peter Lang published Joseph Fantin's *The Greek Imperative Mood in the New Testament: A Cognitive and Communicative Approach* and the current contribution by Douglas Huffman complements Fantin's work. Both investigate how the linguistic concept of verbal aspect informs our understanding of commands and prohibitions in the Greek text of the New Testament and are part of Peter Lang's *Studies in Biblical Greek* series.

Verbal Aspect and the Prohibitions is broken into two sections. In part one, "The Great Prohibition Debate" (approximately 120 pages), Huffman argues that verbal aspect explains the differences between the negated present imperative and the negated aorist subjunctive in a more coherent manner than *Aktionsart* theory does. "The main thesis is that a verbal aspect understanding of these NT prohibition constructions can, in fact, refine and replace the traditional understanding" (p. 5). He is not so concerned about the content of what is prohibited, or the context of the prohibitions, but how these prohibitions are grammatically expressed. In doing so he employs an eclectic approach to verbal aspect theory that combines Stanley Porter, Buist Fanning and Constantine Campbell's work (pp. 511–12).

In the second section, "All the Prohibitions in the Greek New Testament," Huffman surveys the ways one could say "Don't do that" in Koine Greek that do not fit into the typical negated present imperative or negated aorist subjunctive. This section is almost two and a half times longer than the first (about 330 pages). The difference in space dedicated to these two sections is surprising until one notes, as D. A. Carson does, that there are around 260 prohibitions that fit the negated present imperative or negated aorist subjunctive construction but there are almost 1400 prohibitory statements in the NT. The second part of this book collects and categorizes those additional prohibitory statements and is an invaluable contribution in itself.

I would like to suggest that there is a third "section" to this book that deserves equal attention: that is his comprehensive survey of the history of the *Aktionsart* theory and clear explanation of verbal aspect in reference to prohibitions. This third section bookends his work (chapters 1–3 and the final chapter [14] and appendices A and B). Each of these three sections makes its own distinct contribution to the study of prohibitions.

Chapter 1 surveys the history of the *Aktionsart* approach. This approach views the negated present imperative as commanding someone to stop what they are currently doing ("stop doing that") and the negated aorist subjunctive construction as forbidding someone from starting to do something ("don't start doing that"). While we can speak of an *Aktionsart* theory, Huffman clearly shows how there are three different models that fall under the *Aktionsart* rubric. *Aktionsart* is based on the idea that the *kind of historic action* determined which verb tense the author used to write about it. Moulton is credited with introducing this German concept into English biblical studies in 1906 from Karl Brugmann's work (1885). However, Huffman demonstrates that the *Aktionsart* approach has earlier roots in John Milner's work from 1734. This is more than just a historical survey. Huffman demonstrates how these 19th century philological approaches influence how contemporary grammarians interpret the NT (see his appendix, "Tracing *Aktionsart* views of Prohibitions").



Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are the theoretical backbone of this book. *Aktionsart's* general guidelines for interpreting a prohibition according may hold in certain instances but there are too many inconsistencies. This is because the *Aktionsart* model is based on “the presupposition that the Greek verb tense-form is determined by the historic kind of action that it represents,” and Huffman concludes that *Aktionsart* approach must “be completely set aside” (p. 58). In chapters 3 & 4 the author demonstrates how verbal aspect theory is able to coherently explain the evidence of the prohibitions without resorting to qualifications or exceptions to the rule. The basic presupposition of verbal aspect theory is that the verb tense-form is not determined by the historic action but the author’s perspective; “the question is how the author wishes to speak about an event” (67). The fourth chapter examines parallel prohibitions in the NT or passages where the negated present or aorist forms are used interchangeably when speaking about the same action. Verbal aspect theory can comprehensively cover these passages where the different authors use different verb tense-forms without appealing to qualifications. A surprising point brought out in this chapter is how English translations of the NT do not follow the *Aktionsart* model but tend to follow the simpler verbal aspect suggestions to translate the present prohibition along the lines of “do not be doing” and the aorist as “do not do.”

In Part 2 Huffman surveys all the different ways that it is possible to say “don’t do that” in the NT without resorting to a negated present imperative or an aorist subjunctive constructions. This section makes a unique contribution in that, as Huffman notes “as far as we know, no one has attempted to identify in place all the possible NT constructions of prohibitions” (p. 123). Judging from the major sections in chapters 7 through 13, the author identifies 24 different forms of prohibitions in the NT. This section does not attempt to apply verbal aspect theory to these various prohibitions (a feat that he wisely notes would have been beyond the scope of the current work) but is more of a descriptive exercise.

The second part of the book makes such a valuable contribution to the study of the Greek NT that it may have been better as a separate volume in itself to avoid being overlooked as part of the current volume. This section clearly demonstrates that linguistic models that are based on atomistic premises in which the meaning of a grammatical construction is determined by the sum of the semantic meaning of its parts fall short of what we actually find in real-life language use. A simple illustration of this would be that by using the most advanced searches in a software package like Accordance or Logos one would never be able to compile the comprehensive list of prohibitions in the NT as Huffman has. I was struck by two ideas as I worked my way through his list. First, the meaning of the various prohibition constructions cannot be built up from the meaning of the various grammatical elements but they are holistic in nature. Second, many of these prohibition constructions require other theories of language and linguistics to explain their use. Why for example does “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees” (Matt 23:15, p. 384) count as a prohibition (“do not be hypocrites by corrupting converts”) and not as a judgment against Jesus’s antagonists in the discourse? In this way, his collection of other ways to say “don’t do that” serves as a corpus of linguistic occurrences that hopefully will lead to further studies. In fact the author offers several lines of exploration in ch. 14 “Summary and Prospects.”

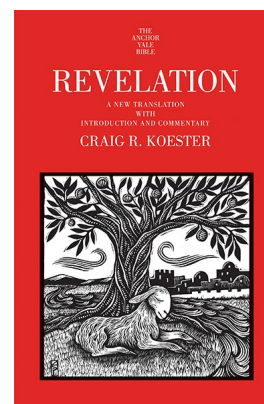
After reviewing Fantin’s volume *The Greek Imperative Mood in the New Testament* (in *Them* 37.3 [2012]) and now Huffman’s work, I feel deeply indebted to both men’s contribution to our understanding of Koine Greek. I hope that both of these volumes (and hopefully others as well) in Peter Lang’s series will be incorporated into software packages like Accordance and Logos in the near future. The wealth of

textual examples and grammatical analysis that both contain makes them ideal texts to be studied and accessed via software.

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Koester, Craig R. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Yale Bible 38A. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 881 pp. £75.00/\$125.00.

This is the most important commentary on Revelation published in English in more than a decade. It is meticulously researched and elegantly written, masterfully situates the Apocalypse in its Greco-Roman and Jewish-Christian context in the late first century, and demonstrates unsurpassed grasp of the history of interpretation of this important and enigmatic book. Craig Koester is Professor and Asher O. and Carrie Nasby Chair of New Testament at Luther Seminary. His previous publications include the Anchor Bible commentary on Hebrews (New York: Doubleday, 2001), *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), and several noteworthy books on the Gospel of John. Koester's fine commentary replaces the weak earlier volume by J. Massyngberde Ford in the distinguished Anchor Bible series, and it belongs on the shelf of every pastor, student, and scholar studying Revelation.



Interpreters are often labeled futurist, idealist, historicist, or preterist, but Koester considers such categories problematic and unhelpful. Instead, he prefers to “identify the social, political, and theological factors” that shape interpreters’ views (p. xiii). Koester reads Revelation “as a forward-moving spiral in which scenes of conflict lead to celebration in heaven over and over again, until ‘all is done’ in New Jerusalem” (p. xiv). He relates the book to the various social, political, economic, and religious settings of Christianity in Asia Minor in the late first century. Koester’s own approach might be classified as preterist-idealist, but he engages widely and fairly with a broad range of ancient and modern interpreters. Unsurprisingly, the most frequently cited modern author is David Aune, followed by Heinz Giesen, G. K. Beale, Richard Bauckham, Grant Osborne, Stephen Smalley, Frederick Murphy, Robert Mounce, and Adela Yarbro Collins.

The commentary opens with the author’s own fresh translation of the Apocalypse (pp. 3–25), followed by a thorough yet accessible introduction (pp. 27–150) and a substantial bibliography organized by time period (pp. 151–206). Koester understands “John” to be an early Christian prophet (not an apostle) writing during the final decades of the first century. The book combines features of three genres (apocalypse, prophecy, and circular letter) and is structured around six vision cycles framed by an introduction (1:1–8) and conclusion (22:6–21). Perhaps the most distinctive and valuable contribution of Koester’s introduction is the remarkable thirty-seven-page treatment of the history of interpretation and influence of Revelation.

The commentary proper adapts the typical Anchor Bible format with four elements: (1) the author’s own translation, (2) “notes” on one or more key phrases in each verse, (3) a select bibliography, and (4) “comments” that lucidly synthesize the passage’s message. Koester moves through the book in forty-

three sections. These sections include valuable overviews treating the book's title and six visionary cycles, as well as focused discussion of text units between four verses and twenty-four verses in length. The bottom of each left-hand page indicates the larger unit (e.g. First Cycle), and the right-hand page includes the passage number, summary heading, and verses (e.g. "4. Christ Commissions John to Write [1:9–20]," p. 239). This is a noticeably improvement over earlier Anchor Bible print volumes that include only the name of the larger unit and do not specify the specific verses being commented on.

Koester's treatment of Rev 1:9 illustrates his priorities and strengths as a commentator. The notes section includes a thorough four-page treatment of John's exile to Patmos, including a map and a black and white photo of a grave stele from the island. Koester discusses the social and religious life on Patmos, which centered around the family and the goddess Artemis, respectively. He argues that "Roman authorities probably relegated John to Patmos as a punitive action" and clarifies that "relegation to an island" was temporary and did not entail loss of property like the more severe punishment of permanent deportation (p. 242). In the comments section, Koester explains that John's situation on Patmos fits his self-presentation as "your brother and companion in the affliction and the kingdom and the endurance that we have in Jesus." John like his readers faced the challenges of "maintaining a distinctive Christian identity in a social context that did not support it" and of "making a living without undue entanglement in the Roman economy" (p. 251).

Koester situates difficult texts in their literary and socio-historical contexts and summarizes the principal ancient and modern interpretations before reaching a measured conclusion. For example, he argues that the scenes of the 144,000 and the great multitude in Rev 7:1–17 provide two perspectives on a single group, followers of Jesus (p. 424). In 11:3, the two witnesses are representatives of the whole church, and the 1,260 days is "a period of oppression in Daniel" and signifies the time from Christ's ascension to his return at the end of the age (pp. 497–98). In 12:1, the woman refers to God's people before and after Jesus's birth (p. 542), while the dragon's expulsion from heaven (vv. 7–9) results from Jesus's death, resurrection, and exaltation and does not refer to primeval history or the end of the age (p. 550–51). The beast in Rev 13:1 weaves together allusions to the final beast in Dan 7 with elements from Roman imperial practices such as emperor worship and stories about Nero coming back to life, making the beast "the demonic counterpart to the Lamb" (p. 571). Koester explains that the number 666 (Rev 13:18) challenges readers to see the beast as John sees it. John's riddle uses gematria, and the Hebrew spelling of Nero Caesar best fits the number and characteristics of the beast (p. 606).

Koester's general comments on the sixth cycle (19:11–22:5) illustrate his approach to larger overview sections. Koester opens with a succinct two paragraph summary of the text that focuses on the defeat of evil, the vindication of the faithful (represented by the martyrs), and the New Jerusalem as the splendid foil to Babylon the prostitute. Next, he surveys the history of interpretation of this controversial section. Early interpreters in the West, including Papias, Justin, and Irenaeus, emphasized a future millennium. Tyconius (d. 400) and Augustine after him identified the millennium with the church's present reality, which became the dominant perspective of early medieval interpreter and the Protestant reformers. Koester discusses the futuristic interpretations by Bede (d. 735) and Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202) and the rise of postmillennialism in Britain and North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He also surveys the premillennialist interpretations by William Miller and John Nelson Darby that exerted significant influence on Seventh Day Adventists and dispensationalists, respectively.

According to Koester, "modern historical interpretation shifts the focus from the future to Revelation's ancient context," but he argues that scholarly comparisons of Rev 20:1–6 to Jewish apocalyptic writings

such as 1 Enoch and 2 Baruch obfuscate the vision's literary function in the book's stylized presentation of divine triumph over evil (pp. 748–49). While interpreters since the second century have commonly linked the millennium to OT prophecies of the earth's transformation, such transformation occurs in the new creation, not the millennium. The millennium is connected to the theme of divine justice and reminds readers that God "will bring the activity of evil to an end for the sake of those who are now its victims" (p. 749). Koester argues that "John's readers would have seen themselves living in the time when Satan and the beast were at work, and not in the millennial age," though he notes that "the visionary world does not outline a chronological sequence of events that can be correlated directly with the readers' world" (p. 782).

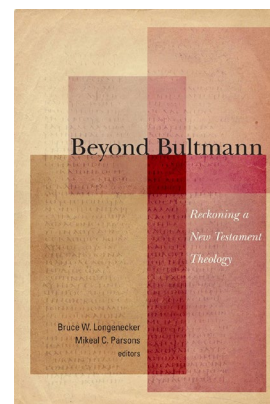
Themelios readers may dispute Koester's rejection of the traditional identification of John the apostle as the author of Revelation and may quibble with some of his interpretive decisions. But overall, this is an outstanding commentary that will prove to be one of the most significant treatments of the Apocalypse in this generation. I warmly commend this volume to anyone engaged in serious study of Revelation, and I hope the publisher will soon release a more affordable paperback edition so that Koester's remarkable commentary can receive the wide readership it deserves.

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Bruce W. Longenecker and Mikeal C. Parsons, eds. *Beyond Bultmann: Reckoning a New Testament Theology*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014. x + 372 pp. £49.99/\$59.95.

The project of New Testament Theology (hereafter NTT), I think it is fair to suggest, has had its heyday. Fewer and fewer New Testament scholars seek to present a coherent account of the NT compositions that is *simultaneously* attentive to exegesis, history, hermeneutics, and the theological claims made by these texts. Despite disagreements with his execution of the project, Rudolf Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* is considered by many to be unequalled in its ability to relate history and theology through strong readings of the NT texts. This sentiment is stated nicely by C. Kevin Rowe: "In an area of scholarship in which an almost rabid specialization is the norm, Bultmann actually knows what he thinks the whole New Testament is basically about – and this in connection to particular contemporary currents of thought that profoundly shape reflection's historicity. This is no small feat" (p. 36).

In response, then, to the legacy of Bultmann's magisterial NTT, this volume seeks to explore the question, to "what extent can we move forward in relation to the powerful influences [Bultmann] has exerted within New Testament studies?" (p. viii). The editors have assembled an impressive group of first-rate NT scholars with each one asked to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of a specific chapter within Bultmann's NTT. Almost without fail, each scholar praises Bultmann's NTT as exerting significant influence on their education and scholarly development. Likewise, most of the essayists continue to credit Bultmann's NTT as impressively coherent, containing strong readings of the NT compositions, hermeneutically sophisticated, and remarkable in its ability to control historical data. That said, the present project is an attempt to move *Beyond Bultmann*, and, therefore, the rest of my



review will focus upon the essayists' criticisms of Bultmann's NTT, given that these criticisms make up the majority of the work.

The kerygma, so central to Bultmann's project as God's address to humanity, is, argues Rowe, never defined and this is due to the fact that, for Bultmann, the kerygma does not have "specific conceptual content" (p. 32). This is philosophically problematic as well as at odds with the witness of the NT (pp. 32–34). Numerous essayists (e.g., Schnelle, Hays, Frey) predictably but rightly take Bultmann to task for his early dating of Gnosticism and his use or invention of a Gnostic Redeemer Myth. Bultmann's methodological decision to treat Pauline theology as anthropology results in a Paul who, according to Hays, downplays or omits "the election of Israel, the constitutive role of Israel's Scripture, the cosmic centrality of the *narrative* of the death and resurrection of Jesus, . . . the corporate character of redemption in Christ, . . . the breaking down of the barrier between Jew and Gentile, and the radical hope for resurrection of the body and God's apocalyptic triumph over death and evil in the world" (pp. 76–77). Barclay notes that Bultmann's failure to evaluate first-century Judaism correctly is devastating for his larger project and means that "Paul's anthropology and soteriology would have to be (implausibly) disconnected from his statements about the law and Judaism, or the whole needs to be reframed" (pp. 92–93). Barclay provides an intriguing outline of how one might go beyond Bultmann by providing an account of the world, social relations, and human lives "as the product of a gift" without relying upon an unfair portrait of Judaism (pp. 96–99). Jörg Frey affirms that Bultmann's account of John's theology has many "thought-provoking accents" (p. 131), but he criticizes Bultmann's questionable historical reconstructions, the positing of a later ecclesial redactor who brought the Gospel into closer conformity with orthodoxy, and his belief that revelation can only take place through paradox. Frey notes: "Yet one can hardly characterize this as exegesis. All too often the text is not permitted to say what it says, and the assumption that it means something other than what it says has extratextual grounds. Thus Bultmann does inappropriate violence to the texts" (p. 131).

Luke Timothy Johnson's treatment of "The Rise of Church Order" argues that in order to move beyond Bultmann's tendentious evaluation of many of the NT texts that do not maintain Bultmann's supposed eschatological/existential awareness (e.g., Luke-Acts, the Pastoral Epistles, James) one must resist positing some "principle of unity that can give usable coherence to the diverse New Testament compositions within a single book" (p. 171). The NT literary compositions are diverse and their richness is lost when they are made to conform to or are evaluated by a single theological principle. Hurtado's primary criticism is similar, namely, that the christological and soteriological riches of Hebrews and Revelation are lost when they are assessed by one particular rule. "Instead, we can judge early Christian writings adequately only if (with some sympathy) we take account of the situation addressed and the likely reasons that the various authors chose to underscore what they did" (p. 208). Wayne Meeks also criticizes Bultmann for assuming there was once a "golden moment" when the kerygma was correctly understood and that the rest of church history is effectively a corruption.

The final two essays are devoted to "Bultmann in History and Theology," and are, in my opinion, the high points of the volume. Angela Standhartinger reflects upon the relationship between Bultmann's writing of his NTT and the historical context (dominated by National Socialism and World War II) within which it was written. She notes that Bultmann's NTT "reflects its contextuality . . . precisely in the increasingly cited *ὡς μὴ* ("as though not") from 1 Cor 7:29–31, summarized in the keyword *Entweltlichung* – namely, the attempt to establish faith as an attitude of resistance to experiences and entanglements in unjust world affairs" (p. 253). The kerygma is able to continue to actualize itself and

address humanity precisely as something that is distinct from the world within which humanity lives. Francis Watson helpfully seeks to “*understand* the relationship between theology and history” (p. 262) by exploring and offering an extended interpretation of what Bultmann means by “kerygma” and “theology.”

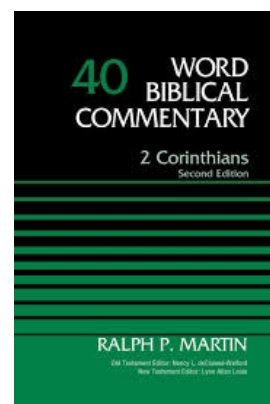
Beyond Bultmann is successful in terms of demonstrating how NT scholarship has moved beyond Bultmann with respect to such matters as first-century Judaism, the apocalyptic nature of the Pauline texts, the supposed Gnostic influence on the NT writings, belief in a content-less kerygma, and a low view of the theological worth of Luke-Acts – just to name a few. But there is also a sense in which the work is a missed opportunity to evaluate with what is actually the enduring legacy of Bultmann’s NTT, namely, his attempt to engage in contemporary theological discourse through his interpretation of the history of early Christianity. One of the factors that has made Bultmann’s NTT so important is this refusal to abide by the so-called “proper distinctions” between biblical and dogmatic theology. Bultmann eschews both Gabler’s two-stage approach as well as Wrede’s proposal that the NT scholars’ task is solely the historical study of religion. There is a surprising lack of engagement in this volume with Bultmann’s self-conscious methodological theological and hermeneutical commitments, *commitments that (self-consciously for Bultmann) exert an inordinate influence upon his reading of the NT texts*. This criticism is not intended to take away from the validity of the project, but in my view more hermeneutical and theological engagement is necessary, including more attention to the philosophical, hermeneutical, and theological influences upon Bultmann, in order to accomplish the subtitle of the volume – *Reckoning a New Testament Theology*.

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Ralph P. Martin. *2 Corinthians*. 2nd ed. Word Bible Commentary 40. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 751 pp. £29.99/\$54.99.

Martin, longtime professor at Fuller Seminary, finished this revision before his death in 2013. The original commentary (1986) was widely praised for its exhaustive interaction with secondary literature and careful attention to syntax and structure. Martin explained that Paul first sent chapters 1–9 as a single composition and, upon hearing of fresh trouble at Corinth, sent chapters 10–13, which Paul later added to the first composition to form a coherent whole. Martin argued that the Corinthian conflict concerned the opponents’ “theology of glory” versus Paul’s “theology of the cross,” with “reconciliation” being the main theme of the letter.

This revision adds 160 pages. Most new material comes from additional excursuses, around half of which are written by Martin’s associates. Carl N. Toney writes a survey of secondary literature on the letter’s composition from 1985 to 2007; an introduction to recent rhetorical analyses of 2 Corinthians; and a brief essay on resurrection in 2 Cor 5. Mark W. Linder summarizes recent literature on the social setting of 2 Corinthians, covering such topics as benefaction, friendship, and conflict resolution against their Greco-Roman backgrounds. David J. Downs supplements Martin’s original excursus on the Jerusalem collection by surveying



recent research and briefly outlining his own monograph, suggesting that Paul casts the collection as a religious offering in order to undermine how Greco-Roman notions of gift giving center on the human benefactor (p. 427). These new excursuses are helpful in that, like the original commentary, they give detailed bibliographies and summarize much of the secondary literature. Their *interaction* with the literature, however, is limited and theological reflection is minimal.

The revision also adds three excursuses by Martin, all previously published elsewhere. The first expands on Martin's identification of the intruding "pseudo-apostles" (11:13)—i.e., Antiochian Hellenists who preach a "theology of glory" but bear a loose connection with the Jerusalem's legitimate "highest apostles" (11:5; p. 114). The second is a fairly basic survey of the epistle's major themes as they relate to Paul's "theology and mission," with some repetition of Martin's section on the opponents (pp. 123–24). The third examines the closing wish for the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (13:14), arguing that it flows from Paul's understanding of the Spirit as the "authentic sign of the new age" (p. 707). First published in 1987, 2000, and 1988, these excursuses are less technical and more theological than the commentary, but none interacts with secondary literature that postdates the original essays.

The indices are significantly longer (including the helpful "subject index"), although the index of ancient primary literature has disappeared (apart from specific authors like Philo or Aristotle now in the "author index").

The commentary itself retains the original format: "Bibliography," "Translation," "Notes" (on textual issues), "Form/Structure/Setting," "Comment," and "Explanation." The bibliographies are, by far, the most heavily revised and expanded section. They add much recent literature and even some works that predate the first commentary. Very little of the original bibliographies has been removed. These bibliographies remain dominated by the mid-twentieth century, while the commentary (and excursuses) include nothing published after 2009.

Martin's translation, at least in the passages I examined, has not changed. The other sections of the commentary changed only slightly. Positively, the revision is much more "user friendly" than the original: non-English and Greek/Hebrew phrases are always translated. Cumbersome parenthetical citations have helpfully become footnotes. Tables are cleaner and sentences are occasionally repunctuated for clarity. Finding specific comments is much easier; instead of being divided into long chunks by single verse numbers, the text is now divided by Greek clauses (followed by a corresponding reprint of Martin's translation).

However, while Martin regularly cites secondary literature published since 1986, he rarely engages with it. Often, he merely acknowledges or summarizes it in footnotes (e.g., pp. 215n229, 391n1407). In the main text Martin's many dialogue partners are almost entirely from the mid-twentieth century (although the commentaries of Barnett and Thrall appear throughout). Some recent commentators are nearly absent (e.g., Hafemann, Harris, Matera), with Furnish's major commentary (1984) hardly appearing beyond 2 Cor 10–13.

As he acknowledges in the new preface (p. 10), Martin has not really changed positions. He (and the excursus writers) still argue that Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in two stages (p. 61) and that 6:14–7:1 is a Qumran-influenced, preexisting fragment that Paul modified and inserted (p. 59). Strikingly, Martin's comment on 2 Cor 5:21 has not changed (apart from removing one brief technical parenthesis on the meaning of "know sin"); he does not note any literature on either side of the imputation and "New Perspective" debates of recent decades. While the bibliographies of all sections are considerably

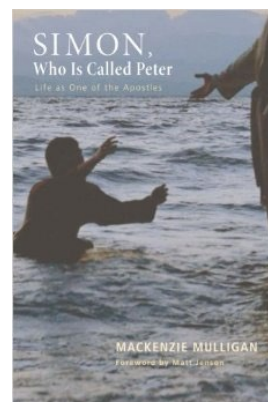
longer, I hoped for more substantial interaction with recent literature in both the excursuses and the commentary.

To summarize: the new excursuses, like the original commentary, give very helpful surveys of recent scholarship about 2 Corinthians. They will benefit those hunting for further resources and students who need a “crash course” in these debates. Martin’s added excursuses fill out parts of his commentary and give it a slightly more theological and pastoral tone. This revision is significantly easier to navigate than the original. The bibliographies are much longer, while the commentary text retains its sweeping dialogue with mid-twentieth-century scholarship. However, Martin’s commentary has changed little and it rarely interacts with recent literature, so the revision has limited value for scholars and students looking for much beyond the original. Even with welcome changes in layout, pastors and laypeople may still struggle with Martin’s technicality and limited theological reflections.

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Mackenzie Mulligan. *Simon, Who Is Called Peter: Life as One of the Apostles*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014. xii + 125 pp. £11.00/\$17.00.

