

themelios

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EDITORIAL: Theological Reflections on the Pandemic <i>by Brian J. Tabb</i>	1
STRANGE TIMES: 'The Things We Think and Do Not Say: The Future of Our Business' <i>by Daniel Strange</i>	8
Politics, Conscience, and the Church: Why Christians Passionately Disagree with One Another over Politics, Why They Must Agree to Disagree over Jagged-Line Political Issues, and How <i>by Jonathan Leeman and Andrew David Naselli</i>	13
Should the Local Church Resist Texts in Scripture that Clash with Western Culture? The Test Case of Leviticus 21:16–24 <i>by Katherine Smith</i>	32
Leviticus 18:5 and the Law's Call to Faith: A Positive Reassessment of Paul's View of the Law <i>by Etienne Jodar</i>	43
The Genesis of the Jerusalem Donation <i>by Daryn Graham</i>	58
Paul's Overlooked Allusion to Joel 2:9 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 <i>by Jordan Atkinson</i>	74
What Must She Do to Be Saved? A Theological Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:15 <i>by Jared M. August</i>	84
On Words, Meaning, Inspiration, and Translation: A Brief Response to Bill Mounce <i>by Dane Ortlund</i>	98
Affirmations and Denials Concerning World Mission <i>by the Southgate Fellowship</i>	108
Book Reviews	136

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DESCRIPTION

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

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REVIEWS

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

EDITORIAL

Theological Reflections on the Pandemic

— Brian J. Tabb —

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

So thou, sick world, mistak'st thy self to be
Well, when alas! thou'rt in a lethargy....
There is no health; physicians say that we,
At best, enjoy but a neutrality.
And can there be worse sickness than to know
That we are never well, nor can be so?

—John Donne, “An Anatomy of the World”¹

Once again, the terrifying term “pandemic” has been headline news. On 31 December 2019, Chinese health officials reported cases of serious respiratory sickness in people associated with a large market in Wuhan, China.² This outbreak was soon linked to a “novel coronavirus” (later given the innocuous name “COVID-19”), and the World Health Organization declared “a global public health emergency” due to the deadly virus.³ On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization characterized COVID-19 as “a pandemic,” with confirmed cases of the virus in well over 100 countries, thousands of confirmed deaths, and thousands of new cases being reported each day.⁴ The Center for Disease Control ominously warns that there is “no vaccine to protect against COVID-19” and “no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19.”⁵ Despite the stunning scientific advances in our modern age, medical providers and researchers weren’t prepared to counter this coronavirus when it burst on the scene. Without vaccine or cure, the Chinese government turned to containment, imposing residential

¹ John Donne, “An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary,” in *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. Edmund K. Chambers (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1896), lines 23–24, 91–94, <https://tinyurl.com/qpaf5sy>.

² Anita Patel and Daniel Jernigan, “Initial Public Health Response and Interim Clinical Guidance for the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak—United States, December 31, 2019–February 4, 2020,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69.5 (2020): 140–46, <https://tinyurl.com/yx6xp3xb>.

³ Judith Mischke, “Coronavirus: WHO Declares Global Emergency,” *Politico*, 30 January 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/wm56s2f>.

⁴ “WHO Director-General’s Opening Remarks at the Media Briefing on COVID-19,” *World Health Organization*, 11 March 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/vyvm6ob>.

⁵ “What You Need to Know about Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19),” *Center for Disease Control*, 18 February 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/r6kdabn>.

lockdowns that impacted over half the country's population,⁶ while major airlines grounded flights to and from China. The global spread of the coronavirus prompted nation-wide lockdowns in Italy and other countries, severe travel restrictions, closures to schools and businesses, and cancellations of major sporting events. The president of France even declared "war" on the invisible enemy.⁷ Churches on multiple continents have even been forced to cancel or modify corporate worship services.

The coronavirus pandemic is the latest in a long line of disease outbreaks that have wreaked havoc on humanity over the centuries, and it will very likely not be the last. This editorial offers theological, historical, and pastoral reflections on disease and sickness.

1. Disease in Biblical Perspective

Disease and death have indelibly marked the human experience east of Eden. In the beginning, there were no rogue parasites or harmful germs—everything was "very good" (Gen 1:31). Then everything changed when sin entered the world and "death through sin," and creation itself "was subjected to futility" (Rom 5:12; 8:20). Though the OT does not explicate this point, the realities of sickness and disease accompany the "thorns and thistles" of creation's curse and humanity's "dust ... to dust" sentence. Without sin, human beings would experience neither death nor illness, which serves as "death's prelude."⁸

The OT emphasizes that Yahweh alone has the ultimate authority to "wound" and to "heal" (Deut 32:39; cf. Job 5:18). Yahweh strikes Egypt with various "diseases" yet promises to heal and protect his people if they heed his voice (Exod 15:26; Deut 7:15). Likewise, when the Philistines capture the ark, Yahweh afflicted them with tumors and caused "a deathly panic" (1 Sam 5:6–12). "Pestilence" is also one of Yahweh's four dreadful judgments against Israel, along with war, famine, and wild beasts (Ezek 14:21; cf. Deut 32:24–26; Rev 6:8). On several occasions in the OT, Yahweh afflicts his people with pestilence because of their unfaithfulness. For example, in response to David's sinful census, Yahweh strikes the land with his "sword" of pestilence, and 70,000 men of Israel perished (1 Chron 21:12–14). Because Jehoram "walked in the way of the kings of Israel" and led Judah into spiritual harlotry, the Lord brings "a great plague" on the people and strikes the wicked king with a severe, incurable disease in his bowels, "and he died in great agony" (2 Chron 21:12–19).

However, the Scriptures do not always connect sickness to specific personal or corporate transgressions. For example, the great prophet Elisha who raised the Shunammite's son and healed Naaman of leprosy himself fell sick with a terminal illness (2 Kgs 13:14). In the NT, Jesus corrects his disciples' neat-and-tidy cause-and-effect reasoning that ties physical sufferings to personal sins (Luke 13:1–5; John 9:1–3).

The prophets also anticipate the day when Yahweh will gather his scattered, afflicted people to bind up their wounds and heal them—not just from their physical afflictions but from "their apostasy" (Hos 14:4; cf. Isa 30:26; Jer 30:17; 33:6). The scourge of suffering and the hope of restoration move God's

⁶ Raymond Zhong and Paul Mozur, "To Tame Coronavirus, Mao-Style Social Control Blankets China," *New York Times*, 15 February 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/soa4gsx>.

⁷ Steven Erlanger, "Macron Declares France 'at War' With Virus, as E.U. Proposes 30-Day Travel Ban," *New York Times*, 16 March 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/vcsblnw>.

⁸ D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 98.

people to heed Hosea's call, "Come, let us return to Yahweh; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up (Hos 6:1).

Jesus declares that he "came to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10), in contrast to Israel's self-serving leaders who failed to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, and seek the lost (Ezek 34:4). He shows compassion to the harassed and helpless (Matt 9:36) and heals the sick and the oppressed (Acts 10:38). Christ's healings authenticate his ministry as truly from God, signal the dawn of the age of restoration, and also point to the deeper healing that he accomplishes through his atoning death for sins (1 Pet 2:24; cf. Isa 53:3–4; Matt 8:16–17).

Thus, the Scriptures do not present disease as morally neutral or "indifferent" like the philosophers.⁹ Rather, disease and other causes of pain and suffering are part of this broken world infected with sin, and these terrors have no place in the new creation, when God will roll back the curse, wipe away every tear, and make all things new (Rev 21:4–4; 22:3; cf. Isa 25:8).

2. Disease Is a Parable

The secular prophets warn that global pandemics are among the greatest threats facing humanity,¹⁰ but the biblical prophets present disease as a parable for humanity's greatest malady—*sin*.

The whole head is *sick*, and the whole heart faint. (Isa 1:5)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately *sick*; who can understand it? (Jer 17:9)

How *sick* is your heart, declares the Lord GOD, because you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen prostitute. (Ezek 16:30)

When Ephraim saw his *sickness*, and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to the great king. But he is not able to cure you or heal your wound. (Hos 5:13)

Sin is the ultimate pandemic, infecting every son of Adam and daughter of Eve (cf. Rom 5:12). It is "a deep, universal and fatal illness.... Its working is lethal and toxic, and we all carry the germ."¹¹ Calvin puts it this way: "Innumerable are the evils that beset human life; innumerable, too, the deaths that threaten it. We need not go beyond ourselves: since our body is the receptacle of a thousand diseases—in fact holds within itself and fosters the causes of diseases—a man cannot go about unburdened by many forms of his own destruction."¹² There is no political solution, scientific remedy, or educational program that can cure or contain the pandemic of human sin. Yet many if not most people do not recognize their cancerous condition or grasp its deadly diagnosis.

⁹ Compare Seneca, *Ep.* 82.10–12; 117.9.

¹⁰ See, for example, Simon Beard and Lauren Holt, "What Are the Biggest Threats to Humanity?," *BBC*, 15 February 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-47030233>.

¹¹ Ian Campbell, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Sin: The Disease and Its Cure* (Fern, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015), 1.

¹² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 1:223 (1.17.10).

3. Disease Is Iconoclastic

Disease is iconoclastic—it shows and smashes our most cherished cultural idols. Devotees of ancient religions sacrificed to the gods to secure temporal benefits such as prosperity, long life, and fertility while asking to be spared from “disease, dearth, sterility, premature death.”¹³ People in modern secular societies want more or less the same provisions and protections yet “live in a way that takes no account of the transcendent.”¹⁴ Consider how this recent outbreak of illness illuminates and challenges the contemporary idols of security, prosperity, and wellness.

3.1. Disease Smashes the Idol of Security

People around the world long for security—freedom from threats or dangers—and lack of security is among our deepest fears. We must pass through security checks at airports and government buildings to reduce the threat of terrorism. We lock our doors or install home security systems to deter burglary. We install antivirus software and use secure passwords online to protect our devices and personal data to avoid malware and identity theft. Governments such as the United States and China invest hundreds of billions of dollars per year on internal and external security, yet even the most formidable military forces and sophisticated surveillance systems cannot detect, detain, or disarm the invisible threat of viruses like COVID-19.

3.2. Disease Smashes the Idol of Prosperity

The so-called American dream of achieving happiness and success is really a global aspiration shared (with some variation) by many societies ancient and modern. First Kings 4:25 fittingly expresses the OT vision of the good life: “And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.” Aristotle spoke of “happiness” (εὐδαιμονία) as humanity’s highest good—“the pleasantest and the fairest and best of all things whatever” (*Eud. Eth.* 1214a), though the philosophers cautioned that true happiness is not found in one’s circumstances, status, or stuff. President Xi Jinping’s famed “Chinese Dream” called for a march toward “common prosperity.”¹⁵ Yet the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 has caused massive disruption to the world’s second largest economy, shuttering schools, offices, and businesses, and dramatically disrupting trade and travel for weeks. Fear over the virus’s rapid spread beyond China sent US and global markets tumbling and forced numerous businesses to lay off or furlough workers. The financial hardship caused by this public health crisis exposes our fears of instability and loss.

Jesus warned, “You cannot serve both God and money” (Matt 6:24), and Paul likened greed to “idolatry” (Col 3:5; cf. Eph 5:5). Brian Rosner explains, “Greed is idolatry because the greedy contravene God’s exclusive rights to human love, trust, and obedience.”¹⁶ He perceptively observes that “in western society in general the economy has achieved what can only be described as a status equal to that of the sacred.”¹⁷ As wealthy (and “middle class”) Christians worry about the bleeding red numbers on

¹³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 150.

¹⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 143.

¹⁵ Weia Li, “Xi Reveals Five-Year Road Map to Realise ‘Chinese Dream,’” *GB Times*, 25 October 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/t6d8c55>.

¹⁶ Brian Rosner, “Soul Idolatry: Greed as Idolatry in the Bible,” *ExAud* 15 (1999): 81.

¹⁷ Rosner, “Soul Idolatry,” 82.

our savings and retirement account balances due to fears over the virus outbreak, we must remember that Mammon cannot save or satisfy us, nor can it offer the true security for the future that only God supplies.

3.3. Disease Smashes the Idol of Wellness

The Global Wellness institute defines *wellness* as “the active pursuit of activities, choices, and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.”¹⁸ In 2017 global wellness was a \$4.2 trillion industry, including spending on beauty products, nutrition and diet, wellness tourism, fitness, spas, and more. Wellness evangelists promise health and wholeness for those who frequent this fitness club, follow that program, and use these products. Yet disease affects the fit and unfit alike, an uncomfortable reminder of our frailty and mortality. As Vanhoozer notes, “‘Get well soon’ rings hollow to the man on his deathbed.”¹⁹

Disease offers us a healthy reminder of our weakness and limitations. We do not have bionic bodies. The psalmist reflects on the human life span as seventy or eighty years, which are full of “toil and trouble” (Ps 90:10). We are not promised four-score years but should “number our days” (Ps 90:12). Even with an optimal regiment of diet, exercise, and sleep, our bodies slow down and break down until eventually we die. Disease may rapidly accelerate this process of dying, but each one of us lives within divinely-imposed limits, even as we long for God to make all things well in the resurrection.

4. Responding to Sickness

How did the church respond when “a third of the world died” in fourteenth-century Medieval Europe due to “the Black Death”?²⁰ Most explained the calamitous plague as an expression of divine punishment against human sin and sought to appease God’s wrath in various ways, including public repentance in sackcloth and ashes, self-flagellation, and violence against the Jews who were blamed for poisoning the water. Sixteenth-century evangelicals consistently interpreted the “English sweating sickness” as the divine “rod” sent to discipline the nation for its wickedness, and preachers called on believers to pray and amend their ways.²¹ During the seventeenth century, three bouts of bubonic plague beset England. The Protestant Church identified this disease as a divine scourge striking down sin. One London preacher likened the 1625 plague to the “flying scroll” of Zechariah 5:1–4 that travels over the land, and he called parishioners to remember this record of God’s judgment.²² Protestants typically responded to these trials with “an inward turn” to examine conscience and behavior in light of the

¹⁸ “What Is Wellness?,” *Global Wellness Institute*, <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/>.

¹⁹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers: A Pastor’s Guide to Making Disciples through Scripture and Doctrine* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), 25.

²⁰ Mark Galli, “When a Third of the World Died,” *Christian History* 15.1 (1996): 37. Cf. Michael W. Dols, “The Comparative Communal Responses to the Black Death in Muslim and Christian Societies,” *Viator* 5 (1974): 269–87.

²¹ Brian L. Hanson, *Reformation of the Commonwealth: Thomas Becon and the Politics of Evangelical Change in Tudor England*, *Reformed Historical Theology* 58 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 152.

²² Ernest B. Gilman, *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 73, citing Sampson Price.

Scriptures rather than with public processions and violent appeasement strategies.²³ Others, such as John Donne, also reflected on the brevity of life and the “decay” of this sick world.²⁴

In light of this all-too-brief biblical analysis and historical survey, we now turn to consider three ways that followers of Christ should respond to the threat of global pandemics and the trials of personal illnesses.

First, public health crises force us to *face our fears*. Fear is a natural reaction to danger, death, and uncertain times. What shall we do with our fears? Fear leads some people to minimize the threat, while others magnify the danger as all-consuming. Some have responded to the COVID-19 outbreak by caring for the vulnerable, while others express their fears by threatening or ostracizing Chinese people in their communities.²⁵ For Christians, fear can prompt us to “return to obedience and charity,” loosening our grip on the world’s toys and reminding us that our “true good is in another world” and our “only real treasure is Christ.”²⁶ Many Chinese Christians in Wuhan responded to the terrifying coronavirus outbreak by calling for prayer and passing out face masks, food, and gospel tracts.²⁷ Andy Crouch wisely writes, “*We need to redirect social energy from anxiety and panic to love and preparation.*”²⁸ When we remember that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1), we can overcome debilitating fears and respond to crises with courage and compassion for our neighbors in need.

Second, sickness is an occasion to *seek the Lord*. Consider the contrasting responses of Asa and Hezekiah to their severe sickness:

In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek Yahweh, but sought help from physicians. (2 Chr 16:12)

In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and he prayed to Yahweh, and he answered him and gave him a sign. (2 Chr 32:24)

The Chronicler’s point is not to criticize the work of physicians, but to stress the fundamental need to “seek the Lord” in sickness.²⁹ While earlier in his life, Asa commendably led his people to seek God with their whole heart and soul (2 Chron 15:12), he relies only on human experts in his time of personal need rather than prayerfully turning to his God. In contrast, Yahweh answers tearful deathbed prayer, restoring the king’s health and prolonging his life another fifteen years (2 Kgs 20:1–7).

²³ Gilman, *Plague Writing in Early Modern England*, 91–92.

²⁴ Donne, “An Anatomy of the World,” lines 23, 127–36, 143; cf. Gilman, *Plague Writing in Early Modern England*, 201.

²⁵ Jessie Yeung, “As the Coronavirus Spreads, Fear Is Fueling Racism and Xenophobia,” *CNN*, 31 January 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/v8dsbe5>.

²⁶ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, reprint ed. (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 94–95.

²⁷ June Cheng, “Seeking Peace in Sickness,” *World Magazine*, 6 February 2020, https://world.wng.org/2020/02/seeking_peace_in_sickness.

²⁸ Andy Crouch, “Love in the Time of Coronavirus: A Guide for Christian Leaders,” *Praxis Journal*, 12 March 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/whcbdho>.

²⁹ Neil G. Messer, *Flourishing: Health, Disease, and Bioethics in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 58–59.

Like Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat similarly offers a model response to troubling times. Hearing news that a vast army was marching against Judah, the king “was afraid and set his face to seek Yahweh.” He proclaims a fast and assembles the people “to seek help from Yahweh” (2 Chr 20:3–4). Jehoshaphat then prayed,

If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.... We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. (2 Chr 20:9, 12).

Seville writes, “Jehoshaphat had a disposition of trust, regardless of danger. Even in the face of pestilence or plague, he cried to God.”³⁰

Third, sickness and other forms of suffering also *test our faith* and *reveal our hope*. Consider Peter’s words: “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:6–7). The apostle helps believers recognize that their present sufferings and struggles—whether due to social ostracism, threats, sickness, etc.—are not random blows of Fate but a divinely designed test to prove their faith and prepare them for glory. One Wuhan pastor similarly reflected, “It is readily apparent that we are facing a test of our faith.” He reminds believers that “Christ has already given us his peace, but his peace is not to remove us from disaster and death, but rather to have peace in the midst of disaster and death, because Christ has already overcome these things.”³¹ Our present peace and future hope should move us to respond to crises like the coronavirus outbreak with Christ-exalting good works.

Thus, global health crises prompt us to reflect on the true pandemic of human rebellion against a holy God. Sickness reveals our fears and exposes our idols and serves as an urgent invitation to seek the Lord. All people—rich and poor, young and old, religious and non-religious—are susceptible to sickness and are certain to die one day. Yet for followers of Jesus, sickness tests our faith, reveals our hope, and moves us to be zealous for good works.

³⁰ Jason Seville, “King Jehoshaphat and the Coronavirus,” *The Gospel Coalition*, 6 February 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/r67bldp>.

³¹ “Wuhan Pastor: Pray with Us,” *China Source*, 28 January 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/sl8nejt>.

STRANGE TIMES

‘The Things We Think and Do Not Say: The Future of Our Business’

— Daniel Strange —

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

*In Cameron Crowe’s 1996 film *Jerry Maguire*, the eponymous successful sports agent, played by Tom Cruise, has an epiphany whilst on a conference about the state of his industry. Through the night he feverishly writes a long mission statement (‘not a memo’), the essence of which centres around the importance of personal relationships, fewer clients and less money. He entitles it, ‘The Things We Think and Do Not Say: The Future of Our Business.’ The next morning, and having distributed glossy copies to all the delegates, a nervous, hesitant Maguire enters the conference lobby to light applause which gradually becomes whooping and hollering. ‘Finally someone said it’ can be heard as he receives a standing ovation. The camera pans to two ‘enthusiastic’ colleagues at the back of the room, all smiles and claps. ‘How long do you give him?’ says one, ‘About a week’ says the other holding aloft the mission statement to Maguire and with clenched fist punching his heart.*

Having returned from some large theological conferences in North America last November, I want to offer some brief personal comments to one of *Themelios’s* main audiences: theological students (pastors and scholars can listen in). These comments concern the business of which I believe I am a part, in terms of theology, sociology and technical ‘membership’. I want to be very clear from the outset that these comments are *not* to be heard as cheap shots aimed at the States per se, nor are they really about the specific gatherings I attended. As a Brit, and so in a minority at said gatherings, I don’t want to be accused of the arrogance of evangelical cultural superiority, because I recognise all too well the failings, foibles and indeed ‘inferiority’ of my own evangelical culture. Rather, I would hope these musings might be an example of a slightly different voice making some observations that might lead to mutual growth and edification.

As the director of a theological seminary in the UK—one that is very small by US standards—I don’t get to attend these gatherings every year. But when I do, it’s always a rollercoaster of love and loathing in such-and-such-a-city. The states I cycle through on repeat go like this: a sense in which I just love it; then on reflection, a loathing that I love it; and finally a supercilious love that I loathe it which takes me back to just trying to love it again. I can’t work out whether this lands me in a vicious circle or virtuous spiral. Whichever it is, it’s pretty discombobulating.

In my country where evangelicalism, let alone conservative evangelicalism, is such a minority, is culturally pretty irrelevant, still retains a stubborn strain of anti-intellectualism, biblicism and pragmatism, and is often embattled, under-resourced, and all with a ‘half glass empty’ air, I always

marvel at the size, scale and sheer brio of thousands, yes, *thousands* of evangelical scholars getting together to do stuff. This year, in one random thirty-minute session of people watching, I'm sure I witnessed *Guinness World Record* amounts of confident back-slapping, and I mean that literally and non-pejoratively. Not only that, but all of us meeting in facilities that can comfortably (in more than one sense) accommodate such numbers. I probably need to get out more and/or am easily pleased, but meeting in the flesh people whom you've only previously read in print always gives me a frisson of excitement. The phenomenon of double-taking a name-badge to a face is a common sight. And, of course, the genuine and sweet Christian fellowship of reacquainting yourself with old friends, and the making of new ones. And so many choices of papers to attend, however good, bad or ugly they actually turn out to be. And I've not yet mentioned the Exhibition Hall and the books ... all those books: piles, heaps, mounds. This year one new title had been made into a tower which was, well, towering. All I can do is liken my expression to that of the gawping Charlie Bucket when Willy Wonka opens the door to present the children with the 'Land of Candy'. As Gene Wilder crooned in *the* definitive film version, it's a world of pure imagination and I confess, I find it intoxicating. Joking apart, I have no doubt that during those days there are indeed many instances of the fostering of biblical scholarship through the provision of a medium for the oral exchange and written expression of thought and research. I thank God for the opportunity to be part of it.

And yet the intoxicating contains within it the toxic. Even though biblical scholarship is being fostered, so are a number of other less desirable qualities that I witness in myself and observe in others too. Temptations abound and the traps seem to be set wherever there are selfish, self-focused and self-centred people. First, in what to me are these gargantuan surroundings, is the gargantuan pressure to impress and the need to preen. In conversation, I want, no, I *need*, to be able to say something about me and I'm looking for every opportunity to manipulate conversation onto this favourite topic. And no matter what we're talking about, if I detect a more appealing name-badge walking by, I'll be immediately distracted, working out exit strategies from the current conversation to pursue my next target. Don't tell me it doesn't happen. I've done it and it's been done to me. But oh, that internalised punch in the air when someone has heard of me or read something I've done. That can keep me going for a good few hours before I crave another fix. Vain-glory is always lurking around every cluster of conversation.

Second, is when good and healthy respect and honour cross over into a sickly and sinful obsequiousness and sycophancy and where the entourage is quickly formed. As Mangis notes,

The sin of obsequiousness leads one to passively invest authority in others and to make decisions based on how they might affect relationships rather than on discernment of right and wrong. Obsequious people allow others and even themselves to deny and disrespect the image of God with them. They allow their God-given voice to be silenced.¹

Such relational power dynamics are unhealthy for all parties. In an interview about their study *Sucking Up: A Brief Consideration of Sycophancy*,² Deborah and Mark Parker answer a question about how one recognises the sycophant:

¹ Michael Mangis, *Signature Sins: Taming our Wayward Hearts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 39.

² Deborah and Mark Parker, *Sucking Up: A Brief Consideration of Sycophancy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017).

This is often difficult. Plutarch has a wonderful essay on topic, ‘How to tell a friend from a flatterer.’ He suggests a few tests. One might vary one’s opinions or contradict oneself: a flatterer will shift as one turns. A flatterer will support ignoble, mean-spirited, or vicious actions. A flatterer will undermine one’s other friends. But ultimately, the best defense against sycophancy is to eradicate the flatterer within—our own self-conceit. Plutarch reminds us that we often flatter ourselves, which makes us less resistant to the flattery of others. We meet sycophancy halfway.³

Of course, earlier and more authoritative than Plutarch are the plethora of Proverbs that deal with flattery, e.g., ‘A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin’ (26:28); ‘A man who flatters his neighbour spreads a net for his feet’ (29:5).

Third, is a competitiveness sometimes manifest in the questions people ask in sessions, the purpose of which is certainly not about group edification. Indeed, many of these utterances don’t even qualify under the definition of ‘question.’ At the college where I teach, I call this R.S.S. (Rutting Stag Syndrome).

As well as the plethora of Scriptural passages and patterns I need God’s Spirit to bring to mind to crucify this horrible stuff, I’m thinking of distributing to all delegates in the ubiquitous tote bag, a free phylactery containing C. S. Lewis’s ‘The Inner Ring,’ an essay we make all our first-year students read at our college but which we could all do with marking, reading and inwardly digesting several times before, during, and after these gatherings. Let’s heed Lewis’s conclusion: “To a young person, just entering on adult life, the world seems full of “insides,” full of delightful intimacies and confidentialities, and he desires to enter them. But if he follows that desire he will reach no “inside” that is worth reaching.”⁴

It would be simplistic only to address the individual human heart here. There is a sociological and institutional issue which can encourage such behaviours. This has to be faced square on. One of the reasons for our self-promotion and sycophant tendencies is that people are desperately looking for academic posts to fulfil their vocation, or more mundanely, to feed their family: *and demand is vastly outstripping supply*. I am not the first to note this and I won’t be the last.⁵ And I’m just giving reportage when I someone referred to our gathering as the annual ‘cattle market.’ As someone who is responsible for recruiting new faculty in, I repeat, a very small college in the UK, the deluge of applications we receive for every opening, many of them North American, is eye-popping and makes for sobering reading. Surely we need to look at our business and ask some hard questions—for example, should we even be calling ourselves a business, and if so what responsibilities do we have in thinking through the ethics of our economics when it comes to scholar generation?

Fourth, is not so much the problem of puffing-up but rather a conflictual breaking-down. Maybe it’s the need to put the ‘youngster’ in his place. Maybe it’s a long-standing professional rivalry and feud between academic heavy-weight titans which is reprised every year with an eager and even baying audience waiting for the spectacle, and afterwards enjoying post-match analysis over a coffee and pastry. Whichever instantiation it is, it’s combative rather than collaborative. It’s not constructive critique and

³ Howard Lovy, ‘Interview with Deborah and Mark Parker,’ *Foreword Reviews*, 16 August 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/tg58dgn>.

⁴ ‘The Inner Ring’ was Lewis’s Memorial Lecture at King’s College, University of London, in 1944. It can be found online (<https://www.lewissociety.org/innerring/>) and in Lewis’s *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1980), 141–57.

⁵ Peter Enns has written a number of posts on this topic over the last few years. For example see, ‘The Moral Irresponsibility of PhD Programs in Bible and Theology,’ *Pete Enns*, <https://peteenns.com/phd-bible-theology/>.

proper refutation, and certainly in terms of theological education seems far removed from the images of the *hospicium* and *paedagogium* brought out so well in David Smith's recent book *On Christian Teaching*:

The image of the *paedagogium* hints that a pedagogy might rather be a house, a home, a shared dwelling place.... When we teach, we design learning, we offer a temporary home in which students will live for a while, and we shape patterns of life together within which they will grow. A pedagogy is a home in which teachers and students can live together for a while, a place to which students are welcomed as guests and in which they can grow.⁶

How could our hotel not be made a little more homely? Pedagogically what are the 'unintended learning outcomes'⁷ that we are forming in ourselves and our brothers and sisters around us in the way that we conduct our gathering together, not merely the 'character or quality of relationship, but the design of the task, the structure of learning resources, and the patterns of practice.'⁸ How is *Christian* pedagogy being formed and fostered in these meetings? It seems a little odd that we might think deeply about these matters in our 'normal' educational settings but not so much when we come together.