Writing in first person, Mackenzie Mulligan adopts the persona of the apostle Peter in this historical novel that gathers all that can be gleaned about the apostle’s life from the NT plus some church tradition. The setting is the last night of Peter’s life while imprisoned in a Roman cell, alternating with flashbacks to his time with Jesus and his ministry in the early church. Mulligan limits the scope of his story to the timeframe of Peter’s life presented in the NT with the exception of the account of Peter’s imprisonment and execution drawn from church tradition. Footnotes point the reader to the Scripture on which the episodes are based. For instance, “These events are taken from Matthew 26:17–29, Mark 14:12–25, Luke 22:7–38, John 13:1–38, modified and expanded from the ESV” (p. 49n1). In addition to the NT material, Mulligan documents his extensive use of secondary sources, primarily major commentaries on the passages he expands and monographs on the apostle Peter. A substantial and selected bibliography is included.



Mulligan recognizes the ease of crossing “the line from scholarship and knowledge into irresponsible speculation” (p. xii) and attempts to avoid filling in the gaps of the biblical material on Peter’s life. Nevertheless, in order to redact the relevant biblical texts into a coherent and cohesive first-person narrative, Mulligan does judiciously add plausible, though speculative, details about events and reconstructs some internal thoughts and emotions of Jesus, Peter, and the other apostles. For instance, in an attempt to convert 2 Pet 3:15–16 into narrative, he writes in Peter’s voice from Rome, “I have not been allowed to see him [Paul]. Mark and Silvanus have, however, and they have brought me copies of his messages to the Church” (pp. 1–2). In a flashback to the day Andrew announced finding the Messiah we read, “Simon! Simon!” Andrew’s voice jarred me out of my sleep. I turned over and pulled my blanket more tightly around me” (p. 3). It is possible that readers unfamiliar with the NT material

itself will remember such fabricated details as truths about Peter, though what risk may result from that is probably minimal.

Mulligan attributes fatigue, fear, and anger to Jesus apparently by inference from what he thinks any human being would feel in such circumstances. For instance, during the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Peter looks at Jesus, “expecting the frown, the tiredness, to be gone, but it was, if anything, worse than ever” (p. 35; see also reference to Jesus’s fatigue, p. 49). He then attributes “a flash of anger” to Jesus as he mounts the donkey (p. 36; see also reference to Jesus’s anger, p. 44). Peter’s thoughts are also provided, for instance, when we read that one of the angels at Jesus’s ascension “was smiling at us, and I felt as though he was holding back laughter” (p. 89).

Where there is scholarly disagreement about when and how many times Jesus cleared the Temple, Mulligan opts for twice, once at the beginning of the public ministry and again during the last week of Jesus’s life (p. 42). The unidentified disciple who questions Jesus in Mark 13:1 is identified as Andrew in Mulligan’s narrative “partly because he is included in the following conversation and partly because the narrative requires a name” (p. 45n18). One of the two unnamed disciples in John 21:2 also is identified as Andrew, the other as Philip, “[a]s their identity makes neither a theological nor a narrative impact on the story” (p. 84n3). Because Peter is absent from the New Testament accounts between his denial of Christ and the visit to the empty tomb, Mulligan notes that chapter 7 is entirely his own creation as he speculates that Peter returned to Gethsemane after denying Jesus three times (p. 71n1). Mulligan documents most of the assumptions he introduces so the careful reader can determine what material was not found in the biblical text. Even with many such assumptions and inferences, Mulligan’s narrative is faithful to the biblical account.

This book is very well written and carefully executed, but there are two minor typos. Note 14 on p. 42 refers to “footnote 63 above” though there appears to be no such note, and on p. 63 there is the misspelling “site” for “sight.”

This engaging “autobiographical” narrative of Peter’s life is reminiscent of Bruce Longenecker’s *The Lost Letters of Pergamum: A Story from the New Testament World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003) and Gerd Theissen’s *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), though neither of those narrates the life of a New Testament figure. Mulligan’s monograph began as his senior thesis project supervised by Matt Jenson, a systematic theologian at the Torrey Honors Institute at Biola University. Jenson writes in the Foreword that Mulligan has provided an aid to theological interpretation of Scripture by presenting “an imaginative immersion in Peter’s life in Peter’s own voice” (p. vii). This reviewer would raise questions with Jenson on that point but agrees that Mulligan’s book will be wonderfully effective with those readers and in those settings where such imaginative re-telling is suitable.

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Peter R. Rodgers. *Text and Story: Narrative Studies in New Testament Textual Criticism*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011. ix + 126 pp. £11.00/\$17.00.

Peter Rodgers is pastor of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church and Adjunct Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary's Sacramento campus, and his publications over the years have focused especially on NT textual criticism ("text") and the use of the OT in the NT ("story"). In this slim volume, Rodgers brings the two together by considering ten textual variations that involve citations, echoes, or allusions to the OT. The hope is that "the study of the *story* may give new perspectives for decisions on the *text*, and that a new confidence regarding the *text* may [*sic*] lead to a better understanding of the *story*" (p. 5, emphasis original).



The introduction offers brief remarks on developments in both fields. He notes the growing interest among textual critics for finding theologically motivated variants, but as about half his examples show, he finds that accidental causes often provide better explanations. With regard to the use of the OT he follows the work of scholars like Richard Hays who argue that the NT writers often appeal to large narrative structures in their use of the OT rather than atomistic "proof texts."

The ten chapters that follow the introduction generally contain five sections: (1) manuscript support, (2) transcriptional probabilities, (3) internal evidence, (4) narrative features, and (5) the text's transmission history. The first three sections (sometimes disappointingly short) attempt to show that the normal external and internal evidence for each variant is divided. This sets up section four to provide the decisive evidence for the preferred reading. The last section offers a short explanation of how the original reading was corrupted.

Each chapter considers a different variation, each one involving an OT allusion, citation, or echo. Some of the variations are longstanding textual conundrums (e.g., Heb 2:9; Luke 22:43–44) while others are less familiar (e.g., Phil 4:7; Mark 15:34). In all, Rodgers disagrees with the NA²⁷/UBS⁴ in eight of the ten variations (*contra* p. 101, the editors do not consider Luke 22:43–44 original, hence the double brackets) and this naturally makes the book more interesting, especially for exegetes. A summary of a few of these will give a taste for the main chapters.

At Rom 8:28, Rodgers argues for the explicit subject "*God* works all things together" rather than "all things work together" based on a perceived echo of Gen 50:20 where "*God* intended for good" what Joseph's brothers intended for evil. At Luke 3:22 the majority reading "you are my beloved Son, in you I am well-pleased" is preferred as a "composite echo" (p. 28) of Ps 2:7, Isa 42:1, and Gen 22:2, 12, 16 instead of the weakly-attested "you are my Son, today I have begotten you," which offers a straightforward (and easily harmonized) quotation of Ps 2:7. At Mark 15:34, he argues that the cry from the cross should read "My God, my God, why have you *reproached* me?" as another composite echo, this one of Ps 22:1 and the various references to "reproach" in Ps 69. This reading also fits with the other reproaches in Mark's passion narrative. In Phil 4:7, it is Isa 26 with its mention of resurrection (v. 19) that provides the "story" behind the preferred reading "the peace of God . . . will keep your hearts and minds *and* your *bodies*." These last two readings are preferred despite solitary Greek manuscript support (Codex Bezae and P^{16vid}, respectively). Clearly, Rodgers does not feel bound to follow the "oldest and best witnesses" (p. 101).

The concluding chapter offers some implications for textual criticism, exegesis, and theology. With the first, Rodgers suggests that, overall, less deference should be given to the shorter, more difficult, or un-harmonized reading in text-critical decisions. For exegesis and theology, the individual studies serve as a reminder that these disciplines “cannot and should not” be separated from textual criticism (p. 105). A one-page appendix, bibliography, and name and Scripture indices round out the volume.

A few minor problems attend the book. The number of catalogued Greek manuscripts is 5,607 at the time of writing not 5,800 as suggested on p. 1 (see <http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/liste>). “Original text” should not be identified with the “initial text” (p. 1) and the quest for the former deserves some defense in light of the later citation from David Parker that such a thing does not even exist (p. 8). A half-dozen or so typos were found but, like so many textual variants, none impedes the author’s meaning.

A more significant problem is that the author’s method of using the OT “story” to determine otherwise “balanced” textual decisions risks begging the question. The more the OT “story” is based on the very reading it is meant to illuminate, the more circular the argument becomes. In Luke 3:22, for example, a three-part echo of the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets may evoke more of the OT “story” than a single quotation of Ps 2:7, but this in itself tells us nothing about which reading is original. The book would have benefited from greater reflection on how the appeal to OT “story” can avoid this circularity.

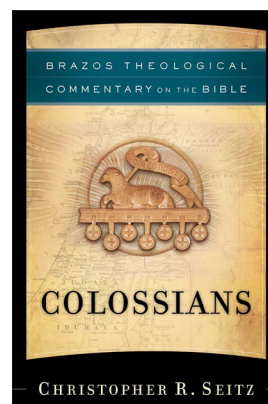
Despite these concerns, the book should still be welcomed for what it aims to be: an illustration for students that textual criticism is not dry and musty work best left for someone else. Instead, it can help attune our ears to hear exegetical and theological insights we might otherwise miss.

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Christopher R. Seitz. *Colossians*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014. 217 pp. £19.80/\$29.99.

The Brazos Commentary Series is a concrete manifestation of the renewed interest in the so-called “theological interpretation of Scripture”. This movement, which has gained momentum in recent years, was born out of frustration with historical-critical approaches to the Bible that have yielded many interesting insights, but have done so at the cost of abandoning the Bible’s claim to be Scripture and sacrificing any sense of its unity. The series editors seek to rehabilitate the great ecumenical tradition in biblical interpretation, convinced that “dogma clarifies rather than obscures” (p. 11). Thus, they generally call on systematic theologians, rather than biblical scholars, for commentary. In the case of Colossians, however, they turned to Christopher Seitz, professor of biblical interpretation at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto. An OT scholar by training, he is perhaps the most prominent practitioner of “canonical criticism” in the tradition of Brevard Childs, under whom he studied at Yale University.

Canonical criticism is hardly the same thing as the theological interpretation of Scripture, so Seitz’s commentary probably represents something of an outlier in the series. Be that as it may, there can be



no doubt that it is certainly different—sometimes strikingly so—from the standard commentaries on Colossians. The results are often as refreshing as an ocean breeze sweeping through a seaside cottage that has been shut up for far too long. When, for instance, Seitz discusses the authorship of Colossians he kowtows neither to the evangelicals' insistence on Paul as the "sole author," arguing that this is a modern construction unsuited to the community origins of Scripture, nor to the critics' sophistic(ated) contortions in their attempts to avoid the plain intent of the text (not to mention the theological and moral implications of the resultant presence of pseudepigraphy in the canon). Instead, he consciously engages Colossians as part of the collection of Pauline letters that from very early on was read and later commented on as a cohesive unit, much like the Minor Prophets compilation that Seitz knows so well (cf. pp. 41–42). By following this tried and true approach, he is able to offer a robust defense of Pauline authorship that would have made sense to the 1st century churches that received it as Scripture. Along the way he makes no apologies to critical scholars for conveying the impression that this pre-Enlightenment stance is eminently reasonable (which, in fact, it is). Seitz puts it nicely: "At some point the canonical portrayal sits before us and requests that we take it seriously as a factor in interpretation" (p. 25).

This laudatory note should not, however, be construed as a blanket affirmation either of Seitz's method or his conclusions. Anyone familiar with modern Colossians commentaries will be shocked to discover that, whether in the introduction or in his treatment of the relevant texts, Seitz almost completely dispenses with any discussion of the so-called "Colossian Heresy," the epithet traditionally given to the heterodox teachings that influenced the church in Colossae and that Paul seeks to counter at several places in the letter. This is in part due to his conviction that there was no Colossian heresy in the sense of a single body of teaching (p. 121). He follows Morna Hooker here and falls prey to her mistake. Colossians 2 contains some remarkably specific descriptors of the teaching; somebody was quite clearly teaching something Paul did not agree with. Whether it was a coherent system is another question, one that we cannot answer with any certainty due to our lack (not Paul's) of information. Seitz does more, however, than simply sound a cautionary note; rather, he seems averse to locating Colossians in its historical context as a matter of principle. "Paul's frame of reference," he argues, is the Jewish Scriptures, and that is "far more decisive . . . than seeking to learn what the specifics of religious practice were in the Lycus valley" (p. 121).

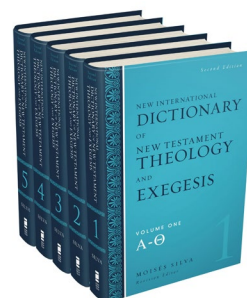
If this either/or approach is a necessary consequence of canonical interpretation (it is certainly not a necessary consequence of the theological interpretation of Scripture; commentators going back to the 4th century discussed the nature of the heresy), I do not regard it as a salutary one. To be sure, by highlighting the relationship of Colossians to the other Pauline epistles, Seitz avoids the dreary atomism of critical scholarship, which, it seems, is only adept at pointing out the differences between the various letters. The result has been an endless stream of fruitless discussions regarding what Paul could or could not have written at any given stage of his theological development, discussions which, truth be told, are often embarrassingly uncritical, since their results are unverifiable in any scientific sense. That is not to say, however, that historical criticism is completely without merit. The fact of the matter is that one cannot learn all there is to know about Colossians by reading it in light of the other Pauline epistles. It is, for example, despite its marked affinity with Ephesians, much more deeply rooted in a specific historical context than that (most likely) encyclical letter. Only historical-critical exegesis, not theological interpretation, can help us uncover that context.

Thankfully, we have both Ephesians, a more abstract assessment of the universal and cosmic dimensions of the Gospel, *and* Colossians, a letter that interacts with a competing cosmology and its resulting ethic and applies the truths of that Gospel to a concrete situation in a specific church. We can be thankful, too, for two complementary methods of interpretation: historical-critical exegesis and canonical criticism. Christopher Seitz's commentary is a good example of how the latter can illuminate the Scriptures. It would have been an even better contribution if he had not largely dispensed with the former. Still, Seitz's unique approach coaxes a number of fresh insights from the text and therefore deserves a hearing.

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Moisés Silva, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 5 vols. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 3,552 pp. £161.99/\$249.99. Available from Logos Bible Software for \$199.95.

James Barr questioned whether theological dictionaries should even exist. He shrewdly criticized the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* for using “unsystematic and haphazard” linguistic arguments such as irresponsible etymologizing (James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* [London: Oxford University Press, 1961]). Should one even attempt to organize a *theological* dictionary lexically? It is dangerous because it is so easy to commit exegetical fallacies in the process such as “illegitimate totality transfer.”



About fifteen years after Barr's criticism of *TDNT*, Zondervan published the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Colin Brown edited this standard reference work (3 vols. from 1975 to 1978 with a fourth volume of indexes in 1986), and evangelical scholars like Gleason Archer, F. F. Bruce, D. A. Carson, Murray J. Harris, I. Howard Marshall, Leon Morris, and J. I. Packer contributed to it. Brown oversaw the massive project of translating, revising, and expanding *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament* (2nd ed.; 2 vols.; 1970–1971), to which over seventy German academics and pastors had contributed.

Four years after the third volume of *NIDNTT* was released, Moisés Silva, a NT scholar with expertise in linguistics and the LXX, reviewed it (*WTJ* 43 [1981]: 395–99). Silva “warmly recommends this dictionary as a valuable reference tool.” But he concludes that while *NIDNTT* provides some corrective to *TDNT*, it still falls short:

In conclusion, anyone who expected this *Dictionary* to incorporate the results of modern linguistics into the study of the New Testament vocabulary will be deeply disappointed. Someone might again argue that the work was not meant to be a contribution to lexicography as such but to theology (*cf.* I, 11). If that is really the case, however, why include lexicographic discussions? In fact, why arrange the material according to Greek words at all? Why not simply bring together all the passages that might say something about knowledge, for example, regardless of whether *ginōskō* or some other word is found in them? This most fundamental criticism of *TDNT* by James Barr has not been

satisfactorily answered. Whatever the valuable features of the present work, we must be clear that it does not mark any substantial advance over the method of *TDNT*. (p. 399)

Silva has gone on to make significant contributions to exegesis (especially linguistics and hermeneutics) and theology. Most relevant for this review is his book *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994). He also recently demonstrated his ability to revise a massive reference work when he served as the revision editor for *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5 vols., 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009). Other highlights include “Old Testament in Paul,” in *DPL* 630–42; “God, Language, and Scripture: Reading the Bible in the Light of General Linguistics,” in *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 193–280; *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), coauthored with Karen H. Jobes; *Interpreting Galatians: Explorations in Exegetical Method*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001); *Philippians*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); and *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), coauthored with Walter C. Kaiser Jr.

If I were to nominate someone to revise the *NIDNTT* in a linguistically informed way, I can’t think of anyone more qualified than Moisés Silva. So I was delighted to learn that he was serving as the editor of what Zondervan has renamed the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (*NIDNTTE*), the NT-counterpart to *NIDOTTE* (*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren, 5 vols., 1997).

Silva, who completed this revision over eight years, has so extensively rewritten the *NIDNTT* that articles in his new work do not include the names of individuals who originally contributed articles to *NIDNTT*. Silva improves this reference work in at least six notable ways: (1) he updates bibliographies; (2) he corrects inaccurate or misleading information; (3) he presents linguistic data from general Greek literature and Jewish literature in a consistent format; (4) he alphabetically organizes Greek words rather than grouping them on the basis of concepts; (5) he describes words and related theological concepts in a more linguistically informed way; and (6) he takes advantage of numerous tools not available in the 1970s such as *TLG*, Louw-Nida, BDAG, and NETS.

Consider, for example, the article on *συνείδησις* (4:402–6). Over the last several years, I have read every exegetical and/or theological resource I can find on the conscience, and this concise *NIDNTTE* article is very good. Like all of the other articles, it has three main parts: (a) General (Greek) Literature features primarily the classical period but also includes preclassical, Hellenistic, and Roman times; (b) Jewish Literature includes the Hebrew OT and LXX, the Pseudepigrapha, Philo, Josephus, Qumran, and rabbinic writings; and (c) New Testament, of course, focuses on the dictionary’s primary text. The article on *συνείδησις* explains the main debates and nuances (both diachronically and synchronically) and includes some of the most important literature in the bibliography. That is the consistent four-part layout for the nearly 800 entries covering over 3,000 Greek words: (1) general literature, (2) Jewish literature, (3) NT, and (4) bibliography.

A word of warning, however, is appropriate for some readers. Make sure to read the “Introduction” (1:5–14), especially the sections “Theological lexicography” and “Linguistic data” (1:7–12). Silva warns, “Prior meanings, if different from contemporary usage, are irrelevant unless there is reason to believe that the speaker/hearer is aware of them” (1:9). Diachronic information, however valuable for specialist purposes, could confuse some users and tantalize them with tidbits that they may preach or tweet but that really do not fit the use of a given word in a NT passage.

NIDNTTE is available in print, but a reference work like this is far more valuable electronically. For one thing it is *massive*—3,500 pages spread over 5 volumes. Not exactly a pocket dictionary. But I actually do carry this reference work—along with about 8,400 other books—with me in my pocket just about everywhere I go because I can easily access it on my iPhone with the Logos app. Or on my iPad or computer. And all my highlighting and notes sync across those platforms. Further, the good folks at FaithLife who prepare books for Logos Bible Software add specialized features all throughout the *NIDNTTE* that connect it with the rest of your library in Logos Bible Software. Integrating a reference work like *NIDNTTE* is invaluable, especially for Logos’s powerful search engine.

Moisés Silva taught me in his book *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* to be wary of the many ways scholars can abuse theological lexicography. Silva was the ideal person for the job to revise *NIDNTT*, and from what I can tell he succeeded. This is definitely a reference work that serious Bible students should own.

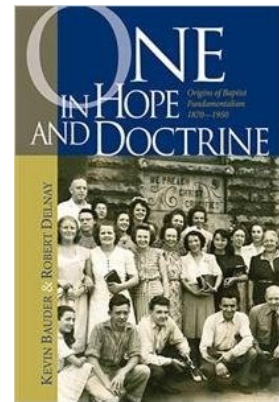
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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

Kevin Bauder and Robert Delnay. *One in Hope and Doctrine: Origins of Baptist Fundamentalism, 1870–1950*. Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 2014. 400 pp. \$29.99.

Ever since Baptist journalist Curtis Lee Laws coined the term “fundamentalist” in 1920, Baptists have enjoyed significant representation within American fundamentalism. With the exception of the Presbyterian trio of William Jennings Bryan, J. Gresham Machen, and Carl McIntire, nearly all of the best-known fundamentalist personalities have been Baptists. In *One in Hope and Doctrine*, Kevin Bauder and Robert Delnay offer a narrative history of Baptist fundamentalism through the mid-twentieth century. They intend their book to be the first of two volumes on this topic.

The major contours of the authors’ story will be familiar to historians of American fundamentalism. By the late-1910s, Northern Baptists were divided into three broad camps: 1) revisionist, progressive modernists; 2) dissenting, traditionalist fundamentalists; 3) denominationalist moderates, who were more pietistic and hesitant to dissent against progressive trends. Denominational conflict ensued in the 1920s and 1930s, resulting in substantial losses for the fundamentalists as modernists and moderates joined cause against conservative dissenters. The public ignominy of the Scopes Trial (1925) further inhibited the fundamentalist cause. The Northern Baptist Convention came firmly under the control of modernists and their moderate allies, becoming part of the Protestant Mainline, while fundamentalist Baptists retreated into their own subculture and established groups like the General Association of Regular Baptist Church (GARBC, est. 1932) and, later, the Conservative Baptist Association (est. 1947).



One in Hope in Doctrine is a work of “insider” history written by and mostly for fundamentalists. In this, the authors follow in the tradition of previous works by fundamentalist historians George Dollar and David Beale. As they state in their preface, Bauder and Delnay are not attempting to write a critical scholarly history of Baptist fundamentalism; they intend their work to be both informative and edifying. There is virtually no attempt at historical contextualization—this is a story about doctrine, spirituality, and evangelism. The authors assume the virtues of fundamentalism, so they do not hesitate to make spiritual pronouncements about their subjects, including questioning the motives of modernists and the controversial fundamentalist J. Frank Norris.

Though Bauder and Delnay evidence awareness of scholarly studies of fundamentalism, they do not engage with critical secondary sources or attempt to organize their own narrative around a central theme. Nevertheless, their implied theme is fundamentalist faithfulness in the wake of modernist apostasy and moderate compromise. Most of their narrative focuses upon the North, which makes sense in a book that focuses upon pre-1950 Baptist fundamentalism. (They do discuss leading southern fundamentalists Norris and John R. Rice; these men had transnational influence.) Though the authors discuss several varieties of Baptist fundamentalism, they seem to at least imply that the best approach is exemplified by the GARBC; it is surely not coincidental that Regular Baptist Press published this book.

Though *One in Hope and Doctrine* is not a scholarly work, historians of fundamentalism and Baptist studies will find much to appreciate. Like many works of insider history, this book highlights some lesser-known figures who made significant contributions that have not often been appreciated by scholars outside the movement. For example, historians have given little attention to GARBC leader Robert Ketcham and have totally ignored northern fundamentalist pioneer Oliver Van Odsel; these men are arguably the two most important figures in the authors’ narrative. Bauder and Delnay also draw out all sorts of details and anecdotes that are absent from more critical studies. While this can be cumbersome at times, these details provide “color” that is often missing from more scholarly accounts of Baptist fundamentalism.

Non-fundamentalist historians have sometimes downplayed or even ignored the tensions between Regular Baptists and “conference fundamentalists” who remained in the Northern Baptist Convention after 1932; these tensions constitute a major theme in this book. The authors’ typology of Baptist fundamentalism, while perhaps impressionistic, provides helpful nuance for scholars interested in the topic. The discussion of Norris’s career among fundamentalists in the North is a welcomed contribution, since most scholarly studies focus almost exclusively upon his relationship with Southern Baptists. Their argument that modernists formed the Northern Baptist Convention to promote their agenda deserves closer investigation by non-fundamentalist historians.

Fundamentalists, especially in the GARBC, will appreciate a winsome narrative that recounts so much of their past. Conservative Baptists will likely not appreciate the implication that the GARBC was more faithful than the denominational fundamentalists who tried—ultimately in vain—to reform the Northern Baptist Convention. Some southern fundamentalists might feel they receive inadequate treatment and/or question the implicit methodology of interpreting southern fundamentalism through the lens of their northern coreligionists. Non-fundamentalist historians of American Christianity will not resonate with the simplistic and apologetic narrative, but many will appreciate the way *One in Hope and Doctrine* brings to light many figures, stories, and controversies that have heretofore been relegated to unpublished dissertations written at fundamentalist institutions or buried away in obscure archival holdings.

After 1950, the nature of fundamentalism changed. Independent Baptists became more prominent, the battles with the “new” evangelicals took center stage, and fundamentalists fought each other over secondary separation and the King James Only position. Fundamentalism also took on a more “southern” feel, largely through the influence of periodicals like *Sword of the Lord* and institutions such as Bob Jones University. Fundamentalists and many historians will look forward to seeing how Bauder and Delnay tell those stories in their forthcoming second volume.

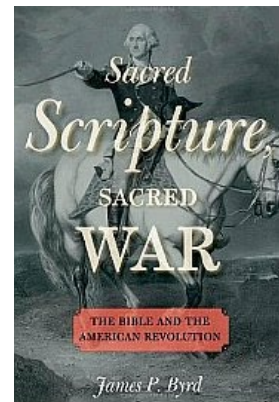
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James P. Byrd. *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 256 pp. £18.99/\$27.95.

No book was more widely read and respected in colonial America than the Bible. These Scriptures must have shaped and supported the patriotic cause in overthrowing the British government. But how? What verses were particularly popular? And how did these spiritually and patriotically zealous Americans explain passages such as Romans 13 while they denounced King George III and took up arms against him? These are some of the questions answered by James P. Byrd, assistant professor of American religious history at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and Graduate Department of Religion, in his book *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War*.