Finally, I want to observe an abstraction from ecclesiology and the evangelical mission of mission. In our God ordained and God prescribed scholarly and academic pursuits, which surely do entail meeting together as a guild, and which surely do entail the pursuit of excellence and necessary specialisation, how as a body, do we stop becoming hermetically sealed? How do we prevent a compartmentalization where the wood is lost for the trees? How do we stop becoming that world of pure imagination which has lost connection with the messy contingencies of the real world? How does what goes on every year in those hotels over those days, relate to what goes on out there? Again, I've been asking *myself* this question first. My own epiphany was the result of an encounter on the Sunday of this year's meetings. I had given a paper in the analytic theology group on the Friday which was a response to a forthcoming book on post-mortem salvific opportunities for the unevangelized. I have no doubt this is an important and worthy topic. My perception was that the session had been profitable and the panellists had been able to dig down quite deep into soteriological, hermeneutical and methodological issues. Therefore, I was in that nice post-paper relaxation mode and had arranged to go to the church of childhood friend and former youth group member who had emigrated to the States a while back, and who, after some years of spiritual wandering and homelessness, had recently become part of a new evangelical church-plant. Encouragingly, I could discern that very slowly she was beginning to grow in her faith but it was fledging and faltering, having been pretty much nowhere. I had not seen her for many years and so we had much to catch up on about the ups and downs of life, health and relationships. Because this lady is still very close to my younger sister, she vaguely knew that I taught at a Bible college but, shock horror, she had no absolutely no idea that the premier gathering of evangelical theologians was on her doorstep. As we chatted she admitted that she was having to learn a new vocabulary which was rather confusing: 'Dan, you can help me here? Someone came up to me in church last week and asked me whether I was a Calvinist or an Iranian....' In that very moment, I realised that if I, if we, have no way of articulating

⁶ David I. Smith, *On Christian Teaching: Practicing Faith in the Classroom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 12.

⁷ Smith, *On Christian Teaching*, 6.

⁸ Smith, *On Christian Teaching*, 6.

my part in the chain that connects our often rarefied business of evangelical erudition to the ordinary business of discipling and evangelising within the visible church, then we're in trouble. The theologising of disciples and the disciplining of theologians surely belong together. How do we create or re-create structures and institutions that allow this mutual flourishing to occur?

There, I've said it. Thanks for the applause. And if this is to be my last editorial, can I say it's been a blast.

Politics, Conscience, and the Church: Why Christians Passionately Disagree with One Another over Politics, Why They Must Agree to Disagree over Jagged-Line Political Issues, and How

— Jonathan Leeman and Andrew David Naselli —

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Abstract: Today many evangelical churches feel political tension. We recommend a way forward by answering three questions: (1) *Why do Christians passionately disagree with one another over politics?* We give two reasons: (a) Christians passionately care about justice and believe that their political convictions promote justice, and (b) Christians have different degrees of wisdom for making political judgments and tend to believe that they have more wisdom than those who differ. (2) *Why must Christians agree to disagree over jagged-line political issues?* After explaining straight-line vs. jagged-line political issues, we give two reasons: (a) Christians must respect fellow Christians who have differently calibrated consciences on jagged-line issues, and (b) insisting that Christians agree on jagged-line issues misrepresents Christ to non-Christians. (3) *How must Christians who disagree over jagged-line political issues agree to disagree?* We explain three ways: (a) acknowledge leeway on jagged-line political issues; (b) unite to accomplish the mission Christ gave the church; and (c) prioritize loving others over convincing them that your convictions about jagged-line political issues are right.

John Piper, who pastored Bethlehem Baptist Church for over thirty years, talks about two groups within the church who feel tension with one another.¹ One group is passionate about evangelism and global missions, while the other is passionate about social action such as ministries to the poor, recovering addicts, women with crisis pregnancies, or marginalized minorities. Piper loves both groups. He has tried to breathe oxygen on their fires. And he has attempted to bring them together by reminding them that Christians should care about relieving suffering—all of it—*especially* eternal suffering.²

Today many evangelical churches in America feel a similar tension in approaching politics.³ All Christians care about justice, but they differ—sometimes *passionately*—about how to identify injustice and how to right those wrongs. Some churches even feel they are at an impasse over such issues and that the result is quiet fractures.

We don't want to overly complicate that political tension, nor do we want to cover it with a band-aid. We recommend a way forward in this article by answering three questions: (1) Why do Christians passionately disagree with one another over politics? (2) Why must Christians agree to disagree over jagged-line political issues? (3) How must Christians who disagree over jagged-line political issues agree to disagree?

We have our own opinions on politics, but our goal in this article is not to convince you that our political judgments are right on issues such as immigration, tax policy, healthcare, welfare, global warming, gun control, or free speech. Nor is our goal to persuade you to vote for a particular political party. Our goal is to help Christians understand why, when, and how they must agree to disagree in political matters. Politics has a reputation for being divisive, dirty, disagreeable. Yet Christians (of all people!) should be able to both hold firm opinions about politics and discuss politics with one another *generously*—in a way that is kind, considerate, friendly, pleasant, humble, and respectful. Basically, in a way that prioritizes loving others.

¹ Thanks to friends who examined a draft of this article and shared helpful feedback, especially Anthony Bushnell, Brian Collins, Sam Crabtree, J. D. Crowley, Kevin DeYoung, Abigail Dodds, Collin Hansen, Tim Keese, James McGlothlin, Travis Myers, Charles Naselli, John Piper, Joe Tyrpak, Mark Ward, Steve Wellum, Jonathon Woodyard, Mike Wittmer, and Fred Zaspel.

We recently coauthored a little book that overlaps with this article: Jonathan Leeman and Andrew David Naselli, *How Can I Love Church Members with Different Politics?*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020). In that book we target laypeople, and in this more academic article we target church leaders (e.g., the book contains no footnotes).

² E.g., see John Piper, "What Do Christians Care About (Most)?" 17 May 2019, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-do-christians-care-about-most>.

³ The typical way dictionaries define *politics* concerns publicly distributing power over an entire population—e.g., "the activities associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power" (*The New Oxford American Dictionary* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017]). For a chapter-length discussion on how to define and describe politics, see Jonathan Leeman, *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ's Rule*, Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 55–97. In this article we are thinking of politics primarily in the democratic republic of the United States because that is our context, but what we write applies in principle to other governments.

1. Why Do Christians Passionately Disagree with One Another over Politics?

Sometimes fellow church members *mildly* disagree over politics. For example, one American votes for a Republican candidate, and another votes for an independent candidate. But our focus here is on *passionate* disagreements, ones that negatively affect how church members think about and relate to one another—that affect their ability to prioritize love. They may feel skeptical or even angry toward one another: “How can she be a Christian and support *that?!?*” Christians passionately disagree with one another over politics for at least two reasons.

1.1. Because Christians Passionately Care about Justice and Believe That Their Political Convictions Promote Justice

Let’s break this first reason down into five components:

1. *Justice according to the Bible is making righteous judgments.* That is, justice is doing what is right according to the standard of God’s will and character as he has revealed it in his word. The word *justice* first occurs in the Bible when God says that he chose Abraham and his descendants to bless the nations “by doing righteousness and justice” (Gen 18:19).⁴ A third of the 125 times the word *justice* appears in the OT, the word *righteousness* is next to it (44 times). The standard of justice is not “contemporary community standards”; it is God’s righteousness. Justice and righteousness begin with God’s own character. What God commands humans to do expresses his will and character. God’s righteousness is what makes human rights right. What humans call *rights* are right only if God says they are right.

The word *justice* in the Bible is interchangeable with *judgment*. It’s the noun form of the verb *judge*. Justice is fundamentally the activity of judging or making a judgment. So we can define justice according to the Bible as *making a judgment according to God’s righteousness*. Or more simply, *making righteous judgments*. This definition has two components: a standard (God’s will and nature as Scripture reveals) and an action (applying the standard or making a judgment on the basis of that standard—i.e., doing justice).

King Solomon illustrates what it looks like to wisely make a righteous judgment. After Solomon discerned which prostitute was telling the truth about her baby, all Israel “stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice” (1 Kgs 3:28)—that is, to *apply righteous judgments*. Doing justice is applying a righteous judgment: “By justice [i.e., by applying righteous judgments] a king builds up the land” (Prov 29:4).

Furthermore, context is important for understanding what justice requires.

doing justice = righteous judgment + context

For instance, in the context of a courtroom, justice doesn’t show partiality or accept bribes (Deut 16:19–20). In the context of a marketplace, justice uses “a just balance and scales” (Prov 16:11).

Justice according to the Bible contrasts with justice according to our secular age in which *justice* = *rights*. Our secular age offers the fruit without the root—the fruit of rights without any standard of righteousness for measuring which rights are right. As such, people learn to enshrine whatever they want with the language of rights. Justice effectively becomes “I deserve what I want,” with the one proviso that others’ rights should not be transgressed either, leaving a muddled mess for the courts to

⁴ Scripture quotations are from the ESV, unless otherwise noted.

sort out amid the myriad conflicts that inevitably arise. So if a man wants to marry a man, it is his right. “Justice” demands it. If a woman wants to terminate her pregnancy, it is her right. “Justice” demands it. If a man decides he wants to have surgery to become female, “justice” demands it. If a person wants to pursue euthanasia and “die with dignity,” “justice” demands it. Whether or not this definition of justice is the best we can do in a pluralistic nation, we can leave for another day. The point here is to observe the difference between a biblical view of rights and contemporary Western culture’s view. Sometimes justice-as-rights will yield just outcomes by the biblical standard (e.g., the right to religious freedom). Sometimes it yields very unjust outcomes by the biblical standard (e.g., the above examples).

2. *Christians passionately care about justice.* Why? Because justice characterizes God: “he has established his throne for justice” (Ps 9:7); he practices and delights in justice and righteousness (Jer 9:24); “every morning he shows forth his justice” (Zeph 3:5); “righteousness and justice are the foundation of [God’s] throne” (Ps 89:14); he “is exalted in justice” (Isa 5:16). And the just God has justified Christians. Justification is to justice what faith is to good works. Genuine faith results in good deeds, and doing good deeds gives evidence of genuine faith (Matt 7:15–20; James 2:14–26). Similarly, being justified results in a desire to do justice, and doing justice gives evidence of being justified.⁵

3. *Governments exist for the purpose of justice.* God instituted governments to do justice for everyone created in his image (Gen 9:5–6; Rom 13:1–7; cf. 2 Sam 8:15; 1 Kgs 10:9; Prov 29:4). So when Christians talk about abortion, immigration, poverty, or same-sex marriage, they are fundamentally talking about doing justice and opposing injustice. Subcategories of justice include *procedural* justice (how a society makes fair decisions), *retributive* justice (how to fairly punish criminals), and *distributive* justice (how the government distributes or redistributes its nation’s resources). The most controversial subcategory these days is *social* justice, which speaks to societal structures broadly and includes elements of the other subcategories of justice.

Christians might debate how to define and evaluate social justice, but it has provided a category that some modern American Christians may not have had: individuals are not the only ones who can be unjust; systems can be, too. Legal and social structures can be unjust. Sinful people pass sinful laws and support sinful institutions and social practices. Haman convinced King Ahasuerus to enact a genocidal campaign against the Jews (Esth 3:7–14). What started as the sin of two individuals quickly became institutional: it became something bigger than individuals, something institutional, something no individual could stop. Isaiah warned against “iniquitous decrees” and “writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right” (Isa 10:1–2). Jesus condemned the experts in the Mosaic law for loading burdens on people that were too hard for them to bear (Luke 11:46). And the first church unjustly neglected the widows of Greek-speaking Jews (Acts 6:1).

Politics yields passionate disagreements between Christians, then, whenever both sides disagree about how to apply God’s word—that is, they disagree about what justice requires. The other side looks like it’s promoting an injustice, which in turn can tempt people to question whether the other side is actually Christian.

4. *In our political context, people on the Right and Left tend to emphasize different aspects of the government’s work of dispensing justice.* People on the Right tend to emphasize justice as righteously

⁵ Cf. Andrew David Naselli, “The Righteous God Righteously Righteouses the Unrighteous: Justification according to Romans,” in *The Doctrine by Which the Church Stands or Falls: Justification in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. Matthew Barrett (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 209–33.

punishing wrongdoers, while people on the Left tend to emphasize lifting up the wronged. We believe the Bible emphasizes both: “May [the king] judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice! ... May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!” (Ps 72:2, 4).

5. *Christians passionately believe that their political convictions promote justice.* People may often be right in their opinions and in their politics. At the same time, the fallen heart always thinks it’s right; it always thinks its cause is just. Adam and Eve’s decision to partake of the fruit required a self-justifying argument, and we have all been self-righteous and self-justifying ever since. And self-justifying people tend to be certain that their convictions are just. That’s why we are tempted to scorn and second-guess our fellow church members whose politics disagree with ours.

So the first reason Christians passionately disagree over politics is that Christians passionately care about justice and believe that their political convictions promote what they perceive as justice. The second is like it.

1.2. Because Christians Have Different Degrees of Wisdom for Making Political Judgments and Tend to Believe That They Have More Wisdom Than Those Who Differ

Most political judgments depend on wisdom, and only God is all-wise. Political judgments are difficult because we all lack wisdom to various degrees. Even if Christians agree on biblical principles, they will often disagree over methods and tactics and timing and more.

Wisdom is both a posture and a skill. It’s the posture of fearing the Lord, and it’s the skill of making productive and righteous decisions. Life is full of complex, complicated decisions; wise people skillfully apply the Bible because they fear the Lord. Wisdom recognizes that there’s a time to answer a fool according to his folly and a time to refrain (Prov 26:4–5). Like cars need fuel, political judgments need wisdom.

Consider once more the episode of the two prostitutes each telling King Solomon that the baby was hers. Solomon called for a sword and commanded, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other” (1 Kgs 3:25). That revealed the real mother. And it required wisdom: “And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice” (1 Kgs 3:28). The goal was justice; the means was wisdom.

The goal of politics is justice; the means is wisdom. Five examples may help illustrate that most controversial political issues depend on wisdom: abortion, immigration, tax rate, political alliances, and political parties.

Example 1: abortion. The Bible forbids abortion since deliberately killing an unborn person is a form of murder. Preachers and churches, therefore, should take a stand on abortion, both in their preaching and in their membership decisions. They should excommunicate anyone who unrepentantly promotes abortion, whether by personally encouraging women to seek them or by politically advocating for abortion.⁶

But Christians do not agree on all the political tactics for opposing the injustice of abortion. Some Christians take an incrementalist strategy. They advocate for policies that prohibit abortion with the

⁶ On church membership and excommunication, see Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

exceptions of rape and incest because they think such policies stand a better chance of passing and that they will eliminate the vast majority of abortions. Others reject such an incrementalist strategy as compromising. Instead, they take an all-or-nothing approach. Who is right strategically? It's hard to be certain, of course, because we're relying on our own wisdom. The Bible might have principles to bring to bear, but it doesn't speak directly to political tactics like that. That's why Pastor Mark Dever, for instance, told me (Jonathan) that he would say that he won't promote a pro-life march from the pulpit even though he might participate in one. He does not want to use his pastoral authority to communicate that Christians must adopt the political strategy of marches. Marches may or may not be wise. The Bible doesn't come close to saying, and a pastor's authority depends on the Bible.

Example 2: immigration. Consider the controversy surrounding Central and South American asylum seekers and other migrants crossing the southern United States border. One group of Christians believes the present laws are just fine. If anything, they believe we need to tighten the restrictions in order to protect our nation and our children. Another group of Christians argues that humanitarian considerations mean allowing as many migrants in as the present law allows, or even changing the laws to accommodate more. And let's agree that "protecting our children" and "showing compassion to asylum seekers" are both biblical impulses. Still, there's a long way to travel between affirming those two biblical principles and determining how to balance them in public policy. How many migrants should a nation permit a year? How many asylum seekers? How will that affect the economy and people's livelihoods? What is the best way to prevent and combat drug and human trafficking? Is a nation obligated to undertake all the costs of processing the hundreds of thousands of migrants who might show up at the borders? In what kinds of conditions should refugees be housed at the border? What about child-parent separation? What unintended consequences might follow this decision or that decision?

Answering those tough questions requires wisdom. The revealed wisdom of God in the Bible is distinct from the wisdom of man, which we need to make nearly every political judgment. Political judgments depend on figuring out how to apply the Bible to the vast and complex set of circumstances that surround every political decision. They require a person to rightly understand biblical principles and then to apply those principles based on social dynamics, legal precedent, political feasibility, historical factors, economic projections, ethnic tensions, criminal justice considerations, and so much more.

When you feel anger at what you perceive to be a political injustice such as an aspect of immigration, you are applying your wisdom to an issue. You are responding with negative moral judgment against what you perceive to be injustice. But it's possible for you (1) to make a political judgment that lacks wisdom and (2) to respond sinfully to what you perceive.

Example 3: tax rate. Christians agree that the Bible condemns stealing. Some infer that a progressive income tax is unjust because it arises from coveting the wealth of the rich and therefore amounts to stealing. Saying the rich need to pay their "fair share" doesn't offer a standard by which to judge what counts as "fair." Others argue that a progressive income tax is better than a flat tax since Jesus said, "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:48). It is "fair" because they don't deserve the extra they have. The first group says that passage has nothing to do with tax rates, and the second group says it applies to all of life. Back and forth it goes. Christians make different political judgments.

Example 4: political alliances. If you want to get things done in a democratic system, you have to make alliances with people with whom you don't agree on everything. That's why political parties exist.

There are not enough people who think exactly like we do on every issue, so we have to join together with people who agree with us on a significant clump of issues to get anything done.

But this process of forming political alliances raises moral questions. Are we culpable for any unjust legislation the other members of our political party manage to pass into law? What if the other party does even more injustice? Does it make a difference if the injustice we're talking about is a "small injustice" versus a "big injustice"—and how big is big? Does it make a difference if we're comparing evil rhetoric versus evil policies? And what if one alliance makes us Christians and our witness look hypocritical, while the other means siding with those who explicitly oppose us? We need wisdom!

Example 5: political parties. To complicate matters, the political landscape keeps changing. It may be reasonable for a Christian to support a particular political party today but not a decade later. The ground can shift beneath our feet quickly. Imagine that you lived in Germany in the early 1920s, and a Christian friend told you that he joined the National Socialist Germany Workers Party—the Nazis. You would have misgivings, but your church probably wouldn't excommunicate him. By the early 1930s, however, what the Nazi Party represented would have become clear enough that voices in your church hopefully would argue for excommunication, as evidenced by the 1934 Barmen Declaration in which the Confessing Church publicly denounced all Nazism. How much more would this be the case by the 1940s? Politics are not static, and with every passing day we need a fresh dose of wisdom. And Christians will have different opinions all along the way.

For example, the political landscape in the United States has changed radically in the last few decades, and with every passing year more and more elements in both parties challenge the biblical standards of justice. The Republican Party has demonstrated a tendency toward an amoral libertarianism, which can function according to the utilitarian principle of sacrificing the few for the sake of the many. Its good emphasis on individual responsibility can overlook larger structural realities and deny implicit biases and thus leave behind the poor, the foreigner, or the minority. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party has adopted shockingly extreme views on abortion by doubling down on third-trimester abortions and sometimes commending a woman's "choice" to kill an accidentally delivered child. The Party also champions gay "marriage," transgender "rights," and other LGBTQ+ "rights" in the name of tolerance in a way that punitively threatens the religious liberty of evangelical institutions such as churches, schools, and adoption agencies.

We list problems in both parties not to suggest there is a moral equivalence between them. We don't believe there is. Some evils are greater than others.

Looking at the landscape in the United States today, some Christians seem untroubled by their choice of party. Others don't feel fully aligned with either party but say they hold their noses and pick "the lesser of two evils." Still others wonder if one or both of the major parties have become off limits for Christians, like the situation with the Nazi Party. We don't think that a particular political party is a perfect fit for a Christian.⁷ If we did, then party thinking would probably be subverting our Christianity. But we do not believe in moral equivalency. Some parties are better than others, and some injustices are worse than others.

Yet our goal throughout this article is not to assess the landscape or to tell you which political judgments to make on any given political matter. Rather, it's to encourage you to ask God for wisdom

⁷ Cf. Timothy Keller, "How Do Christians Fit Into the Two-Party System? They Don't," *The New York Times*, 29 September 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/29/opinion/sunday/christians-politics-belief.html>.

and then to remember that neither you nor your fellow church members are Solomon, much less Jesus, who alone is perfectly wise. Remembering this should create some room for charity and forbearance.

We resonate with theologian and ethicist John Frame that political choices are not always obvious:

It is an art to weigh the importance of different issues and to come to a godly conclusion. Each of us should have a large amount of tolerance for other Christians who come to conclusions that are different from ours. Rarely will one issue trump all others, though I must say that I will never vote for a candidate who advocates or facilitates the killing of unborn children.⁸

2. Why Must Christians Agree to Disagree over Jagged-Line Political Issues?

Before we answer that question, we must first explain jagged-line vs. straight-line political issues. For a straight-line issue, there is a straight line between a biblical text and its policy application. For instance, the Bible explicitly teaches that murder is sinful; abortion is a form of murder, so we should oppose abortion. That's a straight line. Accordingly, both of our churches would initiate the church-discipline process with a member who is advocating for abortion—such as encouraging a single pregnant woman to get an abortion or supporting Planned Parenthood. Though we do not affirm the gospel faithfulness of Roman Catholic Churches, we do appreciate the occasional news report of a Roman Catholic bishop denying communion to politicians such as Ted Kennedy and Joe Biden.

For a straight-line issue, there is a straight line from a biblical or theological principle to a political position. But for a jagged-line issue, there is a multistep process from a biblical or theological principle to a political position. Fellow church members should agree on straight-line political issues, and they should recognize Christian freedom on jagged-line political issues. (See Figure 1.)

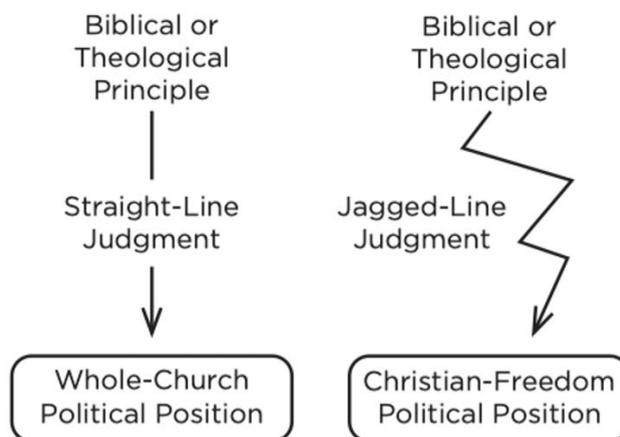


Figure 1. Straight-Line vs. Jagged-Line Political Issue⁹

⁸ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 617.

⁹This figure is from Leeman and Naselli, *How Can I Love Church Members with Different Politics?*, 41. Used with Crossway's permission.

Most political issues are not straight-line issues. Most are jagged-line issues. Think of everything from trade policy to healthcare reform to monetary policy to carbon dioxide emission caps. These issues are important, and Christians should bring biblical principles to bear when thinking about them. But the path from biblical text to policy application is not simple. It's complex. For such issues, none of us should presume to possess "the" Christian position, as if we were apostles revealing true doctrine once and for all time. Rather, we should recognize that such issues belong to the domain of Christian freedom (see sections 2.1 and 3.1 below).

This distinction between straight-line and jagged-line issues comes from Robert Benne, a conservative Lutheran scholar who specializes in how Christianity relates to culture. In his book *Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics*, he argues that treating most issues as straight-line harmfully fuses what is central and essential to Christianity with particular political policies.¹⁰ And both sides of the political spectrum, Benne observes, can fall into this error. Paul Tillich drew a straight line from Christianity to the political-economic system of socialism. Meanwhile, the Christian Coalition, by placing "Christian" in their name, could imply that those who disagree with their political policies are not Christians. Benne recognizes that Christians often employ straight-line thinking unintentionally: "Many individuals and churches are so deeply committed to the affinity of their faith convictions with particular political philosophies and programs that they de facto fuse the faith and politics."¹¹ The policies that mainline Protestant churches in America prefer "seem to mimic those of the Democratic Party," while the Religious Right seems to move in a straight line "from central core convictions to conservative policies."¹² But, argues Benne, "The trajectory from core Christian theological beliefs to a specific public policy is a complex and jagged one."¹³ Relatively few political issues are straight-line issues. Benne names a handful of them:

- "policies that restrain abortion"
- "policies that uphold classical views of marriage"
- the cluster of issues "surrounding a 'safety net' for the most vulnerable in our society" (Benne qualifies, "Even these relatively straight-line trajectories do not lead necessarily to specific public policies.")
- the cluster of issues of protecting "religious liberty at home and abroad"
- opposing policies "that do not jibe with any line from the core to public policy" such as "Hitler's genocidal policies"¹⁴

To that list of straight-line issues, we would add that Christians should oppose policies that support prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against people on the basis of their race or ethnicity—as if some people are not made in God's image.

The problem with saying there is a straight line from the Bible to specific policies is that while the goal (pursued by the policies) may be a straight line, the policies may not. Benne argues that for most political policies, "the steps between core and policy are so fraught with disagreement that clear

¹⁰ Robert Benne, *Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 31–38.

¹¹ Benne, *Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics*, 35.

¹² Benne, *Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics*, 37.

¹³ Benne, *Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics*, 71.

¹⁴ Benne, *Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics*, 76–78.

connections are impossible. A whole range of public policy issues—perhaps the vast majority of them—exhibit a tangled journey from core to policy. There simply are too many steps in the movement from core to public policy, involving too many prudential judgments, to construct anything like a straight line”—such as addressing foreign policy in Iraq, the economic recession, or global warming.¹⁵ As John Frame asserts, “When issues become more specific, it often becomes more difficult to be sure of the biblical position”¹⁶—or whether there even is *the* biblical position.

In short, it is critical to distinguish between straight-line issues (which can lead to what we might call *the* Christian position) and jagged-line issues (whose policy judgments belong to the domain of Christian freedom). It’s right for churches to take institutional stands on straight-line issues through preaching and membership decisions, but church leaders risk being sinfully divisive by taking those institutional stands on jagged-line issues.¹⁷

Now that we’ve explained jagged-line vs. straight-line political issues, we are ready to answer the question *Why must Christians agree to disagree over jagged-line political issues?* For at least two reasons: (1) Christians must respect fellow Christians who have differently calibrated consciences on jagged-line issues, and (2) insisting that Christians agree on jagged-line issues misrepresents Christ to non-Christians.

2.1. Because Christians Must Respect Fellow Christians Who Have Differently Calibrated Consciences on Jagged-Line Issues¹⁸

Yes, *must*. It’s not optional to respect fellow Christians who have differently calibrated consciences on jagged-line issues. Jagged-line issues correspond to what Paul in Romans 14:1 calls “disputable matters” (NIV) or “opinions” (ESV) or matters of conscience. “Don’t argue about disputed matters” (CSB).

Your conscience is your consciousness of what you believe is right and wrong. That implies that your conscience is not necessarily correct on every issue. What you believe is right and wrong is not necessarily the same thing as what God believes is right and wrong. You might believe with deep conviction in your conscience that a ten-year-old boy has the right to choose to become a biological female. If so, your conscience is not functioning correctly for that issue because it is based on immoral standards. You should calibrate your conscience.

The idea of calibrating your conscience pictures your conscience as an instrument. Instruments can be incorrect: your bathroom scale may say you weigh 142 pounds when you actually weigh 139; your car odometer may indicate that your speed is 52 when it’s actually 56; your watch may say it is 1:47 PM

¹⁵ Benne, *Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics*, 78–79.

¹⁶ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 617.

¹⁷ Cf. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 721–23. The Feinberg brothers make three distinctions: “(1) prescriptive versus descriptive language; (2) ethical principles versus prudential advice; and (3) universal general norms versus contextualized specific applications of principles” (722). They argue that political issues don’t have a “Christian position” if Scripture doesn’t directly address them—that is, if they are matters of prudential policy and not scriptural ethics, such as laws about voluntary prayer in public schools (723).

¹⁸ This section condenses Andrew David Naselli and J. D. Crowley, *Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

when it's actually 1:49 PM. When an instrument is incorrect, it needs to be calibrated. To calibrate an instrument is to align it with a standard to ensure that it's functioning accurately.

The standard for what's right and wrong is God, who has revealed himself to us particularly through the Bible. So when your conscience is not functioning accurately, you should endeavor to align it with God's words. The classic example of this in the Bible is the Apostle Peter. He was convinced in his conscience that it was sinful to eat certain foods—like pork. God told Peter three times to “kill and eat” animals that Peter considered to be unclean. Peter had the gall to reply to God, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” But because the Lord was commanding Peter to eat those foods, Peter had to calibrate his conscience so that he would have the confidence to accept food and people that he previously could not accept (see Acts 10:9–16).

So how does a Christian calibrate his or her conscience? In at least three ways:

1. *by educating it with truth.* Truth refers primarily to the truth God reveals in the Bible, but it also includes truth outside the Bible. For example, assuming that God allows some forms of contraception, the decisive information that may lead a Christian couple to use or not use a particular form of contraception may be truth outside the Bible—that is, scientific information that explains in detail how a form of contraception works.

2. *in the context of your church.* Godly church leaders and fellow members are one of God's gifts to you to help you calibrate your conscience. You don't have to do it alone.

3. *with due process.* Some issues may take you years to work through. That's okay. It's better not to rush it than to prematurely change and go against your conscience.

How does all this relate to jagged-line political issues? Here's the basic scheme that we're recommending: Treat straight-line issues as whole-church issues, and treat jagged-line issues as Christian-freedom issues or matters of conscience. It's critical that Christians distinguish between straight-line whole-church issues and jagged-line Christian-freedom issues because the consciences of Christians should function differently for each set of issues. For straight-line whole-church issues, pastors should preach, “This is what God says.” It's right to try to persuade people to be conscience-bound on whole-church issues. Furthermore, straight-line or whole-church issues will impact membership decisions. An abortion doctor or a member of the Ku Klux Klan could not be a member of either of our churches. Those are both straight-line issues, which means they are whole-church issues.

Jagged-line issues are matters of conscience that fellow church members should be able to agree to disagree over. Disputable matters include issues such as how you interpret who “the sons of God” are in Genesis 6 or how Christians should view the “Sabbath.” It also includes the vast majority of political judgments. For example, is the American government presently enforcing the death penalty in a just way? If not, what are the next steps the government should take to solve that problem?¹⁹

¹⁹ Some readers might be wondering why we are taking a binary approach here (i.e., either whole-church or not; either straight-line or jagged-line) and not using theological triage (i.e., three levels of importance—essential, cardinal doctrines; important denominational distinctives; and nonessential, non-cardinal doctrines). On theological triage, see R. Albert Mohler Jr., “A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity,” *Albert Mohler*, 12 July 2005, <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity>; Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 295–96; Gavin Ortlund, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On: Theological Triage in Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020). We are not using theological triage here because church organization is binary. To borrow language from Jesus, a church will bind some things and loose others (Matt 16:19; 18:18). The church will decide that belief *x* or practice *y* is necessary for being a Christian and church membership or that it

Jagged-line issues easily become deeply ingrained in your conscience. And that sets the scene for conflict because we inevitably dispute disputable matters. No two sinful humans agree on absolutely everything—not even a godly husband and godly wife. We have different perspectives, backgrounds, personalities, preferences, thought processes, and levels of understanding truth about God, his word, and his world. So it's not surprising when fellow church members disagree about jagged-line issues. We should expect that and learn to live with those differences. We don't always need to eliminate such differences, but we must seek to glorify God by loving one another in our differences. That is Paul's main concern in Romans 14.

Here are two of Paul's principles in Romans 14:

1. *Welcome those who disagree with you as Christ has welcomed you* (Rom 14:1–2; 15:7). Those who have a weak conscience on a particular issue are theologically incorrect but not heretical since the issue is not “of first importance” (1 Cor 15:3). Your main priority should not be for them to change their view. Your main priority is to “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Rom 15:7).

2. *Don't look down on those who are stricter than you on a particular issue, and don't be judgmental toward those who have more freedom on a particular issue* (Rom 14:3–4). Love those who differ with you by respecting them, not disdaining them. Don't assume that anyone who is stricter than you is legalistic or that anyone who is freer than you is licentious. When you are convinced that a certain political strategy is just, you may be tempted to treat it as a matter of first importance, but that would be a grave mistake because it would imply that those who disagree with you on that issue cannot be Christians.

So is it okay to talk about jagged-line political issues with fellow Christians? Yes, but only if you do it with the right spirit and with the right proportion. Be strict with yourself and generous with others. Genuinely respect your fellow brothers and sisters who disagree with you on jagged-line political issues. Don't become preoccupied with jagged-line issues with the result that you are divisive about them. Jagged-line issues should not be so important to you that it's all you want to talk about.

The same is true, of course, in other areas. We both have an opinion of the nature of the millennium. And both of us would be willing to share our opinion about the millennium, say, in a Sunday School class. Still, when I (Jonathan) was teaching about the millennium in such a setting, I told the class that they could disagree with me and still be a member of the church. I would not make this a point of contention and division. I treat that topic differently than I treat a gospel issue like the Trinity or even a church-order issue like baptism. We have to agree on gospel issues and church-order issues. They are whole-church issues. We don't have to agree on conscience issues.

Christians must agree to disagree over jagged-line political issues because of how God commands Christians to relate to fellow Christians—respect those with differently calibrated consciences. A second reason concerns how Christians relate to non-Christians.

is not. More specifically, churches will bind first-tier and second-tier issues but not third-tier ones. Christians will disagree about which issues fall on which side of the whole-church line. Some say a particular view on baptism is a whole-church issue; others don't. Some say a certain stance on the millennium is a whole-church issue; others don't. Fine. Our point here is that a line does exist between whole-church issues and Christian-freedom issues and that churches must likewise make membership decisions that are on/off decisions, not three-layered ones.

2.2. Because Insisting That Christians Agree on Jagged-Line Issues Misrepresents Christ to Non-Christians

When a Christian insists that his conviction about a jagged-line political issue is *the* Christian position, he is misrepresenting Christ to non-Christians. We cringe when we see this on social media. A well-intentioned brother links to a partisan opinion article that implies his policy position on immigration (or global warming or poverty or gun rights or systemic racism) is *the* Christian position—the position that Jesus himself demands his followers take—and that those who oppose his conviction are unbiblical and unchristian. Sometimes, he might be right. Often, he isn't. And that creates a poor witness to non-Christians, who consequently might equate Christianity with a specific political position or political party.²⁰ We don't want to imply that the Bible requires you to take a particular view on a jagged-line political issue to be a Christian. That does not accomplish the church's mission (more on that in section 3.2 below).

The gospel creates a unified people in Christ, but it does not necessarily create political uniformity for wisdom-based political judgments. Churches should strive to proclaim the gospel to as many people as possible—people who are diverse economically, generationally, ethnically, and nationally. Churches must be careful not to cultivate a culture that pressures everyone in the church to be uniform on jagged-line issues. Christians must not bind the consciences of fellow Christians on disputable matters. Even if your church is healthy, your members will likely not be entirely uniform in their politics. There may be some political tension. That's okay because what unites us is our love for Jesus, not our convictions on jagged-line political issues. And when your church cultivates a healthy unity amid such diversity, that strengthens how you represent Christ to outsiders. What marks Christians should be our love for one another—not our strident tone.²¹

It makes sense that you may feel skeptical or angry toward fellow church members when they disagree with you about which political judgments are the most just. But that doesn't make it right. You must love and respect your fellow church members who differ with you on jagged-line issues.

3. How Must Christians Who Disagree over Jagged-Line Political Issues Agree to Disagree?

Christians who disagree with one another over jagged-line political issues must agree to disagree in at least three ways: (1) by acknowledging leeway on jagged-line political issues, (2) by uniting to accomplish the mission Christ gave the church, and (3) by prioritizing loving others over convincing them that your convictions about jagged-line political issues are right.

²⁰ Cf. how Timothy Keller winsomely explains to a secular audience the difference between big-E *Evangelicalism* (which the media define sociologically, especially with reference to how people vote) and little-e *evangelicalism* (which Keller defines theologically, especially with reference to the gospel, the *evangel*): “Can Evangelicalism Survive Donald Trump and Roy Moore?,” *The New Yorker*, 19 December 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/can-evangelicalism-survive-donald-trump-and-roy-moore>.

²¹ On how loving fellow Christians is a powerful way to evangelize non-Christians, see J. Mack Stiles, *Marks of the Messenger: Knowing, Living and Speaking the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 103–9.

3.1. By Acknowledging Leeway on Jagged-Line Political Issues

Christians must distinguish between *the* Christian position on a political matter (e.g., abortion) and political matters that are jagged-line issues (e.g., carbon dioxide emission ceilings, national math standards for eighth graders, the existence of a federal aviation authority, and requirements on commercial airline construction). There's no leeway for straight-line issues; there is leeway for jagged-line issues. (*Leeway* refers to space for Christians to have different opinions.)

If there is no leeway according to the Bible for Christians to disagree, then pastors should preach about those matters from the Bible as *the* Christian position, and that should affect whom churches admit into their membership and whom they remove from membership. If there is leeway for Christians to disagree, then pastors should not attempt to bind consciences on such issues, and a Christian's position on such issues should not affect his or her standing as a church member. We must distinguish (1) what God says and (2) our political judgments on jagged-line issues that apply what God says. For example, determining the most strategic way to vote is ordinarily a jagged-line issue.²²

It's one thing to believe that God forbids stealing. That's what God says in the Bible. But it's another thing to argue that a ninety percent tax rate, which was the rate in 1960 for anyone making more than \$300,000 in the United States, is stealing. That's a political judgment on a jagged-line issue that applies what God says. We personally think that that political judgment is probably correct, and we're even happy for Christians to attempt to persuade one another on the topic, particularly as some Americans increasingly regard socialism as a viable option. But we must be careful not to imply that the way we apply the Bible here is *the* Christian position. There's a big difference between titling your position paper "*The* Christian Statement on Tax Rates" and "A Christian Statement on Tax Rates."

Ethics professor Andrew Walker proposes a helpful "ethical triage": (1) must = obligatory; (2) should = advisable; and (3) may = permissible.²³ That's a helpful grid for thinking through political matters. It's sinful to adopt a *take no prisoners* strategy for a jagged-line political issue that's actually a "should" at best and more likely a "may."

One of my (Jonathan's) pastor friends wisely observed, "I thought my job as a pastor would focus on getting my church members to encourage one another to do what the Bible commands. Instead, most of my job is keeping my church members from demanding things of each other the Bible never does." We need to be able to simultaneously work to persuade one another of perceived injustices while also leaving one another some measure of freedom to disagree about what counts as an injustice.

Here's some advice to pastors: Be cautious about how you wield your influence on jagged-line political issues. Your job is to preach the Bible—not to advocate specific political policies. Your authority is tied to God's word. So when you preach and teach and counsel your flock, be very careful not to speak about jagged-line political issues with the same conscience-binding authority with which you speak about matters "of first importance" (1 Cor 15:3). When you speak dogmatically about a jagged-line political issue, you weaken your ability to prophetically address a straight-line political issue.²⁴

²² Cf. thought #2 in Kevin DeYoung, "Seeking Clarity in This Confusing Election Season: Ten Thoughts," *The Gospel Coalition*, 13 October 2016, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/seeking-clarity-in-this-confusing-election-season-ten-thoughts/>.

²³ Andrew T. Walker, "Is This a Sin?: Ethical Triage and Church Discipline," *9Marks*, 2 October 2019, <https://www.9marks.org/article/is-this-a-sin-ethical-triage-and-church-discipline/>.

²⁴ For more to pastors along this line, see Kevin DeYoung, "Of Pastors and Politics," *The Gospel Coalition*, 3 February 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/of-pastors-and-politics/>; Kevin DeY-

A U. S. senator once invited his pastor, Mark Dever, to his office for advice on a constitutional amendment that would require a balanced budget. The senator shared, “My colleagues are pushing me. The party whip is pushing me. The press is hounding me. You’re my pastor. How should I vote?” Dever wisely responded, “Brother, I’ll pray that God gives you wisdom.” And that was all. Years later, Dever recounted to me (Jonathan), “It’s not like I didn’t have an opinion. I had a very strong opinion.”

I asked, “So why didn’t you say something?”

“Because my authority as a pastor,” Dever explained, “is tied to the word of God. I know I’m right about the Bible. I know I’m right about the gospel and Jesus’s promised return. And I’m happy to address any political issue that meets the criteria of being biblically significant and clear. I don’t think the constitutional amendment in question was either biblically clear or significant. Therefore, I’m going to preserve my pastoral authority and credibility for what Scripture has told me to talk about.” To be sure, some people might argue that the balanced budget amendment is biblically clear or significant. Fine. That was a judgment call on Dever’s part. Our goal isn’t to argue about that issue; it’s to commend the principle that Dever illustrates. He distinguished between straight-line and jagged-line issues, and he humbly practiced forbearance with jagged-line issues, particularly as a pastor.

Dever also explained that if the senator asked him about the 13th amendment (outlawing slavery), the 14th amendment (the right of citizenship for all races), or the 15th amendment (voting rights for all races), he certainly would have spoken up since the line from the Bible to political policies is straighter for those issues. Those who are justified will pursue justice. Faith shows itself in deeds.²⁵

More and more, the two of us find ourselves in conversations with brothers and sisters in Christ who feel stuck. They “cannot possibly imagine” voting for *this* party or *that* party or *either* party. Yet hopefully you can now better understand what it would mean to treat this kind of question as a straight-line whole-church issue: it would mean your church would potentially excommunicate anyone who supports this or that party, even as we would excommunicate a Nazi. Until your church reaches that point, you must exercise some measure of charity and forbearance.

Churches can sin and prove faithless by not speaking up in matters of political policy when they should. But only once in a great while should churches speak directly to political policy or to particular candidates. Normally doing that would require competencies that most pastors don’t possess, and it would be saying more than Jesus authorizes pastors to say.

3.2. By Uniting to Accomplish the Mission Christ Gave the Church

The distinction between straight-line versus jagged-line issues needs to be set inside the larger conversation about the mission of the church. God gives everyone jobs to do, including the different institutions he has established like governments, churches, church elders, or parents. If two Christians disagree whether X is a part of the church’s job, one is bound to argue, “Why are you saying the church should take a stand here? This isn’t any of the church’s business!”

oung, “The Preacher and Politics: Seven Thoughts,” *The Gospel Coalition*, 1 May 2018, <https://www.thegospel-coalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/preacher-politics-seven-thoughts/>; Kevin DeYoung, “The Church at Election Time,” *The Gospel Coalition*, 3 October 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/church-election-time/>.

²⁵ That story is from Jonathan Leeman, *How the Nations Rage: Rethinking Faith and Politics in a Divided Age* (Nashville: Nelson, 2018), 145–46.

Part of Christians learning how to agree to disagree better than we presently are, therefore, is trying to come to some agreement on what exactly is the church's "business." What jobs has God given it? What is its mission?

We implicitly assume throughout the previous section (3.1) that straight-line issues are a part of the church's business—at least in its capacity as a corporate actor—while jagged-line issues are not. Instead, jagged-line issues are the prerogative of church members or individual Christians.²⁶

The problem is that most Christians have little ecclesiology. They have little understanding of the institutional authority and concreteness of a church and how the individual Christian and his or her opinions are not the same thing as a church and its authority. The individual Christian walking into the public square is not the same thing as a church collectively walking into the public square.

The individual Christian stepping into the public square should make every use of common-grace knowledge, his or her own study of the Bible, and even partnerships with non-Christians to advocate for just ends on every straight-line or jagged-line issue out there. They possess much more freedom to speak to a broad range of issues, so long as they take care not to treat their positions as "the" biblical or "the" Christian position, save those on which their church has rendered judgment.

God has commissioned local churches, acting corporately, to teach everything Jesus commanded and to equip the saints for their respective ministries. But God has not commissioned local churches to advocate across the whole range of issues that comprise the work of government. It's not a part of their job. It doesn't belong to their mission. They can teach what the Bible says about taxes and private property. They probably shouldn't presume to speak to this or that tax bill. We might say that the church is to an individual church member what a law school is to a lawyer or a medical school is to a doctor. The law school's "mission," for instance, is to teach law to the aspiring lawyer, whose "mission" in turn is to practice law. The two missions work together, but they are distinct.

What will help Christians to agree to disagree politically, in short, is pastors who begin to teach their members what a church is, what the church's corporate mission is, and how that mission differs from the mission God has given them as individual church members. With these distinctions more firmly in mind, we believe one church member should more easily be able to say to another member, "Well, I feel strongly about this political issue, and I disagree with you. But I recognize that we can still share the Lord's Supper together in love and peace amid our disagreements. Our agreement on this topic is not what makes us a church."

²⁶ We won't take the time here to unpack the broader debate between narrow and broad construals of the church's mission. Suffice it to say, some (not all) of the confusion roots in the fact that people are using the term *church* differently when they answer the question about the church's mission. Advocates of a broad view tend to use the term *church* to refer to *the church as its members*. Advocates of a narrow view tend to use the term to refer to *the church as a corporate actor*. For more on this, see Jonathan Leeman, "Soteriological Mission: Focusing in on the Mission of Redemption," in *Four Views on the Church's Mission*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 17–45 (also 92–97, 134–39, 177–82). See also Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); John Anthony Wind, *Do Good to All People as You Have the Opportunity: A Biblical Theology of the Good Deeds Mission of the New Covenant Community*, Reformed Academic Dissertations (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019).

3.3. By Prioritizing Loving Others Over Convincing Them That Your Convictions about Jagged-Line Political Issues Are Right

That's Paul's burden in Romans 14. It's ideal that you not have a theologically incorrect position (i.e., a weak conscience) on a disputable matter. But far more important than eliminating disagreements on such issues between fellow church members is that fellow church members love one another in their differences.

We are not suggesting that you never talk about controversial political issues with fellow church members or that you never make a case for why you are convinced that your political judgments promote justice. We are exhorting you to prioritize loving fellow Christians over convincing them that your convictions about jagged-line political issues are right. Here are six specific ways to love one another:

1. *Welcome those who disagree with you as Christ has welcomed you* (Rom 14:1; 15:7). Treat brothers and sisters who disagree with you over politics as family—not as enemies. View them with an eternal perspective. To cultivate that mindset, meditate on eternity and the final judgment. That shouldn't cultivate complacency or indifference toward injustice; it should calibrate your perspective over politics and fellow Christians who disagree with you on specific political policies. Measure the *now* according to the eternal *then*.

2. *“Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”* (James 1:19). Why? “Because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires” (James 1:20 NIV). Sinful anger overreacts and escalates controversy and tension. Wise Christians know when and how to dial down the temperature of political disagreements.²⁷

“A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion” (Prov 18:2). Humbly listen to those who don't share your perspective, especially when they come from a different background.²⁸ Put yourself in their shoes. What principle of justice are they seeing that you might be missing? Don't assume that you flawlessly perceive injustice.²⁹ Be sensitive to the fears and concerns of fellow believers whether you agree or not.

²⁷ When our friend Tim Keese—*a missionary globetrotter*—shared feedback on this article, he suggested that we encourage Americans to gain an international perspective on politics: “In much of the world today and throughout history, Christians don't have any opportunity to impact their government or hold a political opinion that matters. In such countries, justice issues are extremely different than they are in America now. This doesn't lessen the need to pursue justice in America, but the depth and breadth of systemic injustice is so great in much of the world that it should at least dial down the temperature of our disagreements” (email to Andy Naselli on 16 November 2019, shared with permission).

²⁸ Cf. Collin Hansen, *Blind Spots: Becoming a Courageous, Compassionate, and Commissioned Church*, Cultural Renewal (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

²⁹ Cf. D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 160: “When we are convinced that we are suffering unjustly, we may cry out for justice. We want God to be just and exonerate us immediately; we want God to be fair and mete out suffering immediately to those who deserve it. The trouble with such justice and fairness, however, is that, if it were truly just and truly fair and as prompt as we demand, we would soon be begging for mercy, for love, for forgiveness—for anything but justice. For very often what I really mean when I ask for justice is implicitly circumscribed by three assumptions, assumptions not always recognized: (1) I want this justice to be dispensed immediately; (2) I want justice in this instance, but not necessarily in every instance; and (3) I presuppose that in this instance I have grasped the situation correctly.” J. Paul Nyquist presents four reasons that legal justice is elusive: (1) legislative—we make unjust laws; (2) cognitive—we have limited knowledge; (3) spiritual—we have darkened understanding; and (4) neurological—we have implicit bias. *Is Justice Possible? The Elusive Pursuit of What Is Right* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 41–89.

3. *Pray with affection for those who disagree with you.* When you pray about the outcome of someone else's faith, God often deepens your affection for them. When fellow church members celebrate Bible teachings that are of first importance, jagged-line issues shouldn't overthrow those rich truths we love and live for and would die for.

4. *Respectfully think about those who disagree with you.* Don't disdain them or look down on them. This is not easy to do. It's not natural; it requires God's supernatural enabling. The natural route is to avoid the guy who incessantly pontificates about his political hobby horse or to think condescendingly about that lady who is too far to the right or too far to the left. You might be tempted to suspect that a fellow member may be an enemy because he voted for the other side and thus may not even be a genuine Christian. "Slander no one ... be peaceable and considerate ... be gentle toward everyone" (Titus 3:2).

5. *Don't use the label gospel issue for a jagged-line political judgment that you think is an implication of the gospel.*³⁰ Calling something a *gospel issue* sounds the theological alarm at DEFCON 1. It may communicate something like this: "I hold *the* Christian position on this political matter. If you don't agree with me, then you are not a Christian." We agree with Tim Keller that evangelism and our pursuit of justice "should exist in an asymmetrical, inseparable relationship."³¹ In other words, there is an *inseparable asymmetry* between the primary problem the gospel solves (our sin against God) and the secondary problem the gospel solves (our sin against others); one way we preserve the gospel is by giving grace and protecting Christian liberty on jagged-line political matters.³²

6. *Exult with one another that we can trust our sovereign God when politics tempt us to be sinfully anxious.*

Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases. (Ps 115:3)

Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
"Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."
He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision. (Ps 2:1–4)

³⁰ See D. A. Carson, "What Are Gospel Issues?," *Them* 39 (2014): 215–19. Cf. D. A. Carson, "The Biblical Gospel," in *For Such a Time as This: Perspectives on Evangelicalism, Past, Present and Future*, ed. Steve Brady and Harold Rowdon (London: Evangelical Alliance, 1996), 83; Kevin DeYoung, "Is Social Justice a Gospel Issue?," *The Gospel Coalition*, 11 September 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/social-justice-gospel-issue/>.

³¹ Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Dutton, 2010), 139. Cf. Tim Chester, *Good News to the Poor: Social Involvement and the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

³² Jonathan Leeman, "Do Evangelicals Need a Better Gospel?," *The Gospel Coalition*, 21 December 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/inseparable-asymmetry-gospel/>. Cf. D. A. Carson, "Editorial," *Them* 33.2 (2008): 1–3; D. A. Carson, "How Do We Work for Justice and Not Undermine Evangelism?," *The Gospel Coalition*, 18 October 2010, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2010/10/18/asks-carson-justice-evangelism/>; D. A. Carson, "The Hole in the Gospel," *Them* 38 (2013): 353–56.

Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matt 6:34)

4. Concluding Prayer

Father, when we disagree with one another on complex political issues, would you please help us disagree in a way that pleases you? Give us courage to be faithfully countercultural and to represent you truthfully to non-Christians. Please give us wisdom to love and forbear when we disagree about political judgments. Please unite us to accomplish the mission Christ gave the church. We ask this for the fame of your Name. Amen.

Should the Local Church Resist Texts in Scripture that Clash with Western Culture? The Test Case of Leviticus 21:16–24

— Katherine Smith —

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Abstract: Leviticus 21:16–24 instructs the Aaronic priest with a permanent physical blemish to refrain from serving YHWH in his presence. In today’s western culture, such exclusion would be deemed deplorable and so this clash of cultures raises the question of how the local church can appropriate Leviticus 21:16–24 as Christian Scripture in the present cultural climate. In addressing this question, this paper argues that the theological basis of Leviticus 21:16–24 is that only those who exemplify a whole condition are acceptable in YHWH’s presence. Thus, when a person does not exemplify this condition of wholeness, there is restriction and exclusion. Understanding the condition that leads to exclusion requires a holistic view of purity and impurity and, when we understand Leviticus 21:16–20 with this holistic perspective, the passage reflects a theological reality central to the person and work of Christ.

A hermeneutical challenge in our day is overcoming contempt for biblical texts where the meaning and theological basis seem to grate with Western cultural values. An example of such a text is Leviticus 21:16–24 where a man, who would usually qualify to be an Aaronic priest, is excluded from a particular priestly role on the basis that he has a physical disability. In a culture where exclusion on the basis of disability would prompt public criticism or even legal liability, such a text could be construed as an example of Scripture where the meaning needs to be resisted lest it have a negative impact on the wellbeing of those with disability in the church’s midst. This clash between a Western worldview and Leviticus 21:16–24 raises the question about how the local church as an expression of a new covenant community can understand and appropriate this particular text as Christian Scripture. To address this question, this article models reading Leviticus 21:16–24 attentively in its theological

contexts.¹

1. Attentively Reading Leviticus 21:16–24

Leviticus 21:16–24 is mainly a divine speech that Moses is to mediate to Aaron. The quotative frame in vv. 16–17a identifies Aaron as the addressee of the mediated speech and so suggests that adherence to the following instructions are the responsibility of the high priest. As is common for instruction in Leviticus, the speech then begins in v. 17b with a head theme that topicalizes the whole. In this instance, however, the head theme's first elements focus upon the identity of those to whom the instructions are applicable, namely those from Aaron's descendants (מִזְרְעֶךָ; lit. "from your seed") and for future generations (לְדֹרֹתֶם). Then a relative clause modifies this description further to include those who have a "permanent blemish" (מוֹם). In the Hebrew text, the final clause of the head theme in v. 17 is the prohibition that restricts Aaron's descendants who have a blemish from approaching with the purpose of offering the food gifts of "his God." In Hebrew word order, natural information flow progresses through the main verb being the initial element in each clause. When this is not the case, and either the explicit subject or object is in the clause-initial position, then the text has chosen to highlight this particular information as prominent. Thus, the focus of the head theme in v. 17 is upon the description of those to whom the prohibition applies, which suggests that these characteristics are significant. Second, the prohibition only concerns the priestly function of offering YHWH's food gifts. It does not prohibit the blemished priest from undertaking other duties, such as teaching YHWH's instruction to the Israelites.² The rest of the passage expands further upon this head theme from v. 17.

Verses 18–20 describe the kind of permanent blemishes that exclude a priest from offering gifts before YHWH. However, this list in v. 18 is preceded by a second prohibition at the beginning of the verse. This prohibition is prefaced by the conjunction כִּי ("for" or "since"), which suggests that this is the reason for the first prohibition in v. 17. Once more, the subject in the Hebrew text is fronted before the verbal idea and so highlights the identity of the one to whom the following prohibition applies, namely, "every man" (כָּל-אִישׁ) who has a blemish. Further still, the prohibition itself does not specify the function of offering food gifts for God, but rather finishes the prohibition at the action of approaching (קָרַב). The reason then as to why a priest with a blemish cannot draw near to offer gifts to YHWH is that no man with a blemish can approach. Thus, this exclusion from the priestly role is due to a much broader prohibition against any Israelite with a blemish from drawing near. This prohibition then forms an introduction to a list of example blemishes in vv. 18–20, which includes a man who is blind, who is lame as a result of a problem with his foot or leg that makes walking difficult, who has a birth deformity

¹ The phrases "reading Scripture attentively" and an "attentive reading" are appropriated purposefully from Mark Thompson, "Attentively Reading Scripture," in *Marriage, Same-Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia: Essays from the Doctrine Commission* (Mulgrave: Broughton Publishing, 2019), 78–79.

² See also Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, AB 3A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1825. Contrary to John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC 4 (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 349; Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC 3A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 275. For example, Hartley states that a disability would make the person "unfit to function as [a] priest."

(חָרָם)³ or a deformity since birth (שָׂרוּעַ),⁴ who has an injured foot or hand, who is hunchbacked, who is a dwarf, whose sight is obscured, who has a festering sore, or who has crushed testicles.⁵ Each “blemish” alters the physical appearance or outward functionality of a person.

After vv. 18–20 conveys the rationale of the prohibition in v. 17 and gives examples of blemishes that restrict a priest from offering food gifts to God, vv. 21–23 accentuates both prohibition and permission through its literary structure where permission in v. 22 is framed by prohibition in v. 21 and v. 23. The first prohibition frame in v. 21 repeats the thrust of the head theme from v. 17. Like v. 17, v. 21 begins by describing the person first before stating the prohibition. The now familiar relative clause “who has a blemish on him from a descendant of Aaron” modifies “every man” (כָּל-אִישׁ). There is no ambiguity about who the following prohibition applies—every man descended from Aaron who has a blemished appearance. The prohibition then repeats the thrust of the head theme by restricting the blemished Aaronic priest from approaching with a gift for YHWH. Two pithy disjunctive clauses then make up the remainder of v. 21. The first simply states immediately after the prohibition, “he has a blemish.” The purpose of this clause is to highlight the basis for the prohibition. The second disjunctive clause then repeats the prohibition for the second time that he, that is the blemished Aaronic priest, is not to approach with the purpose of offering a food gift. Noticeably though, the direct object, which is “the food of his God” (אֵת לֶחֶם אֱלֹהָיו) is placed first in the clause before the negative particle (לֹא; “not”) + main verb (יִגַּע; “he should approach”). Once more, the choice to move elements of the clause before the main verb highlights the information that is fronted, which in this instance is the food gifts that the blemished priest is prohibited from offering. Thus, there is a connection between the priest having a blemish and the offering of the food gifts, since this task is the only restriction that the text has addressed to this point. Further still, the repetition of the prohibition in v. 21 functions to reinforce the restriction so that there is no excuse where there is culpability.

Before reading the second prohibition frame in v. 23, it is worth reading the text in its given shape to follow the text’s logic; thus, the next stage of logic after the first prohibition frame is in v. 22, where YHWH gives permission in the midst of prohibition. Just as the conclusion of v. 21 is disjunctive, so too v. 22 continues with disjunctive clauses that give prominence to what is being said. To accentuate what is permissible, the main verb, “he can eat” (יֹאכַל), is placed last in the clause of the Hebrew text and then what can be eaten is placed before this main verb, namely the “food of his God from the most holy gifts.” That is, there is absolute freedom for the blemished priest to eat the parts of the food offerings that God has given his servants from his own portion (see Leviticus 7:1–10, 28–36).⁶ Thus, the restriction only

³ The Hebrew term used for this description is חָרָם and the precise meaning is uncertain. The general consensus is that it has a connection with an Akkadian form that refers to a kind of physical deformity from birth. For this reason, the above renders the noun as “birth deformity.” See V. Hamilton, “חָרָם,” *NIDOTTE* 2:277.

⁴ The passive participle in this instance is שָׂרוּעַ. The verbal root שָׂרַע means “to be deformed,” which in context I understand to be differentiated from the previous descriptor as the man’s body having been impacted by an event or illness causing a deformity.