Byrd and his researchers painstakingly scoured 17,148 biblical citations from 543 sermonic sources between 1674 and 1800 to produce what he calls the “most comprehensive database on the Bible in colonial America” (p. 169). He offers this analysis, a less ambitious but similar task to the one undertaken by Harry L. Stout in *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006), as the front bookend to an American story where the Bible always factors prominently in war. Even those like Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin who did not believe it still used the Bible to advance their revolutionary aims. And as much as historians cite key pamphlets that circulated during this tumultuous era, their influence paled in comparison to the much more popular public teaching of sermons.

According to Byrd’s calculations, by far the most cited passage in colonial sermons was Rom 13. You cannot convince Americans who revere the Bible to take up arms against the authorities until you can persuade them that the apostle Paul was not directly addressing their situation: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment” (Rom 13:1–2). Another of the most frequently cited chapters of Scripture was the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt 5:38–39). It is not clear whether modern readers would find the colonial sermons persuasive, but Byrd is not judging contemporary application, only historical usage.



Byrd brings his imposing database to bear on decades of historical analysis about Revolutionary Era millennialism and says the evidence does not see colonial American preachers as preoccupied with the Bible's apocalyptic visions. And when they did, books such as Revelation could cut both ways: sometimes to support the British government over the patriots and sometimes to project an inspiring future for America free from transatlantic meddling.

Historians engrossed in millennial symbolism, according to Byrd, miss the more obvious ways the Bible was employed. God's Word gave young soldiers and militia courage to kill. The Psalms were especially popular in this regard. Since the colonists lacked military experience, they needed supernatural courage. "Colonial ministers did not shy away from biblical violence," Byrd writes. "They embraced it, almost celebrated it, even in its most graphic forms" (p. 73). He identifies the Song of Deborah from Judg 5 as particularly influential, because it did three things: it celebrated killing, taught that victory comes not only from providence but also through militant initiative, and reminded Americans that victory requires sacrifice and courage. Another especially popular figure was Moses, because he led God's people out of foreign oppression. In addition, Exod 15:3 refers to God as a "man of war."

Americans were partial to Moses for another reason. Unlike David, who ruled as an absolute monarch, Moses led a republican government of laws. Thus George Washington was more often likened to Moses than to the warrior-king David, who had been corrupted by power. Nevertheless, David still figured prominently in this period. Between 1675 and 1800, six of the twenty most popular Bible texts featured in colonial sermons referred to him. Naturally, the story of David and Goliath stood out. Byrd writes, "For the Continental Congress, David's victory over Goliath inspired colonists not to trust in sheer numbers and long odds, but to trust instead the miraculous possibilities of a courageous people united around a righteous cause" (p. 98).

Byrd's work eliminates some of the fanciful speculation that tempts historians of this period. He forces them to contend with the statistics rather than particularly imaginative sermons that may turn out to be outliers. And readers need not fear that Byrd makes too much of the Bible's influence on the Revolution. He merely means to demonstrate how this vivid, powerful book inspired Americans to overcome their doubts and fears to kill in the name of God and country. The methodology of this monograph has already inspired another focused on the Spanish-American War: Matthew McCullough, *The Cross of War: Christian Nationalism and U.S. Expansion in the Spanish-American War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2014). Subsequent research can only expand historians' interpretive arsenal and arm today's preachers with humility before God's Word as they see it stretched beyond credulity.

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D. Eryl Davies. *Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Evangelicals in Wales: Bala Ministers' Conference, 1955–2014*. Bridgend, Wales, UK: Bryntirion Press, 2014. 442 pp. £14.99/\$22.99.

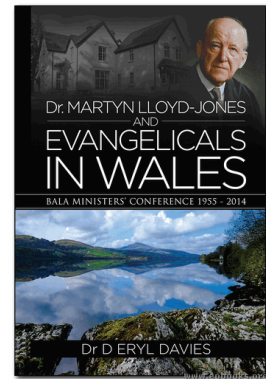
Few things in the evangelical church in contemporary Wales, and sometimes elsewhere, can arouse such passions as the life and legacy of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. A number of recent studies have attempted to interpret him from a more realistic standpoint, and this has prompted reactions from some who revere Lloyd-Jones and have seen it as their duty to defend his reputation against all comers. This volume is a further attempt to burnish Lloyd-Jones's memory.

There is a sense in which this volume is really two books in one, something indicated by the book's slightly awkward title. At its heart is a study of the Bala conference, a gathering of largely Welsh ministers, held annually since 1955 under the auspices of the Evangelical Movement of Wales. Having started life as an organisation that brought together evangelicals from across the Welsh denominational spectrum, the EMW evolved into a rallying point for churches that seceded from those denominations after Martyn Lloyd-Jones's 1966 appeal for evangelicals to stand together not occasionally but always. Although he left the country in 1938, and lived in England for the vast majority of his life, Lloyd-Jones kept up strong links with Wales, travelling the length and breadth of the country during regular mid-week preaching itineraries, and he became the driving force behind the coalescing of an evangelical presence there in the years after the Second World War. The book is therefore also a study of Lloyd-Jones's influence in Wales, something which, Davies argues, was channeled through the Bala conference at which he always presided and gave the closing address until 1978.

The book is split into three distinct parts. The first and longest section outlines the history of the Bala conference down to the present day. These chapters are largely made up of a catalogue of those who spoke at the various conferences, the contents of their sermons and addresses, and Davies's opinion as to their effect. A second section offers some evaluation of the conference's significance in the development of Welsh evangelical Christianity, while the final section, without doubt the most valuable, provides some summaries, based on notes taken by the author and a friend, of some of Lloyd-Jones's addresses at Bala.

Davies has attended a large number of the Bala conferences and so brings a wealth of personal experience to the study. But his claims about its significance are too grand. On more than one occasion he refers to it as a "phenomenon in Welsh church history" (213). He stresses time and again that the gatherings were characterised by powerful preaching and the presence of God. On one occasion in 1959 there was apparently "a foretaste of revival" (p. 87). Yet what was the effect of these gatherings on the churches more widely? If the conference was as "phenomenal" as Davies claims then one would expect there to be a wider impact. Whether there was is never explored. Only between 50 and 100 ministers attended at any given time. This was a conference of ministers almost exclusively for ministers; did it engender an unhealthy clericalism?

In addition, Davies shows little awareness of the wider Welsh evangelical scene. For example, evangelicals in the Church in Wales had their own gatherings from the mid-1960s, the brainchild of John Stott. Some comparison would have added perspective. One of the virtues of the work is that Davies does not shy away from writing about some of the disagreements that took place at the conference. In late 1956, the issue of Calvinism became a major stumbling block; a more prominent emphasis on the



doctrines of grace led many Arminian ministers to reassess their involvement. The conference could no longer claim to reflect the breadth of evangelical opinion in Wales. More divisive still was the reaction to Lloyd-Jones' call for evangelicals to reassess their denominational affiliation in 1966. While it was in Wales that his call was met with the most enthusiastic response, there were many—especially in Welsh language communities—who did not read the situation in the same way. Different readings of the ecclesiastical situation led to recrimination, and charges of compromise. The conference became more inward looking thereafter.

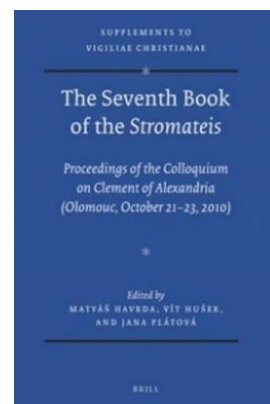
Throughout the book the figure of Lloyd-Jones looms extremely large. Much has been written in recent years about Lloyd-Jones's influence in Wales. Davies is keen to defend him against the charge that he held an unchallenged and unhealthy sway over evangelicals in Wales. While he provides some anecdotal evidence of the way in which some ministers privately disagreed with Lloyd-Jones on various issues, on page after page the evidence of this book points in a different direction. While Davies warns of the danger of idolising Lloyd-Jones (p. 18), there is little doubt that when Lloyd-Jones referred to these Welsh ministers as "his boys" they responded by giving him almost unquestioning loyalty. Perhaps nowhere is this brought out more poignantly than in the response to Lloyd-Jones's death in 1981. Since then some have sought to honour his legacy by defending his every theological position, others to imitate his style of preaching, manner of speaking, or pastoral practice in Westminster Chapel.

While the book is well supplied in terms of its footnotes, it would have benefitted from the attentions of a rigorous editor, and at 450 pages is far too long and repetitive. Chapters 29 and 30 could have been cut in their entirety. The book is also marred by too many short staccato sentences that break up the flow of the narrative, and the inclusion of a study guide is a little odd in a book of this nature. History is meant to describe the past in order to understand it, this book describes the past in order to defend the decisions of its main participants, and having done so to venerate their memory. As such it is more akin to hagiography than scholarly history.

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Matyáš Havrda, Vít Hušek, and Jana Plátová, eds. *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis: Proceedings of the Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, October 21–23, 2010)*. Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*. Leiden: Brill, 2012. xviii + 386 pp. €143.00/\$186.00.

This volume is a collection of papers given at the Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria held in Czech Republic in October 2010, which marked one of the first international gatherings of scholars focused entirely on this early Christian theologian. Far too often, Clement of Alexandria is forced to the boundaries in discussions of early Christian theology, often forgotten between the likes of his predecessor Philo and the subsequent prolific writing of Origen. The Czech colloquium and this volume are evidence, however, that Clement is worthy of study in his own right. Like the colloquium, the book is fundamentally restricted in its scope, focusing exclusively on the themes Clement develops in *Stromateis* VII. After an introduction by Annewies van den Hoek on the state of Clementine studies, the book is divided into three thematic sections



which correspond roughly with Clement's emphases in *Stromateis* VII: "piety," "perfection," and "truth." Unfortunately, the nature of an edited book restricts one from speaking to every essay in a short review, so I will highlight some significant contributions, while offering a brief perspective on the volume as a whole.

Annewies van den Hoek's initial chapter serves as a useful introduction to the entire volume. Focusing on Clementine scholarship in roughly the last fifteen years, she discusses concepts familiar to Clementine scholars (e.g. esoteric knowledge, "gnostic" teaching, etc.) and, more importantly, she highlights some of the new perspectives that interdisciplinary and theological trends have brought to recent Clementine monographs (e.g. apophaticism, angelomorphic pneumatology, etc.). Yet, in my mind, viewing this volume as a resource for the study of Clement and Alexandrian theology, the crown jewel of this chapter—and really the entire book—is the inclusion of a lengthy bibliography of recent Clementine research. And while this might sound beneficial only for Clement scholarship, in reality, those with general interests in early Christian theology can easily find a number of works in this one resource to enhance their study, even if Clement himself is tangential to their own project(s).

No volume on Clement of Alexandria would be complete without contributions from senior scholars who have consistently produced insightful work on early Christian Alexandria. In this volume, Alain Le Boulluec plays this role, and provides the first chapter of the section on "piety." Le Boulluec analyzes how Clement applies the method he proposes in the prologue of *Stromateis* VII: to persuade Greek philosophers from their own writings, without recourse to "the prophetic witness," that the only truly pious individual is the Christian gnostic. Le Boulluec compellingly shows how Clement, amidst the claim to persuade the Greeks in their own language, uses an intertextuality between the writings of the Greek philosophers, the NT, and the prophetic testimony clandestinely to reveal an underlying process of education, which moves beyond Greek philosophy and even mere Christian belief to the initiation into true knowledge.

The second part of the volume is devoted to Clement's portrayal of Christian perfection, and two essays especially emphasize the biblical foundation from which Clement creatively develops his theology. In an essay reflecting on Christian progress towards the knowledge of God and salvation, Veronika Černušková shows how Clement's formulation of the Christian's "likeness to God" (ὁμοίωσις) is developed from a reflection on Scripture's injunction to be perfect as the Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48; Strom. 7.88.4). Judith Kovacs's essay reflects on Clement's use of Greek philosophical dialogues in his exegesis of 1 Cor 6.

To my mind, however, the most significant essays in the volume are to be found in the third section of the book. Here, the essays by Matyáš Havrda and Marco Rizzi are particularly helpful and deserve special attention. To open the third section's focus on the concept of "truth," Havrda spotlights Clement's use of demonstrative method. He sets the context of *Stromateis* VII by displaying Clement's adoption of terminology from long-standing Greek epistemological discussions. Drawing on the insightful heresiological scholarship of the aforementioned Alain Le Boulluec, Havrda shows how Clement turns to the principles of demonstration (ἀπόδειξις) available in Hellenistic philosophy to illustrate a consistent method of scriptural interpretation and frame an answer for the skeptic's challenge on the reasonability of Christian belief (πίστις) among many divergent heresies.

Marco Rizzi's chapter builds upon his earlier treatments of Clement's epistemology where he has compellingly argued that a scriptural matrix of texts create the foundation of Clement's understanding of knowledge (γνώσις). In the present volume, Rizzi focuses on a literary formula employed at the end of

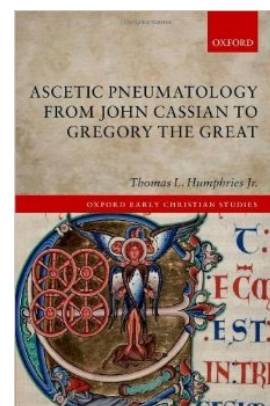
Stromateis VII: “we shall give an account of what comes next, starting from another beginning” (*Strom* 7.111.4). Comparing this with a similar convention in Sextus Empiricus’s *Adversus mathematicos*, Rizzi argues that Clement planned to continue the work of the *Stromateis* beyond the seventh book, albeit with a hint of discontinuity. Rizzi then contends that Clement’s *Hypotyposeis*—a (sadly) lost exegetical work witnessed by the testimonies of later authors like Eusebius of Caesarea—may have been originally composed with the extant *Stromateis* as a single volume of Clement’s notes to record his oral teaching. Such a solution to the literary problems inherent in the study of Clement’s oeuvre seems at least plausible, and future reflection on this issue will have to account for Rizzi’s reconstruction.

At the outset of her introductory essay, Annewies van den Hoek lamented the reality she faced alongside Alain Le Boulluec nearly thirty years ago, when Clementine scholars were merely tolerated at conferences devoted to Origen. As *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis* displays, the tables have turned dramatically, and Clement of Alexandria has become a figure worthy of an entire colloquium in his own right. Other essays in this volume touch on recent questions in Clementine scholarship—his views on heresy, the relationship of church and school in Alexandria, and the connections between philosophy and theology in Clement’s thought. While this volume will be most helpful to scholars in fields related to early Christianity, and especially those with an interest in Clement, its structure allows movement beyond its main protagonist and offers a glimpse of the development of broad themes in early Christian theology—spirituality, sanctification, Scripture, exegesis, and philosophy. One may only hope that the Second Colloquium on Clement, which met in May 2014 and focused on Clement’s biblical exegesis, will provide another significant contribution to Clementine research.

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Thomas L. Humphries Jr. *Ascetic Pneumatology from John Cassian to Gregory the Great*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. xviii + 237 pp. £65.00/\$99.00.

This addition to the Oxford Early Christian Studies series narrates the conjunction of the theological teachings of asceticism and the Holy Spirit from the early fifth through the early seventh centuries. The book is Humphries’s revised dissertation, written under the supervision of historical theologian Lewis Ayres. Humphries’s volume can be understood as filling out some of Ayres’s earlier provocative assertions. For instance, Ayres wrote, “Perhaps the major contribution of pro-Nicene pneumatology is the insistence that the work of the Spirit is inseparable from Father and Son. . . . [Thus,] the work of sanctification is the unmediated work of God . . .” (*Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 217). Such a claim has *prima facie* appeal: once it was clearly confessed that the Holy Spirit is God, a corollary is that God himself indwells the believer. If that is the case, then the degree of holiness achievable increases mightily. But it also raises a question about human agency. If God himself sanctifies, then to what degree do a believer’s strenuous efforts (*askesis*) even matter? One would therefore expect the monastic tradition, with its emphasis on disciplined striving to attain holiness, would reckon with these issues. Were the inheritors of Nicene theology



indeed concerned with the implications of their pneumatology for the formation of Christian virtue? Humphries seems to be the first to explore this interesting line of reasoning at monograph length. Thus, it is not an overstatement to call the book a groundbreaking achievement.

Humphries begins with a preface that defines key terms, above all “ascetic pneumatology”: the application of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to the process of *askesis*. In other words, Humphries coins this phrase in order to identify the tendency in an author writing about monastic theology to articulate their asceticism with reference to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The first eight chapters chronologically chart the nexus of the doctrines of the Holy Spirit and asceticism in several authors. Chapters one and two treat John Cassian’s (ca. 360–ca. 435) “archetypal” ascetic pneumatology, in which the Paraclete is understood “as an essential part of all Christian ascesis” (p. 3). Leo the Great (ca. 400–461) follows, whose theology, directed at the laity rather than monastics, tends to understand the practices of Christian formation in terms of the sacraments and thus locates the Holy Spirit’s activity there as well. Chapters four and five range widely, beginning with the early fifth-century controversy between Pelagius and Augustine on grace and free will. Then comes investigation of the self-proclaimed defender of Augustine’s anti-Pelagian theology, Prosper of Aquitaine (ca. 390–ca. 463), followed by monastic writings emerging from Lérins. Chapter six discusses Fulgentius of Ruspe’s (ca. 462–ca. 527) improvement on Lérinian theology, leading up to two more detailed chapters (seven and eight) on Gregory the Great’s (ca. 540–604) ascetic pneumatology before the conclusion (chapter nine). Humphries artfully characterizes Gregory’s doctrine as a “dialogue of desire” in which God the Spirit reforms human interiority before the ascetic responds with appropriate desire (pp. 176–77).

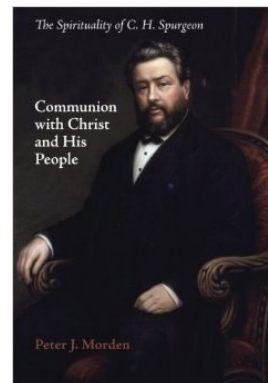
Humphries’s thesis is that, generally speaking, theologians in the Latin West from Cassian up to Gregory affirm that the Holy Spirit is responsible for the success of *askesis*. Programs of rigorous practices aimed at holiness require the Holy Spirit for their effectiveness. While not all readers will find Humphries’s proofs convincing, there are three especially strong arguments for this point. First, Humphries juxtaposes the ascetic program laid out by Cassian with that of Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–ca. 254), an important source for Cassian but an author whose pneumatology does not square neatly with later pro-Nicene theology. Humphries shows that Cassian supplements Origen’s writings on *askesis* by incorporating as an assumption that the Spirit is co-equal with Father and Son (42–43). Second, Humphries demonstrates how Pelagius managed to hold a perfectly orthodox doctrine of the Holy Spirit and a highly rigorous asceticism. Yet he never joins the two together in notable contrast with Cassian, who, in earlier scholarship, often was labeled as a “semi-Pelagian.” Perhaps this helps to explain why Pelagius was branded a heretic while Cassian was largely embraced as orthodox. Third, Humphries concludes that the Lérinians did not extend their Nicene pneumatology to their ascetic program. Their failure to do so, despite their staunch orthodoxy, suggests that the idea of applying a full-fledged Nicene pneumatology to questions of spirituality was not as inevitable as one might expect. It also serves to underscore the sophistication of authors such as Cassian and Gregory who were able to perform this integrative task.

More should be said about the history of the theology of the Holy Spirit and the Christian life. Such investigation would benefit theologians today seeking to understand the conjunction of these doctrines. We can thank Humphries for providing the basis for more such inquiry.

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Peter J. Morden. *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014. 318 pp. £24.00/\$39.00.

Charles Spurgeon, often referred to as “the prince of preachers,” has had significant trans-Atlantic influence over the last two centuries in terms of ministry practice, preaching, and devotional Christianity. He has, however, at times received scant attention in the world of academia, perhaps due to his focus on reaching the common man through his ministry, and not writing works of great theological weight. Nevertheless, when considering the staggering number of sermons preached and works written, all with attentiveness to theological acumen, Spurgeon is certainly worthy of attention in the academic world. Peter Morden, in his work *Communion with Christ and His People*, offers to readers a distinctive, thorough, and rigorous investigation of the spiritual practices of Spurgeon that sustained him in a lifetime of frenetic ministry.



Morden is Vice Principal of Spurgeon’s College and Professor of Church History and Spirituality. This book is a revision of his dissertation, focusing on the diverse range of factors that affected Spurgeon’s spirituality. Due to the various ways in which the term “spirituality” can be understood, the author specifies his meaning and asserts that Christian spirituality embodies both the interior life of the soul and the concrete ways this interior life is expressed and lived out. Thus, “spirituality is understood as being concerned with the conjunction of theology, prayer, and practical Christianity” (p. 3). In seeking to demonstrate the internal and external aspects of Spurgeon’s spirituality, Morden argues that the phrase “communion with Christ and his people” represents the integrating theme of Spurgeon’s approach to spirituality (p. 14). As such, each portion of spirituality discussed has both personal and corporate aspects.

The work is structured in such a way as to follow the historical chronology of Spurgeon’s life, though several chapters simply refer to these spiritual realities as seen in his overall ministry. Utilizing an extensive amount of primary source material, the author begins (chapter 2) with the “Puritan piety” of Spurgeon, discussing his upbringing around such authors as Watson, Brooks, and Bunyan, and his reception of Calvinistic theology. From these roots, chapter 3 discusses conversionism, a key facet of evangelicalism, as outlined by David Bebbington. This chapter discusses Spurgeon’s own conversion, while also highlighting his Calvinist soteriology that gave rise to a zeal for evangelism, which he considered to be a key mark of the spirituality of the Christian. His understanding of conversion was also tightly tied to his theology of baptism (chapter 4). Rejecting baptismal regeneration outright, Spurgeon highly valued his own baptism and believed, “Being baptized as a believer was a crucial next step following conversion, establishing him on the path of discipleship, a pilgrimage that was both with Christ and to Christ” (105).

The following two chapters discuss Spurgeon’s understanding and use of Scripture (chapter 5) and prayer (chapter 6) in relation to Christian spirituality. Both of these means were central and essential in pursuing communion with Christ and his church. The final chapters discuss the Lord’s Supper (chapter 7), activism (chapter 8), holiness (chapter 9), and suffering (chapter 10) respectively. In affirming a real spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper and seeking to celebrate corporately, Spurgeon again sees spirituality as communion with Christ and his bride. Morden discusses these other aspects as well,

demonstrating the various strands of influence that affected Spurgeon's thinking, but always to the end that communion with Christ and his people was the centralizing motif of his spirituality.

Morden has presented the reader with a well-reasoned and historically informed work to digest and consider regarding this aspect of Spurgeon's life and ministry. There were times that felt as though his thesis was slightly strained. For example, in seeking to demonstrate how Spurgeon communed with God's people in relation to the Bible, Morden speaks of the Psalms in *Treasury of David* and the biblical commentaries he used as "friends" that he communed with (pp. 131–32). In seeking to hold to "communion with Christ and his people" as central to Spurgeon's spirituality, this may push the evidence in an unnecessary direction.

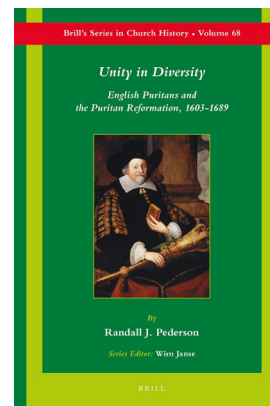
However, the instances of this occurring in the work are few, and overwhelmingly Morden uses evidence accurately and is careful not to go beyond where it leads. A good example of this is found in speaking of Spurgeon's conversion. Recognizing there are tensions in the way Spurgeon told this narrative over the course of his ministry, the author deftly cites the sources, deals with the realities, and offers a conclusion constrained by the best evidence (pp. 50–55). This is typical of the work as a whole, as demonstration of this integrative motif certainly holds true in Spurgeon's overall approach to Christian spirituality. The author does a great service to his readers in making this theme plain, and also alluding to the number of influences on Spurgeon's thinking (e.g. Calvinism, Puritanism, Roman Catholic mystics, Romanticism, Enlightenment thinking, etc.).

As a recently published dissertation, Morden helpfully places the work in the midst of burgeoning Spurgeon scholarship. As such, scholars of Spurgeon, Christian spirituality, the history of British Christianity, and the history of evangelicalism will benefit greatly from this work. Morden's book fits a helpful niche for the ever-expanding literature on spirituality, and also captures well the need to cite multiple historically contextualized influences on Spurgeon's thinking. Also, due to its subject matter, its readability, and the applicable subject matter of Christian spirituality, this material will profit pastors and students alike. This worthwhile volume educates at a number of levels, and surely it is the hope of the author that all who read of this titanic, yet flawed, figure will recognize the spiritual disciplines that sustained him and pursue a similar path.

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Randall J. Pederson. *Unity in Diversity: English Puritans and the Puritan Reformation, 1603–1689*. Brill's Series in Church History 68. Leiden, Brill, 2014. xiv + 380 pp. €140.00/\$181.00.

For decades scholars have argued about how to define “Puritanism.” The challenges are such that some have given up using the term altogether. Others deconstruct the phenomenon into rival Puritanisms. Against this fragmentation in the recent literature, Randall Pederson foregrounds a collective identity within the diversity of Puritanism and argues that historians should use the term with greater confidence and less equivocation. This book, the fruit of Pederson’s doctoral research at Leiden University, takes an inductive approach, working from individuals who would generally be regarded as Puritans, to discover unity within their diversity and thus draw conclusions about the nature of Puritanism itself. In this there are similarities to the methodology applied to an earlier period by Peter Lake in *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).