⁵ This list is similar to the list of blemishes for an animal found in Leviticus 22:22, which further strengthens that the two cases share the same theological basis. See also Hartley, *Leviticus*, 350; Leigh M. Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics, and Ritual in Leviticus*, HBM 29 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011), 210–11.

⁶ See also Rooker, *Leviticus*, 276; Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 292.

concerns the priest offering the food gifts and so there is still complete permission for the blemished priest to participate in God's provision for him and his family.⁷

The second prohibition frame in v. 23 begins with a restrictive particle in the Hebrew (אֲלֵ), which is usually translated into English as “but” or “yet.” This restrictive particle signals a contrast with what has been stated previously, namely the permission to eat from the priestly part of the food offerings from v. 22. Significantly however, v. 23 follows a similar pattern to the first prohibition frame in v. 21 where two prohibitions enclosed the clause “he has a blemish on him” (מוֹם בּוֹ). Thus, following the restrictive adverb, the first prohibition once again moves the significant information to the front of each clause before the main verb in both v. 23a and v. 23b. In each instance, the significant information concerns two spaces where the blemished priest is not allowed access within the tabernacle. The first space in v. 23a is near the curtain (אֶל־הַפְּרֻכָּת), which separates the holy place from the most holy place (see Exod 26:31–35). The reason for this particular restriction is that the curtain is what separates the place where God's presence dwells among his people and so the issue is proximity to YHWH's presence. The second space in v. 23b is the altar (אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ) where the food offerings are caused to smoke and where the blood of the animal gifts is splattered, both of which actions are priestly functions involved in offering the food gifts. As noted above, v. 23 follows a similar pattern to v. 21 where the first prohibition is followed by the disjunctive clause “he has a blemish” (מוֹם בּוֹ). The only variation in v. 23c is that the phrase prefaces the repeated clause with the conjunction “for” (כִּי) and so makes it explicit that the declaration about the man having a blemish is the rationale for his exclusion from approaching the spaces in the tabernacle that are critical for the ritual success of food offerings for YHWH.⁸

The second prohibition in v. 23 focuses upon the danger of a blemished priest not adhering to this instruction, which is the desecration of YHWH's sanctuary. The blemished priest cannot enter the space of the altar and near the curtain to ensure that the place that YHWH dwells is not defiled. Departing from the pattern of v. 21, v. 23 continues to add a rationale for this final prohibition. This rationale begins with the declarative refrain that recurs throughout Leviticus, which identifies the one speaking with YHWH. This refrain “I am YHWH” is short-hand for the complete declaration from the beginning of the Decalogue, “I am YHWH who brought you out from Egypt, out from the house of slavery” (Exod 20:2).⁹ The use of the short-hand declaration in this instance is modified by the descriptor of who YHWH is, which is the one who has sanctified the priesthood. That is, the one who is commanding is YHWH who brought Israel out from Egypt, who has set apart the priesthood for their task as servants in his presence, and whose presence sets them apart.¹⁰ By virtue of the speaker's identity, there is an expectation that this instruction will be obeyed by future generations of the Aaronic priesthood.

⁷ See also Hartley, *Leviticus*, 350, 351.

⁸ See also Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1825; Jay Sklar, *Leviticus*, TOTC 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 269. Contrary to Rooker, *Leviticus*, 275–76, who states that the blemished priest is unable to approach the tabernacle. The text only states two particular spaces.

⁹ Reinhard Müller, “The Sanctifying Divine Voice: Observations on the אֲנִי יְהוָה-Formula in the Holiness Code,” in *Text, Time, and Temple: Literary, Historical and Ritual Studies in Leviticus*, ed. F. Landy, L. M. Trevaskis, and B. D. Bibb, HBM 64 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015), 72.

¹⁰ See also Müller, “The Sanctifying Divine Voice,” 79, who states, “The אֲנִי יְהוָה-formula is at the core of this [paraenetic] strategy since it makes the audience constantly aware that they are directly addressed by Yhwh himself.”

Before placing this reading into the wider theological context of Leviticus, it is worth considering first what Leviticus 21:16–24 does not mean and what it does claim. At no point in 21:16–24 does the text suggest that the reason for the Aaronic priest’s exclusion from particular tasks and spaces within the tabernacle is that his disability is being “identified with” sin or is synonymous with sin.¹¹ Furthermore, this is not about complete exclusion; there is a place for the disabled priest to be part of the priestly community. In light of this, the meaning of Leviticus 21:16–24 is actually unambiguous and the repetition serves to ensure that what is being instructed is reinforced so that there is no excuse when there is culpability. Thus, Leviticus 21:16–24 does restrict an Aaronic priest with a physical disability, or with a chronic wound, from the task of offering YHWH’s food gifts, and also from approaching the altar and the veil. There is, however, continued provision for the priest as he is able to eat from the priestly portions of YHWH’s food gifts that he has given to them. Furthermore, the final prohibition is clear that the effect of a blemished priest entering the space of the altar and the curtain is that YHWH’s dwelling-place would be defiled. However, while the rationale of exclusion is conveyed, the theological basis is only implied. Through the high incidence of repetition and clauses that deviate from unmarked Hebrew word order, it is clear that there is a relationship between the characteristic of having a “blemish,” being excluded from offering food gifts, and having restricted access to particular holy spaces in the tabernacle. Therefore, an attentive reading of Leviticus 21:16–24 will place the passage within the wider theological context of the whole book, which is the task of the next section, so as to shed light upon why the disabled priest, and in fact any blemished man, is excluded from drawing near before YHWH.

2. Leviticus 21:16–24 within Its Theological Context

The theological context of Leviticus 21:16–24 within the whole book is shaped by an unresolved problem at the conclusion of the book of Exodus: YHWH’s glory has filled the newly-constructed tabernacle, yet Moses is unable to enter (Exod 40:34–35). There is restriction. YHWH’s consuming presence has moved from the top of Mt Sinai (Exod 24:17) to now being in Israel’s midst (Exod 40:34), but the inability to enter suggests that a barrier needs to be overcome if Moses, let alone any other Israelite, is to enter and be able to draw near before YHWH.¹² For this reason, Moses’s and Aaron’s access into the tabernacle, and then YHWH’s glory appearing before the whole people, in Leviticus 9:23 is astonishing as these two sequential events demonstrate that this barrier has been overcome.¹³ This raises the question of what happened between Exodus 40 and Leviticus 9:23 that provided the solution to the problem at the conclusion of Exodus.

Leviticus 9 points to the answer. Before Moses and Aaron entered the meeting place, Aaron had offered gifts before YHWH on behalf of himself and the people, which included a combination of burnt, cereal, fellowship, and sin offerings. The parts of these offerings that are to be wholly offered to YHWH, namely the fat of every animal and the entire animal of the burnt offering, were placed by Aaron on

¹¹ Contrary to Matthew Anstey, “The Case for Same-Sex Marriage,” in *Marriage, Same-Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia: Essays from the Doctrine Commission* (Mulgrave: Broughton Publishing, 2019), 273. See Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics, and Ritual*, 215–17, for an explanation for the text restricting itself to physical blemishes and why the text does not refer to moral blemishes.

¹² Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus*, FAT 2/25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 90, 158.

¹³ See also Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 91–92.

the altar (9:1–21). Significantly, immediately after YHWH's glory appeared before the people in 9:23, fire came down and consumed YHWH's food offerings (9:24). This points to the function of YHWH's food gifts, which is for the life of God's people to be preserved in the presence of God's glory. Through these gifts offered to YHWH regularly, exactly as YHWH commanded, the people can now draw near to God's presence. Thus, the preservation of Israel's life with God in their midst is dependent upon the success of these gifts. For this reason, it is worth exploring these gift instructions from Leviticus 1–7 further.

2.1. YHWH's Provision of Gift Instructions in Leviticus 1–7

There are five kinds of gifts described in Leviticus 1–7, which fall naturally into two groups. The first group of gifts in Leviticus 1–3 are those that enable the offerer and the community to draw near to YHWH in good relationship. These gifts are the burnt offering that enables the offerer to enter God's presence (1:3–17), the cereal gift that motivates a remembrance of the covenant between the offerer and YHWH (2:1–16), and the fellowship sacrifice that expresses the whole relationship between the offerer, his community, and YHWH (3:1–17). The second group of offerings are for situations where relationship needs restoration after offence threatens the whole relationship between YHWH and the culpable. There are two offerings in this second group, namely the sin and guilt offerings (4:1–6:7).¹⁴ Through these gifts, and the obedience of both the Israelite community and the priesthood, the relationship between Israel and YHWH is sustained and restored.

The first gift of the burnt offering in Leviticus 1:2b–17 is of particular note for the sake of this article. The situation where an Israelite is to offer the burnt offering is simply when he, or she, wishes to draw near to YHWH (1:2).¹⁵ In this instance, the Israelite can offer a bull (vv. 3–9), a ram or a goat (vv. 10–13), or a pair of doves (vv. 14–17). In each case though, the animal or bird offered must be male and, with the bull, lamb, or goat, the essential characteristic that will determine the animal's acceptance on behalf of the offerer is that the animal exemplifies the condition of being “without blemish” (תָּמִים).¹⁶ The term תָּמִים has a positive meaning of having integrity and being whole, and is also the antonym of “blemish” (מוֹם) from 21:16–24.¹⁷ The idea in this burnt offering instruction is that the livestock gift must have the appearance of physical integrity. Furthermore, the gift that exemplifies this condition of being whole, or without blemish, is accepted before YHWH and on behalf of the offerer (1:3–4).¹⁸ When the gift is caused to smoke by the priest on the altar, the gift's aroma has a soothing effect for YHWH (1:9, 13, 17).¹⁹ That is, because the gift has been offered, YHWH allows the offerer to draw near to his presence without consequence. As the offerer draws near, he or she is very much aware that their acceptance in the presence of God is because an unblemished animal has died at their hand and in their stead. This suggests that the reason why the animal has to be unblemished, or needs to have physical integrity, is because the offerer lacks that characteristic and so one who is without blemish needs to die

¹⁴ Please note that the English versification for the instruction about the sin and guilt offerings differs from that of the Hebrew text. The Hebrew text versification is 4:1–5:26.

¹⁵ The subject in the protasis is אִשָּׁה, which can be gender neutral. See also Hartley, *Leviticus*, 9.

¹⁶ See also Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics, and Ritual*, 202–5.

¹⁷ See also Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics, and Ritual*, 202–6.

¹⁸ Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics, and Ritual*, 181–82.

¹⁹ G. B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925), 77–80, 82–83; Watts, *Leviticus 1–10*, 207, 210; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 49, 56.

on their behalf if there is to be access to God's presence.²⁰ Thus, there is awareness from the outset of the book that only those who have integrity and are whole are acceptable in YHWH's presence.

As one reads through Leviticus 1–7, it is hard to miss that the priests are YHWH's servants, mediating between YHWH and the Israelites as they carry out their responsibility to ensure that each offering is given to YHWH as he commands. This requires the Aaronic priest having access to the altar in order to arrange the parts of the slain livestock on it and cause them to smoke, as well as being able to splatter blood on the curtain and the altar. This is necessary for each food offering to fulfill its soothing or restorative function.

2.2. The Distinction between the Impure and Pure

The reason for the theological basis that only the whole or unblemished are acceptable in YHWH's presence relates to the distinctions between impurity and purity, and the holy and the common. This distinction is stated explicitly in 10:10 after Aaron's sons fail in their priestly responsibilities with the consequence that they died (10:1–3). This failure motivates YHWH to define the role of the priesthood in 10:9–11, and a critical part of this role is to ensure that the Israelites maintain these two binary distinctions between the impure and pure, and between the holy and the common (10:10). Averbek helpfully observes that purity and impurity are conditions, while the holy and the common are states of being.²¹ For this reason, both conditions of purity and impurity can affect the two states; that is, the common state can be pure or impure, just as the holy could exemplify the condition of purity or even impurity.²² Having said this though, impurity cannot, under any circumstance, come into contact with the holy.²³ The consequence if this occurs is either death (15:31) or being thrown out of the land (20:22–26). For this reason, impurity is always separated from the holy and those in an impure condition are excluded from the holy. So, it is not a coincidence that the successive passages after Leviticus 10 teach the Israelites how to make the distinction between impurity and purity since a holy God dwells in their midst (Lev 11–16).

Again, of the instructions concerning the separation of impurity and purity, the food laws in Leviticus 11 are relevant for understanding the theological basis of Leviticus 21:16–24. Leviticus 11 sets the distinctions between impurity and purity within the domain of food. The way in which the Israelite is to distinguish between which foods exemplify a condition of purity and so can be eaten, and those that are considered impure and so cannot be eaten, depend upon certain criteria. In 11:2–8, an animal that is considered pure has a divided hoof *and* chews the cud (v. 3), while an animal that is to be considered impure only exemplifies one or none of these two characteristics (vv. 4–7). While these two particular characteristics might seem nonsensical to us, the idea is that the animal must be complete with both characteristics; an animal with only one, or indeed none, is incomplete and so exemplifies the

²⁰ Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics, and Ritual*, 205–6.

²¹ Richard E. Averbek, "Clean and Unclean," *NIDOTTE* 4:481. See also L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, NSBT 37 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 155; Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics, and Ritual*, 68–70.

²² See Wenham, *Leviticus*, 19.

²³ See Jan Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17–26*, VTS 67 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 124.

condition of impurity.²⁴ This same logic applies to the instructions in 11:9–11 about what sea creatures the Israelites can eat and those they cannot. Again, those considered to be pure are those that have two characteristics—fins and scales—and so are complete (v. 9). What the Israelites are to regard as impure are sea creatures with one or none of these characteristics, and so are incomplete (vv. 10–12). Thus, by separating animals and fish into the binary distinction between the pure and the impure, the Israelites learn the distinction between the two conditions; purity is what is whole and complete, while impurity is what is not whole and incomplete. As the instructions in Leviticus 11 continue, further associations with impurity are developed such as with decay and death (11:13–19, 39–40) and with rebellion (11:41–42). Furthermore, by being in contact with what is declared “impure,” the consequence is that they too are considered impure, and so impurity is considered contagion. For as long as an Israelite remains in an impure condition, he or she is unable to approach YHWH in the tabernacle and so experiences exclusion.²⁵

Thus, based on the above, there is a need to have a holistic understanding of purity and impurity. There are both physical (i.e., appearance) and ethical (internal disposition) dimensions. Furthermore, purity is associated with wholeness, integrity, completeness, order, and life, whereas impurity is associated with unwholeness, incompleteness, brokenness, disorder, decay, and death. The pure can draw near to YHWH’s holy presence because they represent relational order in their condition of wholeness, order, and life, whereas those that represent impurity because of unwholeness, incompleteness, and brokenness are restricted from drawing near to the holy because of what the impure represents in the presence of God. Israel’s responsibility to their covenant God is to ensure the nation is set apart in purity belonging to YHWH.

2.3. Summary

A brief exploration of Leviticus’s theological context and basis accentuates the unique status that the Aaronic priests share within the life of the Israelite covenant community. They are set apart to mediate the people to YHWH and YHWH to the people, and a critical task that preserves relational order between Israel and YHWH is the offering of YHWH’s food gifts. To fulfil this role, the priesthood must represent a condition of purity, that is, they must exemplify the characteristics of wholeness and completeness both in their physical appearance and also in their ethics.²⁶ Leviticus 21:16–24 singles out priests for this instruction because of their responsibility as servants of YHWH. However, the same principle applies to every Israelite; no one who exemplifies a condition of impurity because of unwholeness, whether it be physical or ethical, is able to draw near to the presence of God.

²⁴ See also M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London; Routledge & Paul, 1966), 64–65.

²⁵ See also Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics, and Ritual*, 88–89.

²⁶ This is a different argument to Wenham, *Leviticus*, 292, who states, “The idea emerges clearly that holiness finds physical expression in wholeness and normality.” More precisely, purity “finds expression in physical wholeness and normality” as the means by which the Israelites and priesthood are to be set apart, that is holy, to YHWH. Contrary to Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus, Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 169; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 51–52; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 349; Nihan, *From Priestly Torah*, 487; Rebecca Raphael, *Biblical Corpora: Representations of Disability in Hebrew Biblical Literature*, LHBOTS 445 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 33–34, 39.

3. Leviticus 21:16–24 within Biblical Theology

Having grounded our understanding of Leviticus 21:16–24 in its theological context, the next step is to explore how the theme of this passage is developed within biblical theology. The purpose of this task is to discern how, as a new covenant community, we can appropriate Leviticus 21:16–24 as Christian Scripture helpfully. Significantly, the theme of a priest with a blemish being restricted in his task and the space that he is able to access in the tabernacle, or later temple, does not recur or develop within the rest of the Old Testament. There was no reversal; the absence instead suggests that this instruction remained unchanged and so consistent, just as the imperative remained for the offering of unblemished animals to YHWH (see Deut 15:21, 17:1; Mal 1:8, 13) and the need for Israel to remain whole in their integrity, that is, to remain blameless serving YHWH (Deut 18:13, 26:14; Josh 24:14). The next step then is to move forward into the New Testament where the theological basis here too remains consistent, although with a vital development—the mystery revealed, the Lord Jesus.

It is easy without Leviticus in mind to glance over Peter’s comment in 1 Peter 1:19 that Jesus is a lamb unblemished, without defect. Peter is purposefully reactivating the theological framework of Leviticus to accentuate that those who are redeemed have been purified through the blood of this unblemished offering. For Jesus’s sacrifice to be sufficient, once-for-all, and accepted by God, he needed to fulfil the characteristic of being unblemished in the entire meaning of the term, which includes the physical dimension of wholeness too, both as an offering and as the officiating priest (Hebrews 7:26–27). Jesus was whole physically, even his legs were not broken on the cross so that, up to death, he remained whole and complete (John 19:31–36). He was presented in an unblemished condition, both ethically and in physical appearance, so that God’s people can be presented unblemished because of the purifying blood of Christ (Eph 1:4; Col 1:22; Heb 9:14). While this purificatory effect for believers focuses upon the ethical dimension, participation in Jesus’s purifying work through his death and resurrection gives the believer assurance of an imperishable hope of a resurrection body where, in the new creation, there will no longer be physical incompleteness or blemish, and the entire new covenant community will be in the presence of the crucified and risen lamb (Rev 21–22). However, in the “already and the not yet,” as believers await the return of Christ, the imperative remains for every believer to embody who they are in Christ, so as to reflect their status of belonging to him by actively pursuing wholeness and integrity (Matt 5:48; Jas 1:2–5).²⁷

4. Leviticus 21:16–24 and Disability

Very rarely is it wise to claim that an issue is “clear” in academic work, but in this instance the meaning of Leviticus 21:16–24 is unambiguous and so is its context within the theological framework of Leviticus. Indeed, Leviticus 21:16–24 restricts Aaronic priests who have a physical blemish from offering YHWH’s food gifts and from accessing the holy space of the altar and the veil separating the holy place from the most holy place. So too Leviticus 21:16–24 also states that no person with a blemish may draw near to YHWH. The theological basis for these prohibitions is that only the whole and complete are able to stand in the presence of YHWH. It is equally clear though that the Aaronic priest with a physical

²⁷ The phrase “the already and the not yet” used in this paper is an adaptation of the well-trodden phrase in New Testament theology of “the now and the not yet.” I have borrowed this adaptation from D. A. Carson, *How Long O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 123.

blemish is still part of the priesthood, with its food provisions. So too the Israelite with a blemish is part of the covenant community. Furthermore, a physical blemish in the instance of Leviticus is a physical issue that alters the appearance and functionality of the person away from the creation ideal. That is, having a blemish is about physical incompleteness, which is an expression of brokenness and creation disorder, rather than of wholeness and creation order.

The term “disability” is a modern construct used to describe, in a delicate way, those in society who have a medical issue that affects the person’s function and so needs societal accommodation. Using this term, Leviticus 21:16–24 touches directly on physical disability, which by nature is often public and is, by many, unable to be hidden. In our western context, helping individuals with a disability accept and adapt to a different normal is fundamental to rehabilitation programs. The goal is for people with a disability to function and flourish in society. But if we are to be honest, the problem with Leviticus 21:16–24 is not that it seems to exclude, or that it defies our perceived human right of inclusion, but that it confronts a frustrating reality for the person with a physical disability, which is that our bodies are not whole and do not reflect created order. To be confronted with this reality, we might say, could do harm to how the person with a disability views themselves and how they are viewed by their church community. Yet the physically disabled are aware that we are different by virtue of doing life in public, and this difference is often compounded by a staring public and the impertinent remarks by strangers. Some people with a physical disability struggle with shame knowing that our bodies are not normal and that, in some contexts, a display of such disability is not acceptable. These though are common issues of living with a physical disability in public. We get on with life on the outside, but we struggle inwardly with the fact that our bodies are not “normal” and fail us on a daily basis. So for those who are part of the new covenant community and who have a disability, this passage can sting as we have mirrored in Scripture the theological reality that, if it were not for the work of Christ on our behalf, we would not be accepted in the presence of God because of our physical condition of unwholeness and incompleteness. Thus, this has the potential to cause pain as we sit under a passage of Scripture that suggests that our physical disabilities mean that we would be restricted from drawing near to God.

Yet, for those of us who choose to elevate the biblical texts as Scripture and so allow the whole of Scripture to transform our view of the world, including of ourselves, the pastoral response is not to critique and resist Leviticus 21:16–24, nor to excise it from the counsel of Christian Scripture. The pastoral task is to help everyone in the new covenant community, including those who, like myself, live with a physical disability, to understand that no one without the work of Christ would be accepted in the presence of God because of our spiritual unwholeness and incompleteness caused by our rebellion against God, irrespective of whether we live with a disability or not. And this is the very role of Scripture in the life of the believing community; by the reading of Scripture, and through the work of the Spirit, we have reflected in Scripture our incompleteness and brokenness in all that we are, so that we can see the need to be wise for salvation through the Lord Jesus. This is a painful process for all whose sin is brought to light by the Scriptures. There is no distinction between people with a disability and those with a “normal” physical appearance when it comes to the nature and penalty of our sinfulness. Thus, the pastoral task with Leviticus 21:16–24 is to point to the theological reality that, without Christ, unwholeness and incompleteness hinders us from drawing near to God, and so motivating the body of Christ to focus on the Lord Jesus whose unblemished sacrifice enables the believing community to be presented whole and without accusation. The task for pastors serving those with a physical disability in the church’s midst is to encourage us daily to fix our eyes on Jesus in whom we find wholeness by participating in his death and resurrection, as we live with our physical disabilities in the “already

and the not yet.” So rather than resisting Leviticus 21:16–24, the courageous response of those with a physical disability in the church is to let our grief and frustration with our physical incompleteness be transformed into a yearning for the crucified and risen Lamb, for the imperishable hope that can be found in him, and with thankfulness that Jesus’s death and resurrection has restored us to the presence of God, both in the present and in the future.

5. Conclusion

Attentively reading and understanding Leviticus 21:16–24 demonstrates that the passage does prohibit an Aaronic priest who has a physical disability or festering sores from drawing near with Israel’s food offerings for YHWH. Furthermore, he is restricted from approaching the altar and the veil that separates sacred spaces within the tabernacle. The theological basis of this restriction though is that nothing unwhole or incomplete is able to be in the presence of God. The reason for this is that physical unwholeness is within the domain of impurity, and impurity irrespective of its cause cannot be in contact with the holy. While this theological basis clashes with Western cultural values, the challenge of adopting the Bible as Scripture is to let every text, through the work of the Spirit, transform how we view the world and ourselves. In relation to Leviticus 21:16–24, this requires us to have the willingness to see the consequence of our unwholeness and incompleteness reflected in Scripture and, in turn, let this motivate us to find wholeness and completeness through our participation in Christ.

Leviticus 18:5 and the Law's Call to Faith: A Positive Reassessment of Paul's View of the Law

— Etienne Jodar —

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Abstract: Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12 is generally understood as showing Paul's negative view of the Mosaic law. The apostle would be using Leviticus 18:5 to show that the law comes short of the principle of faith. This paper shows that the difficulties with such an understanding of Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12 are both theological and exegetical. The proposed thesis is that Leviticus 18:5 powerfully brings trust in God into play, and thus can be used by Paul to show that the law calls to faith. Leviticus 18:5, then, would not come short of the logic of faith as some commentators assert. Informed by Second Temple Judaism's understanding of Leviticus 18:5, this manuscript follows an exegetical method that gives particular attention to words like γάρ, δέ, ἀλλά, and ἐκ in Paul's unfolding argument. The article shows that interpreting Leviticus 18:5 as a call to exercise faith makes good sense of Paul's train of thought in both Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12.

Although much ink has been spilled since Richard B. Hays's alarming statement concerning the pervasive misinterpretation of Leviticus 18:5 ("the man who does them [the statutes and ordinances of the law] shall live by them"), to this day no explanation of how Paul uses this text in both Galatians 3:12 and Romans 10:5 convinces a majority of interpreters.¹ Many interpretations leave something to be desired because either they appear somewhat unorthodox to some scholars² or they

¹ For Richard B. Hays, "The efforts of some commentators to drive a wedge between these two texts [Lev 18:5 and Deut 30] as though they represented radically different conceptions of righteousness have wrought disastrous consequences for Christian theology" (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 76).

² For example, Francis Watson's view (*Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* [New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004]) that Paul's apparent inconsistencies regarding the law come not from his own theologizing but from different voices in the Pentateuch itself has not yet convinced all conservative scholars. For a similar interpretation, see Jean Noël Aletti, "L'argumentation de Ga 3,10–14, Une fois encore: Difficultés et propositions," *Bib* 92 (2011): 193. Solutions that rest heavily on extrabiblical literature are generally rejected. Such is the case of Louis

rest on suboptimal assumptions.³ If one is to properly understand Paul's view on the Law (and the New Testament's), however, it is necessary to arrive to a conclusion on how Paul uses this crucial text.

Traditionally, Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5 has been understood as the antithesis to faith. As Howard observes, interpreters have focused their attention on the "doing" language of this text.⁴ However, because this *antithetical* interpretation suffers from different kinds of difficulties, a growing number of exegetes prefer not to interpret Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5 as antithetical to the principle of faith.⁵ Disappointingly, the alternative *noncontradictory* interpretation lacks a major element: it fails to explain the role that Leviticus 18:5 plays in Paul's lines of argument, both in Romans 10 and Galatians 3. Both interpretations will be detailed in the first section of this paper, whose goal is (1) to explain the major objections to the antithetical interpretation and (2) to explain how Leviticus 18:5 functions in Paul's flow of argument in Romans 10 and Galatians 3. Immediately connected to this second goal is this paper's thesis: Leviticus 18:5 powerfully brings trust in God into play and thus can be used by Paul to show that the law—rightly understood—encourages the exercise of faith.⁶ Presupposing a coherence in Paul's thought and a fundamental unity in Scripture, this study homes in on the broader question of Paul and the law and highlights the oft-overlooked purpose of the law to foster faith.

1. Interpretation of Paul's Use of Leviticus 18:5

Because others have listed and classified the plethora of interpretations of Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5, this author will not repeat the task.⁷ Presenting the two structural, and polar, interpretations will be sufficient for our purposes: the *antithetical* interpretation and the *noncontradictory* interpretation.

Martyn, who attempts to solve Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5 by using textual forms of Paul's time ("Paul's Understanding of the Textual Contradiction between Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5," in *Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Shemaryahu Talmon [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 465–73). Resting also on extrabiblical literature, Joel Willitts attempts to interpret Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12 in light of the later Jewish interpretative tradition ("Context Matters: Paul's Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12," *TynBul* 54 [2003]: 105–22). Both Martyn and Willitts recognize that their solutions are tentative.

³ These will occupy the second section.

⁴ George E. Howard, "Christ the End of the Law: The Meaning of Rom 10:4ff" *JBL* 88 (1969): 333.

⁵ Especially in Romans 10:5. As mentioned below, the case of Galatians 3:12 is more complex.

⁶ To my knowledge, the scholar that comes the closest to this paper's understanding of Leviticus 18:5—and in particular of *why* this verse is about faith—is Hays (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 76). Unfortunately, Hays does not develop this important element and does not have a consistent understanding of Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 and in Galatians 3:12 (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 208 n. 87). See also *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 179, where Hays construes Leviticus 18:5 as being "incompatible" with faith in Galatians 3:12).

⁷ For various current interpretations, as well as the history of interpretation, see Friedrich Avemarie, "Paul and the Claim of the Law according to the Scripture: Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12 and Romans 10:5," in *Beginnings of Christianity: A Collection of Articles*, ed. Jack Pastor and Menachem Mor (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2005); Alain Gignac, "Citation de Lévitique 18:5 en Romains 10,5 et Galates 3,12: Deux Lectures Différentes des Rapports Christ-Torah?," *EgT* 25 (1994): 367–403; François Refoulé, "Romains, 10:4: Encore une Fois," *RB* 91 (1984): 321–50; Douglas C. Mohrmann, "Of 'Doing' and 'Living': The Intertextual Semantics of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians and Romans," in *Jesus and Paul: Global Perspectives in Honor of James D. G. Dunn for his 70th Birthday*, ed. B. J. Oropeza, C. K. Robertson, and Douglas C. Mohrmann (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 151–72; and

The essential characteristic of the antithetical interpretation is that it sees something akin to an antithesis between law and faith. In Romans 10:4–8, Paul would present a righteousness based on the law (v. 5 [Lev 18:5])—a concept different from “faith” because it consists of “doing”—in order to contrast it with righteousness *by faith* (v. 6). Fundamental to this interpretation is the adversative meaning ascribed to the conjunction $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ in verse 6. The text reads,

For Christ is the end [$\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For [$\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$] Moses writes about the righteousness that is from the law that [$\delta\acute{\omicron}\tau\iota$] the one who does these things will live by them.⁸ But [$\delta\acute{\epsilon}$] the righteousness that comes from faith speaks like this: Do not say in your heart, “Who will go up to heaven?” that is, to bring Christ down or, “Who will go down into the abyss?” that is, to bring Christ up from the dead. On the contrary, what does it say? The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. This is the message of faith that we proclaim. (Rom 10:4–8)

Under this interpretation, verse 5 explains verse 4—that Christ is the $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ of the law—in an indirect way: (1) “doing” the law ensures salvation, but (2) no one can perfectly “do” the law; therefore, (3) salvation is by faith in Christ and not by “doing” the law. According to this interpretation there is something of a false promise in the law because no one can reach life the way God indicated in Leviticus 18:5. Thus, for Douglas J. Moo, “The Mosaic law holds out the promise of life for those who do it. But no one can ever achieve life through the law, because it is impossible to do it.”⁹ Paul’s use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12 is understood similarly.¹⁰

The noncontradictory interpretation, on the other hand, does not construe Romans 10:5 (and thus Lev 18:5) as opposing the righteousness of faith mentioned in verses 6–8. There would be no antithesis between law and faith in Romans 10:4–8. Concerning Paul’s use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12, the noncontradictory interpretation does not usually view Leviticus 18:5 as being in harmony with the principle of faith as in Romans 10.¹¹

Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul*, WUNT 241 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 142–51, 168–70.

⁸ There is a text-critical issue concerning the placement of $\delta\acute{\omicron}\tau\iota$. With other interpreters, I believe that the placement of $\delta\acute{\omicron}\tau\iota$ after $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\phi\epsilon\iota$ found in several manuscripts does not make a significant difference in meaning. See Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 166–67 n. 2 for more details.

⁹ Douglas J. Moo, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View,” in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 333. Stephen Westerholm asserts, “God’s law promised righteousness to those who did its commands ([Rom] 10:5; cf. 2:13), though righteousness was in fact never achieved that way” (*Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran Paul and His Critics”* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 329). For Martyn, Paul finds in Leviticus 18:5 a “false promise” (“Paul’s Understanding,” 472).

¹⁰ Jason C. Meyer argues, “The Law principle of conditional covenant life in Lev 18:5 is not gracious in a Pauline sense because it rests on human obedience, not on a call to trust God’s intervening work in behalf of humanity” (*The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 6 [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009], 161).

¹¹ See, for example, J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 160–61; John E. Toews, “The Law in Paul’s Letter to the Romans” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1977), 254; Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 98–99; and Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*

2. Objections to the Antithetical Interpretation

First and foremost, the antithetical interpretation is based on the assumption that “doing” the law is somehow antithetical to exercising faith.¹² This antithesis between faith and works, however, may in fact exist only in the lexical realm, not in real life *or in the law*.¹³ As will be shown hereafter, Paul’s emphasis in Romans 10 on “doing” on the one hand (with the Leviticus 18:5 quotation) and believing on the other (with the Deuteronomy 30:12–14 quotation) does not have to be construed as a real antithesis between faith and works.¹⁴

When Leviticus 18:4–5 speaks about “doing” the statutes and ordinances, faith does not need to be discarded. There is evidence that God’s asking his people to “do” the commandments is tantamount to demanding “faith.”¹⁵ This seems supported by the numerous times this parlance is used in connection with the exhortation to love and trust God. Deuteronomy 11:22 is a good example. God says, “If you will

in the Letters of Paul, 208 n. 87. A notable exception is M. A. Kruger, “Law and Promise in Galatians,” *Neot* 26 (1992): 311–27.

¹² This section builds upon Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14 (1971): 19–28; Howard, “Christ the End of the Law”; and Toews, “The Law in Paul’s Letter to the Romans.” The assumption that “doing” the law is somehow antithetical to exercising faith is widespread among scholars who nonetheless have a high view on the law. For example, Brian S. Rosner says, “The law is of doing, not of faith” (*Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, NSBT 31 [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013], 70). Richard N. Longenecker understands Leviticus 18:5 as having to do with “doing and living by its prescriptions and not with faith.” Leviticus 18:5 would thus “refer to Law and to doing but not to faith” (*Galatians*, WBC 41 [Waco, TX: Word, 1982], 120). For Avemarie, “Lev. 18:5 proves that the Law, since it calls for doing, has nothing to do with faith” in Galatians 3:12 (“Paul and the Claim of the Law according to the Scripture,” 138). Meyer says, “Gal 3:11–12 highlights the impotence of the law in that it is not based on believing, but on doing” (*The End of the Law*, 162. See, however, 165 n. 166). For Westerholm, “The basic principle of the law is that it requires deeds, ‘it does not rest on faith’” (*Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 305). For the theological liberal Heikki Räisänen, Galatians 3:12 means that “the law has nothing to do with faith, because it requires that its commandments be ‘done’ if man wants to ‘live’” (*Paul and the Law* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 163).

¹³ Contra Mark A. Seifrid, who writes, “When Paul rejects the saving value of the ‘works of the law’ in Galatians and Romans, he does so with full recognition that he is dealing not merely with a misreading of the law, but with the law itself. The law is a ‘law of works,’ which demands deeds of obedience in order to obtain the offer of life (Rom. 3:27; cf. 10:5; Gal. 3:12)” (*Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, NSBT 9 [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001], 105). Räisänen similarly writes, “Any interpretation that lets Paul only reject a misunderstanding but not the Torah ... has no chance of survival except in the abstract” (*Paul and the Law*, 44).

¹⁴ Paul also quotes Deuteronomy 9:4 (and possibly 8:17) in Romans 10:6. For convenience’s sake, this paper talks about Romans 10:6–8 as being the quotation of Deuteronomy 30:12–14.

¹⁵ That which Pharisees have become known for in achieving a “doing” void of “believing” should not lead us to think that this is what the Law is demanding in Leviticus 18:5. Some Pharisees may well have had faith in God despite their exacting “doing” of the law (Nicodemus and Gamaliel?). But foremost, there are evidences that the “doing-without-faith” that came to characterize the Pharisees’ spirituality was actually not the “doing” which the law exhorted: Jesus did not understand the Pharisees as good doers of the law. He rebuked them for not attending to the weightier matters of the law (Matt 23:23) and for disobeying the commandment of God (Matt 15:3). Matthew 23:3 reads, “They [scribes and Pharisees] preach, but do not do [οὐ ποιοῦσιν]” while John 7:19 reads, “None of you does the law [οὐδεὶς ἐξ ὑμῶν ποιεῖ τὸν νόμον].”

be careful to do all this commandment that I command you to do, loving the Lord your God, walking in all his ways, and holding fast to him, then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before you.”¹⁶

Second, foundational to the antithetical interpretation is the presupposition that in Leviticus 18:5 God is requiring perfection; nothing less than perfection would attain the “life” that Leviticus 18:5 promises. This understanding, however, faces a major difficulty. Howard remarks concerning how this verse was understood in Tannaitic Judaism, “The point is not one of perfection of life.”¹⁷ So if Leviticus 18:5—rightly understood—were actually demanding perfection, and if this were something that Paul wanted to stress about this verse, it would seem that Paul should have made it more plain because in all likelihood his audience did not construe this verse as demanding perfection.¹⁸ In fact, this verse cannot demand perfection because offering sacrifices for sin was part of “doing” the commandments; law-keeping is not equivalent to perfection. The antithetical interpretation, however, rests on such a presupposition.

According to the antithetical interpretation, the law points to Christ (as stated by Rom 10:4) in that no one can “do” the law, so Christ has to do it on one’s behalf. That Christ is the τέλος of the law *in such an indirect way* assumes much understanding (too much?) of the Israelites that came out of Egypt. They would have understood (1) that someone else would observe the law in their place and credit his obedience to them (2) after their realizing that they could not “do” the law. In all likelihood this understanding was not reached by many because the Jews seem to have believed in the possibility of fulfilling the law.¹⁹ This appears to nip in the bud the assumption that the Israelites would have understood Leviticus 18:5 as unachievable and thus that Christ had to do the commandments in their place.²⁰

Third, the antithetical interpretation makes Paul’s logic obscure and significantly complex. Why would Paul present the law under a negative light in Romans 10:5 when *his aim* is to explain that Christ is the τέλος of the law? (v. 4).²¹ Paul indeed uses the conjunction γάρ in the opening of verse 5—a conjunction that usually introduces an explanation.

¹⁶ Another example is Deuteronomy 6:1, 3–4, where “to do the commandments” is juxtaposed with loving God with all the heart. See also Nehemiah 1:5.

¹⁷ “The point is that Israel is to serve Yahweh rather than the gods of the nations” (Howard, “Christ the End of the Law,” 334).

¹⁸ Howard, “Christ the End of the Law,” 334. Watson rightly says, “This broad contrast does not require that the human action that leads to salvation of ‘life’ must be perfect or sinless; such an assumption is irrelevant to Paul’s argument, and contradicts Leviticus itself” (*Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 326).

¹⁹ Paul, for example, affirmed to be blameless in the observance of the Law (Phil 3:6). The Law itself claims that observing the law is not too difficult or beyond reach (Deut 30:11).

²⁰ By this objection neither the substitutionary atonement of Christ nor the impossibility to observe the Law without sinning is called into question. It is the assumption of Israel’s perfect understanding of the substitutionary atonement of Christ (assumed in the antithetical reading) that is questioned.

²¹ BDAG 998 lists the occurrence of τέλος in verse 4 under two different senses. The first is “a point of time marking the end of a duration.” As such, it can be rendered “end” or “termination.” The second sense indicates that τέλος is a word that writers of the New Testament could use when they were speaking about “the goal toward which a movement is being directed.” Under this sense the glosses listed by BDAG are “goal” and “outcome.” Most commentators prefer not to decide between the temporal and the teleological meaning (e.g., A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001], 264). They say that Paul probably saw Jesus as both the end and the goal of the law. Because Paul readily uses the law to call Gentile believers to obedience, however,

The antithetical interpretation, then, suffers from the perplexing phenomenon of Paul's setting the law in contrast to itself in Romans 10:5 and 10:6 (with the quotations of Lev 18:5 and Deut 30:12–14 respectively). Although not following the view presented hereafter, Hamilton notes the problem: "It would be very strange for Paul to quote Moses's words in Leviticus 18 to point to law-based righteousness, followed by quotations of Moses's words in Deuteronomy 30 to point to faith-based righteousness."²² Under the antithetical interpretation, Paul would ascribe a curse to Leviticus 18:5 but not to Deuteronomy 30:12–14. The immediate context of Deuteronomy 30:12–14, both before and after, however, underlies a dreadful curse. It says, "When all these things happen to you—the blessings and *curses*" (Deut 30:1), and "See, today I have set before you life and prosperity, *death and adversity*" (Deut 30:15). If Paul views Deuteronomy 30:12–14 positively in Romans 10:6–8—that is, as a call to exercise faith—although the curse motif lays in the background, he could certainly view Leviticus 18:5 in the same positive manner, that is, as a call to faith as well.

Fourth, the antithetical interpretation presupposes that there are two paths to salvation (although only one can practically lead to it).²³ Under this interpretation, the Old Testament would offer the path of "faith"—congruent with Deuteronomy 30:12–14 and Habakkuk 2:4—and the path of "doing"—allegedly that of Leviticus 18:5—something that comes short of the logic of faith. As Kaiser remarks, however, "There was no alternative route to eternal life offered in the Old Testament."²⁴

This antithetical understanding raises the question of why God would have given the Israelites a second (and misleading?) way to gain life in Leviticus 18:5. To see in this a teaching device for the Israelites to understand that they needed, rather, to be saved by faith is presupposing an incompatibility between "doing" and "believing," as if the two could not go together and as if one could not be the

the temporal meaning "end" does not seem appropriate. That Paul was capable of using τέλος with the meaning "goal" is supported by 1 Timothy 1:5, "The aim [τέλος] of our charge is love." See also Romans 6:21–22.

²² James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 112. See also Toews ("The Law in Paul's Letter to the Romans," 253), who argues that Leviticus 18:5 was not understood as antithetical to Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in the Judaism of Paul's time. The same applies to the relationship between Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5. Gignac remarks that "from a rabbinic standpoint, Leviticus 18:5 and Habakkuk 2:4 are by no means contradictory" (translation mine) ("Citation de Lévitique 18:5," 387). This is also the observation of Michael Gaskell, who says that "Paul's opponents would have seen no tension between Hab 2:4 and Lev 18:5, or between 'faith' and 'doing'" (Review of *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul*, by Preston Sprinkle, *WTJ* 71 [2009]: 501).

²³ Stephen Westerholm says that "what he [Paul] perceives as his opponents' error is their clinging to this path which, though *indeed announced by Moses*, has proven unable to lead to righteousness ... *a path which*, moreover, has now and forever been set aside" ("Law, Grace, and the 'Soteriology' of Judaism," in *Law in Religious Communities in the Roman Period*, ed. Richardson Peter and Stephen Westerholm [Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991], 69, italics mine). Martyn agrees: "Whereas Habakkuk 2:4 says that faith leads to life, Leviticus 18:5 says that the *route* to life lies in observance of the law" ("Paul's Understanding of the Textual Contradiction between Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5," 465). Moo also appears to reveal this understanding when he says, "The only means to attaining righteousness apart from Christ is through perfect obedience to God's law" ("The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," 341). Rosner says, "For Paul, the essence of the law as law-covenant or legal code is its call for something to be done in order to find life, and *this path* has failed, due to universal sinfulness of humanity, and instead the law has led to death" (*Paul and the Law*, 72, italics mine).

²⁴ Kaiser, "Leviticus 18:5 and Paul," 28.

expression of the other.²⁵ As mentioned above, the Old Testament does not understand the command to “do” the law as void of faith or opposed to it, and the New Testament assumes that true faith is active and working. The alternative supposition that the law lost its salvific capacity with the coming of Christ and that, ever since, the law could not save because it demands perfect obedience also presents weaknesses.²⁶

According to Kaiser, a better understanding of this matter would be that a righteousness based on the law is only a “misconception of Paul’s generation of Jews.”²⁷ Or probably more likely is the fact that a personal righteousness based on the law does exist—as that attested in 2 Samuel 22:21–25²⁸—*yet is not salvific* and can be opposed by Paul when it becomes a claim of salvation on God.²⁹

Another objection (never raised to my knowledge) is that an alternate path to salvation is hardly consistent with Paul’s saying that it is “evident” (δῆλον) that no one is justified by the law (Gal 3:11).³⁰ If an alternate path to salvation existed (even a hypothetical one or one impossible to follow), Paul would certainly not have rebuked the Galatian believers by using the word “evident.” It would simply not have been “evident” because there would have been an alternate path presented in the Old Testament.³¹

²⁵ For Moo it appears to be a kind of teaching device. He says that the pious Israelite would have understood, “as God intended,” the impossibility of achieving holiness by works and would have fled in faith to the mercy of God (“The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses,” 327).

²⁶ For this view, see Schreiner, *40 Questions About Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 62–63, as well as Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 155–57. For Schreiner there is an antithesis between Romans 10:5 and 10:6. Here is the reason: Since animal sacrifices are not efficacious anymore after the coming of Christ, perfect obedience to the law is necessary to obtain eternal life, and thus Leviticus 18:5 opposes salvation by faith (Rom 10:6). This view presents at least three weaknesses. First, it is quite sophisticated and lacks clear scriptural support. Second, it seems to imply that salvation by the law was possible at some point in history. Third, it seems to fail to take into account original sin. Obedience could never atone for it, however perfect it might be.

²⁷ Kaiser, “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul,” 27.

²⁸ Other verses talking about the personal righteousness of the law are 1 Kings 8:32; 2 Chronicles 6:23; Psalm 18:20–24; Isaiah 57:12; Ezekiel 14:14; 18:9; Matthew 6:1; and perhaps Luke 1:6.

²⁹ This observation might help to answer a major objection to the noncontradictory interpretation: The righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith are contrasted in Philippians 3:6–9. This objection is not a real challenge to the view presented here because there are strong reasons to think that in Philippians 3:6–9 Paul contrasts the righteousness of faith with the *nonsalvific*, personal, righteousness of the law. This is supported by the emphasis on “my” in Galatians 3:9. Both the word order and the choice of the possessive adjective ἐμὴν rather than the simple possessive pronoun μου put the emphasis on “my.” As shown hereafter, it appears that the personal righteousness of the law is not in view in Romans 10:5. It is likely that in Romans 10:5 (and thus in Leviticus 18:5) Paul sees the passive/alien righteousness of the law—the same found in Deuteronomy 30:12–14 and Habakkuk 2:4—that God credits to those who have faith in him.

³⁰ To be sure, this observation depends on the NA28 text, which places the comma after δῆλον. Andrew H. Wakefield remarks that it is more likely that the comma precedes δῆλον, giving an altogether different meaning to Galatians 3:11: “Because no one is justified before God by the law, it is clear that ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (*Where to Live: The Hermeneutical Significance of Paul’s Citations from Scripture in Galatians 3:1–14*, AcBib 14 [Atlanta: SBL, 2003], 162–67, 207–14). In my opinion, it is more likely that Paul proves the assertion that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God (Gal 3:11a) with Habakkuk 2:4 (Gal 3:11b) than that such assertion was already agreed upon by Paul and his opponents (Wakefield’s view).

³¹ In addition, if an alternate path existed, Paul’s opponents could have appealed to it to reject his argument before the unsettled Galatians.

3. Paul's Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5

This section focuses on the thesis proper of this article, namely that Leviticus 18:5 powerfully brings trust in God into play and thus can be used by Paul to show that the law calls to faith. Before explaining why Leviticus 18:5 zeros in on the trust factor, two building blocks of the noncontradictory interpretation must be briefly presented.

Foundational to the noncontradictory interpretation is that in Romans 10:5 Paul is *explaining* the declaration that he made in verse 4. This is most natural after the conjunction γάρ, which signals an explanation; verse 4 said that the law has Christ as its goal,³² and now Paul explains how. In order to do it, Paul goes to the Pentateuch to cite a proof-text—Leviticus 18:5. *At a prima facie level, one would thus expect this quotation to support the declaration that Christ is the goal of the law (Rom 10:4).* Second, because of the objections raised above, δέ (in verse 6) is understood as connective rather than adversative; both the canonical context and the immediate context demand such a use.³³

Leviticus 18:5 constitutes a call to faith for the simple reason that *it is a promise*. It basically says, “You will have life if you choose me.”³⁴ Putting oneself in the Israelites’ shoes helps to grasp how it constitutes a call to faith rather than a human way to gain life. The first thing that would have come to mind at the hearing of these words in the wilderness is “Really?” “Should I believe God?” “Is he trustworthy?” “Will he truly grant me life if I choose him? If I ‘do his statutes and judgments’ (Lev 18:4) rather than follow the ways of the nations?”

God’s promise, therefore, permits the Israelites to exercise faith in response to it. The words of Leviticus 18:5 are a platform for faith to arise; Leviticus 18:5 creates the need for faith. Although Paul recognizes that the Jews of his time distorted the law—and probably with this very verse!—looking for a “law of righteousness” in it (Rom 9:31), it is more reasonable to take this verse as a promise demanding faith rather than representing a principle inferior to “faith” as many commentators still do.³⁵ For Paul, Leviticus 18:5 is one of the tersest proofs that “believing” is a central component of the law. It seems that Leviticus 18:5 is about faith for Paul, not a “doing” short of the principle of faith.³⁶ In order to make

³² The race/contest imagery that Paul starts in Romans 9:30, as well as the objections raised above seem to demand the sense “goal” rather than “end” for τέλος.

³³ The connective use of δέ is common in the New Testament. James D. G. Dunn cites Campbell, Cranfield, Badenas, and Bandstra as supporting a connective use of δέ in Romans 10:6 (*Romans 9–16*, WBC 38B [Waco, TX: Word, 1982], 602).

³⁴ An interesting question is whether God is promising eschatological life or simply life in the land; in other words, whether this saying is soteriological or not. James D. G. Dunn has championed the nonsoteriological view and has maintained that Leviticus 18:5 was understood nonsoteriologically by early Judaism (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 154). For Simon Gathercole, the verse is nonsoteriological in its original context, but Judaism wrongly understood it soteriologically. Gathercole produces better evidences than Dunn and proves that by and large (with the exception of Philo), this verse was understood soteriologically in early Judaism (“Torah, Life, and Salvation: Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and the New Testament,” in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. Craig A. Evans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 126–45. Although an interesting question, knowing whether God promised “life in the land” or “salvation” in Leviticus 18:5 does not affect the thesis of this paper; either way, the call to faith is present.

³⁵ A good example is Westerholm, who comments on Galatians 3:12 that “the basic principle of law is that it requires deeds, it ‘does not rest on faith’” (*Perspectives Old and New*, 305–6).

³⁶ Kruger agrees and adds that “doing the law must be seen in close relation to Paul’s use of the noun ἔργον for faith (Rom 2:7, 15; Phil 1:6, 22; 2:30; 1 Thess 1:3; 2 Thess 1:11)” (“Law and Promise in Galatians,” 323).

this point exceedingly clear, Paul will show that other passages of the Law (in particular Deut 30:12–14) discard the idea of self-righteousness and exhort faith.

By showing that *believing* was possible in the law, Paul lays the foundation of his demonstration that the law has Christ as its goal (v. 4). Why? Because without the possibility of exercising faith, the law could not have Christ as its goal since the gospel of Christ demands faith. Now Paul can continue with his argument showing that the law not only creates the need for faith (Lev 18:5) but truly *exhorts* everyone to this very faith (Deut 30:12–14). It would seem that the only way to be justified according to the law—and the only way that exists in the law—is the way of faith.

The Deuteronomy 30:12–14 quotation appears to explain how Leviticus 18:5 should be understood—as a call to faithful obedience rather than a command to achieve one's own salvation. Paul characterizes faith as renouncing to doing what God has already done (*going* up to heaven or *going* down into the abyss [Rom 10:6–7]). This is confirmed with Paul's next words: "The word is near you" (v. 8). In the context of Deuteronomy, "the word is near" implies that God has brought the commandment.³⁷ Therefore, since *God* has already done everything that is necessary—by bringing the commandment to the generation of Moses and Christ to the generation of Paul—trying to do what only God can (and has already done) does not characterize faith.

Paul's omission of the word "do" in his quotation of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Romans 10:6–8 probably arises from the fact that Israel was confused by it, looking for a law of righteousness and pursuing the law as if it depended on works (ὡς ἐξ ἔργων [Rom 9:32]) *and not faith* (οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως [Rom 9:32]). By amending the quotation from the Old Testament, Paul removes all possible misunderstandings and shows that the law is not about works apart from faith but about trust in God. By using Deuteronomy 30:12–14, Paul shows that the "doing" of Leviticus 18:5 is really about having faith in God's promise.³⁸

As he shows that faith is exhorted by the law, Paul blends the Deuteronomy passage with the gospel of Christ in a *peshet* way (τοῦτ' ἔστιν, v. 6, 7). By asserting that the message of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 is consonant with the message of faith (τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως ὃ κηρύσσομεν [Rom 10:8]), the impression given is that the law commands a trust *in God* which is of the same nature as the trust *in Christ* demanded in the new dispensation. In Fuller's words, "[Paul] was showing that the righteousness set forth by the law was the righteousness of faith. Since the wording of the law can be replaced by the word 'Christ' with no loss of meaning, Paul has demonstrated that Moses himself taught that Christ and the law are all of a piece."³⁹

In summary, with verses 5–8 Paul is proving that the righteousness of God that most Jews missed was attested by the law. Since this righteousness comes only by faith, he had to prove that the law demanded this very faith. He quotes two passages (Lev 18:5 and Deut 30:12–14) to prove that faith was not only possible but actually really exhorted by the law. In his line of argument, he starts with Leviticus 18:5 because it is a passage that, by the greatness of its promise, powerfully directs the focus towards trusting the God of the promise. Also, since Leviticus 18:5 is probably the main verse which some Jews misunderstood in looking for a "law of righteousness," Paul explains what the true sense of Leviticus 18:5 is with Deuteronomy 30:12–14, namely, a call to faith. Paul's use of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 (especially with his explanations [τοῦτ' ἔστιν]) shows that the trust in God that the law demands is analogous to the

³⁷ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 671–75.

³⁸ This faith, as hinted above, finds its expression by general observance of God's commandments.

³⁹ Fuller, *Gospel and Law*, 86.

trust that Christ demands. Some Jews missed Christ when he came to earth because they missed the exhortation to believe God that is encouraged in the law to begin with.⁴⁰

4. Paul's Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12

The other and only time Paul uses Leviticus 18:5 is in Galatians 3:12. While some interpreters favor the noncontradictory reading in Romans 10:5, they usually do not favor it in Galatians 3:12, thus viewing Paul as setting Leviticus 18:5 against Habakkuk 2:4 in an antithetical fashion.⁴¹ The result is that their case for a noncontradictory reading in Romans 10:5 is weakened due to the greater likelihood that Paul uses Leviticus 18:5 consistently—whether to contrast law and faith or to correlate them. The following paragraphs show that this article's thesis can find exegetical support in Galatians 3 as it did in Romans 10.

The central issue in Galatians is whether the law plays a role in justification. Paul sternly denies it (Gal 2:16, 3:21) criticizing those who identify with the works of the law (ἔργα νόμου) rather than with faith. His consternation reaches a pinnacle in Galatians 3:10 when he says that those “of” the works of the law are cursed (ἐπικατάρατος). It is in this context that he uses Leviticus 18:5. This Old Testament quotation follows two other quotations from the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 27:26 and Habakkuk 2:4. Galatians 3:10–12 reads,

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for [γάρ] it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for [ὅτι] “The righteous shall live by faith.” Now the law is not of faith, rather [ἀλλ’] “The one who does them shall live by them.”

Unfortunately, many interpreters come to the Leviticus 18:5 quotation of Galatians 3:12 with the presupposition that sinless perfection is required to have the life that God promises.⁴² They, then, usually read the implicit impossibility premise of Galatians 3:10—the fact that no one can abide by all things written in the Law—into Galatians 3:12.⁴³ One result is that the negativity of Galatians 3:10 is superimposed on Leviticus 18:5, thus not letting this Old Testament text make its own contribution in Paul's argument. With the Leviticus 18:5 quotation Paul has moved on in his argument;⁴⁴ he is no longer proving that those who rely on the works of the law are cursed—this he did in verse 10 with a quotation

⁴⁰ Some Jews were simply in a state of unbelief. Jesus reproached the religious Jews of not *believing* the writings of Moses (John 5:46–47). “Unbelief” is Paul's very evaluation of himself before conversion: He says in 1 Timothy 1:13 that he acted in unbelief (ἀπιστία). See also Romans 3:3.

⁴¹ See for example Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 160–61; Toews, “The Law in Paul's Letter to the Romans,” 254; Fuller, *Gospel and Law*, 98–99; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 208 n. 87. A notable exception is Kruger, “Law and Promise in Galatians,” 311–27.

⁴² As shown above, this is neither the way this text was understood by the Jews of Paul's time, nor what God asked in Leviticus 18:5.

⁴³ The dissertation of James W. Carlson illustrates this phenomenon. He states, “It is imperative to see that the impossibility premise of Gal 3.10 extends to 3.12” (“The Curse of the Law and its Promise of Life” [PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2011], 248).

⁴⁴ The conjunction δέ in the opening of verse 12 indicates a new development (Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010], 28–36).

from Deuteronomy 27:26. With Leviticus 18:5 he is contrasting what he just said in the first half of Galatians 3:12, namely, that “the law is not of faith.”

What Paul means when he says, “The law is not of faith, but ‘the one who does them will live by them’” (Gal 3:12), is not straightforward at all.⁴⁵ Surprisingly, however, it is commonly understood as something tantamount to “the law is not of faith, because it requires dutiful performance of its commands.”⁴⁶ This interpretation is problematic for the following reasons. As just mentioned, it imposes an understanding upon Leviticus 18:5—that, incidentally, is contrary to the meaning it had in its original context.⁴⁷ Second, it construes a causal relationship between Paul’s statement “the law is not of faith” and its accompanying text Leviticus 18:5. While the relationship between statement and quotation is causal in Galatians 3:10 and 3:11 (with γάρ and ὅτι introducing Deut 27:26 and Hab 2:4, respectively), Paul does not mark the relationship between “the law is not of faith” and the Leviticus quotation as causal; he uses the adversative conjunction ἀλλά.⁴⁸ Third, it is not corroborated by the concise underlying Greek text, and thus is open to the charge of subjectivity.⁴⁹

Willitts seems more cautious when he suggests, “The law is not of faith, but the law is from ‘the one who does these things will live by them.’”⁵⁰ His reading, however, does not untie the *crux interpretum*, and he recognizes that Paul’s saying remains enigmatic.

The key to unlock Paul’s saying certainly lies in the contrastive conjunction ἀλλά. Willitts construes the ἀλλά clause as borrowing the subject of the previous clause (“the law” in “the law is not of faith”). The following chart gives a visual presentation of Willitts’s understanding:

⁴⁵ Speaking about Galatians 3:12, Thomas R. Schreiner, says, “This is one of the most difficult verses to interpret in the entire Pauline corpus” (*Galatians*, ZECNT [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 210).

⁴⁶ See, Rosner, *Paul and the Law*, 67.