Pederson identifies four significant trajectories within Puritanism: the precisianist, the mystical, the antinomian, and the neonomian. After introducing their seventeenth-century context, Pederson spends the greater part of the book studying representatives of the first three strains: (1) John Downame, whose *Christian Warfare* (1604–1618) was a classic precisianist combat manual, rallying the godly in the fight against sin, the world, and the devil; (2) Francis Rous, a respected Member of Parliament, lay member of the Westminster Assembly, and an author of works of piety infused with bridal mysticism; and finally (3) Tobias Crisp, a highly-educated pastor who, in his reaction against the precisianist approach, arising out of pastoral concerns about assurance, articulated views on justification before faith and the roles of the law and the evidence of good works in the Christian life which placed him at the more respectable end of the antinomian spectrum. Pederson introduces the life and career of each, surveys their writings and their particular emphases, and then reviews their theology under six headings in order to make comparisons further on in the book as he builds towards his conclusion. The categories employed are: God and humanity, predestination and assurance, covenant of works and grace, justification and sanctification, law and gospel, and Christian life and piety.

In comparing his three chosen subjects, Pederson finds that, despite their differing emphases, there is a remarkable amount of consensus on fundamental aspects of faith and practice. A single defining feature, the presence or absence of which determines whether or not the label “Puritan” should be applied, cannot be isolated. Instead one finds an “ethos,” a broad range of shared doctrinal commitments with a degree of “confessional plasticity” (p. 315), a living piety, and a commitment to the further reformation of church and society. Pederson finds Ludwig Wittgenstein’s concept of *Familienähnlichkeit* helpful here, the idea of a “family resemblance” in similar and overlapping concepts, even if one defining feature cannot be identified. Seen from this perspective “Puritan” and “Puritanism” are not empty ciphers but are laden with “rich and vibrant connotations” (p. 314).

Pederson acknowledges the need for further work on more radical thinkers like John Goodwin, John Eaton, and John Milton. How would they fare within his paradigm? Pederson clearly believes that there is sufficient elasticity in the term “Puritan” to apply it to a defender of divine-right episcopacy like Joseph Hall, or a quasi-Arian like John Milton in some qualified sense, or at least to “phases” of their careers (p. 303). Radicals, argues Pederson, represent intensifications of tendencies inherent within

Puritanism, and thus even when they strayed over confessional boundaries, they stand in an intimate relationship to the mainstream tradition. Puritanism is clear at the centre and fuzzy at the edges.

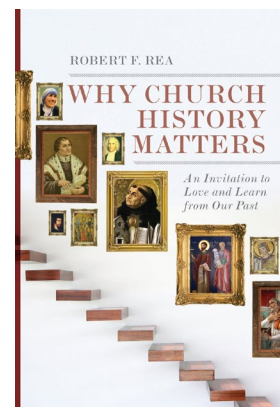
This book has some clear strengths. It provides a useful discussion of some of the historiographical challenges that Puritanism presents and its up-to-date bibliography will be useful to those venturing into this field. It also offers a constructive proposal as a means of moving forward in the debate. There are, however, also certain weaknesses. It seems strange that, freed from the word limit of a doctoral dissertation, Pederson has not included a representative of the fourth strain, neonomianism, which could have made his overall case stronger as well as giving the book a more rounded feel, though the level of consensus on the nature of justification may have not been so great had a Richard Baxter been thrown into the mix. It is also disappointing that, having introduced a new concept to the debate, Pederson does not expand on his brief description of Wittgenstein's *Familienähnlichkeit* and only one solitary supporting reference is given. More could have been said here, and it would have been especially helpful if mention had been made of any other fields of historical analysis in which the paradigm had been used fruitfully in handling problems of definitional clarity. There are obvious factual inaccuracies, such as Latimer and Ridley being burned at Smithfield (p. 49), and Richard Montagu already sitting on the episcopal bench when he published *A New Gagg* in 1624 (p. 166). There are some infelicitous expressions, such as the description of Pederson's three subjects as "members of Stuart Puritanism" (p. 275), which has connotations of a level of unity going well beyond that for which the author argues. There are, furthermore, a frustrating number of typographical and other errors. These criticisms aside, the book is a worthwhile contribution to the literature and would repay careful study by any student of seventeenth-century Puritanism.

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Robert F. Rea. *Why Church History Matters: An Invitation to Love and Learn from Our Past*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. 233 pp. £14.99/\$20.00.

In each of the admittedly few church history courses I have taught, not a few students have entered the classroom with the familiar face of dread. Beginning students of church history, it seems, *expect* the history of the faith to lack interest, importance, and contemporary relevance. Thankfully, it is for precisely this audience that Robert F. Rea, professor of church history and historical theology at Lincoln Christian University, has written *Why Church History Matters*.

Rea specifically intends to address "Bible-focused" Christians, those who "hold the Bible dear and study it in order to know God and God's truth" (p. 17). This group, among whom Rea counts himself a member, feels a particular tug towards dismissing church history in favor of more Bible-centered disciplines. Rea writes to convince his tribe that not only can church history be interesting, but in fact it is essential to rightly interpret the text and applying it in the contemporary context. He provides a "call to Christians who love the Bible to study historic Christians and their wisdom and experiences throughout the ages—to understand the Bible and theology better and to experience a fuller Christian life" (p. 15).



Rea lays out his case in three well-defined sections. Part One focuses on defining and explaining terms. This discussion centers around the idea of “tradition”—what it means and how various strains of the Church have understood and applied tradition. Rea identifies the misunderstanding and misappropriation of tradition as one of the main reasons many Bible-focused Christians, and particularly evangelical Protestants, have ignored or downplayed the importance of church history. Combatting this tendency, Rea argues that Christianity is necessarily “dependent upon and explicitly concerned with tradition, because the entirety of Christian identity depends upon real events in history” (p. 30). The passing on of the faith through generations and contexts is the continuation of that true historical story, and therefore the continuation of that tradition. Thus, “tradition is both necessary and inevitable,” and by paying attention to it, Christians will be more equipped to study Scripture, understand theology, and communicate their faith in their own context (p. 34).

Rea argues in Part Two, the strongest and most important section of the work, that the Christian life is practiced in dialogue with “expanding circles of inquiry,” meaning we are shaped and informed most immediately by those closest to us in time, space, worldview, etc., but we are likewise shaped by those farther out, including Christians from other denominations, other cultures, and other centuries. The Christian life is enhanced by careful attention to these expanding circles of inquiry, including great tradition of Christian history. Thus, church history helps shape our personal and corporate identity (chapter 4), as we discover that our own beliefs about the Bible and the essence of true Christianity line up with those of men from centuries past. Church history also provides fellowship and community, allowing Christians to commune with those from centuries past by hearing their stories and learning from their successes and failures (chapter 5). Studying past theologians opens believers up to greater theological accountability, exposing our blind spots even as we learn from theirs (chapter 6). Finally, church history gives us teachers who can broaden our perspective on certain topics and fill in gaps in our theology by raising questions we tend to neglect (chapter 7).

Rea concludes in Part Three with some concrete examples of how the study of church history can serve the Church today. Specifically, he provides for Bible-focused Christians an historical survey of biblical hermeneutics and suggests a model for how we might use such knowledge in contemporary Bible study (chapter 8). Then, he concludes with brief examples of how the history of Christianity can be used in ordinary church ministry, including preaching, theology, ethics, and cultural engagement (chapter 9).

Rea’s work excels in a few areas that will help achieve his overall goal of persuading Bible-focused Christians to study, value, and appropriate their Christian heritage. First, he ably demystifies on a simple level the tricky subject of tradition, and helps beginning students see how various Christian groups have related to tradition in their theology and practice. Second, Rea’s personal anecdotes remind the reader that church history can and should actually enhance our faith and spirituality. Sharing his own journey into the study of church history, Rea invites readers to find their own mentors from the past who will both teach and challenge them in their faith journey. Finally, Rea correctly assesses the climate of contemporary evangelicalism when showing how church history speaks to their context. In other words, he knows his audience. He knows he is speaking to mostly evangelical Christians, many of whom remain suspicious of tradition, and he carefully shows them that church history offers more than dogmatic, impersonal authority. In fact, it offers much of what most Christians today long for, namely authentic community and theological confidence.

A main area of weakness has to do with the lack of brevity. Part One is foundational, but Part Two provides the meat of his argument, and some readers will undoubtedly get lost in the tedium of historical understandings of tradition. Likewise, the eighth chapter on Bible interpretation suffers from trying to do too much. There Rea surveys historical exegesis, critiques the historical-critical myopia he sees in modern exegesis, introduces text-criticism and translation, and provides a brief exegetical model. Though this purports to be one of the “practical” chapters, one wonders how much students will be able to incorporate into their own Bible study.

Despite this weakness, Rea provides an accessible and compelling case for why and how the study of church history can actually serve the faith of Bible-focused Christians. Therefore, it would serve as an excellent textbook in a Christian college or seminary survey class, when many students are only beginning to taste the riches our historic faith has to offer.

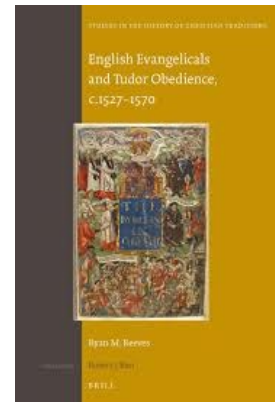
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Ryan M. Reeves. *English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience, 1527–1570*. Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 167. Leiden: Brill, 2014. X + 212 pp. €99.00/\$128.00.

In *English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience*, Ryan Reeves, assistant professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, researches the conforming attitude among “Tudor Evangelicals” during the English Reformation. Instead of a revolutionary spirit, these “Evangelicals” propagated obedience toward the civil government, combined with a nonviolence conviction. Different than often assumed, Protestant theology brought them to subscribe Royal Supremacy, even when forced to do evil. Reeves’ motivation is the disproportioned academic attention devoted to those Protestants who—only after “Bloody Mary” (1554–1558)—did revolt (like John Knox and John Goodman), thus distorting the general reputation of the English Evangelicals.

In Reeves’s opinion, scholars such as A. G. Dickens have ignored the inherently conformist line of Calvinism; this conformity more than likely reinforced obedience rather than rebellion. He argues the basic state of mind of the average English civilian in the sixteenth century was not resistance, as sometimes by the research of the late Patrick Collinson, but rather obedience (p. 18). It is surprising to notice, however, that Reeves does not carefully define his use of the term “Tudor Evangelicals,” and without further explanation considers them as synonymous with “English Reformers” as if this is the regular *terminus technicus* (pp. 22, 198). Between the lines it can be deduced that Reeves uses it as a general term for those English clergymen who orientated themselves to continental Reformed theology.

Nonetheless, Reeves has written a most readable and erudite study. He uses “the doctrine of obedience” as a knife cutting through the *strata* of the English Reformation from William Tyndale’s *Obedience of the Christen Man* (1527) under Henry VIII until the first years of the Elizabethan Settlement and the affirmation of the *via media* wherein a middle ground was sought between conservatism (traditional Catholicism) and Puritanism. The image drawn by Reeves reveals a development in English



Protestantism from pure Erastianism (for example Thomas Cranmer), into a Puritan “version” in which obedience and nonviolence take the shape of “passive disobedience” (p. 194). Passive disobedience allowed them to ignore unbiblical demands and laws, yet without open rebellion. When forced to do evil, a Christian had to refuse and face its consequences with forbearance (pp. 16, 195). Reeves argues that this position can only rightly be understood against the background of the doctrine of obedience that characterized early English Protestantism. Nonviolent resistance should not be perceived as an attenuated form of (violent) rebellion, but as a direct consequence of the divine command to obedience to civil rulers.

Central to Reeves study, and the doctrine of obedience, is the reception of Ps 82:6 (“You are ‘gods,’” NIV). Tyndale posited this text as a ratification of the divine authority of the civil magistracy and especially the Christian prince. It is Reeves aim to retrieve the lineage of the English doctrine of obedience back to the Swiss Reformation, where Ps 82—with regard to the Patristic and Medieval eras—received a reinterpretation under influence of rabbinic commentaries. Consequently he disputes the unjust polarization between “Lutheran obedience” and “Calvinist radicalism” (p. 198).

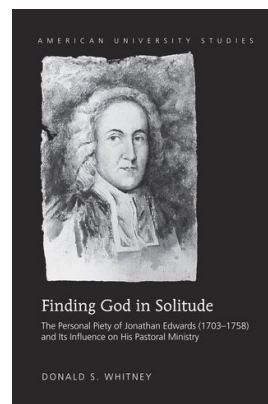
In summary, Reeves’ study helps us to think differently about English (radical) Protestantism in the sixteenth century. Although radicalism, in the sense of an absolute obedience to the Scriptures, led to a more critical stance towards the English magistracy, it did not necessarily include a theory of warranted violence and rebellion (“resistance theory”). Reeves shows convincingly that many Protestants, under influence of reformers such as Calvin, Bucer, and Ochino, preferred passive disobedience (127).

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Donald S. Whitney. *Finding God in Solitude: The Personal Piety of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) and Its Influence on His Pastoral Ministry*. American University Studies VII: Theology and Religion 340. New York: Lang, 2014. 178 pp. £50.00/\$81.95.

There is an increasing interest in Puritan spirituality and spiritual practice, with a particular emphasis on Jonathan Edwards. This volume is the fourth in as many years dealing with Edwards’s spirituality/Christian life, and it attempts to uniquely place Edwards’s piety in relation to his life and ministry. Whitney’s approach is primarily historical, but not solely so, having modern questions concerning spiritual disciplines at the forefront of his interest (although, it is unclear how these interests relate methodologically to his project). This volume is Whitney’s reworked dissertation, although it does not read like it. The footnotes are short, as is the volume itself, and it is an easy read.

After establishing some introductory issues, this book develops in three movements. First, Whitney walks through Edwards’s biography. This section is uneventful. Second, being the main thrust of the argument, Whitney develops an account of Edwards’s “personal piety” (as opposed to corporate piety). The development of this analysis culminates in a short engagement with questions concerning Edwards and mysticism. Last, Whitney again turns to biography, now focusing on how his development of Edwards’s piety links with his practice of pastoral



ministry. Whereas others have developed an account of Edwards's spiritual practices and his pastoral ministry, Whitney uniquely puts them in conversation. He follows this analysis with a conclusion, where he compares his work in relation to a small handful of other Edwards scholars.

This book is hard to characterize, because while the focus is on Edwards's biography, it is not a biography. Furthermore, it is hard to claim that it is a volume on spiritual formation or spirituality, because Edwards's theology of these things is never developed. Rather, what is developed is the practices of various disciplines, but Edwards's own understanding of formation is not engaged on a deep level. Furthermore, and this is perhaps the most important point, Whitney's assumptions and agenda are ultimately fatal for the project. I do not use "fatal" loosely, but take it at face value. His argument ultimately falls apart because he never bothers to argue for the foundation for his entire project. I call this an "agenda" because Whitney has a horse in this race, known for his work on spiritual disciplines, a term not used by Edwards. Rather than developing a notion of means of grace from within Edwards's theology, or simply turning to one of the Edwards scholars who have, he wields his own modern understanding of the term and reads Edwards through it.

Whitney's assertions concerning spiritual disciplines are outlined in his introduction. There, Whitney creates an account of "spiritual disciplines" without any insight from Edward's work. For a project focused on an historical analysis, this is odd indeed. Furthermore, using his own understanding of these things, Whitney simply asserts that spiritual disciplines are limited to "biblical practices," which he defines as "practices taught by command, example, or principle in the Bible." Edwards would have only recognized such Biblicism in heretical groups. Edwards's chief heretical opponents were Biblicists, and in Edwards's day, this sort of Biblicism is what led to anti-trinitarianism, Arianism, etc. It is hard to link the assumptions here with Edwards claim, "I am not afraid to say twenty things about the Trinity which the Scripture never said" (*Works* 13:257); Whitney's assumptions reveal his, not Edwards's, views. This assumption was most evidenced in a lengthy footnote struggling to show that "family worship" was biblical on Whitney's definition (p. 9n30), a discipline he clearly desires to include in his definition.

In contrast, Edwards existed in a thought-world that understood theology as a mode of wisdom, and embraced a tradition that read the text theologically. Edwards was not interested in simply repeating what was said, but coming to know God and form a life in devotion to him in a "biblical" manner (understanding "biblical" to be broader than a mere repeating of the biblical text). Whitney's attempt to fit Edwards into his modern assumptions makes for a reductionistic and ultimately superficial analysis of Edwards's spirituality. For instance, as an example of its superficiality, Whitney makes the bold claim that there is a "high degree of consistency" over two millennia of Christians practicing the disciplines, but does not offer any evidence for this claim. For such a foundational claim in an academic text it is a profound lacuna that it is not substantiated. It is also ambiguous what the claim means. He goes on to add that the disciplines were practiced in "very similar ways" in the ancient church as eighteenth-century Massachusetts, but it is unclear if the similarity was simply what practices were done, how they were done, or if it included the theology behind the practice. The claims here seem historically naïve and theologically superficial.

Ultimately, Whitney's presuppositions undermine the usefulness of this volume. What is found is not a depiction of Jonathan Edwards's piety, but Edwards's piety as looked through an anachronistic lens; or, at times, the somewhat random attempt to put Edwards in conversation with modern spiritual formation figures. I, for one, am excited to see scholars putting Edwards in conversation with these

figures, but there must be a deeper theological analysis concerning what each party is saying to make the comparison worthwhile. That is simply not found here.

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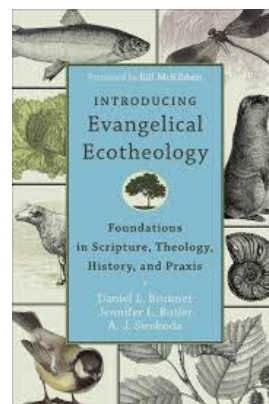
— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda. *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014. x + 262 pp. £17.82/\$26.99.

This book by three academics associated with George Fox Evangelical Seminary attempts to involve evangelicals in dialogue about the environment. In recent years, debates over other social issues have largely kept theologically conservative evangelicals from engaging in discussion of environmental ethics. Due to a politicization of the topic, environmentalism has become an unhelpfully divisive issue in the church. As such, a thorough evangelical environmental theology would be a welcome contribution to the discussion. Unfortunately, this text does not meet that need.

This book has the key components for an introductory text on an ecologically friendly theology. It is divided into four parts. In Part I, after overviewing the structure of the book in their introduction, the authors outline a basic theological method, which includes listening to God’s general and special revelation. The study of general revelation includes their detailed presentation of environmental data and projections that offer a picture of a creation that is distressed. In Part II, the authors present historical and theological approaches to an ecologically sensitive theology. They do this by selectively overviewing attitudes toward the creation from church history using an admittedly revisionist method (p. 69) and by presenting major doctrines such as Christology, pneumatology, anthropology and soteriology reinterpreted along ecological lines. Part III offers recommendations for putting their proposed ecotheology into practice. Their suggestions include such things as eating less meat, reducing consumption of goods, and incorporating “green” elements for the Lord’s Supper that are certified as both fair trade and ecologically sourced. Part IV concludes the volume with a single chapter that functions as an epilogue, encouraging an attitude of hope and active participation in solving ecological problems despite their enormity.

As a whole, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology* presents a comprehensive case for living an ecologically friendly lifestyle. The authors’ conclusions about necessary human response, given the popularly accepted interpretations of climate data, are consistent with those found in non-religious environmental ethics texts. Their theological method will resonate strongly with many Christians, particularly with younger Christians who are seeking to reconcile their concern with the environment with their adherence to the Christian faith.



The problem with this text is that it presents a questionable theological method as consistent with evangelicalism. The authors claim their approach is evangelical based on a brief citation of David Bebbington's famous evangelical quadrilateral: *conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism* (p. 5). A closer examination of Bebbington's categories and ecotheology reveal a significant distance between the two, particularly in the category of *biblicism*.

Ecotheology is not merely a term that refers to theology that affirms the goodness of creation and seeks to properly care for it; it is a technical term for a form of liberation theology that seeks to radically reinterpret both historical Christian theologies and the text of Scripture with an explicit bias. Proponents of ecotheology cited authoritatively in this text, such as David Horrell, are open advocates for a hermeneutics of suspicion and radical reconstruction of theology using environmentalism as the doctrinal key. Based on their suspicion toward Scripture, it is not surprising the authors eschew gendered language when referencing God (p. 21). The "biblicism" of this supposedly evangelical ecotheology disregards the text of the Bible, which uses masculine pronouns to describe God. Instead of taking the Bible as it presents itself, the authors attempt to "embrace the Bible for its revelation of salvation and justice" while they "resist applying it through a model that views interpretation as timeless and transcultural" (p. 21). In effect, they are subordinating Scripture to contemporary cultural standards.

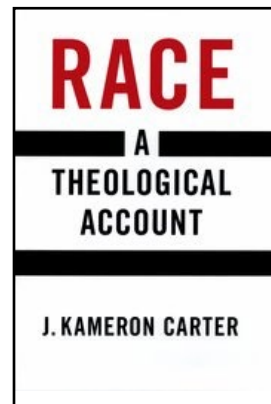
In general, the text presents an approach to theology that will seem palatable to many evangelical Christians. Affirmations of "praxis" (pp. 7, 14, 19) and assertions of an "interconnection between ecology and liberation theology" (p. 93) occasionally come to the surface. However, the failure to define these loaded theological terms brings into question the introductory nature of this volume. This is a more subtle presentation of a questionable liberation theology than most from the ecotheological tradition, but it is no less distant from a robust evangelical theology. Largely absent from the sources of this volume are self-identifying evangelicals, with only a handful of such scholars cited for illustrative purposes (e.g. Douglas Moo). The substance of the arguments is supported by academics like Rosemary Radford Reuther, Sallie McFague, and Leonardo Boff—scholars who are openly skeptical, if not hostile, to the content of Scripture and traditionally orthodox Christian theology. Though Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda present their skepticism in more muted tones, it is no less evident, which makes this an evangelical text only by stretching the usual definitions beyond recognition.

Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology adds little to the discussion of environmental ethics. Were the theological content removed it would offer a standard, non-religious apology for green living. The significance of this book is that it represents an attempt to recommend a version of liberation theology as a viable evangelical option. The chief importance of the volume is as a sign of the times; it marks a move to obfuscate theological dialogue. This volume will provide little help to evangelicals seeking to live an appropriately ecological lifestyle and thus there is little reason to commend it to readers.

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J. Kameron Carter. *Race: A Theological Account*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. xiv + 489 pp. £18.99/\$36.95.

Carter (Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Black Church Studies at Duke Divinity School) asserts: “The . . . modern problem of imagining the human being in racial terms, and within these terms positioning whiteness as supreme [is] a central ideological component in constructing the modern world as we have come to know it. The racial imagination arose inside of . . . and even camouflaged itself within the discourse of theology” (p. 12). His study promises to narrate the theological origins of “race” discourse. Since “race” has compromised Christian theology, Carter proposes an alternate course for its future.



The Prelude outlines certain features of Irenaeus Christology. The Gnostics’ Christ, lacking “Jewish flesh,” allows for a “hierarchy of [human] essences” (p. 35). Irenaeus “reclaims Christ’s humanity as made concrete in his Jewish flesh as a central feature of both Christian identity and the theological imagination” (p. 7), a trait shared by “antebellum Afro-Christian” writers (p. 7).

Part I sketches a genealogy of “race” discourse, a modern reimagining of human identities promoting “white cultural supremacy” (p. 12) to legitimate European hegemony. The “perennial though increasingly invisible theological problem of our times is not race in general but *whiteness* in particular” (p. 372), where “‘white’ and . . . ‘black’ . . . are not merely signifiers of pigmentation . . . [but] signify a political economy” (p. 8).

Carter argues that Kant is the first to articulate “race” in theoretical form: it appears in early essays on anthropology contrasting the superior capacities of “whites” to non-whites, and in the later writings on political economy. In the latter, Kant uses “Christian supersessionism” (p. 7) to sever the Christian faith from Judaism and recast Europeans as the owner-proprietors of “the supreme rational religion” (p. 82) destined to rule the world.

Part II interacts with African American religious scholarship: James Cone, Albert Raboteau and Charles Long. While much is appreciated, these works are (a) misguided in constructing self-contained “racial/cultural” identities that—like white identity—are incapable of mutuality and (b) reductionistic regarding the theological convictions of early Afro-Christian writers: a “reperformance of the master’s religion” that interrupts “modernity’s enslaving narrative of civil or cosmopolitical religiosity” (p. 227).

“Interlude on Christology and Race” reflects on Gregory of Nyssa’s reasoning about slavery, rendering him “an ancient theological abolitionist” (p. 7) contrasted with the toleration of Basil, Nazianzen, and Augustine. Nyssen “read[s] against rather than with the social order” because of “his complex Christological understanding of the image of God” (p. 233), a pattern also to be seen in “New World Afro-Christianity” (p. 7).

Part III is Carter’s constructive response to “the theological problem of whiteness,” primarily in commentary on autobiographical accounts by antebellum Afro-Christian writers in the U.S. The theological reflections of Briton Hammon, Frederick Douglass, and Jarena Lee resist dominant whites’ dehumanizing construction of blackness and slavery on the basis of their dignity and freedom in Christ. Excerpts from Nyssen and Maximus the Confessor show a shared “Christological sensibility” (pp. 7–8).

Carter frames the theological solution to “race” as follows: “success in destabilizing race as a founding and grounding category of existence is tied to how one imagines the person of Jesus Christ” (p. 256). He writes:

Christ’s life . . . restores the image-status of all persons, affirming and positioning all persons in the person of the eternal Christ, the Son of the Trinity, so as to set them free. . . . In so doing, they take up the theological mandate . . . [to] exit the power structure of whiteness and of the blackness (and other modalities of race) that whiteness created, recognizing that all persons are unique and irreplaceable inflections or articulations . . . of Christ the covenantal Jew, who is the Image of God, the prototype, and who as such is the fundamental articulation, through the Spirit of God, of YHWH the God of Israel, the one whom Jesus called Father. . . .

To exist in Christ is to be drawn into [a covenantal] understanding of identity, into the ecstatic and eschatological identity of Israel’s covenantal promises. But it is just such a mode of existence that yields freedom . . . free[ing] all beings to be unique articulations of Christ the Image, the prototype, so that together human beings across space and time might constitute a jazz ensemble that riffs upon and improvises within the eternal Word. (pp. 250–51)

The Epilogue addresses the question: “What kind of discourse should theology be?” Race is an ideological discourse that systematically privileges whiteness, spawning, in reaction, other forms of “possessive self-love” (p. 348). Because “whiteness continues to reign as the inner architecture of modern theology and . . . function[s] as a discourse of death” (p. 377), Carter warns that Christian theology faces loss of credibility among those it marginalizes.