⁴⁷ In its original context it is a promise of life based on faith. A faith that, as mentioned above, finds its expression in the “doing” of God’s commandments rather than the practices of the Canaanites.

⁴⁸ Although challenging the common understanding of Galatians 3:10–12, Ben C. Dunson presents this problem in “‘The Law Evidently Is Not Contrary to Faith’: Galatians and the Republication of the Covenant of Works,” *WTJ* 79 [2017]: 249–51. He views the Leviticus 18:5 quotation as “support[ing]” the claim ὁ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως. The quotation, however, follows the adversative conjunction ἀλλά, not a causal conjunction. Another problem is that, for Dunson, although the Mosaic covenant does not teach that perfect obedience would lead to justification, Paul would have used Leviticus 18:5 to give this impression to the Galatians. But, if the Mosaic covenant does not teach that perfect obedience leads to justification, it remains to be shown why the Galatians would have understood this from the Leviticus 18:5 quotation.

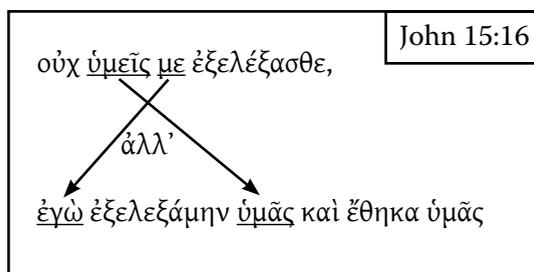
⁴⁹ One problem comes from the meaning of the preposition ἐκ. For Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 160, it appears to mean “based on.” He translates, “The law is not based on faith.” Westerholm translates like the NRSV, “The law does not rest on faith” (*Perspectives Old and New*, 305, 326, italics mine). Because none of the six senses of ἐκ listed in BDAG validates these renderings, it seems best not to opt for such presuppositionally driven renderings. In fact, as shown below, the normal glosses “of” or “from” make sense in Paul’s argument.

⁵⁰ Willitts, “Paul’s Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” 118.

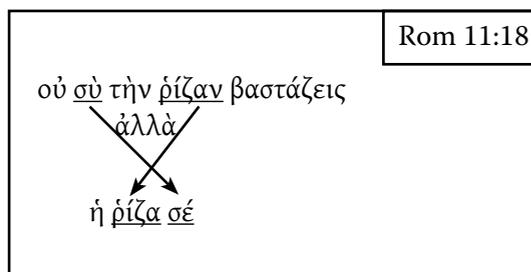
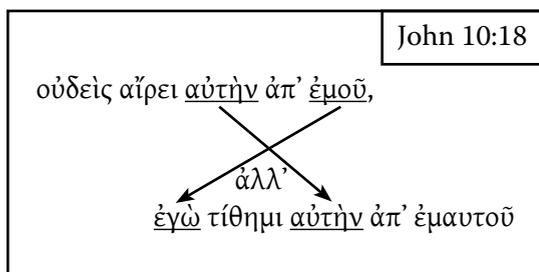
	<i>First Clause</i>	<i>Conjunction</i>	<i>Second Clause (Lev 18:5)</i>
NA28	ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως	ἀλλ'	ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.
Willitts	ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως	ἀλλ'	[ὁ νόμος ἔστιν ἐκ] ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.

Supplying “the law is from” does not necessarily follow, however. The conjunction ἀλλά did not limit Greek writers to using the subject of the preceding clause. It seems best, therefore, to leave the clause as Paul wrote it, that is, not supplying anything. This allows for an interpretation where the ἀλλά conjunction taken together with the first clause *defines* how Paul understands Leviticus 18:5 (second clause), rather than an interpretation that depends on a preunderstanding of what Paul means with Leviticus 18:5.

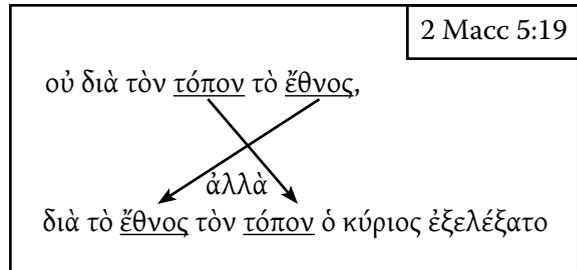
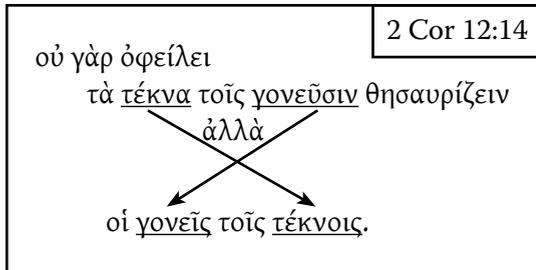
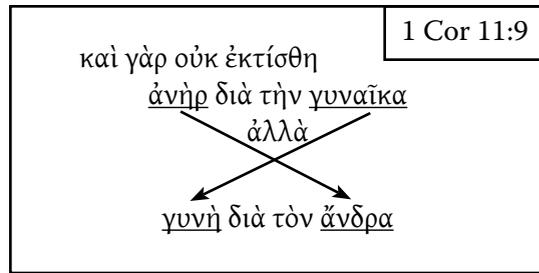
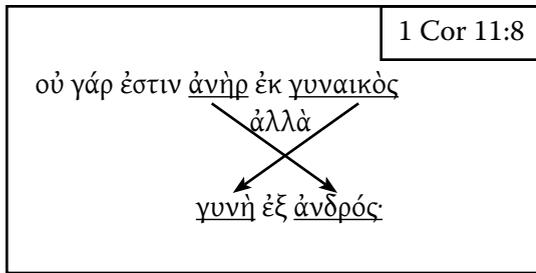
Knowing that ἀλλά marks a contrast, ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς (Gal 3:12b, the Lev 18:5 quotation) must somehow be contrary to “the law is not from faith” (Gal 3:12a). A possible contrast for “the law is not from faith” is “faith is from the law” (note the reversal of “law” and “faith”). Ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς could thus mean that faith is from the law. Now, for this hypothesis to be even viable the conjunction ἀλλά needs to be capable of introducing a reversal of substantives. Biblical literature shows that it is in fact not uncommon for ἀλλά to do so. Consider John 15:16, where Jesus says, “You did not choose me, but [ἀλλά] I chose you.” There the conjunction ἀλλά introduces a reversal of substantives that is highlighted in the following visual:



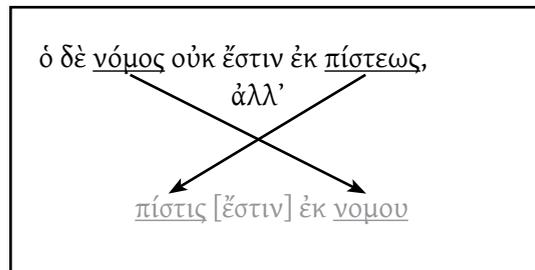
The same reversal of substantives is marked by ἀλλά in John 10:18; Romans 11:18; 1 Corinthians 11:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 12:14; and 2 Maccabees 5:19. I like to call this an *alla-chi* construction.⁵¹



⁵¹ This name is given because of the arrows that form the Greek letter X (*chi*). The same construction and reversal of substantives is found in Ignatius (*Magn.* 10.3) and in Philo's writings (*Opif.* 133; *Leg.* 1.2; *Sacr.* 19; *Somn.* 2.116). This author was not able to survey much extra-biblical literature but supposes that other *alla-chi* constructions exist.



That Paul might be using ἀλλά in Galatians 3:12 to announce such an incoming reversal of substantives is thus a viable hypothesis. The law is not from faith; it is the other way around—faith is from the law. This is represented by the following visual.



If this is correct, Paul would be using Leviticus 18:5 to say that faith is from/of the law because this text stands in place of the reversal of substantives that ἀλλά can introduce. In other words, the Leviticus quotation would be used by Paul in a metonymical fashion for expressing the thought “faith is from/of the law,” probably meaning that faith comes from the law.⁵²

Is this interpretation possible? In other words, can Leviticus 18:5 be tantamount to “faith is from/of the law” for Paul? Since this verse is a promise (from the Law) and since promises have to be held to by faith, it seems possible. The following visual summarizes the proposed understanding.

⁵² So Willitts, “Paul’s Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” 118, who says that the Leviticus 18:5 quotation indicates “*from where* the law derives.” (italic his). Christopher Zoccali understands the phrase “is from” (ἔστιν ἐκ) as presenting the whole from which the following is a part. He proposes that the Law is not *part of* “faith,” but the contrary (ἀλλά) is true: “Faith is *part of* the law” (“What’s the Problem with the Law?: Jews, Gentiles, and Covenant Identity in Galatians 3:10–12,” *Neot* 49 [2015]: 377–415, italics mine).

	<i>First Clause</i>	<i>Conjunction</i>	<i>Second Clause (Lev 18:5)</i>
Galatians 3:12	ὁ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως	ἀλλ'	ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.
Meaning	faith → law	Complete reversal	law → faith

Although original, this understanding fits the context nicely. Leviticus 18:5 would make its own contribution to the warning against the necessity of the law in matters of righteousness (Gal 3:6–12). If a function of the law is to bring faith in God into play (in order to be justified by faith) the logical implication is that Gentiles that believed without the law (the Galatians received the Spirit by faith, not by the works of the law [Gal 3:2]) do not need the law for justification.

Paul, then, uses the key verse of Judaism to advance his argument. He advances it, not by making this text say what is impossible to see from the Leviticus context—namely that this text embodies a principle inferior to pure faith (traditional interpretation)—but by drawing an inference from it: the goal of the law is to lead to faith. If this is true, the Galatians that reached faith without the law do not need the law for salvation. The logic is clear, the rhetoric excellent. Paul skillfully turns the incorrect interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 on its head. He is not ready to hand over Leviticus 18:5 to his opponents.

5. Conclusion

The exegetical and theological weaknesses of construing Leviticus 18:5 as somehow antagonistic to faith in Romans 10:5 demand a better interpretation. This paper builds a case to show that Leviticus 18:5 is best understood as a call to faith. This verse encourages faith because it is a promise and because promises demand the exercise of faith. It, therefore, does not come short of the principle of faith as many commentators still suggest.

Although simple, this solution is a core element that proponents of the noncontradictory interpretation have not provided thus far. They posit that Romans 10:5 is consonant with the righteousness of faith mentioned in Romans 10:6–8, but exactly why and how Leviticus 18:5 functions in Paul's unfolding argument is left unexplained.

This paper shows that Galatians 3:12 presents no serious objection to the view that Leviticus 18:5 can best be understood as a call to faith. If the ἀλλά conjunction introduces a reversal of substantives (*alla-chi* construction) in Galatians 3:12 as it does in other contexts, then Paul views the law as bringing faith into play because he would be equating Leviticus 18:5 with the meaning “faith is from/of the law.” Although impossible to prove (Paul did not *write* “faith is from/of the law”), an implied reversal of substantives introduced by ἀλλά that would give such a meaning to Leviticus 18:5 is perhaps the best solution; neither superimposing a preunderstanding upon Galatians 3:12, nor construing ἀλλά as causal, nor supplying unwarranted words to the concise Greek wording has better exegetical grounds. As mentioned, this interpretation does not weaken Paul's firm warning against legalism. On the contrary, it reinforces it: If a function of the law is to bring faith in God into play (my proposed view of Leviticus 18:5), Gentiles that reached “faith” without the law do not need the law for salvation.

If the thesis presented in this paper should be deemed plausible, then the noncontradictory interpretation should gain momentum. The major weakness according to detractors of this interpretation

(that since Paul uses Leviticus 18:5 as a contrast to “faith” in Galatians 3:12, he must be doing the same in Romans 10:5) indeed vanishes.

The last obstacle for the noncontradictory interpretation is Philippians 3:6–9. There Paul contrasts his personal and non-salvific righteousness derived from the law with the righteousness of faith. As succinctly pointed out, this does not demand rejecting the noncontradictory interpretation. It is possible that Romans 10:5 (and thus Lev 18:5) is about the imputed righteousness of the law—the same found in Deuteronomy 30:12–14 and Habakkuk 2:4—which comes by faith. It is thus not necessary to interpret Leviticus 18:5 as coming short of the principle of faith like many interpreters still do. While Jews misunderstood Leviticus 18:5 looking for a law of righteousness, Christians can misunderstand it too, looking for a foil for faith. Misinterpreting Leviticus 18:5 is an ever-present danger.⁵³

⁵³ Hays, commenting on Leviticus 18:5, rightly remarks, “There is a sad irony here. Paul agonized over the fact that his Jewish contemporaries failed to understand that Israel’s law pointed to the righteousness of faith; now, Christians make the same tragic error when they fail to acknowledge that the law and the prophets bear witness to the righteousness of God and when they think that Torah and Christ are antithetical. It is the same hermeneutical mistake, viewed from the two different sides of the schism that it created” (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 77).

The Genesis of the Jerusalem Donation

— Daryn Graham —

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Abstract: The Jerusalem Donation was the Apostle Paul's largest charity drive. However, it did not begin by his own initiative. In this article, it shall be shown using biblical evidence and other ancient sources, that the movement to provide the Jerusalem church with considerable added finances to alleviate suffering among them due to the Great Famine, began with the ordinary Christians of Achaëa, Macedonia and Galatia. This article proves, contrary to the claims made by some commentators, the movement behind this collection was not driven by Jerusalemite coercion or pressure from James, Peter and John upon Paul, but rather, it began and progressed out of Christian solidarity and love between Gentile and Jewish believers in those provinces, and genuine concern for their brethren suffering from the effects of famine sustained in Jerusalem.

1. The Community of Goods

Charitable giving had deep Christian roots that would emerge under the terrible conditions sustained by the Christians of Judea during the Great Famine. During his ministry, Jesus taught his followers not be anxious about money, but rather, act to give to the poor, a teaching taken up zealously by the early Christians in Jerusalem (Matt 6:25, 28; Luke 12:33; 18:22). So seriously were Jesus's teachings taken up by the early church, shortly after the first Pentecost following Jesus's ascension, the Christians living in Jerusalem began to voluntarily share and pool their resources, selling their property so that 'there were no needy persons among them' (Acts 4:32–37).¹ Fundamental to this community was the priority of provisioning for poor widows among both Hebrew and Hellene Christian adherents (Acts 6:1–7). According to Acts, this Community of Goods voluntarily pooled their resources to assist the poor and needy believers among their growing numbers.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. (Acts 2:44–45)

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.... There were no needy persons among them. From time to time those who owned land or houses sold them,

¹ Chris Marshall, 'The Radical Community,' *Reaper* 72.5 (1990): 3–5.

brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. (Acts 4:32, 34–35)

Some scholars see in this communal sharing influence by the Jewish group, the Essenes, such as those from Qumran who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, who also pooled their resources within their communities.² As the Community Rule states,

All those who freely devote themselves to His [God's] truth shall bring all their knowledge, powers and possessions into the Community of God, that they may purify their knowledge in the truth of God's precepts and order their powers according to His ways of perfection and all their possessions according to His righteous counsel. (1QS 1.11–55)

However, it should be noted a difference between these two communities: among the Essenes in Qumran the contribution of resources was required upon joining, whereas among the Christians in Jerusalem the pooling of monies was more voluntary.³ However, there is evidence in the Luke's writings that the church in Jerusalem was not acting spontaneously in its sharing. Jesus taught the crowds, 'Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out' (Luke 12:33).

If this teaching was the inspiration for the Community of Goods, then it would seem that the Jerusalem church was not operating in a vacuum. Given that the Essenes had been operating in a similar way for some time already, this does suggest that there must have been some influence over the Christians of Jerusalem by the Essenes, like those from Qumran.⁴ Most likely, after Jesus's ascension, the Christians of Jerusalem recalled Jesus's instructions to sell their possessions and give to the poor, and did so helping those mainly from amongst their own numbers along similar lines as those at Qumran.⁵

In order to facilitate the charitable giving, Christian overseers were appointed to oversee sharing in similar fashion to the Essenes at Qumran, who also appointed overseers to take charge over financial sharing there. This allowed leading Christian teachers like Peter greater opportunity to preach more freely (Acts 6:17).⁶ Granted, Martin has questioned the biblical narrative, claiming that the Hellene Christians in Jerusalem were too few in number to require any kind of the assistance that Acts refers to.⁷ However, as Gonzales and Blomberg show, Luke was a deliberately honest reporter, and the early church's relief efforts embraced Jewish and Hellene believers.⁸

² Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (London: SCM, 1994), 21–22; Brian J. Capper, 'Community of Goods in the Early Christian Church', *ANRW* 26.2:1730–74; James VanderKam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002), 346–47; Steve Walton, 'Primitive Communism in Acts? Does Acts Present the Community of Goods (2:44–45; 4:32–35) as Mistaken?', *EvQ* 80 (2008), 99–111.

³ VanderKam and Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 347–48.

⁴ On overseers at Qumran, see 1QS 1.1; 1QS 6.21–22; 1QS 8.1–4; 4Q265 fr. 7.2; 4QSa=4QS255. For financial leaders among the Christians in Jerusalem, see Acts 2:44–45; James VanderKam, Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 347.

⁵ Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 21.

⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *From Pentecost to Patmos: An Introduction to Acts Through Revelation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 34.

⁷ T. Martin, 'Hellenists', *ABD* 3:135–36.

⁸ Justo L. González, *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (New York: Orbis, 2001), 142–43. Blomberg, *From Pentecost to Patmos*, 46.

One of the main reasons for the Community of Goods was Jesus's prophecy of coming famine. In Jesus's prophetic teachings delivered at the temple not long before his arrest, Matthew's and Mark's Gospels record that Jesus warns famine to be expected as a sign that the earth is giving birth to a new spiritual age under God's rule. In Jesus's own words, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.... Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it [the end of all things] is near, right at the door' (Matt 24:7–8, 33). Jesus's teaching on this matter was so influential among early Christians, that in the middle of the Great Famine (AD 45–63) that swept the Roman Empire, the apostle Paul would inform the church at Corinth that 'time is short,' and that 'this world in its present form is passing away' (1 Cor 7:29, 31).

This Community of Goods met a significant test in the Great Famine. Indeed, before the famine developed, there was already a sense of foreboding among Christian communities in Judea and Syria that the forthcoming famine would hit the people of the Judean region hard. We first meet this sense of foreboding in the city of Syrian Antioch. According to Acts, at a Christian meeting in Antioch not long before Agrippa I's death in AD 44, the Christian prophet Agabus prophesied that a particularly devastating famine would soon hit the empire hard, and Judea the hardest, at some stage in the near future, as indeed it would. Acts states that immediately upon hearing Agabus's prophetic message, the Christians of Antioch, led by the apostle Paul—a Roman citizen from Tarsus in Cilicia—and his peer Barnabas, responded promptly by collecting and compiling monetary funds to send to the church in Jerusalem in anticipation of the coming famine. In essence, this collection was an Antiochene extension of the kind of monetary sharing exhibited by the Judean Community of Goods. Acts states,

During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world [οἰκουμένη]. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 11:27–30)

Although it has been suggested by Pervo and others that the historical tradition concerning Agabus in this instance originally derived from Antiochene witnesses and confirmed by Paul,⁹ Pervo has argued that the entire Agabus story was based largely upon the later post-famine traditions.¹⁰ As to the nature of Agabus himself, views vary. Dunn has argued in the past that Agabus must have been a wandering prophet, similar to a Cynic philosopher, much like those recorded in the *Didache*, on the premise that Agabus seemingly appears to have been wandering still later on in Acts 21:10.¹¹ However, as Keener observes, such an identification with the *Didache*, written as it is long after the New Testament was written, is anachronistic.¹² In fact, there are many references made throughout the NT to Christian

⁹ D. E. Aune, *Prophecy and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 264–65; Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 480; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Herm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 296–97; Craig S. Keener, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 2:1853.

¹⁰ Pervo, *Acts*, 295–97.

¹¹ Acts 21:10; *Did.* 11–13; James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 157.

¹² Keener, *Acts*, 2:1851.

prophets like Agabus, meaning he was not a mere prototype of later unrelated ‘wandering’ Christian prophetic traditions, as much as he may seem Hellenistic and Cynic in style upon first glance.¹³ Moreover, Schnabel affirms the historical veracity of the Agabus tradition, arguing that given this meeting took place in AD 44, around a year before, the famine began, Luke’s sources must have indeed been Antiochene, as Pervo holds, but originating from firsthand eyewitnesses at the meeting itself.¹⁴ This helpful response that the Christian church in Antioch extended to their Jerusalemite brethren is evidence that both groups deeply respected one another, and this kind gesture on the part of the Antiochene Christians no doubt reinforced their already close ties.¹⁵

2. Beginnings of the Great Famine

It is held by many biblical commentators that under Claudius there was never one, single famine that swept the empire, but an unrelated series of localised food shortages that only gives one an impression of one singular great famine.¹⁶ On the other hand, others believe this famine that Acts states was ‘worldwide’ denotes a singular famine that covered the entire planet.¹⁷ However, as Keener points out, the word ‘world’ (οἰκουμένη) Luke uses in his gospel and Acts (Luke 2:1; Acts 17:6–7; 19:27; 24:5), refers only to the Roman ‘world’ at the very most.¹⁸ For, the same designation is used by Josephus (*J.W.* 3.29) and Lucian (*Octogenarians* 7) in this fashion.¹⁹ Keener also notes that although there were various seemingly independent food crisis occurring throughout disparate parts of the empire under Claudius at roughly the same time, together these did result in a single, massive empire-wide food crisis, the longest and most devastating famine that occurred under Roman rule. This accounts for the lack of provision of a year date of the famine in Acts—its duration necessitated that any reference to one single year for this famine redundant.²⁰

Egyptian agriculture is the gift of the Nile. However, the Nile’s floodwaters that made alluvial fields cultivatable were never always consistent; and, whilst a Nile height of sixteen cubits during inundation was ideal, variation in Nile flood height could mean a year’s poor harvest (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum* 22.15.13).²¹ That fact was amply demonstrated in the year AD 45, when, as Pliny the

¹³ NT references to prophets in the early church include the following: Luke 2:26–27, 36; Acts 13:1; 19:6; 21:9; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 11:4–5; 12:10, 28–29; 13:2, 8–9; 14:1–39; Eph 3:5; 4:11; 1 Thess 5:20; 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14; Rev 1:3; 10:11; 11:3, 6, 10, 18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 19:10; 22:6–10, 18–19; cf. Keener, *Acts*, 2:1852.

¹⁴ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 526.

¹⁵ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 373; Stephen Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity Strategy and Theological Reflection in Paul’s Collection*, WUNT 2/124 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 114–15, 132 n. 31, 139; John S. Kloppenborg, ‘Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem and the Financial Practices in Greek Cities’, in *Paul and Economics: A Handbook*, ed. Thomas R. Blanton IV and Raymond Pickett (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 309.

¹⁶ Fitzmeyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 482; Pervo, *Acts*, 296–97.

¹⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 417.

¹⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1855.

¹⁹ Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 372.

²⁰ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1856, 1858.

²¹ Kenneth Sperber Gapp, ‘The Universal Famine Under Claudius’, *HTR* 28.4 (1935): 258.

Elder states, the Nile rose to a height of eighteen cubits—the highest in more than a century—which resulted in such a poor harvest for that year that its effects were felt throughout Egypt and the Roman Empire (*Nat.* 5.58).²² Both papyri and ostraca from Egypt illustrate just how dire the situation in Egypt was as a consequence. The papyri register of the Grapheion at Tebtunis dated to August, September and November of AD 45 records that the price of grain at Artaba averaged some 8 drachmas, which was exorbitantly higher than the cost of grain there for the entire period preceding AD 70.²³ Compared to this high rate, ostraka from Artaba show that in AD 3 the normal price level for grain there was a mere 3 drachmas,²⁴ and in AD 33 it was 3 drachmas.²⁵ Notably, in AD 65 the cost of grain there was reduced to just 2 drachmas and 1 obol—a fall in price that indicates that by 65 the great famine had dissipated for several years.²⁶ Papyri records from Egypt dated to September–October AD 51 fill this gap somewhat between 45 and 65. They show that in one Egyptian city in AD 45/46, 1,222 locals there had to default in their tax arrears, and that in AD 47/48 that number had risen to 1,678, and that even in AD 50/51 there were still many defaulters. Moreover, at the same time, up to half the entire adult male population of Philadelphia in Egypt defaulted as well.²⁷ Furthermore, papyri from Oxyrhynchus in the year AD 45 reveal that the poor there were heavily in debt and needed credit just to acquire food, and these conditions lasted right up to the early years of Nero’s principate, by which stage there had formed a sharp depression in taxpayers in that city.²⁸ In short, this high inundation of AD 45 resulted in an acute grain shortage which produced a dramatic rise in the cost of grain throughout all of Egypt, and together with hoarding and the inevitable price speculation at inflated prices, food crisis conditions worsened exponentially.²⁹ From the papyri alone we can detect that the famine lasted for many years, a scenario that is also attested to in Roman literary sources. In addition to Pliny’s evidence, the Roman historian Tacitus states in AD 51 there was yet another sizable dip in the Roman Empire’s grain supply:

This year [AD 51] witnessed many prodigies. Ill-omened birds settled on the Capitol. Houses were flattened by repeated earthquakes, and as terror spread the weak were trampled to death by the panic-stricken crowd. Further portents were also seen in a shortage of corn, resulting in famine. (*Ann.* 12.43)

The main origin of this shortage of grain was, once again, Egypt.

²² Gapp, ‘The Universal Famine,’ 259.

²³ A. E. R. Boak, *Papyri From Tebtunis, Part 1* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1933), no. 123. II.26–27; no. 127.I.8, 12–14, 16, 17, 38; Gapp, ‘The Universal Famine,’ 259.

²⁴ Friedrich Preisigke, *Sammelbuch Griechische Urkunden aus Ägypten* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1915–), no. 7341, 22–23; Kenneth Sperber Gapp, ‘The Universal Famine,’ 259.

²⁵ Ulrecht Wilken, *Griechische Ostraka aus Ägypten und Nubien*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Gieseke und Devrient, 1899), no. 1372; Gapp, ‘The Universal Famine,’ 259.

²⁶ J. Tait, *Greek Ostraka*, vol. 1 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1930), no. 210, 108; Gapp, ‘The Universal Famine,’ 259.

²⁷ *P. Mich.* 594 (September–October AD 51); G. M. Browne, *Documentary Papyri from the Michigan Collection*, X, ASP 6 (Toronto: Hakkert, 1970), 64–67.

²⁸ E. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), no. 439; Josiah Osgood, *Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 136–37.

²⁹ Gapp, ‘The Universal Famine,’ 260.

However, Egypt was not alone in suffering crop failure during the period between AD 45 and 57. Other food crises throughout the empire added to a general grain shortage. In AD 45, an armed insurrection in western North Africa, one of Rome's other main sources of grain besides Egypt, necessitated a military campaign there by a Roman procurator against the Maurusii in Mauretania. This war disrupted North Africa's food harvests, for according to Garnsey, 'to say that an interplay of natural and human causes was a regular feature of food crisis is not a bold assertion.'³⁰

A series of severe droughts also hit the Levant in AD 46, which caused the harvests of Syria and Judea, the two next richest bread-baskets of Rome, also to fail. According to Josephus, famine had already set in by the Passover in the spring of that year (*Ant.* 3.320). This timing is revealing, for in the Levant the winter from November to March is the main wet and rainy season. As famine had set in by the spring of AD 46, this indicates that the rains of this wet season must have failed dramatically by the beginning of that year, resulting in drought, and famine.³¹ But the Levant did not suffer just one year of drought, nor just one of famine. According to Suetonius, a whole series of droughts that spanned many years 'caused a scarcity of grain' for the entire empire, including Judea (*Claud.* 18).

Given that the church in Jerusalem required urgent financial aid from Paul's Gentile churches in AD 57 to feed itself, this series of droughts and famine clearly up to that date there. As for the date of this famine's end, we can be fairly certain that it dissipated in AD 63. For, in that year, Nero issued brass *dupondius* coins that feature on its reverse side an image of a new food market that seems to celebrate the return of crop abundance once more.³² Given also that by AD 65 grain prices had been restored to the low level of 2 drachma and 1 obol, access to plentiful supplies of grain and other foodstuffs must have been restored for several years by that time, suggesting an end to the famine in AD 63.³³

Drought and famine were not uncommon occurrences in the Levant in ancient times. Famines had occurred there in 25/24 BC, AD 38/39 and AD 45/6, thereby averaging about once every 20 years.³⁴ Famines are repeatedly referred to in both the OT (2 Sam 21:1; 1 Kgs 8:35–40; 17:1–24; 2 Kgs 4:38; 8:1–5) and NT (Mark 13:8; Luke 15:14; Acts 11:27–30; Rev 6:8; 18:8). In biblical sources, God is sometimes referred to as a protector from famine, but in most cases God is a harbinger of famine and divine punishment.³⁵ Scientific studies also inform us that droughts were frequent in the Levant as a result of natural conditions in the region. Droughts there could be brought on by climatic anomalies, agricultural

³⁰ Peter Garnsey, 'Famine in Rome', in *Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Peter Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1983), 58–60.

³¹ Yair Goldreich, *The Climate of Israel: Observation, Research and Application* (Norwell: Kluwer Academic, 2003), 21–22; Morten H. Jensen, 'Climate, Drought, Wars, and Famines in Galilee as a Background for Understanding the Historical Jesus', in *JBL* 131 (2012): 307.

³² *BMC* Nero 196; *RIC* Nero 110.

³³ See Suetonius *Claud.* 18; Tait, *Greek Ostraka*, no. 210, 108; Gapp, 'The Universal Famine', 259. Although Dio claims that this market was dedicated in AD 59 to celebrate Nero's escape from an assassination attempt, Tacitus's silence is conclusive that this could not have been so. In any event the dedication of a new market does not fit well with a famine, and makes more sense if it was dedicated immediately after one. See Tacitus *Ann.* 14. 12–15; Dio, *Roman History* 62.18.3.

³⁴ Israel Karmon, *Israel: A Regional Geography* (London: Wiley, 1971), 101.

³⁵ For God as a protector from famine, see Ps 37:19; Ezek 34:29. For God as harbinger of famine, see Lev 26:26; Deut 28:22–24; 32:24; 2 Sam 21:1; 1 Kgs 17:1; Ps 105:16; Isa 14:30; 51:19; Jer 11:22; 14:11–18; 24:10; 42:13–17; Amos 4:6–8; 8:11–14.

failure, or hydrologic failure, or all three.³⁶ Despite its small size, the Levant was characterised by geographical extremes: from hills and alpine mountains to plains; from tropical jungle to oak forests to desert; and from gorges and valleys to lakes, rivers and the Dead Sea. While parts of Galilee in the north were often well-watered, southern Judea near the northern edge of the arid Negev desert was vulnerable to ongoing droughts.³⁷ As a result of these variations, changes in weather patterns throughout them had immense impacts upon the food supply of inhabitants of the region, for their eating habits were largely dependent upon their own economic and technical agricultural conditions, and the trade and food patterns of neighbouring kingdoms. As a result, when drought conditions returned Syria and Judea in AD 46, the outcome was acute food crisis there, which compounded the suffering experienced throughout a Roman empire reliant upon grain from the Levant, as well as Egypt and North Africa, for its subsistence.³⁸

3. *The Jerusalem Donation*

The largest, and indeed the only, attested fundraising effort by Early Christians was the Pauline churches' mass collection known as the 'Jerusalem Donation.' Some commentators see the germination of this collection in Paul's letter to the Galatians. This letter is dated between AD 48—two years after the famine began to be felt in Judea—and the early 50s, perhaps 53, meaning that potentially this germination began to take place just a few years after the famine began in Jerusalem. It is true that during the Hellenistic period, 'Galatia' designated the geographical region in northern Phrygia on the Anatolian peninsula (Polybius, *Histories* 5.77–80; Livy, *History of Rome* 38. 16; Strabo, *Geog.* 12.5. 1–4), however, by Paul's time 'Galatia' designated the Roman province of that name which stretched from the Black Sea to Pamphylia on the Mediterranean (Pliny, *Nat.* 5.147). Thus, while scholars have traditionally held that the churches of Galatia were located somewhere in the Hellenistic Galatia of northern Anatolia,³⁹ the churches of South Anatolia that Paul founded in the southern regions of the Roman province of Galatia himself, at Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, are more than likely to have been among the letter's immediate recipients.⁴⁰ Just as Paul used provincial titles throughout this letter for Arabia, Syria and Cilicia, and Judea, and that Gaius of Derbe and Timothy from southern Galatia accompanied Paul when he eventually took the Jerusalem Donation to Jerusalem, it is highly likely that

³⁶ Yair Goldreich, *The Climate of Israel* (New York: Springer, 2003), 77.

³⁷ William A. Dando, 'Biblical Famines, 1850 BC–AD 46: Insights for Modern Mankind,' in *Ecology of Food and Nutrition* 13 (1983): 235; Goldreich, *The Climate of Israel*, 78.

³⁸ Dando, 'Biblical Famines,' 235.

³⁹ James Moffatt, *An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1918), 83–107; Hanz D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Herm (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 81–83; J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 10th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1986); J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 8.

⁴⁰ Acts 13:13–14:20; F. F. Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 3–10, 17–18; Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, WUNT 49 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), 277–307; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1990), ixii–lxiii; Greg W. Forbes, 'The Letter to the Galatians,' in *All Things to All Cultures: Paul Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans*, ed. Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 244–46.

Paul had in mind Roman Galatia, not Hellenistic Galatia, as his audience when writing Galatians.⁴¹ This places the precise composition of Galatians to AD 47/48, not long after Paul's meeting, as recorded in Galatians, between himself, James, John, and Peter in Jerusalem, 'fourteen years' after his conversion to Christianity in AD 33/34. Those claims that in Paul's letter to the Galatians is the first written reference to this collection, has given rise to the notion that the Community of Goods must have proved a dismal failure. Several theories have been put forward as to why this might have been so. These include that the many evangelised believers in Jerusalem since Pentecost were probably drawn from that city's poorest classes, that the Sanhedrin's hostility towards Christians in Jerusalem took its toll on them financially, that the hospitality shown for missionaries and pilgrims and the monetary provision for widows there used up precious resources, and that in the very act of sharing, the Community of Goods reduced what little capital the already impoverished church in Jerusalem possessed, thus rendering individual money-making endeavours null and void.⁴² Some scholars even claim that the Jerusalem Christians must have principally been little more than alms-dependent beggars.⁴³

However, the fact that this collection was not carried by Paul to Jerusalem until the late date of AD 57 demonstrates that the Community of Goods was not a failure some would have one believe. Indeed, an examination of Galatians shows there is no proof within it that the Community of Goods had failed. There appears in Galatians only one description of Paul's meeting between himself and the Jerusalem church leaders, and crucially, not one explicit statement to a collection for Jerusalem exists in it. Many commentators entertain such an order as a given fact.⁴⁴ However, all that is contained in this epistle is that instruction that Paul should make provision for the poor generally, and given they agreed this as Paul was leaving for an overseas mission, they no doubt implied that Paul care for the poor in those foreign fields. To quote the passage in this letter assumed by some commentators as proof that Paul had been given instructions to raise money for the Jerusalem church among mission converts, 'They [James, Peter and John] agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do' (Gal 2:9–10). Clearly, it is an assumption that this is proof that the pillars of the Jerusalem church commanded Paul to raise funds for 'the poor' in Jerusalem specifically,⁴⁵ which F. F. Bruce identifies as forerunners of the 'Ebionites' (derived from the Hebrew word for 'the poor'), and an ill-founded one at that.⁴⁶ Indeed, given the earliest explicit evidence that Paul was raising funds for the Community of Goods in Jerusalem comes in the Corinthian correspondence in the mid-50s, clearly that Community progressed well enough financially amidst famine conditions until long after Galatians was written in the late 40s. In short, there was no

⁴¹ Arabia: Gal 1:17; Syria and Cilicia: Gal 1:21; Judea: Gal 1:22; on Gaius and Timothy see Acts 20:4; Donald Guthrie, *Galatians*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 21, 25.

⁴² Margaret E. Thrall, *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians*, CBC (Cambridge University Press, 1965), 161; Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 284; Raymond F. Collins, *Second Corinthians*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 166.

⁴³ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, '1 and 2 Corinthians', in *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 87–88.

⁴⁴ Murphy-O'Connor, '1 and 2 Corinthians', 83.

⁴⁵ Guthrie, *Galatians*, 84; Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity*, JSNTSup 66 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 112–16; Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 112.

⁴⁶ Bruce, *Galatians*, 126.

urgency for financial relief within the Jerusalem church when Galatians was written. Yet, in time, as funds did eventually run out in the Jerusalem church, Paul would have to help that community, but independently of any instruction by Peter, John and James.⁴⁷

Rather, instead of raising funds for the Jerusalem church, in Galatians Paul tells his readers in Galatia to use its monetary resources to help all people, everywhere: ‘Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers’ (Gal 6:9–10).

Astonishingly, the churches in Galatia felt the effects of the Great Famine acutely at this point, for an inscription from Asia Minor dated to this period records in horror the devastating effects of this famine throughout Asia Minor, in the following expressions: ‘A famine in the land, flesh-eating, terrible, and bearing inescapable death, [that] gripped the whole [Roman] world’ (CIG 3973:5–6).⁴⁸

Most likely, the Galatian Christians shared the sufferings of those living next to them in Asia Minor. For, although Paul instructs the Galatian Christians to ‘do good to all people’, he lays heavy emphasis that those who should receive good deeds and gifts ‘belong to the family of believers’ (Gal 6:9–10). These words indicate that funds in the Galatian churches may have started to seriously dwindle.⁴⁹ Still, there clearly continued to be some degree of flexibility as to how the Galatians interpreted Paul’s instruction, for ‘all people’, and the ‘family of believers’ could still, theoretically, apply to every single Christian, including those normally outside the Galatian churches. By AD 54, the Galatian Christians had started raising funds for their Jerusalem brethren, even though Paul had initially intended Galatian church funds be reserved for the Galatian church members in Galatians. However, years had passed since the writing of that letter, and perhaps as testimony to the effectiveness of Paul’s financial advice to the Galatian churches, in AD 54 the Galatian churches began pressing Paul for his permission and blessing on their raising funds for their Jerusalem brethren, and the Apostle agreed with them that they be allowed, just as they wished (Gal 1:2).

4. *The Churches of Corinth, Macedonia, and Galatia*

Around the time Nero became emperor in AD 54, the Corinthian church made the first voluntary request to Paul to help financially to support the church in Jerusalem.⁵⁰ This request marks the first step in the creation of what would later be called the ‘Jerusalem Donation’. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians in AD 55, ‘Last year [AD 54] you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so’ (2 Cor 8:10). One reason for the Corinthians’ desire to do this may be found in the mercantile culture of Corinth itself. After Corinth was refounded by Julius Caesar in 44 BC, Rome invested heavily in the city. Located as it is on the isthmus linking the Peloponnese with Central Greece, and being situated between major east-west maritime trade routes, it was perfectly situated for a reconstituted Roman city.

⁴⁷ Joseph Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, trans. William F. Stinespring (London: Allen & Unwin, 1942), 364–70; D. R. Hall, ‘St. Paul and Famine Relief: A Study in Galatians 2:10’, *ExpT* 82 (1970–1971): 309–11; Bruce, *Galatians*, 126.

⁴⁸ Bruce W. Winter, ‘Acts and Food Shortages’, in *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. D. W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, BAFCS 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 59–78.

⁴⁹ Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 116–12; Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 112.

⁵⁰ Josef Hainz, *Koinonia: ‘Kirche’ als Gemeinschaft bei Paulus* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1982), 123–51; Kloppenborg, ‘Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem’, 309.

Thus, from that point a Roman-style forum surrounded by Roman temples were built there,⁵¹ Caesarean Games and Imperial Games were held there,⁵² and the city's new general layout resembled that of any other typical Roman city.⁵³ This investment paid off. Over the century between its refoundation and the onset of the famine under Claudius, Corinth's economy boomed. Up until AD 67 it even had its own mint.⁵⁴ Corinth's proverbial wealth attracted a population of 100,000, most of whom were Romans.⁵⁵

However, while Corinth was a bustling, entrepreneurial, commercial hub, like the churches in Galatia by AD 49 the famine was felt extremely hard there. By that time, a *modius* of grain cost six didrachms, around eight times the normal price at Rome.⁵⁶ Paul captured the economic hardship faced by Corinthians in his first letter to the Corinthians, in his instruction to the Christians there to resist celebrating weddings in order to incur no further financial costs. As Paul states, 'Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is [unmarried]' (1 Cor 7:26).

Although Paul believed the 'affairs of this world' would soon usher in the 'passing away' of 'this world in its present form,' meaning that new marriages would be short-lived anyway, Paul's reference to the 'present crisis' is revealing (1 Cor 7:29–34). Clearly he meant the famine, for only decades earlier, Dionysius of Halicarnassus had used similar language when he linked a famine in a city with 'trouble' and 'perplexity' (*Ant. rom.* 9.3–4). Thus, the 'present crisis' faced by the church in Corinth that Paul refers to, and which Paul believed demanded a cut in lavish spending associated with traditional weddings and marriages there, must be a reference to suffering and poverty experienced in that city.⁵⁷ In support of these grain price statistics and Paul's Corinthian correspondence,⁵⁸ the archaeological record also strengthens the case that Corinth suffered the effects of famine greatly throughout the late 40s and into the 50s hard. Three honorific inscriptions found at Corinth memorialise one wealthy, and politically influential, Corinthian Tiberius Claudius Dinippus as *curator annonae*—a post he held three times, twice in the late AD 40s and once around AD 51.⁵⁹ In the Greek East, a *curator annonae* was responsible

⁵¹ E. C. K. Williams II, 'A Re-evaluation of Temple E and the West End of the Forum of Corinth,' in *The Greek Renaissance in the Roman Empire*, ed. S. Walker and A. Cameron (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1989), 156–62; Richard M. Rothaus, *Corinth: The First City of Greece: An Urban History of Late Antique Cult and Religion*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 39–42.

⁵² Donald F. Engels, *Roman Corinth: An Alternative for the Classical City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 51–52.

⁵³ Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.* 16.13.9; Mary E. H. Walbank, 'Pausanias, Octavia and Temple E at Corinth,' in *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 84 (1989): 394; Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 62.

⁵⁴ Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 11.

⁵⁵ Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 220.

⁵⁶ B. M. Levick, 'Greece (Including Crete and Cyprus) and Asia Minor From 43 B.C. to A.D. 69,' in *CAH* 10:666.

⁵⁷ Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 223–25.

⁵⁸ Michail Rostyovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire, Volume 2* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), 600; M. Jameson, 'Famine in the Greek World,' in *Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Peter Garnsey, Cambridge Philological Society 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 6.

⁵⁹ A. B. West, *Corinth: Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens 1896–1926* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), 8/2:75–76 (no. 86–90); J. H. Kent, *Corinth: Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens 1926–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 8/3: 116–17 (no. 158–63); James R. Wiseman, 'Rome and Corinth I,' in *ANRW* 11.7.1: 500;

in times of food crisis for sourcing grain and selling it at reduced prices to favour the consumers in their city,⁶⁰ a practice the Greeks termed *paraprasis* (παράπρασσις).⁶¹ It was also the role of the *curator annonae* to source financial contributions from their city's wealthiest citizens and create a grain fund, in order to purchase food staples their city's inhabitants.⁶² To place the importance of these three inscriptions in their context, there have only been eight other inscriptions found throughout Greece and Asia Minor by archaeologists that honour such grain curators over the period from 330 BC to AD 150, which means that Dinippus's repeated appointment to the office of *curator annonae* must have come out of a particularly pressing want of food at precisely the same time grain price statistics and Paul's letters suggest the famine under Claudius was hitting the region hard.⁶³ This makes the Corinthian church's eagerness to give funds to the Jerusalem church all the more astonishing.

Very soon solidarity with Jerusalem caught on among the Pauline churches. This should not come as a total surprise, for upon inspection into the national and religious make up of Paul's churches and the regions they were located, they often consisted of both Gentile and Jewish believers. According to Acts, it was Paul's custom to attend synagogue Sabbath meetings wherever he evangelised, and indeed, he often began his missional preaching in synagogues as he travelled throughout Anatolia (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 16:1 18:19), Achaea (Acts 17:16; 18:4) and Macedonia (Acts 16:13; 17:1–2; 17:10). Ancient literary and epigraphic evidence shows there were many synagogues in the regions Paul travelled to and preached, including in Anatolia,⁶⁴ in Achaea,⁶⁵ and in Macedonia.⁶⁶ At these synagogues and others like them, the Law and the Prophets were read and discussed (Acts 13:14–15; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.283; *CIJ* I no. 203), and these synagogue communities at other times also raised funds for the Temple in Jerusalem (Josephus *Ant.* 14.110–13; 16.167–68). Some of their members made frequent pilgrimages to the Jerusalem Temple during Jewish festivals, especially Passover (Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.69; Josephus, *J.W.* 1.245–61; 2.8–16; 6.414–23; *CIJ* II no. 777) and Pentecost (Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.69; Acts 2:1–13; Josephus *J.W.* 2.35–58), and amongst their number were Jews from Judea and also Greek and Roman converts, as Josephus (*Ag. Ap.* 2.123) and Juvenal (*Sat.* 14.96–106) attest. Indeed, such was their patriotic fervour towards the Temple that according to Cassius Dio, during the First Jewish War, Jews from all over the

Bruce W. Winter, 'Secular and Christian Responses to Corinthian Famines,' *TynB* 40 (1989): 86, 98–99; Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 221–22.

⁶⁰ H. W. Pleket, 'Economic History of the Ancient World and Epigraphy: Some Introductory Remarks,' in *Akten des VII. International Kongresses für griechische und lateinische Epigraphik* (München: C. H. Beck'sche, 1973), 254; Winter, 'Secular and Christian Responses,' 96.

⁶¹ J. Triantaplyllopoulos, 'Paraprasis,' in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy* (Hoboken: Blackwell, 1971), 65–69; Winter, 'Secular and Christian Responses,' 96.

⁶² Bruce W. Winter, 'The Public Praising of Christian Benefactors: Romans 13:3–4 Peter 2:14–15,' *JSNT* 34 (1988): 87–103; Winter, 'Secular and Christian Responses,' 106.

⁶³ Arthur R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), documents 2, 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 23, 29.

⁶⁴ Pisidia (Acts 13:14–15), Bithynia (*CIJ* II no. 800 = *IK* Kalchedon no. 75), Phrygia (*CIJ* II no. 777; *CIJ* II no. 1414), Iconium (Acts 14:1), Teos (*CIJ* II no. 744 = *DF* no. 16), Samos (*CIJ* I² no. 731f), Cos (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.110–13), Halicarnassus (*Ant.* 14.256–58), Ancyra (*Ant.* 16.27–28, 162–65), Sardis (*Ant.* 14.259–61), Ephesus (Acts 19:8; *Ant.* 16.167–68; *CIJ* II no. 746 = *IK* Ephesus V no. 1676).

⁶⁵ Corinth (Acts 18:4), and Athens (Acts 17:16).

⁶⁶ Philippi (Acts 16:13), Thessalonika (Acts 17:1–2), and Berea (Acts 17:10).

eastern provinces of the Roman Empire fought against Titus from the walls of Jerusalem, a large number of which came from the Jewish communities in Greece and Asia (*Roman History* 66.4.1–4). Seen against this backdrop, the example of Timothy as a son of a mother who was a Jewish Christian, and a father who was a Greek believer, may not have been an altogether rare occurrence among Paul's churches and other segments of the local populations throughout Asia, Greece and Macedonia (Acts 16:1). Thus, Gentiles and Jews lived alongside, and even together, in these provinces. They were Gentile nations, and Paul's mission was certainly to the Gentiles, but these nations, or rather provinces under the Romans, had sizable Jewish populations that Paul welcomed into his missional activity.

Soon after the Corinthian church made its request to Paul to help the Christians of Jerusalem, the churches of Macedonia also sent their own request to Paul to allow them to contribute, as well. In Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, written in late AD 55, Paul indicates that the Christians in Macedonia pleaded with Paul so they might join with Corinthian Corinthians to help the Jerusalemite Christians, too. As Paul states,

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in the service to the Lord's people [in Jerusalem].... Last year you [the church in Corinth] were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. (2 Cor 8:1–4, 10)

Of note in this passage is the fact that the churches in Macedonia were, similarly to that in Corinth, undergoing 'severe trial' and 'extreme poverty'. Some commentators have in the past been puzzled over the cause for these hardships and lack of money,⁶⁷ but given that this letter coincides with the famine, they must be references to the suffering Macedonia endured as a result of it. Indeed, Paul's silence on charitable giving in 1 Thessalonians reveals that even by AD 49–52, Paul probably hoped the Macedonian Christians to conserve their funds amongst themselves, in similar fashion to the Galatian churches, as discussed.⁶⁸ However, also like the Galatian churches, this conservation of funds allowed the Macedonian churches to volunteer contributions by AD 54. Still, the lingering trials and poverty of the Macedonian churches makes their enthusiasm to contribute funds as impressive as that of the Corinthians' own.⁶⁹

Fervour to help Judea continued to catch on among Paul's churches, and finally the churches of Galatia sent their own request to Paul that he allow them to contribute to funds to Jerusalem. In response to all these requests, Paul addressed the Galatian churches first, possibly at the very time when the ambassadors of the Galatian churches came to Paul with their special request. Then came his responses to the churches in both Corinth and Macedonia, with words that now lack all caution to conserve or preserve funds. Paul writes,

⁶⁷ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 2nd ed., TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 237.

⁶⁸ Hanz Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Herm (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 132 n. 13; G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 329; Winter, 'Secular and Christian Responses', 93.

⁶⁹ Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 223–25.

Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collection will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me. (1 Cor 16:1–4)

To some, this passage seems a mere errand.⁷⁰ However, it is rich in information on the conditions and workings of the Corinthian church during the Great Famine, and on what we know about the nature of the resulting collection called the 'Jerusalem Donation.'⁷¹ What is made clear is that Paul stipulated that on the first day of the week—most likely the day when the Corinthian church came together for worship⁷²—over an undisclosed extended period, each person was to 'set aside a sum of money in keeping with one's income, saving it up' throughout that week (1 Cor 16:1–2).⁷³ Every person was to make a contribution, no matter their financial situation, and their donations were to be saved in the home and in the church's treasury.⁷⁴ Paul also appointed collectors to collect the funds from the Macedonian, Corinthian and Galatian churches, and he would then pass the funds onto the Jerusalem church himself (1 Cor 16:2–4; 2 Cor 8:19–21).

Despite their initial zeal, the Corinthian church's enthusiasm began quickly to abate, until that is, they learned of the fervour with which the Galatian churches raised their own funds for Jerusalem. Their fervour proved infectious to the Corinthians, and it certainly appears to be the case that they were soon pressing on with similar fervour also.⁷⁵ Indeed, such was the enthusiasm that the Corinthian churches now exhibited, that they soon inspired the churches of Macedonia to give even more than they had been giving. As Paul states, 'For I know your eagerness to help [in the Jerusalem Donation], and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year [AD 54] you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action' (2 Cor 9:2).

This drawing of inspiration from the Corinthian church by the Macedonian churches explains why Paul paired the churches of Macedonia with those of Achaia together in his letter to the church in Rome, written in AD 57, with such palpable, nostalgic retrospection, in the following words:

Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe (ὀφειλέται) it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe (ὀφείλουσιν) it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. (Rom 15:26–27)

⁷⁰ Robert Jewett, 'Romans,' in *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 104.

⁷¹ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 151.

⁷² On the matter of worship on the first day of the week in the early church, see Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 67.6. See also Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 233.

⁷³ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 483–85.

⁷⁴ Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 233.

⁷⁵ F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Oliphants, 1971), 157; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1971), 385; Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 897.

This passage has sparked much scholarly debate regarding the nature of the Jerusalem Donation. In this mid-twentieth century, some scholars drew comparison between it and the Jerusalem temple tax expected from Jews universally.⁷⁶ However, although the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem maintained that full observance of the Mosaic law was obligatory for all Jews everywhere, Paul's letter to the Galatian churches clearly stands against Judaizing.⁷⁷ More correctly, other scholars emphasise the voluntary nature of the Jerusalem Donation, and categorise it as an extension of the Community of Goods. Given it was based on monetary contributions, the collection served to cement together Jewish and Gentile Christians in a kind of universal Community of Goods.⁷⁸ Indeed, Paul's own use of the words *ὀφειλέται* and *ὀφείλουσιν* in Romans 15:27 reflect the Pauline connection of grace and responsibility, which Paul taught ought to be adopted by all Christians for their Christian brothers and sisters, universally.⁷⁹ Therefore, what mattered to Paul was not a unilateral direction of funds by religious subjects to a mother-city, but expressions of faith and reciprocal loving works between all Christians, including those in Jerusalem, who had already shared their own 'spiritual blessings' with the Christians of the Gentile world, motivated by Christian love. Thus, Paul paid honour to the church in Jerusalem by contributing to their welfare in a way it would have done itself—not with purchased food, but with the gift of money (Rom 15:27).

5. Paul Takes Charge of the Jerusalem Donation

By late AD 55, Paul took over the collection of funds for the Jerusalem church. A number of factors drove Paul to this. Firstly, it fitted well with Paul's theology. Ideally, in theological terms, charity to Paul is a natural expression of a genuine Christian's faith, shown, as Tasker describes it, 'in action, just as faith must issue in works.'⁸⁰ Paul articulated in his letter to the church at Ephesus, 'by grace you have been saved, through faith', but Paul then followed up with the statement that once saved by grace, Christians should act upon their faith, and show charitable grace to others, since 'we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works' (Eph 2:4–10).⁸¹ Paul reiterated this point to the church in Rome, writing that we are 'justified by faith apart from observing the law'; once saved by grace we become 'slaves to righteousness' of God, exercising spiritual gifts that include 'contributing to the needs of others' from a place of godly gracious love.⁸² Thus, the Jerusalem Donation was driven by collective

⁷⁶ J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 1:86, 2A:48, 2B:118.

⁷⁷ Thrall, *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians*, 161; Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 158.

⁷⁸ Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 386.

⁷⁹ Michael F. Bird, 'The Letter to the Romans', in *All Things to All Cultures: Paul Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans*, ed. Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 198.

⁸⁰ R. V. G. Tasker, *2 Corinthians*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 114.

⁸¹ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 71–78; F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, 2nd ed, TNTC (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 103.

⁸² On justification, see Rom 3:28; on being slaves to righteousness, see 6:18, 19. John Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 168; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 79. On charity as a spiritual gift, see 12:6–8; Bruce, *Romans*, 103–4, 134, 214–15; Dunn, *Romans*, 150. See also William Pauck, ed., *Luther: Lectures on Romans* (London: Westminster, 1961), 119–20.

love—on behalf of God and towards one's fellow Christians in Jerusalem, who were also loved by God.⁸³ Hence, for Paul, Christians ought to do good works out of love and faith in God and love and hope for others, exhibiting 'faith working through love' as Paul described it to the Christians of Galatia in his letter to them (Gal 5:6).

Paul was eager that God's blessings would follow on to the Macedonian and Corinthian Christians as a result of their kind giving, teaching the Corinthians in apt metaphors in the midst of famine, that he who 'sows generously will also reap generously' (2 Cor 9:6). Theologically speaking, for Paul, generosity is as beneficial to the giver as to the receiver. As Paul wrote,

If he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. (2 Cor 9:10–11)

In 2 Corinthians 8:7, Paul called this teaching the 'grace of giving.' Through this kind of giving, Paul believed the Christians of Greece and Macedonia would become rich 'in every way that God knows will contribute to that person's spiritual growth.'⁸⁴ Paul believed this growth of more importance than the act of charity itself: 'If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing' (1 Cor 13:3). Thus, a Christian should 'do everything' in regard to the relief of poverty, but only 'in love' (1 Cor 16:18).

Paul also had other practical reasons for choosing to oversee the collection. For one thing, this generosity provided a divine pattern for others to follow.⁸⁵ Politically and socially, also, Paul hoped that by unifying the Gentile and Jewish Christians within his own churches,⁸⁶ the Gentile world would be encouraged to show more friendship with the Jewish world,⁸⁷ and hopefully halt animosities from

⁸³ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 123, 218; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 902.

⁸⁴ Blomberg, *From Pentecost to Patmos*, 223. See also Paul W. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 443.

⁸⁵ Ralph P. Martin, 'Theology and Mission in 2 Corinthians', in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission*, ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 74–75.

⁸⁶ For Pauline churches as extensions of Jewish Diaspora synagogues and Graeco-Roman ecclesia, see the cases of Salamis (Acts 13:5–12), Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:5–42), Iconium (Acts 14:1), Philippi (Acts 16:11–40), Thessalonica (Acts 17:10–15), Beroea (Acts 18:1–8), and Corinth (Acts 18:1–8). See also the case of Titius Justus, Paul's first Gentile convert in Corinth, who lived next door to a synagogue (Acts 18:7–8). For Paul's Jewishness generally, see Alan F. Segal, 'Paul's Jewish Presuppositions', in *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 159–72; Paul McKechnie, 'Paul Among the Jews', in *All Things to All Cultures: Paul Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans*, ed. Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 103–23. On Paul's Graeco-Roman heritage, see Luke Timothy Johnson, 'Paul's Ecclesiology', in *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 199–211; Christopher Forbes, 'Paul Among the Greeks', in *All Things to All Cultures: Paul Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans*, ed. Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 124–42. See also John S. Kloppenborg, 'Greco-Roman Thiasoi, the Corinthian Ekklesia at Corinth, and Conflict Management', in *Early Christianity and Its Literature*, ed. Merrill Miller (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 5:197–98.

⁸⁷ A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (London: T&T Clark, 1988), 70–75; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 'Preaching the Gospel in Rome. A Study of the Epistolary Framework of Romans', in *Gospel in Paul: Studies in Corinthians, Galatians and Romans for Richard N. Longenecker*, ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson (Sheffield:

escalating into what would be the First Jewish War (AD 66–70),⁸⁸ Moreover, on a missional level, it was of fundamental importance to Paul to consolidate his work in the East, and ensure it against Judaisers in the lead up to his mission to Spain.⁸⁹ However, according to Paul the greatest rewards would be spiritual, bringing pleasure to God, who loves to bless ‘cheerful givers’ with enlarged harvests of ‘righteousness’ and generosity with ‘thanksgiving’ (2 Cor 9:6–10).