Thus, theologians are directed to “exit whiteness and the identities whiteness creates” (p. 366). Instead they should choose theological engagement with those “on the underside of modernity” (p. 374) as a way forward in “narrating being beyond race” (p. 378).

This monograph breaks new ground, beginning with construing “race” as a theological problem. The argument is made by ascribing the invention of race to Kant (not itself a new claim: Robert Bernasconi, “Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant’s Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race,” in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi [Oxford: Blackwell, 2001], 11–36), by showing that Kantian thought is conditioned by Christian categories (especially supersessionism), and by tracing, in several writings, the theme of white superiority. Carter’s compelling interpretation calls for revision of the ordinarily positive assessment of Kant’s view of humanity.

The study also is original in its interaction with postmodern theorizing and cultural criticism, contemporary black theology and black religious scholarship, and historical theology (patristic and antebellum African American writers). Carter’s broad knowledge and facility in drawing comparisons and distinctions between past and present thought-patterns is impressive.

Carter’s analysis of texts otherwise unknown to many theologians, highlighting the counterhegemonic use of Christological reasoning in reflection by Afro-Christian U.S. writers, is valuable. They bear out his larger argument that theologians neglect such works by non-white writers, to their detriment.

Several questions arise relative to the framing of the subject of “race” by this study. The first matter concerns methodology. It is highly debatable that original authorship of modern racial ideology can be ascribed to Kant; thus, the claim that racial logic is inherently theological pertains specifically to him.

Racial logic took diverse forms in different locales in Europe and European colonies (Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996]). I argue in a forthcoming book that not Kant but French philosophers influenced the formation of racial beliefs in the U.S. (the setting of Hammon, Douglass, and Lee); in this discourse, an alternate retelling of the story of Christianity in which European Christians replace the Jewish people as the elect simply does not figure.

Second, the title of Carter's study—*Race: A Theological Account*—suggests a comprehensive analysis of “race” theory. However, the actual scope and focus is much more specific. The conceptualization of black identity, over against “the theological problem of whiteness” is thematized; other racialized identities are not treated.

Relatedly, what Carter criticizes is the ideological character of “race.” While he accomplishes this aim admirably—especially in highlighting what is unspoken or “invisible” in “race” discourse, i.e., the advantaged position conferred upon whiteness in a racialized system—this level of analysis does not dismantle the notion of “races” as such.

Fourth, “race” first pertains to a fallacious classificatory scheme applied to human beings. Carter's solution highlights the Christological resources available for a theological reconstruction of personal identity. However, while the insights are relevant for self-identified Christians, his description of the implications of Christology evinces some ambiguity: “*Christ's life . . . restores the image-status of all persons, affirming and positioning all persons in the person of the eternal Christ, the Son of the Trinity, so as to set them free*” (p. 250, emphasis added). “*To exist in Christ is to be drawn into . . . the ecstatic and eschatological identity of Israel's covenantal promises . . . a mode of existence . . . that frees all beings to be unique articulations of Christ the Image . . . riff[ing] upon and improvis[ing] within the eternal Word*” (p. 251, emphasis added). However, such statements runs counter to the NT description of what it is to be “in Christ” (Rom 8:1–17; cf. Rom 6:1–15), which is contingent upon placing personal belief and trust in the Son (John 1:12–13; Eph 1:13). To avoid conflating anthropology and soteriology, further qualification of these matters is crucial.

Following Scriptural logic might lead one to inquire, rather, whether there is some other sense in which all persons might be released from essentially erroneous racial interpretation. In my own work, I offer a deconstruction of “race” and argue for an alternate paradigm that is empirically valid and pertains to theological anthropology, Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology.

Thus, Carter's monograph might be more aptly retitled: “*Whiteness in Kantian Thought and an Antebellum Afro-Christian Christological Reconstruction of “Blackness,” with Implications for the Future of Christian Theology*.” This erudite study repays patient, resolute reading, especially in conjunction with Willie Jennings's *The Christian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, reviewed in *Them* 39.3 [2014]: 585–88). The latter volume postdates Carter's, but further elaborates various aspects of the framework they share as academic colleagues. Highly recommended.

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Oliver D. Crisp. *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014. xi + 260 pp. £22.99/\$34.00.

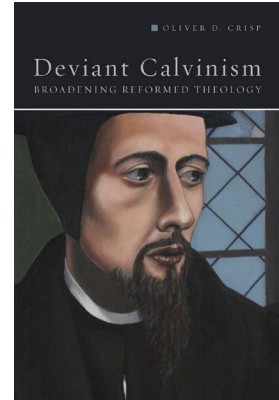
In his most recent contribution, Oliver Crisp, Professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, provides a precisely argued, theologically thoughtful, and philosophically rigorous case for the broadening of “what is regarded as appropriately Reformed doctrine” (p. 238). In this “constructive theological project in Reformed theology” (p. 3), Crisp seeks to resource the contemporary church with tools for its “challenges and difficulties. . . about matters vital to the Christian faith in general and the churches of the Reformation in particular” (p. 3).

Chapters 1–3 specifically seek to dispel three widely held myths about Reformed theology, while Chapters 4–8 explore the “scope and nature of salvation” (p. 3), culminating in the reconstitution of (a specific version of) hypothetical universalism.

Using the colloquial term “Calvinism” to refer to the diverse Reformed branch of the Christian church (including Anglicanism), Crisp begins with a chapter on tradition, faith and doctrine. After refuting the myth that Arminians were synergists in their understanding of how faith is acquired, he explains the sources of and hierarchy of authority in Reformed dogmatics. Along with Scripture as the “norming norm” (p. 17) in matters of doctrine, the ecumenical creeds and Reformed confessions are subordinate authorities that witness to and clarify the truth of Scripture. He appeals to the Reformed confessions as authorities throughout the book.

In Chapters 2 and 3, Crisp seeks to dispel two more Reformed theology myths. In Chapter 2, he demonstrates that the justification-in-history view and the two Reformed versions of the justification-in-eternity view are equally viable options for describing the connection between election and justification. In Chapter 3, Crisp dispels the myth that the Reformed tradition (particularly the Westminster Confession) teaches a “hard determinism” in which God specifically causes every human action (p. 75–79). Beyond that, over and against the typical Reformed assertion of compatibilism (that God causes everything *and* humans freely choose that which is God’s will), Crisp builds the case for a “libertarian Calvinism,” in which God “ordains” (knows in advance and permits) all that comes to pass but allows human freedom of choice in all “mundane” actions that do not directly lead to salvation (p. 87). Crisp perceives his work in Chapters 1–3 as providing ecumenical bridges between Reformed and non-Reformed churches.

In Chapters 4–8, Crisp examines various questions relating to the scope of the atonement, culminating in his demonstration that definite atonement is not the only viable description in the Augustinian tradition. In Chapter 4, Crisp shows that “the central moral and metaphysical intuitions behind Augustinianism are compatible with universalism” (p. 97). In the Augustinian universalist view, God punishes Jesus, thus displaying his justice, while extending mercy to all humanity. However, this universalist possibility leaves the Augustinian with the problem of soteriological evil, namely why a good God would choose to condemn some people (as Scripture seems to indicate) if it were not necessary. In an attempt to rescue Augustinianism from this problem, Crisp sets out in Chapter 5 to rebut Augustinian universalism. In sum, he shows that God is not obliged to create a universalist world in order to act according to his divine nature because creating humans is in itself an act of benevolence



(pp. 148–50). In Chapter 6, Crisp sets out to analyze Karl Barth’s non-analytic teaching on election and the extent of salvation from the perspective of analytic theology, finally providing a helpful construction of the “spirit” of Barth’s account that identifies all humanity as already elect in Christ and yet leaves open the possibility that some may reject that election (pp. 170–73).

Chapter 7 is the constructive climax of the volume. In what he calls a “theological clarification,” Crisp forwards an account of hypothetical universalism (along the lines of English Bishop John Davenant, not Moïse Amyraut) “not to endorse the doctrine but to show that it is a viable theological option for those in the Reformed tradition, which should be taken more seriously than it is in current systematic theology” (p. 183). Crisp describes it this way: “According to the hypothetical universalist, Christ really does die for the sins of the world, in keeping with Scripture. His death is ordained as a conditionally sufficient satisfaction for human sin, that is, the sin of all fallen humanity. Those who have faith are redeemed. Yet God provides this gift to the elect alone” (p. 210). The advantage of this position is that it maintains the clear tension in Scripture that Christ’s salvific work is for the whole world (John 3:16) *and* that God directly elects some to life (Eph. 1:4–5). In contrast, the advocates of definite atonement must explain away the Scripture passages that imply the universal scope of Christ’s redemptive work (pp. 196–97).

Finally, in a postscript to the previous chapter, Crisp rebuts the primary criticism of Universal Atonement, namely the problem of double payment for sins. In short, he argues that even though Christ died for the sins of all, faith is still the condition for appropriating Christ’s work. Those who do not meet that condition are condemned for their lack of faith without an unjust double condemnation of sins.

In order to appreciate Crisp’s contribution, one must recognize his goal and method. This constructive, analytic, and historical work is *not* a work of constructive systematic biblical theology. Instead, using the tools of analytic theology, Crisp argues for the logical and philosophical *possibilities* of various theological concepts, not necessarily advocating for their adoption.

Once one acknowledges the specific goals and methods of the book, the reader can appreciate its various strengths. For one, along with employing his sharp analytical tools, Crisp also calls forward voices from the past through “theological retrieval” (p. 214), gaining insight from the work of Jonathan Edwards, B. B. Warfield, Abraham Kuyper, John Owen, Robert Dabney, and Thomas Aquinas (to name a few). Second, in characteristic fashion, Crisp writes in clear, logical prose illuminated by plain, concrete, and often lighthearted illustrations. Third, Crisp forwards the work of Christ-centered ecumenism as he seeks to free Reformed theology from overly narrow interpretations (p. 240). Although not mentioned by Crisp, this is a Reformed goal that directly follows the example of Calvin, who tirelessly sought unity in the Christian church. Finally, in concert with recent work by Richard Muller and others that has substantiated that the Reformed tradition emerged from a variety of theological voices over a number of years, this volume highlights the fact that the resultant Reformed doctrine is similarly not limited to one narrow set of interpretations.

One addition that would have made the book even stronger would be a more overt explanation of the ecumenical benefits of Crisp’s conclusions. For example it is not immediately apparent why removing the barrier between being justified in/from eternity and being justified in time enables ecumenical common ground. Perhaps some of these ramifications and even further systematic and biblical constructive work will be included in a future piece.

In sum, this work by Crisp provides a clear, timely, and worthwhile addition to Reformed theological scholarship today.

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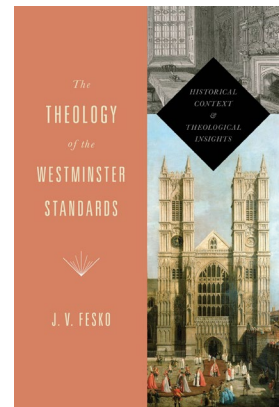
John V. Fesko. *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. 411 pp. £18.49/\$28.00.

The seventeenth century stands distant from us—almost another world in many aspects of culture and society. Yet, the theological debates, discussions, and formulations of the English Civil War era remain close at hand for many of us. Whether Presbyterians holding to the Westminster Standards, or Baptists holding to the significantly similar London Baptist Confession or its derivatives, the theology of the Westminster Standards still shapes the faith commitments of denominations, congregations, and individuals around the globe. Undoubtedly, this is in part because these doctrinal declarations closely cohere to the rich truth of God’s enduring Word.

It is for this and other reasons that John Fesko’s *The Theology of the Westminster Standards* provides a substantial contribution to the field of historical theology. At just over four hundred pages, the book goes beyond an evening read, but the effort to read it yields significant fruit. Fesko proves an able guide as he patiently and engagingly unfolds aspects of the contexts surrounding a number of the substantial points of doctrine found in the *Westminster Confession* and *Catechisms*.

After a brief, interesting, and somewhat eclectic historical survey that carries the reader from the Reformation to the 1640s, Fesko progresses to a thematic approach to the content of the Westminster Standards. Like the Standards themselves, he begins with the doctrine of Scripture. As he does so, it quickly becomes clear his contextual approach is not narrowly restricted to the writings of the members of the Westminster Assembly and their immediate contemporaries. Moving from Ulrich Zwingli and the early Reformation to William Whitaker in the late Reformation era, Fesko further incorporates reference to numerous Reformed confessions along the way as he steps into a discussion of natural and special revelation. He also introduces B. B. Warfield, who serves as a steadily cited companion through the volume.

Any attempt to grapple with the content and historical context of an extensive doctrinal statement leaves the author in the role of deciding with what and what not to engage. Readers ought not expect the author to address everything, and reviewers face a perennial danger of reviewing the book they wished had been written. Yet, considering this volume is entitled *The Theology of the Westminster Standards*, developed from the author’s seminary lectures for a course on the same, the omitted areas are surprisingly substantial in relation to the title. The doctrine of the Trinity, including the attributes of God, receives only brief mention even though the *Westminster Confession* devotes an entire chapter to understanding who God is, and though Reformed orthodox theologians engaged substantially with varieties of Socinian or Unitarian thought. The same is true as the reader moves beyond the chapter



on “God and the Decree” to “Covenant and Creation.” Fesko largely skips over God’s work of creation, including human origin and nature, despite the fact that this is a significant part of the *Confession’s* chapter four, and as a topic drew the attention of many English Puritan writers. Fesko pays similarly scarce attention to the doctrine of providence and man’s fall into sin.

So where does Fesko bring us to focus in *The Theology of the Westminster Standards*? In relation to the decree, Fesko provides insightful engagement with discussions on necessity and contingency, free will, and predestination contemporary to the Westminster Assembly. Beyond this, a good part of his work presents contextual arguments for the interpretation of the Westminster Standards on covenant theology.

Fesko surveys the discussion of covenant theology as situated in the pre-fall context. He also brings to light and assesses the variety of historical views on the nature of the Mosaic covenant. Was it an administration of the covenant of grace, the covenant of works, or a mixture of both? The question plays directly into how one understands the moral law as summarized in the Ten Commandments and is a key component of current law-gospel debates. While Fesko ably notes a diversity of views in the broader context surrounding the Westminster Assembly, he does not engage comprehensively with the Westminster Standards themselves—the Larger Catechism’s introduction to the Ten Commandments leans strongly toward an ecclesial understanding that this is in fact an administration of the covenant of grace.

To a degree this is a pattern in the volume: the weight of emphasis at points tilts to the contextual while seeming to miss a full-orbed, clear engagement with the Standards themselves. It also raises a question of contextual historical study in relation to the interpretation of ecclesiastical documents. To what degree should the views of individual theologians, even where they were delegates to the Assembly (many Fesko cites were not), shape the reading of the Standards? And what was the ecclesial context of the reception of the Standards? Though formulated in England, they were primarily received, interpreted, and applied during this period by the Church of Scotland—and Presbyterianism in Scotland was of a different character than that in England. How the vexed question of historical context and the interpretation of confessional standards is answered varies, yet the best ecclesial answer—as in the days of the Assembly—comes as the contemporary church engages, deliberates, and declares from the Scriptures, with healthy awareness of how past generations have done so before her.

Turning to the doctrine of Christ, Fesko focuses specifically on discussions of hypothetical universalism—a current theme among historical theologians. Under justification he focuses on the imputation of Christ’s active and passive obedience; under sanctification he engages the doctrine of union with Christ. His chapters on the law of God and the church are significantly shaped by an examination of the concepts of natural law and two kingdoms theology. As historical theologians, our endeavors and cases that we make are often reflective of our own contemporary contexts, and the schools of thought to which we adhere; the field of historical theology is as much a field of contemporary issues as it is a study of the past. Those aware of, or involved in debate in, the areas Fesko covers will quickly gain a sense of this reality in his work.

Overall, Fesko’s work provides a wealth of wide-ranging contextual theology to our consideration of the Standards, successfully challenging and engaging the reader. While it is not primarily a theology of the Westminster Standards, as a study of select aspects of the theological context surrounding the

Westminster Assembly, it is a fine volume, calling for thoughtful engagement by those participating in the contemporary conversation on these points.

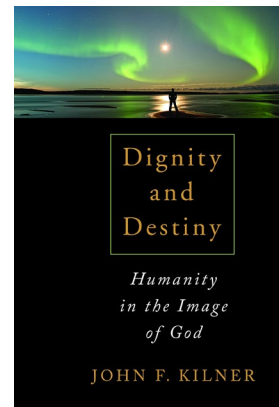
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John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. 414 pp. £23.99/\$35.00.

Dignity and Destiny is a masterful treatment of the *imago Dei* doctrine. John Kilner, in this magnum opus, advances the discussion through careful historical and biblical research on one of the most significant and complicated areas in the history of theology. While not a particularly constructive work, the reader will benefit from Kilner's comprehensive treatment of the subject. In the following, I lay out a brief synopsis by attending to the highlights of Kilner's work and toward the end I advance one minor criticism.

Kilner is interested in dispelling certain notions, albeit prominent in the history of interpretation, concerning the meaning of the "image" and how these notions have impacted church, society, and theological reasoning, in sometimes tragic ways. Kilner carefully and methodically defends his notion of dignity and destiny. He argues that the image is properly identified with Christ, and that humans are properly speaking created "in" or "according to" the image, which is Christ. As he interprets the relevant biblical texts, he defends the idea that humans bear dignity in virtue of their "connection" to God and their destiny is one of "reflection" when they come to be properly related/united to Christ (xi-xii). He defends a similar view found in an earlier treatment on the image of God entitled *True Image: Christ as the Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ*. As such, he is critical of traditional models of the image namely the structural, relational, or functional model. He addresses these views in one of the most important chapters. To this we turn.

He sets the stage by engaging the history of interpretation in chapter 1. While the image concept has commonly been used as a term for good (liberation, fighting racism, defending the sanctity of human life, etc.), this common line of reasoning used has a dark side. What many theologians and social activists have used for good has also been used for control and manipulation. Kilner argues that the logic implicit is often the same, which he defines as a search for a unique trait, capacity, function, or virtue. This line of reasoning is doomed for failure, or so it is argued. The reason for this is clear. Kilner states, "To the degree that one's attributes fall short of the way that God intends human attributes to be, God's image is supposedly damaged or deficient. The cause of that damage most commonly is sin, directly or indirectly. As with other things in life, a more-damaged image is not worth as much as a less-damaged image" (p. 28). Such logic is doomed for failure because this logic has been and is used in male bigotry, racism, and discrimination against disabled humans. Defenders of a traditionally structural view might push back by saying that there is a fact of the matter to being human despite the fact that some individuals bear common human attributes to a greater or lesser extent. Minimally, however, defenders of traditional views should agree with Kilner that such a position is susceptible to difficulties,



deserving careful attention to our use of language. Toward the end of the chapter, Kilner advances several reasons, which seem to motivate disagreement and confusion regarding the image concept.

Chapter 2 is a careful, albeit brief, defense of the Christological view of the image. He highlights a fairly non-controversial contemporary stance that image and likeness, in the biblical portrait, are largely synonymous—despite typical separation of these terms in ancient Christianity. He links image with likeness (i.e., the image-likeness concept) by arguing that Christ is related as the standard and destiny of humans. Additionally, he helpfully re-states recent biblical discussions on the relationship between image and “glory”.

Kilner insightfully and explicitly promotes a solution to historical travesties through biblical clarity. In chapters 3 and 4, Kilner defends the fact that, according to the biblical development, the image is never damaged. Modestly put, we have no reason for reading the Bible as yielding a damaged image; rather it is humans who are damaged. Humans fail to live up to their intended destiny. Kilner systematically carves out several positions on the image in relation to sin, which helpfully facilitate his criticism of the damaged image view. He lists four views (“completely lost”, “virtually lost”, “partly lost”, and “appearance compromised”). I wish to make one point about his discussion, but for other interesting details I refer the reader to the chapter itself. Kilner states that Augustine affirms the “completely lost” position wherein he interprets Augustine to affirm the idea that humans lose the image after the Fall and prior to redemption (p. 160). Unfortunately, it seems to me that either his interpretation of Augustine is mistaken, insufficiently nuanced, or Augustine is inconsistent himself. Augustine, characteristic of the Latin tradition, affirms that humans are images not simply made in the “image.” Augustine affirms that the “image” is indestructible. For Augustine, humans are always images bearing some resemblance (i.e., likeness) to God (see Augustine on Psalm 32, Exposition 3:16; cf. David Meconi, *The One Christ: St. Augustine’s Theology of Deification* [Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2013], 63, 64, 73).

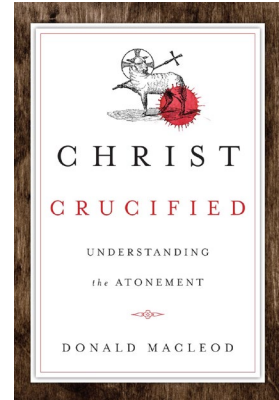
I offer one criticism of *Dignity and Destiny*. Kilner’s chapters seem unduly long and wordy, which is especially true of the last two chapters. In chapter 7 and the conclusion, Kilner’s treatment is unnecessarily repetitious. Kilner lays out recurring themes from his study in chapter 7. Whilst a synopsis could be helpful at this point in the book, most of the chapter felt repetitious. On p. 282, for example, he reiterates the fact that the “image” is not damaged, as found in chapter 4. From pp. 286–310, Kilner rehearses his discussion on the image as “connection and reflection.” I do not intend to communicate that there is *nothing* to gain in addition to what he has discussed in the previous chapters, but, minimally, this chapter could have been significantly shorter. The same is also true of his conclusion where he develops a way forward. For example, on p. 328, he spends half the page restating, almost verbatim, what he stated in an earlier chapter about historically common *image* language. While the conclusion is 19 pages long, it seems that he could have stated everything in 4 pages or less.

Much more of a positive nature could be said about Kilner’s useful resource, like his careful exposition of Rom 8, 2 Cor 3, and Col 3. The reader will benefit from its encyclopedic nature. As a contemporary, historical and biblical analysis, *Dignity and Destiny* is the definitive treatment on the subject.

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Donald Macleod. *Christ Crucified: Understanding the Atonement*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. 272 pp. £16.99/\$22.00.

An esteemed seasoned theologian, Donald Macleod offers a maturely considered treatise on the subject of Christ's atonement that is rich and rewarding in theological insight. Macleod has partitioned the book into two main parts: Part 1: The way of the cross, and Part 2: The word of the cross. Under Part 1 (comprising a bit less than a third of the book) he focuses keenly on narrative elements of the passion story, while under Part 2 his focus mainly is systematic-theological as regards various aspects of atonement theory. The combination of narrative analysis followed by systematic analysis works together quite effectively and adds an illuminating texture compared to the way such doctrinal topics are typically addressed. Macleod signals his approach upfront: "the cross is not in the first instance a doctrine, but a fact, and no interpretation of the fact can make the suffering of Christ more or less awful than it actually was" (p.



15). A distinct strength of the book, Christ's atonement is contextualized first in relation to the overall passion narrative. As Macleod notes, when it comes to Good Friday the Gospels go into slow motion, for this is the climax of Christ's mission, the culminating point of his incarnation. In this way the *person* of Christ is profiled in center view in order to help the reader appreciate better the *work* of Christ on the cross. Here one could say that Macleod adopts the NT's structural sequence in which the Gospel/Acts narratives are followed by the rest of the NT writings, which are largely didactic in character.

Macleod unfolds this in Part 1 starting with Christ's characterization as a man of sorrows. With adeptness to important details and story flow, he walks the reader through the key events leading up to the cross, namely, the last supper, Gethsemane, the arrest and trial, till at last we come to the crucifixion itself. Again, Macleod effectively weaves together the personal facets of Christ's story with the theological points he seeks to draw out. He continues in this same vein as he transitions to the next discussion, which addresses the interlude of Christ's crucifixion from the third to the ninth hour. Here Macleod's sensitivity to the passion narrative shines through at its best. He discusses in succession an array of notable aspects of the passion story, involving those leading up to Jesus' death as well as those following it, such as the charge on which Jesus was condemned ("The king of the Jews"); Jesus's execution between two thieves; the chorus of derision; the three hours' darkness; Jesus's words from the cross, especially the cry of dereliction; the piercing of Jesus's side; the tearing of the curtain; the earthquake; and lastly, the resurrection. Thus, before he addresses the theological particulars in Part 2 of what Christ accomplished in atoning for the sin of the world, Macleod establishes nicely for the reader the particulars of what Christ subjected himself to and personally and experientially underwent in performing his mission of atonement. Macleod rounds out Part 1 with brief discussions on viewpoints of the atonement deemed problematic or scandalous. Leading the list, he notes, is the penal nature of Christ's suffering. Axiomatic for him is the point that "Christ died, and as far as the human species is concerned, death is penal" (p. 59). Additional things discussed here include the claim that the cross is an example of "child abuse," the Father's involvement, and the point and purpose of the atonement. Setting the stage for Part 2, Macleod concludes Part 1 by commenting on the catholicity of the atonement: "There has been unanimity that we owe our salvation to the death of Christ; that the death was an oblation and a sacrifice; and that this sacrifice was piacular, atoning for sin, making peace with God and securing forgiveness" (p. 73).

In Part 2, Macleod transitions to a more systematic-theological treatment of the atonement. Macleod is keen to argue in support of the view that Christ's death on the cross centrally entails penal substitutionary atonement for human beings. He sets out his view under three headings: Substitution: the man for others (ch. 4), Expiation: covering our sin (ch. 5), and Propitiation: averting the divine anger (ch. 6). While Christ's messianic role as humanity's representative (Christ with us) is strongly affirmed, Macleod more strongly puts the accent on Christ's role as substitute in humanity's stead (Christ for us). In connection with Christ's atoning, substitutionary work on the cross, Macleod gives substantive treatments explaining the concepts of expiation and propitiation. The former involves the action of humanity's sins being wiped away, and the latter involves the action of God's wrath being averted from humanity. Put in simple terms, "expiation' highlights the effect of the atonement on sin, whereas 'propitiation' highlights its effect on God. . . . God can be propitiated only if sin is expiated; and sin is expiated only in order that God may be propitiated" (p. 110). In these discussions Macleod presents his view of limited or definite atonement, arguing that Christ's atonement was meant to secure salvation for a definite number of human beings as opposed to only rendering salvable those for whom he died (pp. 120–27). Obviously such issues and many others here have been and remain controverted amongst Christians, but Macleod articulates his positions with commendable clarity. Macleod's understanding of what Christ's atonement accomplishes and encompasses is not limited to that of penal substitution. He presents a full-orbed view of atonement in connection with and under the headings of Reconciliation: God's way of peace (ch. 7), Satisfaction: enough to justify forgiveness (ch. 8), Redemption: setting the prisoners free (ch. 10), and Victory: disarming the powers (ch. 11). In short, Macleod provides a fulsome and variegated perspective of the atonement that highlights the illimitable love of God for the world, seen supremely through Christ's atoning self-sacrifice for the world. The glorious upshot presented is that sin, Satan, and death are vanquished, and mercy triumphs over judgment for a people that God calls to himself, all as part of God reconciling all things to himself through Christ.

All that said, Macleod's treatise is not without its weaknesses. There are a few points in particular I found either theologically problematic or addressed inadequately. These are flagged for the interested reader to consider more completely than I can do here. The first matter has everything to do with theology proper—the doctrine of God. After discussing Christ's cry of dereliction in Part 1, Macleod addresses the question, "Does the Father, too, suffer loss?" Commenting on the cry of dereliction, he makes crystal clear the point that "the unity of the divine Trinity remains unbroken throughout the passion. Even while the Father is angry with the Mediator, the Son is still the beloved and still fully involved in all the external acts of the Trinity" (p. 50). I myself agree with the theological claim made here, though I understand others may not. The point I wish to note is that in a clear effort to disabuse the reader of understanding God as the Unmoved Mover who "was unmoved by the death of his Son on the cross" (p. 51), Macleod seems to problematize the notion of God's impassibility. Thus he states with respect to Christ's passion on the cross, "this very fact of the trinitarian unity has profound implications for the traditional Christian doctrine of divine impassibility. If it is true at the human level that where one member of the church suffers all other members suffer with her, must the same not be true of the Trinity?" (p. 50). The basic point he wants to establish is that pathos is proper to God's nature, such that when God the Son suffered on the cross, then God the Father and God the Holy Spirit suffered right along with him, each in their own way (see also p. 177). The issue in question is not with making such a theological claim, but that he does not adequately qualify what he means here. Similarly, addressing the concept of expiation, Macleod comments on the nature of divine love, "Yet in its impulse toward forgiveness it does not set aside the need for sin to be expiated. Deep in the nature of God himself there

is a necessity for a *hilasmos*” (p. 128). This is no small claim to make about the essential nature of God. Again, making a claim such as this is perfectly legitimate for a theologian to do, but the claim should be adequately qualified so that the reader may come to a clear enough understanding of what is meant and what is not. In these cases I do not think Macleod has made clear what he means, and thus the “profound implications” of the doctrine of divine impassibility and of divine love are themselves left unclear for the reader to ponder.

Another intriguing, if perhaps novel, claim Macleod makes is that “corresponding to the priesthood of the self-giving Son there is a priesthood of God the Father. . . . Golgotha becomes his temple, where . . . he is engaged in the most solemn business that earth can witness. He is offering a sacrifice. The cross is his altar, and his own Son the sacrifice” (p. 64). Macleod is quite clear, as he repeats later, “The Father was in effect the officiating priest at Calvary” (p. 208). For Macleod, God the Father’s priestly role is inferred from the fact that he provides the means and basis of atonement for the forgiveness and cleansing of his people. The view that the Father was acting in his own priestly role in sacrificing his Son at Calvary is an idiosyncratic one, however. And inferring this from Scripture seems at least highly arguable. While it is not a crucial point to his overall exposition, it nonetheless would have been helpful for the reader if Macleod explained better its theological import.

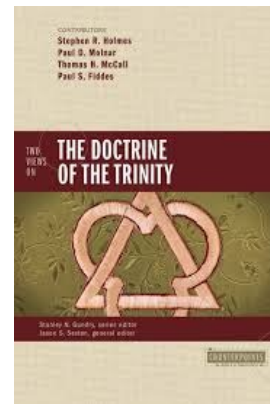
The final issue I wish to mention concerns Macleod’s discussion on the imputation of Christ’s active and passive obedience. To contextualize his discussions, he often includes helpful historical background, though its helpfulness is sometimes too limited by its brevity. Such is the case here where Macleod does a brief compare and contrast between the Calvinist position and the Arminian position that developed in the seventeenth-century in regard to the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer (pp. 180–81). Macleod points up here what he sees as problematic implications of the Arminian position, but in my view this part of the discussion is not particularly helpful (or fair to the side he’s criticizing) because he paints in brush strokes that are too broad within the space limitations.

Overall Macleod’s volume is eminently readable (no small compliment), and is certainly suitable for the theologically interested readership of the church. It would also serve very well as a textbook for related theology courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. With its engaging prose and heartfelt concerns, this reviewer found it both illuminating and uplifting.

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Jason S. Sexton, ed. *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 233 pp. £12.99/\$19.99.

The last half of the twentieth century has been hailed by many as a ‘Trinitarian revival’, as the doctrine of the One God’s nature as three persons has found once again a robust place in Christian dogmatics, in contrast to the preceding two hundred years of modern theology which only rarely paused to discuss the doctrine (and that only as an embarrassing relic of an era now passed by through the achievements of human rationality and biblical criticism). The new consensus of this revival has been that the doctrine has a central dogmatic place, and specifically ‘Trinitarian’ descriptions of all the areas of dogmatics - including, most notably, creation and anthropology - have been argued for by leading Trinitarian theologians such as John Zizioulas and the late Colin Gunton. But as is often the case, the new ‘consensus’ has been complicated. The publication of Lewis Ayres’s *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) is perhaps the most notable of a number of works by historical theologians which, arguing no less strongly for the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity for the Christian faith, nonetheless demur at the particular dogmatic proposals offered by most theologians in the latter half of the twentieth-century. The ‘revival,’ they argue, is in fact a significant departure from the shape of the doctrine of the Trinity as broadly understood from the 4th century to the post-Reformation period.



This most recent volume in Zondervan’s Counterpoints series collects four notable scholars with differing views on the ‘revival’ and some of the more fundamental aspects within the Nicene tradition of Trinitarian orthodoxy. In the Introduction, the editor Jason Sexton offers background to the debate over classical and relational models of the trinity, introduces the contributors, and explains that the four essays address trinitarian methodology, trinitarian doctrine, and the implications for each view. Each theologian is identified, more or less appropriately, with a particular doctrinal position within that tradition: Stephen Holmes as a ‘Classical/Evangelical’, Paul Molnar as a ‘Classical/Catholic’, Thomas McCall as a ‘Relational/Creedal’, and Paul Fiddes as a ‘Relational/Radical’. As in the other volumes in the Counterpoints series, the other contributors provide a rebuttal to each primary argument, with a further final and brief rebuttal given to the presenter. In the case of this volume the result is successful. Sustained engagement with the arguments made here gives an accurate and helpful picture of where the debate lies within orthodox theology without losing the reader in the finer points of historical and doctrinal detail.

The contributors make a number of interesting and provocative points over the course of their presentations. Holmes’s chapter begins with a helpful account of how inattentiveness to how words are used in their particular historical contexts has led to considerable dogmatic confusion. He also notably disagrees with attempts to tie the doctrine of the Trinity to an account of the ‘relationality’ of reality: ‘The doctrine of the Trinity is not primarily an ontology, nor does it depend on a particular ontology’ (p. 35). Molnar also takes aim at the modern fascination with making ‘relationship’ a load-bearing dogmatic category across theological doctrines, arguing that this is ‘little more than a projection of human experience and relationality into God in an overt or unwitting attempt to define God *by* our experiences of relationality’ (p. 73). In contrast to Holmes and Molnar, who understand classical Trinitarian doctrine to lead to varying degrees of apophaticism about the nature of the divine life, McCall’s ‘Relational/

Creedal' account argues that Christians can with confidence claim knowledge of 'I-Thou' relationships within the Godhead that are analogous to human relationships. McCall's argument derives much of its force from exegesis, and interested readers will want to pay close attention to his argument as well as how the classical proponents understand the same passages in question. Fiddes's closing proposal is notably distinct in its formulation, arguing not for a so-called 'social' understanding of the Trinity over and against the equally ill-named 'anti-social' classical formulation, but instead suggesting that 'God is the name for an event or happening of relationships in which we are engaged' (p. 160). As this quote demonstrates, Fiddes's 'Relational/Radical' approach is in many ways an outlier in comparison to the other three proposals. In many ways this makes the contribution all the more valuable as it contextualizes their relative similarity and difference with one another.

If fault is to be found with the volume it is to be found with Molnar's contribution. This is not to say that the chapter is weak; to the contrary, his use of T. F. Torrance, and to a lesser extent Karl Barth, gives an excellent account of the work of a leading and important twentieth century theologian of the Trinity. The weakness is instead that Molnar, though Roman Catholic himself, does not give the kind of "Catholic" representation one might initially expect (i.e., Thomist), although it is perhaps unclear if the intention was that Molnar's familiarity with 4th century figures such as Athanasius (mediated via Torrance) was meant to be a 'small-c' catholic description of the doctrine. The contribution and Molnar's responses to the other contributors still work well within the volume, but this reader would have been interested in a perspective which was representative of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Nonetheless, *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity* is a helpful book which gives an excellent and much-needed one-volume introduction to the current debate on the doctrine of the Trinity. Seminarians, graduate students, pastors, and motivated laypersons will find in it an accessible guide to drawing their own conclusions on this important doctrine.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Brian Brock. *Captive to Christ, Open to the World: On Doing Christian Ethics in Public*. Edited by Kenneth Oakes. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014. 160 pp. £12.00/\$19.00.

The divorce between theology and ethics or theory and practice (practical science) is unfortunate and unnecessary. The way forward according to this author is to “circumvent the divide” and create new pathways for reconsidering and reformulating the questions that we ask as well as questioning the presuppositions from which the questions arise. The recognition and importance of scripture to the life of faith as well as the community of faith within which and through which that life of faith is enacted are highlighted. That emphasis is executed in a way that is simultaneously appreciative and critical of the community and traditional ways of understanding the role of scripture in the community of faith.

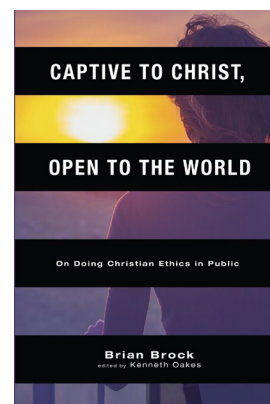
Not only do we as individuals truly find ourselves by looking outside of ourselves to Christ in the same sense that Luther, Barth, and Bonhoeffer suggest, but as a recipient of God’s revelation through the Scriptures the church truly finds itself outside of itself in being for the world and with the world. The movement outward towards the world is really one that originates inward from one’s relationship with Christ and that community of faith, the church.

In an intriguing and thoughtfully manner, the author suggests that being captive to Christ and the Word of God in essence opens one up to the world by breaking up all the socially and wrongfully pre-determined practices that Christians and non-Christians alike embrace self-centered, self-promoting, and self-aggrandizing ways of behaving. Scripture opens us up and frees us from our illusions. Only God can truly break through the kind of illusions that Descartes himself proposed to overcome through self-criticism (p. 86). Nietzsche also repeatedly reminds us that we are forever plagued with illusions, which are part of the very nature of human existence (p. 84).

For Christians, God does in fact break through and break in on us via other people in the community, but especially through Scripture. The posture for rightfully knowing, encountering, judging, and understanding is one of receiving, hearing, and responding to the truth that comes from outside of us.

In terms of the overall theme of the book, there seems to be somewhat of a push and pull effect in the sense that being bound to Christ presents somewhat of a gravitational push outward towards the world, towards people, and a definite concern for all that God created. At the same time, there is a sense of calling to respond to and to be actively engaged in listening to God, the co-worker, colleague, or members of society. In listening to others Christians can search for and capture those theological moments where faith allows Christians to not only understand the truth about the world and the way that it really is, but to faithfully witness to God’s work in ways that are ethically appropriate for the problem or challenge at hand.

Chapter 1 is thought-provoking and refreshing for every serious student who desires to look at the issue of the relationship between biblical exegesis and theology in a way that honors hermeneutics while still relying on the Holy Spirit. The author affirms and acknowledges the practices of great Christian thinkers who “read Scripture directly and theologically, but their thinking about contentious moral questions often took the form of biblical commentary” (p. 2). This chapter also contains an insightful



and brief discussion about the impact of the Enlightenment on biblical theology. The split between theology and Scripture seems to have been more a product of modernity than the natural outcome of church life and ministry. Scripture, after all, is tied to a community and maintains a shaping force and power that guides the entire Christian ethos or all the particular ways in which faith is enacted (p. 10).

Chapters 2 and 3 discuss matters having to do with technology, environmentalism, teaching philosophy, and nationalism. Although the topics may seem broad at times, there are many instances in which the author succeeds in bringing the thought home through personal story or contemporary issues confronting modern society. There is so much to appreciate in the conversational format of each chapter, quoting questions Brock has been asked in interviews along with his answers. The ease with which the author moves back and forth between theology, Bible, philosophy, social science, community, church, and current issues is both a tremendous asset and an enriching experience.

Chapters 4 through 8 deal with a number of issues that are equally relevant and essential to Christians living in a modern society. His treatment of new communities as a kind of New Monasticism offers a source of hope. While paying tribute to the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, work, and service, the author touches upon the idea of new communities in the sense of “being bounded (as opposed to closed) . . . for the purpose of being open to the world” (p. 81).

Throughout the book, the author manages to keep readers of whatever age thoroughly engaged by theologically and ethically reimagining ways of thinking about problems and opportunities that we all face.

I applaud Brock for conveying an authentic approach to a lived commitment to Christ that exemplifies being captive to Christ while appropriately open the world. The book demonstrates a sincere intentionality to refrain from attempting to clone the reader in his own image or to deliver information from pre-packaged arguments with the “right” answers. Instead, the author aims to invite the reader to join in the conversation. Upon reading the book one may find oneself at times truly being separated from what one believes initially in order to reconsider it in a different light. The goal in this distancing effect is not to convince one to believe differently but, on the contrary, to have a deeper understanding about what it is that one claimed to believe and the opportunity to commit more fully to following Christ faithfully.

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Gloria Furman. *Treasuring Christ When Your Hands Are Full: Gospel Meditations for Busy Moms*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. 160 pp. \$10.99.

As the mother of a kindergartener, preschooler, and newborn, I read this book with my hands full, often perusing it on my iPhone with time snatched here and there. Gloria Furman is a mother of four and pastor's wife living in the Middle East. She writes with humility, empathy, and wisdom, as one who *knows* what it's like to yell instructions over one shoulder while pulling bed sheets out of the dryer and remembering with dismay that the meat hasn't yet been defrosted for tonight's dinner. Her winsome way gained my ear at once; her winsome expression of Christ's glory through the unique lens of motherhood quickly gained my heart's attention as well.



Theological truth permeates Furman's work, creating a soul-satisfying meal for mothers who wonder whether what they are doing makes any kind of difference in God's kingdom. This places her in the ranks with up-and-coming younger-generation authors who have a passion for applying the gospel to the daily grind (e.g., Kimm Crandall, Aimee Byrd, and Rachel Jankovich). What sets Furman apart is her whole-Bible approach to theology. Whereas Jankovich might use a microscope lens to apply specific aspects of the gospel to specific moments in parenting, Furman uses a macro lens to bring the themes of redemptive history to bear on a baby's wake-up cry at midnight (for example). Both are helpful.

In Part 1 ("God Made Motherhood for Himself") Furman states that God has designed mothers to reflect the image of God and the glory of Christ in a singular way through their maternal instinct "to love, to exercise patience, to endure pain, and to work for the good of her children" (p. 40). She explains how the gospel orients mothers toward holiness as they work, freeing them to enjoy God and grow spiritually. She points out that participation in the "mommy wars" hinders Christian fellowship: "We treasure Christ when we treasure our sisters whom Jesus died to save" (p. 41). And yet, rather than giving moms a pass because of the challenges of our role, Furman calls us to have an eternal perspective, daily recalling our hope in Christ. "If we want to give grace to our children, then first we must be willing to receive it ourselves from God" (p. 63). Confessing our own sin to our children can help us display God's grace at work in our lives.

In Part 2 ("Motherhood as Worship"), Furman reminds us that God ordains the disruptions in our day and desires communion with us in them. She addresses areas in which mothers often experience lack—of love, wisdom, and strength. She reminds us that mothers love because God first loved us: in imitation of Christ, mothers love by allowing their lives to be complicated by the immaturity, sin, and weaknesses of children, while believing that the sacrifices made are a greater reward than the convenience of not having made them. Furman pushes moms to forsake their own parenting wisdom in favor of God's wisdom, which comes through the fear of the Lord. Loving and obeying Christ take precedence over decisions about meal plans or nap schedules. The gospel enables us to rely on God's strength rather than our own.

Furman then applies the gospel to specific heart issues mothers often face; for example, our desire to achieve mothering perfection and our failure to achieve this desire. Our greatest need is to be rescued from our sin. On our victorious days, God gets the glory for giving us the fruit of his Spirit. And in our failures, we can still see God's redemption at work and find security in Christ's performance rather than

ours. “Our position in Christ lets loose a whole host of joys that transform our mothering” (p. 117). When we glorify Christ rather than ourselves (by becoming “supermom”), we see God’s grace at work in our weaknesses.

Furman concludes the book by counseling moms to avoid both apathetic and idolatrous views of motherhood. Motherhood is a sign of God’s mercy after Adam and Eve sinned and had to leave the garden. They were condemned to die; but God’s promise of life via Eve was a gift that hinted at Christ’s coming victory over sin, death, and Satan. “*As mothers nurture life by faith, they participate in the eschatological triumph of Christ’s victory over sin and death*” (p. 143, emphasis original).

Furman creates a niche for herself both in her sincere and humble tone, as well as in her whole-Bible approach to motherhood, beginning with Eden, taking us through Christ’s victory over sin and death, and reminding us of our position in Christ. Although her transitions can be slightly awkward at times, Furman has a knack for connecting mothers’ seemingly mundane moments to deep theological truth. For example, in one of the book’s most powerful passages, she asserts that a baby’s cries silence Satan. “That little baby bears the image of the Holy One. On the cosmic stage of God’s glory displayed in the universe, the infant’s cries silence the insolent boasts of God’s enemy. God ordained that life would continue despite the devil’s decrepit handmaiden, death. God granted that eternal life prevail through his Son” (pp. 80–81).

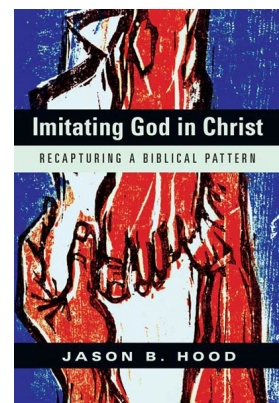
By applying a gospel lens to temptations common to mothers, Furman orients readers to God’s glory in the task of parenting. Mothers who either feel that their work lacks meaning, or who are tempted to glorify their mothering, will be encouraged by how the gospel addresses common tendencies to idolize, boast in, or lament motherhood. I’m thankful for authors like Furman who remind us that busy mothers are simply jars of clay through which Christ’s surpassing strength and glory (not theirs) are revealed.

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Jason B. Hood. *Imitating God in Christ: Recapturing a Biblical Pattern*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013. 220 pp. £15.99/\$22.00.

What is needed, who needs it, and why? These questions can help us pinpoint the core concerns of almost any book. When we ask them of *Imitating God in Christ*, author Jason Hood has ready answers: a “more robust and more biblical approach to imitation” is needed (p. 218), by the Christian church as whole, because “failure to attend to the imitation of [God and] of Jesus and the godly is catastrophic” (p. 190). If Hood is right—and his book makes a convincing case that he is—each of these answers deserves a closer look.

What, then, does Hood mean by a more biblical approach to imitation? Defining imitation in terms of “aligning character, belief, mindset or action with a pattern or template so that the copy reflects the original” (p. 210), Hood argues that this theme runs throughout Scripture, permeating God’s dealings with humanity. A proper emphasis on imitation begins not with church tradition or even the NT, but “with the God who created image-bearers to be like him” (p. 194). From this starting point, Scripture develops



the imitation motif along several lines: it depicts God as the “original,” with humans as the “copies” meant to reflect his character; it portrays Jesus Christ as the only “copy” who faithfully mirrors the image of God; it calls believers to imitate Christ; and it calls believers to imitate more mature believers, as when Paul writes, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1; Hood also emphasizes 1 Cor. 4:17). The structure of Hood’s book helps us to recapture both the broad sweep of this biblical theme and its nuances, as he devotes four chapters to “Imitating God,” seven chapters to “Imitating Jesus,” and two chapters to “Imitating the Saints” (see also ch. 15, which briefly traces the development of the imitation theme through church history).

Hood’s vision for a robust theology and practice of imitation comes into sharper focus when he divides the contemporary church into three groups, each with its own tendencies to distort the biblical picture. The “latitudinal left” stresses Christlike care for the marginalized but detaches Jesus’s example from its biblical and doctrinal moorings. Hood reminds us, by contrast, that only orthodox convictions regarding Christ and his work can form a solid foundation for “sacrificial Christian love” (p. 184). In the “muddled middle” of evangelicalism, “WWJD-oriented kitsch and emphasis on practical application can eclipse redemption,” so that imitation “dies the death of a thousand trivializations” (p. 185). Here again Hood issues a clear challenge: “Without gospel motivation—a steady diet of God’s work for us rather than our work for him—imitation is an exercise in bankruptcy” (p. 185). On the “reluctant right,” representing the Reformed tradition, imitation is buried beneath caveats intended to protect against legalism and works-righteousness. Hood, who certainly appreciates such caveats, also believes that they can be overemphasized: “We have been given the Holy Spirit so that we will properly respond to calls to imitate, not that we will regard such teaching as secondary or unnecessary” (p. 188).

What, though, is at stake in all this? Why is it so urgent that we recover imitation from various forms of neglect and distortion? First, imitation makes great demands in terms of holiness, self-sacrificial love, and endurance of suffering—concepts that are at the heart of image-bearing and of therefore of discipleship. A “cautious sermon on imitation every few years or an occasional reference to being like Jesus” will not prepare us for such demands (p. 217). Only regular, careful reflection on imitation, in the context of its biblical framework, will achieve it.

Second, faithful imitation can do a great deal to curb harmful, even heretical, distortions. People will imitate God, Christ, and other godly Christians; the only question is whether they will do it wisely or foolishly. As Hood so powerfully puts it, “The imitation of God, Jesus and the saints is . . . dangerous. But faithful interpreters do not shrink from dangerous ideas. They put them to work with care and craft” (p. 216).

Finally, imitation can help us to counteract what Hood sees as “arguably the greatest threat to Christian faithfulness” (p. 190) in the global church today—namely, the health-and-wealth gospel, and the consumerism of which it is an expression. According to Hood, Christian leaders across the centuries have dealt with similar challenges by focusing on the pattern laid down by the self-sacrificing, crucified Son of God. Only when “God’s love in Christ’s cross becomes both a standard and a motivation for action” (p. 214) can we resist the merging of the gospel message with the idol of material comfort.

Hood supports his answers to our three key questions with clear biblical argumentation, and he provides a good balance between biblical-theological substance and practical application. The work could be improved at a few points. For example, chapter 6, on discipleship, could benefit from the integration of more material from the Gospels of Luke and John. And the suggestion that God imitates us (p. 87) needs more immediate clarification. However, only the assertion that “in God’s plan, humanity

saves itself” (p. 57) stands out as inaccurate. In context, this sentence means that God’s saving plan involved the work of a perfect human, Jesus Christ; but since “humanity saving itself” is not self-evidently the best descriptor of action undertaken by God to save humanity, perhaps the point could be made in a way that is less likely to distract readers. Yet such matters in no way detract from the value of Hood’s work, which persuasively argues that “informs our original design, our future destiny and our present duty” (p. 216). All of us need to hear this faithful call to recover a crucial, if often distorted, biblical truth.

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Charles Marsh. *Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. New York: Knopf, 2014. 515 pp. £16.54/\$17.95.

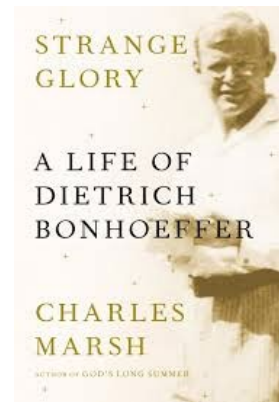
Strange Glory is surely one of the biographical events of the year for Christians. Its shimmering prose and deft depictions of Bonhoeffer’s theological and personal developments are as riveting as they are bold. The book is nearly always a page-turner; however, certain elements mar its virtues.

Marsh follows Bonhoeffer through his precocious upbringing among the Berlin intelligentsia, focusing on the bright lights all around in family and classmates. Already at age thirteen Bonhoeffer revealed his decision to become a theologian, which met with approval from his mother and derision from his older brothers, who remarked, “one can hardly imagine . . . a more paltry institution” than the church. Unmoved, Bonhoeffer replied, “In that case, I shall reform it!” (p. 17).

The volume is peppered with scenes like that one, which bring the reader delightfully close to Bonhoeffer’s life. Bonhoeffer’s trip to northern Africa with his brother Karl-Friedrich, for example, in the middle of his semester in Rome, elicits a fascinating depiction of his encounters with Islam. But Marsh truly shines whenever he reports on Bonhoeffer’s theological developments. These reflections alone are almost worth the price of the book.

Marsh offers new lenses for Bonhoeffer’s year at Union Seminary in New York. Whereas other biographies have focused on his discovery of African-American spirituality and the love he developed for the Sermon on the Mount, Marsh insists that it was Bonhoeffer’s encounter with concrete social ethics, especially through Reinhold Niebuhr, that effected his “signal transformation in the course of that year” (p. 125). Thus the American journey was, for Bonhoeffer, less an inward spiritual awakening and more a growing awareness of the social problems around him.

Bonhoeffer returned to Germany to study briefly under his most formative theological influence, Karl Barth. Marsh describes the mingling of Barthian theology and Niebuhrian “Christian realism” as an entirely new event in the young Bonhoeffer, one for which Barth was quite unprepared. While Bonhoeffer’s view of grace had been “too transcendent” for Niebuhr, it was not nearly transcendent enough for Barth, whom Bonhoeffer deemed “impervious to the ethical and social dimensions of doctrine” (p. 139). Yet Bonhoeffer continued to grip these two poles of thought and action firmly as he returned to Berlin to teach, and to electrify the ears and minds of his sleepy liberal students.



At this point, *Strange Glory* begins to present Bonhoeffer much like other biographers—except in one area. Marsh gives an entirely new interpretation of Bonhoeffer’s relationship with Eberhard Bethge, the student who became his best friend (and later biographer). This is sure to become the defining feature of this book. As Marsh describes it, Bonhoeffer fell completely in love with Bethge as he took the young man under his wing at his Confessing Church seminary in Finkenwalde. Whatever the merits of Marsh’s interpretation may be, he introduces the hypothesis in a remarkably surreptitious manner. Marsh never argues the case that Bonhoeffer had homosexual feelings toward Bethge, making his case instead by insinuation. In light of the novelty of this interpretation, the special pleading is intellectually reprehensible. After portraying their first meeting with the flourishes of a love-at-first-sight romance, Marsh remarks that other students wondered “whether Bonhoeffer had fallen in love with the boyish country pastor” (p. 236). He then briefly catalogues the extent to which the two men came to share their lives together over the next eight years, and remarks that Dietrich’s family “kept any reservations they had about the duo to themselves, and soon welcomed ‘Herr Bethge’ into the family circle” (p. 237). The arguments from silence found here, together with suggestive quotation marks around “Herr Bethge,” are the hallmarks of the next eighty pages of the book. Marsh extracts expressions of affection and appreciation from Bonhoeffer’s letters, and plasters them together to form an impression of Bonhoeffer as a manipulative lover.

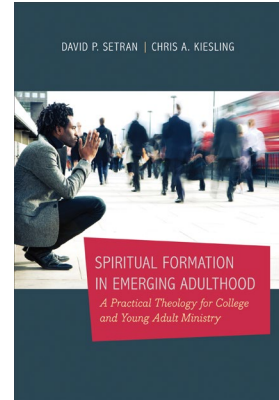
It would be easy to simply regard the treatment of Bonhoeffer’s sexuality in this biography as evidence that our age insists that all ages must be equally sex-obsessed. Even if there is truth to this claim, it leaves an unnerving strain in Marsh’s portrait unexamined. By Marsh’s lights, Bonhoeffer is not only a homosexual; he is also an immature twit, which Marsh takes pains to demonstrate throughout the book. For example, Marsh describes a postcard Dietrich sent to his parents during an internship in Spain, wherein Bonhoeffer’s face was transposed on the body a bullfighter in action. On the back Bonhoeffer wrote, “Greetings from the Matador.” It’s a funny, playful postcard from a twenty-two year abroad, but Marsh describes it as “typical of the unchecked braggadocio of [Bonhoeffer’s] reports to Grunewald” (p. 74). Thus, an amusing gesture from Bonhoeffer is scolded by his biographer, and its humor becomes grotesque.

Throughout the biography, in fact, we are given only muted glimpses of the magnetism, liveliness, and wit that were remembered by many who knew Bonhoeffer. Marsh’s prose, dynamic and glistening to be sure, seems not to be that of an understanding poet. In spite of its many virtues, I would not recommend *Strange Glory* as an introduction to Bonhoeffer, because it would not make anyone want to know much more about the man. It is an important book for those who are interested in Bonhoeffer’s reception and summaries of his theology, but one hopes its influence will not linger long.

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David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling. *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. viii + 280 pp. £14.59/\$23.99.

The topic of emerging adulthood has received increased attention from sociologists and psychologists in recent years. Jeffrey Arnett, in his 2004 work *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), identifies emerging adults as those between the ages of 18 and 29 who have not yet become fully independent; as a result they delay marriage, having children, starting careers, and more. This changing demographic has resulted in increased attention from Christian researchers and scholars, as this age group possesses particular spiritual needs that the church has not yet dealt with in significant fashion. Sensing the need to explore the spiritual lives of emerging adults and to craft corollary ministry practices that meet those needs, David Setran and Chris Kiesling have authored *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, in which they hope to provide guidance for “Christian thinking about emerging adulthood and for walking alongside emerging adults in their faith journeys” (p. 10).



Drawing on the work of Christian Smith (particularly *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009]), Setran and Kiesling begin their work by describing the lackluster spiritual engagement of emerging adults, particularly in the area of ecclesial participation. While attributing the spiritual malaise of emerging adults to a blend of developmental and cultural influences, the authors use Smith’s concept of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) as a means of understanding emerging adults’ spiritual lives. Seeking to counter the pervasiveness of MTD and its corollary effects, the authors seek to move beyond moralism, beyond therapy, and beyond deism in order to craft a robust practical theology for ministering to emerging adults. This paradigm of stretching beyond moralism, therapy, and deism lays the critical foundation for understanding the rest of Setran and Kiesling’s work.

The authors explore topics related to re-engaging emerging adults in religious spaces such as identity formation, vocation, morality, sexuality, relationships, and mentoring. In their chapter on identity formation among emerging adults, the authors explore the work of Jeffrey Arnett, Erik Erikson, and James Marcia as a means of understanding emerging adulthood in psychological and cultural perspective. Setran and Kiesling then develop their opening chapters by exploring the role of the church in the formation of emerging adults. While admitting that emerging adults may be skeptical of the church as a vital institution, they acknowledge that the church has done little to significantly engage emerging adults in spiritual matters. They offer a rich ecclesiology built on aspects of teaching, fellowship, worship, and outreach that empower emerging adults for embodied witness to God’s coming kingdom.

Exploring the notion of vocation in theological perspective, Setran and Kiesling conclude that the notion of emerging adults’ *purpose* within God’s *providence* “become two central domains” for countering cultural ideas of vocational selection (p. 136). Their chapters on morality and sexuality are complementary; the rampant sexualization of Western culture and the so-called “hook-up” culture pervasive among emerging adults can be attributed to the privatization of morality. The final chapter on mentoring emerging adults engages the work of spiritual theologian Adrian Van Kaam and envisions

an inter-generational ecclesial culture where seasoned believers mentor emerging adults through this season of their lives.

Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood stands out among similar works on ministering with emerging adults in that it puts emerging adulthood into conversation with theological wisdom and insight. While Setran and Kiesling draw from recent scholarship in developmental psychology, educational theory, sociology, American religious history, and philosophy, they find frequent conversation partners in C. S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, James K. A. Smith, and Dallas Willard. In this way, the authors demonstrate their theological fluency and prowess as practical theologians concerned with bringing theological realities to bear on cultural and ecclesial realities. In addition, their conclusions on how to best minister to emerging adults are grounded in their work as former campus ministers, observers and researchers of emerging adult culture, and scholars in the areas of Christian education and formation.

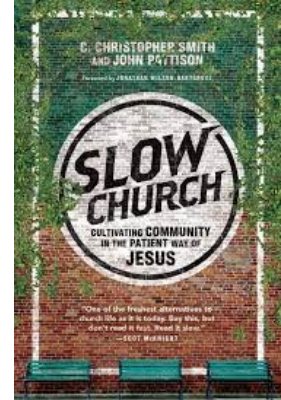
While this book is a useful contribution into the ever-expanding literature on the spirituality of emerging adults, a few concerns do exist. The authors could have put forth a more workable model for ministry with emerging adults. Their theoretical groundwork and ecclesiological vision are refreshing and compelling; however, a practical model would be of more immediate use to those in ministry contexts already. In addition, the book does not address the influence of media on the American life course. The proliferation of social media, the ease of access to entertainment sources such as Netflix, and the culture of image-consciousness have all affected emerging adults in significant ways. A chapter examining these cultural phenomena would have been welcome.

Overall, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood* is an important book for college pastors and those ministering to and with young adults. The book will significantly impact those studying the phenomenon of emerging adulthood, and will certainly become a staple text in coursework on campus ministry, young adult ministry, and even Christian cultural engagement. It will also be of use to Christian college and seminary professors interested in understanding the unique developmental and cultural space their students inhabit.

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C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison. *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014. 246 pp. £11.99/\$16.00.

Supersize Me is a documentary that follows director Morgan Spurlock on a 30-day journey during which he only eats at McDonalds. The documentary portrays the horrific effects that an all-McDonalds diet has on Spurlock's physical and psychological well-being and explores the idea that fast food is highly to blame for America's health problems. In essence, *Supersize Me* challenges Americans to open their eyes to see the destructive nature of fast food. In *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus*, C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison make a similar challenge. They invite American Christians to open their eyes to see the destructive nature of "fast church." When the church embraces "fast church" the results are similar to when people eat fast food; they become lethargic and sick. Sadly, though, the church has developed a taste for "fast church." According to Smith and Pattison, the church needs to change its "diet" and begin to embrace a slower way of doing church.



The authors argue that the American church has been co-opted by the allure of the fast life, what some sociologists have termed "McDonaldization," that is "the process by which the principles of the fast food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society" (p. 13). The fast life is busy, controlling, stressed, superficial, impatient, and marked by quantity over quality (p. 13). Slow is the opposite: "calm, careful, receptive, still, intuitive, unhurried, patient, reflective, quality over quantity" (p. 13).

Slow Church explores what it would look like for the church to embrace the slow way of life. The authors do this by dividing the book into three sections: ethics, ecology, and economy. The first section, "Ethics," looks at what it looks like for a church to be the embodiment of Christ in a particular location. The second section, "Ecology," examines the church's place within God's mission of reconciliation. The third section, "Economy," focuses on the way God has provided the local church with the necessary means to carry out His reconciling work in the world.

Within the "Ethics" section, Smith and Pattison argue that a church that takes its social location seriously is committed to a particular place over time and is committed to developing the patience necessary to bring healing and reconciliation to a broken world. This church stands in contrast to a church that has bought into the McDonaldization paradigm.

Throughout the "Ecology" section the authors develop the argument that Western culture has bought into the myth of fragmentation. However, Scripture affirms that creation is an interdependent whole, created by God, sustained by Christ, and reconciled by Christ's work on the cross. According to Smith and Pattison, the church—much like the rest of Western culture—tends to buy into this myth. The result is different forms of fragmentation, most prominently the fragmentation of faith and work.

The authors conclude with the "Economy" section. Here they make a case for an economy of generous sharing rooted in God's abundant provision for creation and, most importantly, God's greatest act of generosity, "the death and resurrection of Jesus which brought us into the family of God" (p. 201).

Smith and Pattison ought to be commended for several excellent features of this book. First, it is clear that their vision for slow church is rooted in a holistic gospel. They begin with N. T. Wright's five-act version of the biblical drama: creation, fall, Israel, Jesus, and the church, and they emphasize that

God in Christ is effecting the full reconciliation of creation. Rather than settle for a small gospel that equates the gospel with justification by faith they present an all-expansive gospel in which God through Christ is dealing with the effects of human sin, individually, communally, and cosmically. Because their understanding of the gospel is individual, communal, and cosmic, they are able to see the implications of the gospel upon every area of life. Second, this book provides a much-needed corrective to cookie cutter approaches to church. Their primary targets are churches that uncritically have bought into the McDonaldized paradigm of efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control. These churches “have come dangerously close to reducing Christianity to a commodity that can be packaged, marketed and sold” (p. 14). Instead of simply critiquing these churches, however, the authors stoke the reader’s imagination for another way of doing church by providing the reader with plenty of examples of churches who are doing “slow church.”

Although there are many excellent aspects of this book, some of their arguments may be self-defeating. For instance, throughout the book they often take jabs at megachurches as the primary culprits of a McDonaldized approach to the church. Supposedly these churches have completely ignored the social location of their congregation and have attempted to apply a cookie cutter approach. According to the authors, megachurches are guilty of ignoring the indigenous nature of the church. However, I wonder whether the megachurch is actually the indigenous form of church for certain locations. Also, one must wonder what to make of their accusation that the McDonaldization of the church is an instance of the church uncritically buying into a new cultural trend. One could say the same thing about “Slow Church,” which uncritically buys into the Slow Food Movement. To be sure, there are positive aspects of this movement, yet one wonders if the authors have overlooked the negative aspects of the movement.

Overall, Smith and Pattison do a fantastic job presenting an imaginative vision for what the church could be if it chose to reject the fast and McDonaldized values of our culture and exchanged it for a more intentional, organic, communal way of being God’s people in this world.

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Book Reviews

David Helm. *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today*. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. £9.99/\$14.99.

Bobby Jamieson. *Sound Doctrine: How a Church Grows in the Love and Holiness of God*. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. £9.99/\$14.99.

Jonathan Leeman. *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represent Jesus*. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012. £9.99/\$14.99.

Jonathan Leeman. *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus*. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012. £9.99/\$14.99.

Ray Ortlund. *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ*. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. £9.99/\$14.99.

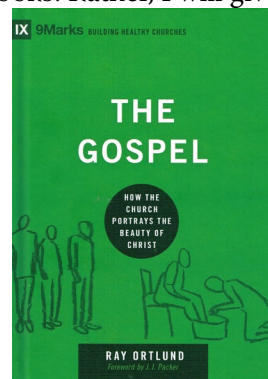
Jeramie Rinne. *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God's People Like Jesus*. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. £9.99/\$14.99.

Mack Stiles. *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus*. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012. £9.99/\$14.99.

Among some Christians familiar with 9Marks, there is a perception that Mark Dever, Jonathan Leeman, and their ilk are unnecessarily rigid in their view of the church. I confess there was a time when I thought this myself. But the longer I have served in ministry, the more I study the Bible, and the more I consider the most faithful way to implement the Bible's teaching on the church, I have come to just the opposite conclusion. While I still disagree with these brothers here and there, I find their vision for church life and ministry compelling and—more importantly—faithful to the Bible's teaching about the church. So when presented with the opportunity, I was quite happy to review Crossway's 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches series.

As I set out to review the series, I was not sure in quite what order to read the books. I tried to read them in an order that makes sense, but some of my impressions may be shaped by the order in which I read them and by the simple fact that I read all seven books relatively quickly, rather than just one or two over the course of a longer Bible study or course. Having said that, my aim in this review is not to provide detailed comments on the content or argument of any of these books. Rather, I will give a short summary of what each author was trying to accomplish it, make a few observations, and add a few thoughts about how these books might be used in concert with each other and in the local church context.

The first book that I read in the series was Ray Ortlund's *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ*. Ortlund's main argument was simple: gospel doctrine should create a gospel culture. This is true for individuals, for the church, and ultimately for the whole creation. Therefore, when an "anti-gospel culture" is found in a church—that is to say, a gospel where the grace of God is not celebrated and lived out in humane relationships—the gospel is actually denied in practice, whatever the church believes on paper. The last part



of the book then sets out some suggestions about our need for the Spirit to give us power, courage, and love to actually implement a gospel culture in our churches.

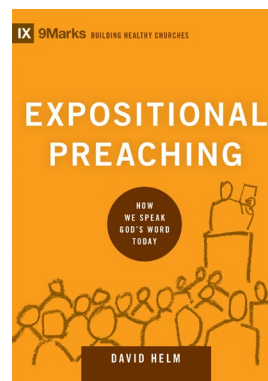
Beginning with Ortlund's book would be a great way to start to reading through this series. It also sets the tone well for the remaining books—while the 9Marks guys are typically well-known for their Baptist distinctives, it is healthy to have an Acts 29 pastor of Presbyterian convictions introduce the 9Marks series on building a healthy church. While there can, should, and will be denominational differences, we can unite around the gospel and build a movement that is truly centered on the gospel and not simple platitudes.

The next volume that I chose was David Helm's *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today*. Helm begins with a definition: "Expositional preaching is empowered preaching that rightfully submits the shape and emphasis of the sermon to the shape and emphasis of a biblical text" (p. 13). From this, he then describes preaching that masquerades as expositional preaching but is not actually rooted in the shape and emphasis of the text. This chapter alone is worth reading the book. The remainder of the book helpfully draws out the necessary steps through exegesis, theological reflection, and application that rises from the text itself.

While many preachers and teachers talk about expositional preaching, too often this means preaching that merely refers to the Bible or preaching that is simple exegesis without any meaningful theological reflection (let alone significant, gospel-shaped application). Helm's book could be a useful tool for both pastors and pastors-in-training as well entire congregations who are not used to preaching that is shaped by the Scriptures in both the near and broad context of the text each week. More than ever, I am convinced that people need to hear the Bible but many pastors unknowingly fail to give it to their people. Helm's book could be used as a great step forward in remedying this problem.

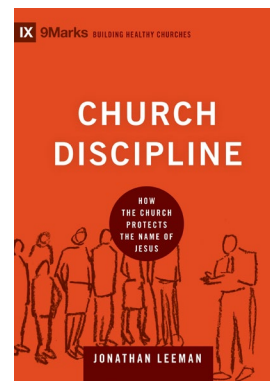
After the gospel and preaching, I decided the next step forward should be church membership, so I read Jonathan Leeman's book *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*. Those who are familiar with the 9Marks world know that Leeman has thought more about church membership than anyone since Benjamin Keach. His years of careful thinking about this topic have certainly paid off in this little book. Leeman attempts to reshape the way we think about church membership. Whereas many Christians tend to think of the church as a voluntary club, Leeman wants us to see it as an embassy. An embassy doesn't define citizenship—it recognizes citizenship. In the same way a church doesn't define who is a part of God's people—it recognizes this. So, to extend his analogy, if we refuse to join and submit to a church, we are in danger of renouncing our citizenship in God's kingdom.

While the entire book is a helpful description of the necessity and practice of church membership, if you (or others you know) are skeptical of church membership, take them to chapter 8: "Should Membership Look the Same Everywhere?" Here Leeman compares his church in Washington, D.C. to a church in central Asia. While there are many differences in structure and practical outworking of membership, he argues that the churches in both places have the same essential function: "the proclamation, display, and protection of the gospel through the lives of its formally affirmed members"



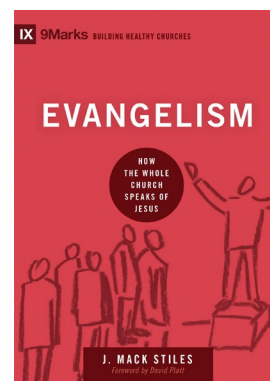
(p. 129). For both church membership skeptics and others, this book could be a great tool in a membership class or other setting.

After Leeman's book on church membership, it makes sense to read next his other book in this series: *Church Discipline: How The Church Protects the Name of Jesus*. It is essentially an expansion of aspects of his church membership book. Unlike the membership book, though, Leeman does not spend much energy trying to convince us about the need for church discipline. He writes, "The main purpose of this book is not to persuade you about church discipline. It's to help the already-persuaded know how and when to practice it" (p. 17). Leeman takes what he calls the "theological-framework approach" to church discipline (p. 18). More specifically, he applies a "Gospel Framework" for understanding discipline. For Leeman, church discipline not about "correcting sin or blowing whistles"; rather, the central issue is "ensuring that church members are indeed representing Jesus rightly" (p. 45). In other words, the pastoral question we must always be asking when considering a discipline case is "whether the church can continue to affirm a profession of faith"—not whether X, Y, or Z Big Issue sin has been committed. This approach "allows for greater pastoral sensitivity in moving from situation to situation" (p. 51).



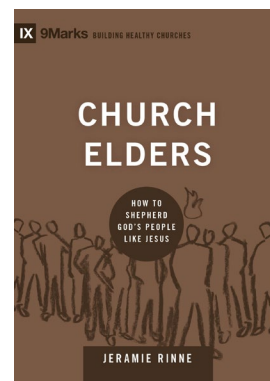
This book could be a valuable tool to introduce in a new members class or as a follow-up to the course. The second and third parts of the book that deal with case studies and the necessary preparation for church discipline will be a great help to an elder team wrestling through the issue as well. In an age when church discipline is either ignored or misunderstood and misapplied, this book can be a helpful corrective and guide for many.

While I appreciated aspects of all the books in this series, my favorite was probably Mack Stiles's *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus*. Many books on evangelism leave you fired up but also a little guilty. This book left me both fired up and encouraged about creating a culture of evangelism in my home and church. Stiles writes, "In pursuing a healthy culture of evangelism, we don't remake the church for evangelism. Instead, we allow the things that God has already built into the church to proclaim the gospel. Jesus did not forget the gospel when he built the church" (p. 64). The book is an encouragement to pastors and other church members to start talking more about evangelism, and it is filled with practical advice about helping people understand the gospel and prioritize evangelism.



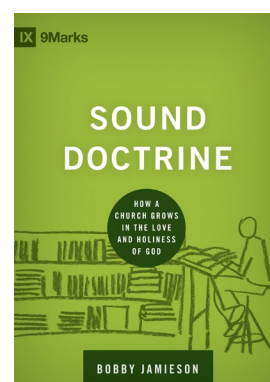
I cannot think of a church context in which this book would not be helpful, but obviously many churches in the West need to understand and emphasize evangelism afresh. To these churches, Stiles writes, "It's my sense that boldness is the most needed element for evangelism for the Christian community, at least in North America" (p. 106). But he is quick to warn us not to despair and turn our focus away from what God is doing in us through our evangelistic efforts. He observes, "Part of my weariness in evangelism is the constant focus on what is supposed to happen in *others*. When that is my focus and nothing seems to happen, I lose heart. But knowing that God works in me when I actively share my faith gives me hope even when no one responds positively to my efforts" (p. 112). Read this little book and be encouraged to share your faith.

The next book I read was Jeramie Rinne’s *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God’s People Like Jesus*. The main burden of this book is to convince church elders that they are indeed shepherds. Rinne writes, “If you remember only one thing from this book, then, let it be that elders are pastors/shepherds, and their core job is to tend the church’s members like shepherds tend their sheep” (p. 35). Beyond this, the book is devoted to describing from the Bible what it looks like for a team of elders to shepherd the sheep. Once they have worked through and affirmed the biblical qualifications for elders, they are to live among the sheep, devoting themselves to the Word and the wise, prayerfully, and loving care of the sheep. Rinne does a particularly good job unpacking what humble and wise pastoral care looks like in the Scriptures.



The best way to use this book would probably be among an already existing elder board, ideally in a new church plant or in a church that is establishing (or re-thinking) the roles and responsibilities of their non-paid elders. In fact, I would probably encourage every elder team to read this book and think together about how their team is doing at fulfilling their calling and caring for the sheep that God has entrusted to their care—especially with respect to the last chapter, praying for their flock.

I’m not sure why I read Bobby Jamieson’s *Sound Doctrine* last, but it seemed to fit. As I reflect on the series as a whole, it was a good capstone to reading all of these books about what a healthy church should be. As Jamieson argues in the book, sound doctrine *must* be useful for life and it must be useful for the life of the *church*. Jamieson first summarizes what he means by sound doctrine: “Sound doctrine is a summary of the Bible’s teaching that is both faithful to the Bible and useful for life” (p. 17). After unpacking this, he then outlines how sound doctrine is the essential foundation for Christian obedience. Jamieson highlights the necessity of sound doctrine for teaching the Bible, living holy lives, loving God and others, unity, worship, witness, and ultimately our own joy.



If you are reading sequentially through this series, landing with this book could be helpful as you consider how to move forward as an elder team or Sunday school class, because it is full of practical motivation for serious study of the Bible. Jamieson does a great job of showing the direct connections between faithful Christian understanding and faithful Christian living. He also shows why these things matter for the church as a whole by pointing to specific ways that sound doctrine should lead us into deeper fellowship with each other and shared mission in local churches. After all, this series is about building healthy churches.

As I write this review, I am transitioning from serving as a pastor to a professor. I intend to use these books as a basis for training people—both at my school and in the church where the Lord places us—about the centrality and importance of a healthy local church. These are a great series of tools for doing just that. Because of this, I am very thankful for the ministry of 9Marks, and I am thankful for Crossway’s willingness to publish the “9Marks: Building Healthy Churches” series.

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– MISSION AND CULTURE –

John Bowlin, ed. *The Kuyper Center Review (Volume 4): Calvinism and Democracy*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. xi + 199 pp. £19.99/\$30.00.

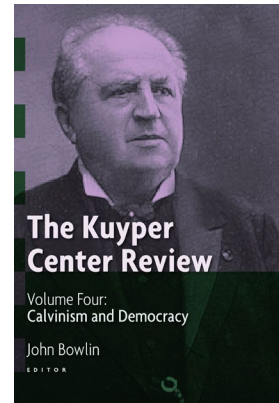
In 2012 a group of scholars gathered at Princeton Theological Seminary for a conference titled, “Calvinism and Democracy.” The purpose of this conference was to reflect upon the neo-Calvinist legacy, to explore its theological roots, and to assess in what ways this tradition might provide resources for democratic criticism and renewal. *The Kuyper Center Review (Volume Four): Calvinism and Democracy* represents the published proceedings of this conference.

Although this collection covers a wide range of topics, there are two themes that tie all eleven essays together: (1) the notion that democracy today is facing a crisis. and (2) the fact that neo-Calvinism has always had a complicated relationship with democracy. Despite these unifying themes this variegated compilation of essays lacks coherence. Since there does not seem to be a strong organizing principle behind their arrangement, for the sake of the review I will divide them into three categories: historical essays on Abraham Kuyper, prescriptive essays based upon Kuyper’s theology, and essays examining other theologians.

The historical essays include contributions by seasoned Kuyper scholars George Harinck and Harry Van Dyke, as well as one by Clifford Anderson. First, Harinck explores the reasons behind neo-Calvinism’s complicated relationship with democracy. Next, Anderson makes perceptive observations regarding the logic behind liberalism and democracy. He argues that the Kuyperian notion of divine sovereignty rather than popular sovereignty allows us to hold these two ideologies together. Finally, Van Dyke makes two contributions: first, he translates the correspondence between Willem Groen van Prinster and Kuyper regarding Kuyper’s election to parliament; second, he addresses the nature of Kuyper’s democracy and his role as an emancipator of the *kleine luyden* (the ordinary people without influence in the land) in the Netherlands.

However, this collection does not limit itself to looking back at neo-Calvinism’s historical and theological roots. In the group of prescriptive essays Jeffrey Stout, Michael Bräutigam, and Michael DeMoor look to Kuyper as a resource for democratic criticism and renewal. Stout turns to Kuyper’s *The Social Problem and the Christian Religion* in order to prescribe a course of action for addressing the problems of poverty, domination, and exploitation. Bräutigam makes the case that Kuyper’s distinction between the church as an institution and as an organism “provides a significant motif for Christian political involvement” (p. 67). Finally, DeMoor calls upon other political theologians to develop a specifically neo-Calvinist conception of deliberative democracy rooted in the God’s sovereignty.

The final category of essays focuses on theologians other than Kuyper. David Little argues that Calvinist theology has made “a significant, if sometimes very ambivalent contribution” to the rise of modern constitutionalism (p. 24). He makes this argument by turning to the political theology of John Calvin, John Cotton, and Roger Williams. In “Distinctively Common,” Clay Cooke utilizes the thought of Herman Bavinck to develop ways to hold on to Christian peculiarity and the common good in the public square. James Eglinton also looks to Bavinck’s theology and shows how Bavinck could support the democratic development of the Netherlands while insisting that churches ought to be



organized around principles that differ from democracy. Finally, Brant Himes shows how Kuyper's and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christology and doctrines of creation enable them live out their convictions that Christianity demands "public discipleship."

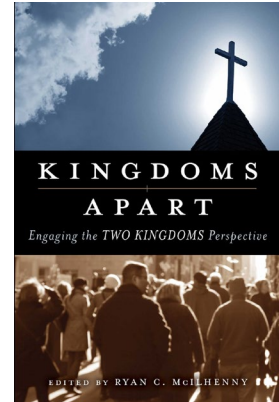
Calvinism and Democracy is a superb collection that will serve to stimulate further theological and political reflection upon its subject matter. Many of these essays provide avenues for further scholarly research. For instance Clay Cooke suggests that Bavinck sees cruciformity as a political virtue. One might want to further investigate what it looks like in practice to engage in politics in a cruciform manner. Michael Bräutigam's chapter, "The Christian as *homo politicus*," explains how Kuyper used new forms of media to stimulate political action among the *kleine luyden*. It would certainly be a worthwhile project to see how new forms of social media, including twitter and blogs, could be used to continue Kuyper's legacy of stimulating political action within the church. In addition to stimulating further research, this collection will also serve ministers who are attempting to form their own theology of political action within the church. Clay Cooke's and Michael Bräutigam's essays will be especially helpful. Both move beyond mere theory and develop practical courses of action for the church.

Despite possessing these strengths, this book certainly has its flaws. One weakness of the collection as a whole is its lack of organization. There is no apparent logic as to how the individual chapters were organized within the book. Several essays also could have been improved. For instance, DeMoor's essay calls for someone else to develop a neo-Calvinist model of deliberative democracy, but it would have been stronger if he had developed a model himself. Little's essay also has an odd flaw; although he addresses John Cotton's and Roger Williams's political theories he never specifically addresses their distinctive Calvinist theology. This surely undermines his thesis. Yet despite these drawbacks *Calvinism and Democracy* is a valuable collection that will stimulate further scholarly work and encourage ministers to develop their own theology of political action.

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Ryan C. McIlhenny, ed. *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2012. 324 pp. £16.99/\$24.99.

In this book Ryan McIlhenny assembles a team of nine scholars to join him in addressing what has become something of an ongoing intramural debate among Reformed Christians. The debate concerns questions regarding the role and status of the church in matters of church and state relations, education, art, and other forms of culture. A number of questions drive the investigation. What voice does the church have in addressing government? Is there such a thing as “Christian” education? What about art? Can art be separated into Christian “God-glorifying” art and secular, useless art? These questions are interesting, but McIlhenny and the contributors to this volume appear to be calling us to see something more. They seem to be voices crying out for the church to take an active role in the wider culture—a role that addresses, interacts with, and actively participates in shaping culture for the purpose of bringing glory to God.



The essays are divided into three sections. Part 1, “Kingdom Reign and Rule,” could just as well be called the “Historical Section.” Cornel Venema and Gene Haas contribute chapters that discuss John Calvin and natural law. Nelson Kloosterman offers a fascinating discussion of the views of Herman Bavinck concerning natural law. People who enjoy history will be drawn particularly to these chapters because they take us back in a lively way in an effort to trace the lineage that reformed thinkers share and from which they may readily draw.

Part 2, “Kingdom Citizenship,” is the “Church and State Section.” Kloosterman translates two addresses by Simon Gerrit de Graaf: “Christ and the Magistrate” and “Church and State.” These two addresses deal with the redeeming role of the church in society. De Graaf argues that “the state faces the grave danger of refusing to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and of Jesus Christ as King, of worshiping its own resplendent power, and of rebelling in self-sufficiency against the Lord” (p. 124). Timothy Scheuers continues with an excellent discussion of the doctrine of common grace. Then John Halsey Wood, Jr. offers a brilliant commentary on Abraham Kuyper and his views concerning church and state. The reader is led to ask the self-defining question, “What is the voice of *my* church concerning our government?” One day every knee will bow before the Lord Jesus Christ but today governments seek to be free entirely from any religious influence and instead move toward atheism. Pastors, elders, leaders in local congregational, regional, and denominational settings will be forced to deal with such questions.

Finally we come to Part 3, “Kingdom Living.” Scott Swanson deals with the question of now but not yet when it comes to Christ’s kingdom, providing a cogent argument that developed through a sweeping survey of the book of Revelation. Jason Leif presents “Eschatology, Creation, and Practical Reason: A Reformational Interpretation of the Two Kingdoms Perspective.” Then McIlhenny concludes with “Christian Witness As Redeemed Culture.” His is the practical argument that resonates with life and mission: the gospel changes the hearts of those who believe and those with changed hearts change culture. This is the transformational, missional vision.

All Christians live in particular communities along with other members of their congregation. All communities exist within particular cultures. Those cultures are unique just like every culture in every community in any setting. Christians must find ways to engage culture. If they fail to engage then they

will fail to accurately communicate the gospel. McIlhenny and the other writers repeatedly force the reader to ask important questions: What am I supposed to be doing here? What does God want me to do? What can I do to bring glory to God? This book helps readers answer these questions. The church continuously proclaims Christ's good news to people who live in the wider culture in which the church is situated. The proclamation itself glorifies God. And as people respond to the moving of the Holy Spirit and come into Christ's kingdom, they are transformed. And perhaps most important of all, when they undergo personal transformation they are also used to transform their families, neighborhoods, and communities. Culture is transformed as people are transformed.

Christians in congregations all over the world meet regularly to pray for church and culture. McIlhenny's book urges them to carry on, to press forward, and to continue seeking the God who transforms hearts, people, and culture. He encourages Christians to continue to ask for personal transformation and Christlikeness. Believers can make an impact—the kind of impact that can change a town and the wider culture.

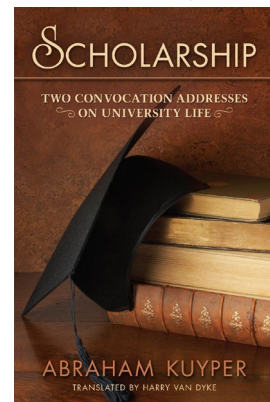
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Abraham Kuyper. *Scholarship: Two Convocation Addresses on University Life*. Translated by Harry Van Dyke. Grand Rapids: Christian Library Press, 2014. vii + 51 pp. \$4.99.

Richard Mouw. *Called to the Life of the Mind: Some Advice for Evangelical Scholars*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. v + 74 pp. \$10.00.

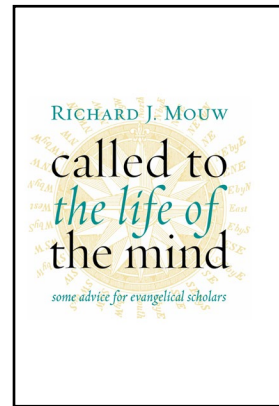
Two small volumes have recently been released that address the subject of Christian scholarship. The first volume is by Dutch Reformed theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) and consists of two recently translated addresses he delivered for convocation ceremonies at the turn of the twentieth century. The second volume is written by one of Kuyper's leading contemporary proponents: Dutch-American philosopher and evangelical statesman Richard Mouw. In *Called to the Life of the Mind*, a senior evangelical scholar offers advice to other (presumably junior) evangelical scholars. Given both volumes come from the "Kuyperian strain," comparing them is not entirely unlike a science experiment. Will two Kuyperian volumes on Christian scholarship originating from different occasion on two different continents and separated over a hundred years retain common traits? Do they reveal an enduring propensity regarding Christian scholarship? Answering these questions requires a closer examination.

Our first "specimen" is two speeches Abraham Kuyper delivered to the fledgling Free University during convocation ceremonies in 1899 and 1900. With around a hundred students and a handful of professors on hand, on behalf of the administration Kuyper addresses the incoming students as budding Christian scholars. A central theme guiding Kuyper is his concept of scholarship as a distinct sphere ("the *res publica litterarum*, the entire republic of letters," p. 3). This sphere—manifested in the university yet transcending the university—maintains its own culture, rules, and aims. Its chief aim is to attain knowledge for the purpose of serving humanity. Given this, Kuyper contends that Christians



entering academic work must do so recognizing “a distinctive calling in life and a special God-given task” (p. 5). In stark contrast to those who jump through academic hoops merely to secure a good job, Kuyper calls budding Christian scholars to appreciate the privilege afforded them, considering theirs a holy calling as priests of learning. For, according to Kuyper, to be a true Christian scholar requires more (though not less) than sustained and careful thinking, reflecting, analyzing, methodical research, attention to form and an understanding of academic etiquette. It also calls one to a life of humility, prayer, service, pure living and sincere piety. Indeed, Kuyper claims no area of one’s life—from financial planning to taking care of one’s body—is unaffected by this call.

Our second “specimen” under consideration is Richard Mouw’s, *Called to the Life of the Mind: Some Advice for Evangelical Scholars*. Mouw’s take on Christian scholarship is strikingly similar to Kuyper’s. As the title suggests, Mouw is also concerned that Christian scholars understand their work as involving a distinct calling. Echoing Kuyper’s reference to priesthood, Mouw compares becoming a Christian scholar to joining a religious order. As such Christian scholars are not only to cultivate the life of the mind, but also to be marked by virtues such as faith and self-denial. Indeed, echoing Kuyper’s discussion on proper humility in one’s scholarship, Mouw claims that the Christian scholar is to humbly embrace her epistemic and personal limitations as one player within the larger academic body. Moreover, also akin to Kuyper, Mouw claims the Christian scholar is to take up this calling as part of a higher aim: a way of loving God and neighbor.



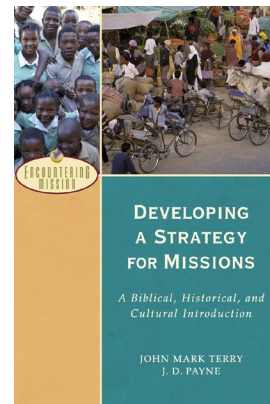
There are strong resonances between the two volumes but also some differences. One difference is the genre. Kuyper’s two formal addresses are characterized by oratorical display that (at times as the result of deductive moves) build on enduring principles; in contrast Mouw offers nineteen brief meditations that appeal to personal testimony, anecdotes, and unanswered questions. An additional difference concerns tone. At times Kuyper is affectionate and fatherly; in other passages he comes off abstract and academic (especially in the second address), and in other sections he takes on the voice of a commander rallying new recruits. In contrast, Mouw’s tone is reflective and pastoral. His is the sagely advice of a seasoned traveler, recounting the haunting voices of his anti-intellectual fundamentalist roots and describing the insecurities and personal pressures attending academic life.

These differences in style and tone noted—influenced as they are by time and occasion (not to mention personal temperament)—it is hard not to recognize a strong family resemblance. Both men accent that Christian scholarship involves entering a distinct sphere of activity. Both want their audience to understand the pitfalls and promise of following Christ in this arena. Both seek to inspire the next generation of Christian scholars to be distinctively *Christian* scholars. As this litany suggests, these two volumes serve to complement each other. Together they provide not only a robust vision, but are also strong evidence that the Kuyperian view of Christian scholarship, having adapted from its native Netherlands, will continue to thrive in North America.

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J. D. Payne and John Mark Terry. *Developing a Strategy for Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction*. Encountering Mission. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. x + 304 pp. £17.99/\$28.00

In 1792 William Carey published his influential pamphlet, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, in which he argued that Jesus's command to make disciples of all nations is binding on all Christians of all ages. Ever since, an almost endless stream of books has been written to advance the cause of mission and provide scriptural support for doing so. But as one wades through the books, it becomes clear that very few concentrate on the *means* of taking the gospel to the world. *Developing a Strategy for Missions* adds to the limited number of books written to help missionaries apply what they know about mission by planning and evaluating their work step by step from beginning to end.



Payne and Terry, who have both served as missionaries, approach their subject with great enthusiasm. They introduce mission strategy by comparing and contrasting it to military and business strategy, making it clear that their use of secular sources does not hide their conviction that the church is neither selling a product nor engaged in competition with other churches. Our aim is rather to make disciples. In their words, “Mission strategy is the overall process describing what we believe the Lord would have us accomplish to make disciples of all nations” (p. 5). In order to develop this definition, they take us on a journey of discovery that leads through a lush panorama of ideas and practices designed to help us craft, implement, and evaluate the methods we use to plant churches and help them grow.

The book opens with five chapters that prep the canvas for the work that follows by elaborating on what mission strategy is all about, considering objections to strategizing, and discussing biblical and missiological principles associated with developing strategy. In the next ten chapters, the authors sketch the background scenery by discussing the biblical basis and historical practice of mission strategy. Painted in very broad-brush strokes, this survey provides a useful (though sometimes superficial) overview of the methods used by the Apostle Paul, the early church, Catholic and early Protestant missionaries, and faith missions. It further outlines strategies related to the more recent indigenous missions, church growth movement, “frontier” strategists, and a few attempts to build strategies around various approaches to contextualization.

This backdrop in place, the authors use five chapters to array the tools and processes of cultural research. By placing them in an advantageous light, they help readers understand their benefits and learn how they can be used. Not only are we told how to develop a people-group profile, we are informed how it can be employed. Not only are we instructed to develop a communication strategy, we are introduced to ways that this can be done in various situations. We are also instructed that through taking up appropriate tools for testing receptivity and need, missionaries can wisely steward their time and resources so that unless they are “*specifically called by God to a resistant people*” they should “*begin where the Holy Spirit has been working to ripen the field for the harvest*” (p. 184, italics original). One wonders how the adoption of this concept would impact some efforts for mobilization.

Throughout the book the authors remind us that strategy is future-focused so that missionaries need to plan their steps as they engage people with the gospel. The final seven chapters thus provide guidelines for processing vision statements, forming teams, assessing resources, setting goals, choosing

appropriate methods for reaching those goals, and evaluating the whole process. Importantly, the authors remind us that many of the “steps” considered do not follow sequentially but overlap each other, and that evaluation is not the final step but something that should be ongoing throughout the whole process of forming and implementing a strategy.

Developing a Strategy for Missions is at once broad, practical, and accessible to most missionaries. It is a strong contribution to the well-regarded Encountering Mission series. It would provide a competent replacement for Dayton and Fraser’s *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). While this book will undoubtedly be added to the reading list of many mission classes, its true value will be recognized by church-planting practitioners, particularly those working in areas where there are few local Christians with whom to partner. Whether adopted as a classroom text or a field guide, readers will benefit from the frequent sidebars that introduce a variety of topics and conclude with questions for reflection and discussion. Many will find the “people-group profile” in the appendix to be a useful guide to researching different aspects of the life and culture of the people with whom they work and also how it lends to organizing people-groups into meaningful categories.

The book is a good introduction to developing mission strategy and should be consulted by strategists, church planters, and many other missionaries. Understandably, it has limitations. By painting an expansive landscape with a broad brush, the authors set aside depth on a number of issues. Thus, biblical analysis is often light with conclusions that are not always compelling. The historical overview similarly lacks penetration in some areas and gives space to others (like missions on the American frontier) that might be better subsumed under the broader categories. If the twenty-seven chapters of the book had been divided into several parts, readers would be able to more easily identify the ones that address common themes. Despite these caveats, I would recommend the book to my co-workers and others.

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Brian Steensland and Philip Goff, eds. *The New Evangelical Social Engagement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 321 pp. £19.99/\$29.95.

This volume charts and explores some very recent developments in American evangelicalism. For much of the twentieth century evangelicals in the United States shied away from the social implications of the gospel, fearful of being suspected of a lack of orthodoxy, or being exponents of a theologically attenuated social gospel. That changed dramatically in the late 1970s and the early 1980s with the emergence of the Religious Right, which saw many evangelicals throw their weight behind the Republican party, in support of deeply conservative stances on various moral and ethical issues. This volume argues that in the wake of 9/11 some evangelicals, disillusioned with the general evangelical embrace of militarism and the war against Iraq, began to question the by then customary alliance between evangelicals and right-wing politics. Two new movements, the Emerging Church and the New Monasticism, challenged this consensus, resulting in a much more radical evangelical critique of contemporary politics and society that went far



beyond traditional evangelical concerns with abortion and sexuality. The editors of this collection argue that this shift brought about the emergence of a new evangelicalism.

This volume is divided into three sections. An introduction by the editors sets the scene, before six chapters examine various aspects of the new evangelicalism. Most of these chapters are based on direct observation in the field, and explore the growing prominence of social action among various groups on the ground. These include a study of InterVarsity's Urbana student missions conference in St. Louis in 2006, a closer examination of the views and approaches of fifty evangelical women activists in New York, and the curriculum of a yearlong course on spiritual formation developed by a group of emerging evangelicals in Cincinnati. Other chapters in this section look closely at the New Monasticism and the popularity of Catholic social thinking on some younger evangelicals. In each instance a broadening out of the social concerns, beyond the narrow preoccupations of the Religious Right, are charted.

These new areas of evangelical social engagement are adumbrated still further in the second section of the collection. In a chapter on divergent attitudes to environmental issues, Laurel Kearns focusses on climate change, something long denied by right leaning evangelicals. Environmental concern, she argues, has not been attractive to evangelicals when it implies major social and policy change, but when green issues are focussed on individual actions they seem to appeal much more to the individualistic impulse that characterises much of the evangelical movement (p. 172). Further chapters explore new evangelical attitudes towards race, a more progressive approach to the anti-abortion campaign, (free of aggressive rhetoric of the right), and a new realisation of the importance of human rights and a commitment to the alleviation of global poverty.

A final section, consisting of just three chapters, offers some concluding reflections. Joel Carpenter, in perhaps the strongest of the three essays, offers some historical perspective, arguing that some of these shifts in emphasis and new evangelical expressions are typical of an evangelical movement that has always attracted 'restless and visionary rebels and innovators [who] have created new ways and means of expressing evangelical commitment' (p. 265). The shift to the left among some contemporary evangelicals is just another example of this characteristically evangelical process.

From the distance of the United Kingdom, American evangelicalism can seem simultaneously both enervating and deeply perplexing. The heavily polarised American political system, where the chasm between left and right leaves the mainstream British political parties looking anaemically similar to one another, has apparently been replicated among contemporary evangelicals. The growth of left-leaning and more progressive social engagement, the subject matter of this book, has it seems received an enormous boost by the reaction of some evangelicals to 9/11 and the strident crusading militarism of the Bush presidency. Indeed, a purportedly evangelical and much heralded president seems to have polarised the American evangelical movement as few others.

Perhaps this volume would have benefited from more comparative content, a less exclusive focus on the American context. In Britain, a more socially aware evangelicalism emerged during the late 1970s spearheaded by the Anglican evangelical John Stott—strangely absent from this volume. One of the striking features of the rediscovery of social action charted in this volume has been the nature of the groups through which these changes have taken place. While some such as Timothy Keller have remained faithful to their traditional theological heritage, others—especially from within the Emerging Church camp—have not stopped at a renegotiation of social attitudes, turning their attention to a redefinition of aspects of evangelical theology as well. The story charted in these pages is still in its

infancy; it will be a number of decades yet before scholars are in a position to assess the final destination of some of those discussed in this volume.

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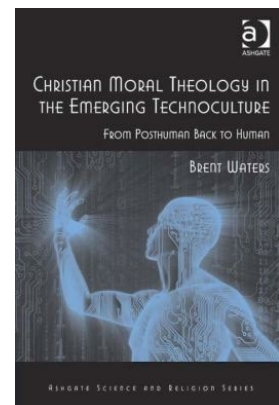
Brent Waters. *Christian Moral Theology in the Emerging Technoculture: From Posthuman Back to Human*. Ashgate Science and Religion Series. Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2014. 260 pp. £65.00/\$119.95.

The author's intent for this book is to provide a framework for developing a Christian moral theology within the "emerging technoculture." Specifically, Brent Waters answers two questions. First, how does one live Christianly in a world increasingly defined and shaped by technological advancement? Second, what does Christianity offer to people in danger of becoming consumed by the machines and devices of such advancement?

Waters serves at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary as both the Jerre and Mary Joy Stead Professor of Christian Social Ethics and Director of the Jerre L. and Mary Joy Center for Ethics and Values. He has written extensively on technology and aspects of the moral life. In this volume he recognizes the culture-forming power of technological advances, from surgical techniques that prolong human life to the smart phones that are more computer than phone. However, Waters maintains throughout that technology *per se* is not the problem. Technology is merely the outgrowth of late modernity's attempt to master nature and overcome mortality, the manifestation of our collective will to power and desire to create, or recreate, a favorable history. In this book, then, the author analyzes and critiques technoculture's root ideology, and uses that analytical fruit to engage theologically with technoculture's realities. While the book's analysis is rich and thick, the author ultimately intends to address the practical and mundane realities of everyday life.

The book is divided into three major parts dealing with, in this order, philosophical critique, theological construction, and moral engagement. Part I begins with the foundational treatment of Friedrich Nietzsche's and Martin Heidegger's concepts of nihilism and historicism. These concepts define a posthuman future and provide the root ideas from which the technoculture draws its force. Concluding that Nietzsche and Heidegger offer failed solutions to the problems they identify, Waters nevertheless takes their horizon-less landscape and seeks a way out via the thought of George Grant, Hannah Arendt, and Albert Borgmann.

Borgmann provides the most fruitful approach for addressing and dealing with nihilism and historicism. While Grant and Arendt diagnose societal darkness well and offer alternative approaches, the practical nature of their approaches is either too vague (Grant's "'perhaps' of waiting for a waiting God" [p. 81]) or too elusive (Arendt's resignation to an oasis existence). Waters also finds their solutions seriously lacking in theological content. Borgmann, however, not only accepts the pervasive, powerful presence of the technoculture; he also seeks to reform it and even present a more alluring model of



thriving for techno dwellers. His “focal things” and “focal practices” provide Waters the concepts and framework for fleshing out a plan for true human flourishing.

In Part II the author builds on his philosophical critique by introducing and developing cogent theological concepts. These concepts become tools for liberating techno folk from what appears to be their dark destiny. Responding to Grant’s thin theological underpinnings, Waters develops a fuller and stronger Christological framework. He then follows Grant’s lead in “confessing the darkness *as* darkness” (p. 116) by developing a clear understanding of the concepts of judgment, hope, and grace. These concepts (particularly judgment) become tools for successfully making that critical confessional move. But a second confessional step, also dependent on judgment, must also be taken. Individuals and groups must not only confess cultural darkness *as* darkness, but confess their own culpability as darkness. Confession leads to repentance, which then “reorients and reorders a subsequent sequence of acts in line with what is judged to be good and right (p. 126).” And the nihilistic cycle is broken.

Forgiving and promising—seeking and granting forgiveness, coupled with “the promise of amended lives” (p. 148), define the new cycle of behavior. This new behavioral pattern orients life toward “natality,” Arendt’s concept of rebirth. However, natality works only if the goal is changed. The new horizon toward which the trajectory of the moral life is now directed becomes the hopefully anticipated, graciously given gift of Jesus Christ’s *parousia*.

Maintaining this new moral trajectory of the amended life requires adoption and application of Borgmann’s focal things and focal practices. Waters develops a set of moral priorities for Christian pilgrims, counter to the nihilistic priorities of nomads, which are then best employed within the focal practices of baptism, Eucharist, and Sabbath, along with “their corresponding virtues of faith, hope, and charity” (p. 188).

In Part III Waters concludes the book by applying his conceptual arguments to the Christian moral life. Here Waters is most practical, helpful, and forceful as he focuses on three selected arenas of moral engagement. The subtitles he uses for the final chapters reveal how he believes these arenas to have been abused in the technoculture: the Internet (“parasitic self-fulfillment”), politics (“nihilistic power”), and economics (“consuming predation”).

This is an impressive volume. Waters provides thorough and insightful analysis and critique of five major social philosophers. He deals with their thought in the same manner that he deals with the realities of technoculture: identifying key elements, making good judgments regarding the useful and useless, and constructing a solid, practical argument for how Christians can experience true human flourishing in this late modern world.

One point of critique might be the lack of a thicker pneumatology. Even as Waters criticizes Grant for his thin Christology (rightly so), Waters’s concept of “dead reckoning” as a metaphor for Christian moral guidance could be strengthened by addressing the significant role played by God the Holy Spirit in providing moral guidance for the Christian.

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