6. Conclusion

In AD 57, Paul finally set out to deliver the Jerusalem Donation to Judea, sailing there from Ephesus, conveniently situated centrally between Corinth, Macedonia, and Galatia. The long length of time that transpired between the start of the famine and Paul’s deliverance of the Jerusalem Donation—eleven years—proves that the Community of Goods was no dismal failure. However, in AD 57, Paul became aware for some time that he could be arrested by conspirators in Jerusalem. Although the prophet Agabus had told Paul upon his arrival in Caesarea Maritima that he would soon be arrested and tried by Gentiles, Paul hastened to Jerusalem anyway (Acts 21:1–16). This demonstrates just how much the Christians in Jerusalem had started finally to feel acute shortage from the lingering effects of this long and severe famine by that date. Thus, with simplicity and brevity, Paul farewelled the church in Rome in concise tones: ‘Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord’s people there’ (Rom 15:25). When Paul arrived at Jerusalem, he was welcomed warmly by all the Christians there, and on the second day he received an audience with James and the Jerusalemite elders, upon which the apostle gave them a detailed report about his missions, including the collection. ‘When they heard this’, Acts states, proving that they received the collection, ‘they praised God’ (Acts 21:19–20). As a signifier that the Jerusalemite church could handle its financial affairs competently, no evidence exists that it required any further donations up to the end of the famine in AD 63. Clearly, in the main, it managed its funds, despite the crisis of a funding shortfall in AD 57, extremely well.

Sheffield Academic, 1994), 357; James C. Miller, *The Obedience of Faith, The Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of Romans* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 16; A. Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 32; Bird, ‘The Letter to the Romans’, 189.

⁸⁸ C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, BNTC (London: Black, 1975), 278; Murphy-O’Connor, ‘1 and 2 Corinthians’, 76; Frank J. Matera, *Romans*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 337; Bird, ‘The Letter to the Romans’, 203.

⁸⁹ Francis Watson, ‘The Two Romans Congregations: Romans 14:1–15:13’, in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 214–15; Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, SNTSMS 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 176; Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 32–52.

Paul’s Overlooked Allusion to Joel 2:9 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2

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Abstract: This article argues that Paul compares the day of the Lord to a thief in the night in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 because of the influence of Joel 2:9. While the scholarly consensus is that the thief imagery owes to Jesus’s thief imagery for his second coming in Matthew 24:42–44 or Luke 12:39–40, Joel 2:9 better fits the criteria for allusions identified in G. K. Beale’s *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Paul’s contextually faithful interpretation of Joel 2:9 is a model for how Christians should continue to interpret OT prophetic literature.

Paul’s comparison of “the day of the Lord” to “a thief in the night” in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4 did not originate with him.¹ As numerous scholars have noted, Jesus used the image of a thief when prophesying his second coming (Matt 24:42–44; Luke 12:39–40). Many of these scholars have argued that Paul’s comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief in the night alludes to Jesus’s earlier teaching on the subject. Though this conclusion is one possible explanation for Paul’s simile, NT scholars have neglected to examine whether another, earlier usage of this comparison may better account for Paul’s language in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4. Hundreds of years before Jesus compared his return to a thief’s invasion of a home, Joel had foretold a day of the Lord that would afflict God’s people in the form of an invading army that would overtake Jerusalem “like a thief” (Joel 2:9).² Though many NT scholars have argued that Paul alludes to the words of Jesus in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, he is more likely alluding to Joel 2:9.

To argue that Joel 2:9 is more likely the source of Paul’s comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief in the night, I will demonstrate that Joel 2:9 meets or can answer objections from all seven criteria that G. K. Beale lists in his *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* for evaluating

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV.

² OT scholars debate whether the army in Joel 2:1–11 is a human army (e.g., Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, NAC 19A [Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1997], 333–43) or a swarm of locusts (e.g., Joel Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence: A Rhetorical Reading of the Book of Joel*, Siphrut [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014], 116–17). The precise identity of the army is not germane to the argument of this paper.

potential allusions.³ I will also show how Matthew 24:42 fails some of those criteria. Because Joel 2:9 meets the criteria for allusions better than Matthew 24:42 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, Paul more likely drew from Joel in comparing the day of the Lord to a thief in the night than from Matthew or Jesus tradition.

1. Availability of Joel 2:9 to Paul

Beale's first criterion for evaluating potential allusions is the source text's availability to the writer. Paul likely had access to both Hebrew and Greek texts of Joel. Of Paul's 107 identified OT citations across his corpus, Moisés Silva identified most citations as agreeing with both the Septuagint and Hebrew Masoretic Text, but Paul 7 times agreed with the MT against the LXX.⁴ Paul therefore had access both to Hebrew and Greek copies of the OT.⁵ By contrast, Paul may or may not have had access to Matthew or the specific Jesus tradition Matthew cited in Matthew 24:42. Many scholars agree that 1 Thessalonians should be dated to the early 50s CE.⁶ Even conservative scholars, however, date Matthew to the 60s CE.⁷ Paul therefore likely did not have a copy of Matthew's Gospel when he wrote 1 Thessalonians. He may or may not have had access to an oral tradition of Jesus's Olivet Discourse (later recorded in Matthew 24, as well as in Mark 13 and Luke 21). In any case, Joel was more available to Paul for a possible allusion in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 than Matthew 24 or Jesus tradition behind it.

2. Lexical Evidence for an Allusion to Joel 2:9

Beale's second criterion for evaluating potential allusions is whether "there is a significant degree of verbatim repetition of words or syntactical patterns," which Beale calls volume.⁸ In this respect, Joel

³ All seven criteria are located in G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 33. Beale adapts these seven criteria from Richard Hays (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989], 29–32). Hays's criteria are the methodological standard against which later Pauline scholars have developed their own criteria for identifying allusions. Stanley Porter has rejected Hays's equation of allusion and echo, and I agree with Porter that an "allusion is concerned to bring an external person, place, or literary work into the contemporary text" ("Allusions and Echoes," in *As It Is Written: Studying Paul's Use of Scripture*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Stanley, SBL Symposium Series 50 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008], 40). Nevertheless, Hays's criteria remain valid for identifying these kinds of allusions. In his monograph on Paul's use of Scripture in Colossians, Christopher Beetham agrees with many of Hays's criteria, to which he adds an additional criterion of interpretation of the proposed allusion in later OT texts and Second Temple Judaism (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, *BibInt* 96 [Leiden: Brill, 2008], 32–33). David Shaw has also defended the usefulness of Hays's original seven criteria against the rejection of them by Porter and the addition to them by Beetham ("Converted Imaginations? The Reception of Richard Hays's Intertextual Method," *CurBR* 11 [2013]: 234–45). Thus, this paper follows Beale and Hays in using them to evaluate the probability of Paul alluding to Joel 2:9 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

⁴ Moisés Silva, "Old Testament in Paul," *DPL* 631.

⁵ Paul "had a firm grasp both on the Hebrew text and the LXX" (Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, *ZECNT* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2012], 202).

⁶ F. F. Bruce comments, "It is commonly agreed that 1 Thessalonians ... should be dated ... about A.D. 50" (*1 and 2 Thessalonians*, *WBC* 45 [Waco, TX: Word, 1982]), xxxiv; this general consensus has held.

⁷ So recently, Charles L. Quarles, *Matthew*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 6.

⁸ Beale, *Handbook*, 33.

2:9 fares significantly better than Matthew 24:42 upon close inspection. Scholars who argue that Paul is alluding to a Jesus tradition in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 have overstated their case by neglecting to list the differences between Paul's imagery in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and Jesus's imagery in Matthew 24:42–44 and Luke 12:39–40. Paul compares “the day of the Lord” to “a thief in the night” (1 Thess 5:2). However, Jesus does not use “day of the Lord” language in either Matthew 24:42–44 or Luke 12:39–40. In Jesus's use of the imagery, “the Son of Man” is “the thief” (Matt 24:43, 44; Luke 12:39–40). Admittedly, both Paul and Jesus are discussing the same event. Nevertheless, the probability of a proposed allusion depends in part on the repetition of lexical connections between two texts. Therefore, the different referents of “thief” in Paul's and Jesus's usage of the imagery decrease the probability that Paul is alluding to Jesus's teaching in 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

Not only do Paul and Jesus compare different referents to a thief, but they also employ different literary devices. In Matthew 24:42–44 and Luke 12:39–40, Jesus uses a metaphor to compare himself at his second coming to a thief, but Paul uses a simile in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Some commentators may have wrongly identified an allusion to Jesus's teachings in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 because they overlook this fact. In an influential article, Joseph Plevnik refers to “the image of thief” in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 as “a metaphor.”⁹ Even such major exegetical commentaries as those by Charles A. Wanamaker, Gary S. Shogren, and Jeffery A. D. Weima repeat Plevnik's mistaken identification of Paul's literary device in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 as a “metaphor” rather than as a simile.¹⁰ Wilfred Watson has rightly summarized, “Simile and metaphor overlap, to a certain extent: they express the same thing but in different ways.”¹¹ Nevertheless, this point does not negate the significance of the difference between the two literary devices. The different ways that a simile and metaphor make the same point result in divergent syntactical constructions, which lessen the probability of Paul's allusion to Jesus in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, just as do their different referents in their respective comparisons.

In fact, Paul's comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief in the night in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 bears more lexical similarity to Joel 2:9 than to either Matthew 24:42–44 or Luke 12:39–40. In Greek biblical texts, the simile *ὡς κλέπτης* (“like a thief”) only occurs in Joel 2:9 and 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4. In Joel 2:9 LXX, the Greek translator uses *κλέπται*, the plural accusative form of *κλέπτης*. However, the Hebrew text of Joel 2:9 for the simile is *כְּגַנָּב* (“like a thief”). Since Paul uses the singular nominative *κλέπτης* in 1 Thessalonians 5, he may be alluding to Joel 2:9 MT.¹² When necessary, then, Paul freshly translated a biblical quotation from a Hebrew text into Koine Greek. The best explanation for a lexical comparison of Joel 2:9 and 1 Thessalonians 5:2 is that Paul is alluding to a Hebrew text of Joel 2:9 rather than a Greek text.

⁹ Joseph Plevnik, “1 Thess 5:1–11: Its Authenticity, Intention, and Message,” *Bib* 60 (1979): 81 n. 27.

¹⁰ Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 179; Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 206; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 346–47.

¹¹ Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, JSOTSup 26, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 254.

¹² This possibility is all the more likely as Paul elsewhere in his letters seems to work directly from a Hebrew text. Gordon Fee has demonstrated that Paul's command *χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ* in Philippians 3:1; 4:4 “is best understood as Paul's own rendering of this OT idiom [‘rejoice in the Lord’],” since “the LXX translators [of Psalms] consistently avoided *χαίρω* for this idiom” (*Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 290 n. 27).

The context of Joel 2:9 further corresponds to 1 Thessalonians 5:2. In context, Joel 2:9 occurs within the larger unit of vv. 1–11. The references to the day of the Lord in Joel 2:1, 11 frame this unit and establish its thematic focus.¹³ Both Joel 2:1–11 and 1 Thessalonians 5 are about “the day of the Lord.” In both Joel 2:1 LXX and 1 Thessalonians 5:2, the subject is ἡμέρα κυρίου (“the day of the Lord”). Both Joel 2:11 and 1 Thessalonians 5:4 refer back to this day by adding the article before it, ἡ ἡμέρα (“the day”).

The lexical connections between Joel 2:1–11 and 1 Thessalonians 5 are all the more persuasive because of how both passages speak of the judgment of the day of the Lord. In Joel 2:1–11, the day of the Lord is a day of judgment that would befall Judeans in the form of an invading army if they did not repent of their idolatry. This invading army would “enter through the windows” of the houses in Jerusalem “like a thief” (v. 9). Significantly, this army would be the agent of God’s wrath against the sin of his people, since God himself is at the head of this force, “his army” (v. 11). Though this “great and powerful people” (v. 2) specifically are the ones that would invade Jerusalem “like a thief” (v. 9), they are the agents of God’s wrath at the day of the Lord. Likewise, Paul says, “the day of the Lord will come like a thief” on those who are “in darkness,” who will face “sudden destruction” (1 Thess 5:2–4). Paul describes the judgment of the day of the Lord in order to encourage Christians to “keep awake and be sober” (1 Thess 5:6). Joel similarly warns his audience about this day of the Lord in Joel 2:1–11 in order to motivate them to repent in Joel 2:12–17.¹⁴ These lexical connections between Joel 2:1–11 and 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and their complementary function in each passage mean that Paul is more likely alluding to Joel 2 in 1 Thessalonians 5 than to Matthew 24 or Luke 12 when he compares the day of the Lord to a thief.

3. Conceptual Connections between Joel 2 and 1 Thessalonians 5

Paul’s citation and use of Joel elsewhere in his writings meets Beale’s third criterion for possible allusions: recurrence.¹⁵ Paul uses similar concepts as Joel did in his portrayal of the Day of the Lord both in 1 Thessalonians 5 and elsewhere in his letters. Paul describes the day of the Lord as a day of darkness in 1 Thessalonians 5:4, just as Joel does in Joel 2:2. Both Paul and Joel describe the day of the Lord with imagery of birth pangs in childbirth (1 Thess 5:3; Joel 2:6). Furthermore, Paul cites Joel 2:32 (3:5 MT/LXX) in Romans 10:13, and the preceding verse describes the “day of the Lord” as “great and awesome” (Joel 2:31 [3:4 MT/LXX]). Paul may also allude to Joel 2:1 in 1 Corinthians 15:52, since both texts mention a trumpet in connection to events on the day of the Lord.¹⁶ Paul’s allusions and citation of Joel both elsewhere in 1 Thessalonians and elsewhere in his letters increase the probability that 1 Thessalonians 5:2 is an allusion to Joel 2:9.

¹³ James L. Crenshaw, *Joel*, AB 24C (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 128; Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence*, 107.

¹⁴ Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence*, 141–42.

¹⁵ Beale, *Handbook*, 33.

¹⁶ Granted, Paul does not use the phrase “the day of the Lord” in 1 Corinthians 15, but 1 Corinthians 15 is discussing the same events as 1 Thessalonians 5. Similarly Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner write, “The *trumpet* as a sign of the day of the Lord in 15:52 recalls Isaiah 27:13, Joel 2:1, and Zephaniah 1:14–16,” and they correlate 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17 and 1 Corinthians 15:52 (*The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 830).

Scholars who have tried to demonstrate Paul's allusions to Jesus tradition in 1 Thessalonians and other letters, by contrast, have overstated their case. Seyoon Kim argues that Paul alludes to Jesus tradition not only in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 but throughout the broader section of 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11. He contends,

Here we should compare the introductory form αὐτοὶ ... ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι ... in 5.2 with the formula ‘Do you not know that...?’ (οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι...;) in 1 Cor 3.16; 5.6; 6.2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19.... I have tried to show that the formula in those verses alludes to the various sayings of Jesus.... Thus, the formula “Do you not know that...?” in the eight verses of 1 Corinthians and its variants in 2 Cor 5.1 and 1 Thess 5.2 (cf. also 1 Cor 10.16) together suggest that at his founding mission for various churches he [Paul] regularly delivered the teaching of Jesus as part of his preaching of the gospel.¹⁷

Kim's strongest lexical connection between Paul and Jesus in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 depends on the accuracy of his assertion that an introductory formula including οἶδατε ὅτι always introduces an allusion to some teaching of Jesus. However, this claim is false.

In 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19, when Paul says that the Corinthians are the temple of God, he is more likely echoing the Old Testament than a teaching of Jesus, since in 2 Corinthians 6:16, Paul quotes Leviticus 26:12 to support his identification of Christians as “the temple of the living God.”¹⁸ If Paul explicitly depended on the OT for his identification of God's people as God's temple here, then the OT could also have been the source of this theological point elsewhere in Paul's letters.

Similarly, 1 Corinthians 6:15–16 may not be an allusion to Jesus's teaching. Paul explicitly cited Genesis 2:24 in 1 Corinthians 6:16. Granted, Jesus also quoted this OT verse in his own teaching on marriage (Matt 19:5). Paul therefore may have been alluding to Jesus's teaching about Genesis 2:24 in 1 Corinthians 6:16. However, it is at least equally plausible that Paul was alluding to Genesis 2:24 without depending on Jesus's own teaching about it. Half of the verses that Kim cites in support of his contention that οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι introduces an allusion to a Jesus saying in 1 Corinthians instead are at least equally as likely to be alluding to the OT without reference to any of Jesus's teachings. No lexical evidence therefore unquestionably supports the claim made by many scholars that Paul is alluding to Jesus's Olivet Discourse in his comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief.

Paul's possible allusion to the Olivet Discourse in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 also does not diminish the relative strength of the proposed allusion to Joel 2:9 in the previous verse. As other commentators have rightly noted, Paul may be alluding to Luke 21:34–36 in 1 Thessalonians 5:3.¹⁹ Paul warns, “While people are saying, ‘There is peace and security,’ then sudden destruction will come upon them [αἰφνίδιος αὐτοῖς ἐφίσταται] as pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape [οὐ μὴ ἐκφύγωσιν]” (1 Thess 5:3). Paul seems to be echoing Jesus's words in Luke 21:34–36:

But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly [ἐπιστῆ ἔφ' ὑμᾶς αἰφνίδιος ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη] like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the

¹⁷ Seyoon Kim, “The Jesus Tradition in 1 Thess 4.13–5.11,” *NTS* 48 (2002): 238 n. 45.

¹⁸ So also Ciampa and Rosner write, “That Paul connects the temple metaphor with the Old Testament is clear from 2 Corinthians 6:16–18, where he quotes Leviticus 26:12 and Ezekiel 37:27” (*The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 158).

¹⁹ E.g., Kim, “Jesus Tradition,” 231; Wanamaker, *Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 180.

face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape [ἐκφυγεῖν] all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

1 Thessalonians 5 and Luke 21 both refer to the day of the Lord and warn of the suddenness of the day of the Lord (αἰφνίδιος) and of the necessity to escape (ἐκφυγεῖν).²⁰

Nevertheless, Paul's possible allusion in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 to Jesus's words as preserved in Luke 21:34–36 does not nullify the probability that he alludes to Joel 2:9 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Matthew does not preserve a comparable saying in his account of Jesus's Olivet Discourse, and Luke situates his account of Jesus's thief metaphor not in the Olivet Discourse but earlier in Jesus's ministry, as he leads the disciples to Jerusalem. Paul's allusion to a portion of Jesus's Olivet Discourse preserved uniquely in Luke among the canonical Gospels may even support the suggestion that he is alluding to Joel 2:9 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, since Luke does not include thief imagery in his account of Jesus's Olivet Discourse. If Paul alluded to the Olivet Discourse in 1 Thessalonians 5 but only had access to Jesus sayings that were later recorded in Luke's Gospel, his allusion to a part of the Olivet Discourse preserved in Matthew but not in Luke becomes even less likely.

Furthermore, even as Paul alludes to Luke 21:34–36, he may be continuing to echo Joel 2 as well. In the midst of his allusion to Luke 21:34–36, Paul says that the “sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman [ὡσπερ ἡ ὠδὶν τῆ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσῃ]” (1 Thess 5:3). Prophesying of God's army at the day of the Lord, Joel also wrote, “Before them peoples are in anguish; all faces grow pale” (Joel 2:6). The phrase “are in anguish” translates the Hebrew verb פָּלַח, which the LXX renders as συντριβῶ rather than as the verb ὠδίνω, which is cognate to the noun ὠδίν. Though different Greek words appear in the translation of Joel 2:6 and 1 Thessalonians 5:3, Paul may nevertheless be echoing the concept of Joel 2:6 in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. First, ὠδίν is an acceptable translation of פָּלַח. Job 39:1 LXX translates a participial form of פָּלַח with ὠδίν. Isaiah 26:17 LXX similarly translates פָּלַח by using ὠδίν. Second, ὠδίν occurs in contexts of women suffering labor pains in Isaiah, though other Greek words there translate פָּלַח. “They will be dismayed: pangs and agony [ὠδίν] will seize them; they will be in anguish [פָּלַח] like a woman in labor” (Isa 13:8). “Before she was in labor [פָּלַח], she gave birth; before her pain [ὠδίν] came upon her she delivered a son” (Isa 66:7). Even when ὠδίν does not render פָּלַח in the Septuagint, the two terms overlap in their semantic range. Therefore, Paul may have been freely rendering the thought of Joel 2:6 into Koine Greek in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. This possibility further supports the conclusion that Paul was likely alluding to Joel 2:9 when he compared the day of the Lord to a thief in 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

4. Thematic Coherence between Joel 2:9 and 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4

Joel 2:9 is also more thematically coherent with 1 Thessalonians 5:2 than Matthew 24:42. As Shogren has pointed out regarding 1 Thessalonians 5:4,

One point of difficulty in this section is whether Paul means to say that the parousia will come as a surprise to Christians. On the one hand, the “thief in the night” metaphor seems strictly to apply to the world of darkness. Yet throughout the tradition on which

²⁰ Paul's claim that non-Christians will not escape the judgment of the day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:3) and Jesus's instruction that Christians should pray to escape that judgment (Luke 21:36) are complementary.

he bases his teaching, all people will be taken by surprise: “Therefore keep watch, because *you* do not know on what day your Lord will come.” (Matt 24:42, italics added)²¹

If one assumes that Matthew 24:42 is the background of 1 Thessalonians 5:2, Paul seems to restrict the surprise of the day of the Lord to non-Christians in a way that Jesus does not. Paul and Jesus thereby seem to use thief imagery in potentially contradictory ways. Shogren’s solution to this “tension” is to recognize that “the believer is said to be ‘ready’ if he or she is always walking in God’s light, even though the event itself will come as a surprise.”²² Though this solution is theologically sound, it is unnecessary if one does not assume that Matthew 24:42 is the background of 1 Thessalonians 5:2. When one compares Joel 2:9 to 1 Thessalonians 5:2, those two texts discuss the day of the Lord in harmony with one another. Joel 2:1–11 describes the day of the Lord as a day of judgment, and so does Paul. Jesus does not talk about his return in Matthew 24 with day of the Lord language because he there emphasizes how he will both save and judge people as the Son of Man. By contrast, Paul talks about the day of the Lord in terms of judgment on those “in darkness” because in Joel 2:1–11 the day of the Lord was an expression of God’s judgment.²³ Matthew 24:42 thus fails Beale’s fourth criterion for proposed allusions in that Matthew 24:42 does not “fit” Paul’s argument in 1 Thessalonians 5:2–4, but Joel 2:9 passes this test, since it meets Beale’s criterion that an allusion “not only thematically fits into the NT writer’s argument but also illuminates it.”²⁴

This argument is all the stronger if Paul also alludes to Joel 2:6 in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. Both Joel and Paul describe the day of the Lord with the imagery of a woman in labor. Duane Garrett has identified 1 Thessalonians 5:3 as an example of how “convulsing in anguish (like a woman in labor) is a stock expression for the day of the Lord,” as in Joel 2:6.²⁵ Paul, consistent with Joel, describes the day of the Lord as a day of judgment. Paul and Joel’s descriptions of the day of the Lord are consistent in a way that avoids the “point of difficulty” that Shogren strove to resolve.²⁶ Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5 is repeatedly more thematically consistent to Joel 2 than to Matthew 24.

5. Historical Probability of Paul’s Allusion to Joel 2:9

Fifth, it is more historically plausible that Paul alluded to Joel 2:9 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 than to Jesus tradition behind Matthew 24:42. This paper has exposed faults in Kim’s vital argument that οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι always introduces an allusion to oral tradition about Jesus’s teachings. Furthermore, Matthew and Luke do not situate Jesus’s metaphor of the Son of Man being a thief in the same historical contexts in their respective Gospels. It is therefore unlikely on grounds of historical plausibility that Paul was

²¹ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 206.

²² Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 206.

²³ Richard Mayhue lists Joel 2:9 in support for his contention that the day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 functions as it did “in the Old Testament—a time of judgment upon the unbelieving world” (“The Bible’s Watchword: Day of the Lord,” *MSJ* 22 [2011]: 71).

²⁴ Beale, *Handbook*, 33.

²⁵ Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 339. He cites Isaiah 13:8; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; and Ezekiel 30:16 as other examples of לַיְהוָה describing the day of the Lord. He cites Hans Walter Wolff’s commentary as the source for his identification of Isaiah 13:8 and Ezekiel 30:16 in this regard (*Joel and Amos*, Herm [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 46).

²⁶ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 206.

alluding to Jesus tradition in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. It is more historically plausible that he was alluding to Joel 2:9. Other NT authors (and Jesus himself!) alluded to various aspects of the day of the Lord described by Joel. Craig Blomberg has identified Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15 among the sources for “a constellation of allusions” in Matthew 24:29.²⁷ According to G. K. Beale and Sean McDonough, Revelation 6:12 alludes to Joel 2:31 (3:4 LXX), Revelation 9:7 alludes to Joel 1:3, 6, and Revelation 14:17–20 alludes to Joel 3:2, 11–14.²⁸ Joel’s imagery in all these texts concerns cosmic portents of the day of the Lord. Revelation 8:12 also prophesies cosmic upheaval reminiscent of Joel’s imagery. In addition to these allusions to Joel, Peter cites Joel 2:28–32 (3:1–5 LXX) in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:17–21). Joel was a central text for Christians from the beginning of the church. Numerous NT documents quote or allude to Joel, so it is historically plausible that Paul would allude to Joel 2:9 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

6. The Inconclusive History of Interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 5:2

Beale’s sixth criterion for evaluating allusions, history of interpretation, at first seems to support Matthew 24:42 as a more likely allusion than Joel 2:9 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. However, Beale describes this criterion as “one of the least reliable criteria in recognizing allusions,” in part because

though a study of past interpretation may reveal the possible allusions proposed by others, it can also lead to a narrowing of the possibilities since commentators can tend to follow other commentators and since commentary tradition always has the possibility of distorting or misinterpreting and losing the fresh and creative approach of the NT writers’ textual collocations.²⁹

Such a distortion seems to have occurred with respect to the correct source of Paul’s comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief in the night. English-language exegetical commentators over the past generation have uniformly identified Jesus tradition as the source of Paul’s thief image in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and have not addressed the thief imagery of Joel 2 in their arguments that Paul is alluding to Jesus in 1 Thessalonians 5:2.³⁰ Plevnik technically states correctly that, “the image of the thief in the OT is never employed *as a metaphor* for the coming of the Lord’s day.”³¹ However, he did not consider that Joel compares the army of the day of the Lord to a thief using simile in Joel 2:9. Seyoon Kim similarly contends that “the unique imagery of the day of the Lord coming like a thief ... is not attested in the Jewish literature.”³² Such a statement observes correctly that the entire comparison does not occur in Joel 2:9, but it ignores the broader context of Joel 2:9, which is solely about the day of the Lord (Joel 2:1–11). The erroneous conclusion of multiple scholars that no OT text compared the day of the Lord

²⁷ Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 87. See also Mark 13:24 and Luke 21:25.

²⁸ G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, “Revelation,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1105, 1114, 1133.

²⁹ Beale, *Handbook*, 33.

³⁰ Of recent English-language scholars, Richard Mayhue alone listed Joel 2:9 alongside NT occurrences “for κλέπτης used in a prophetic motif” (“The Bible’s Watchword,” 71 n. 22). Even Mayhue, however, did not argue that Joel 2:9 is the source of Paul’s allusion in 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

³¹ Plevnik, “1 Thess 5:1–11,” 81 n. 27, emphasis added.

³² Kim, “Jesus Tradition,” 232.

to a thief may explain why they have not considered Joel 2:9 to be a possible source of Paul's comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Though it is not consistent with the history of interpretation, Joel 2:9 is the most likely source of Paul's comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 because the criterion is unreliable, which possibility Beale concedes.

7. *Contextual Fit of Joel 2:9 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2*

Finally, Joel 2:9 is more satisfying an allusion than Matthew 24:42 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, so it better meets Beale's seventh and final criterion for evaluating allusions. Beale asks,

Does the proposed allusion and its interpretative usage make sense in the immediate context? Does it illuminate the surrounding context? Does it enhance the rhetorical punch of the point being made by the NT writer? Does the use of the allusion result in a satisfying account of how the author intended the allusion and how this use of the allusion would have made its effect upon the reader?³³

Joel 2:9 answers all of these questions satisfactorily. Joel 2:9 makes sense in the immediate context of 1 Thessalonians 5:2. It is consistent with Paul's emphasis on the judgment of the day of the Lord, whereas Matthew 24:42 poses a "point of difficulty," as Shogren has admitted.³⁴ Joel 2:9 also illuminates the surrounding context, since Paul deals both with the resurrection that Jesus will accomplish for Christians at his Second Coming (1 Thess 4:13–18) and the judgment that Jesus will render on non-Christians at that time (1 Thess 5:1–11). The day of the Lord as prophesied by Joel helps Paul emphasize the judgment of the wicked in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11. Both Joel 2:9 and Matthew 24:42 would have been rhetorically effective, since both use thief imagery, albeit with different referents, as noted above. Joel 2:9 therefore satisfies every question of Beale's seventh criterion and is a more satisfying allusion in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 than Matthew 24:42.

8. *Conclusion and Significance*

According to Beale's seven criteria for assessing possible allusions in the NT, Joel 2:9 is more likely than Matthew 24:42 (or Jesus tradition behind it) to be the source of Paul's comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief in the night in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Joel 2:9 was more available to Paul than Matthew 24:42. Unlike Matthew 24, Joel 2 has a large volume of lexical connections with 1 Thessalonians 5, and Joel is a recurrent source for Paul, both in citations and allusions, not only in 1 Thessalonians but also in his other letters. Similarly, other NT writers quote or allude to Joel, which makes Joel a historically plausible source for Paul's imagery in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Furthermore, Joel's description of the day of the Lord coheres with Paul's description of it in 1 Thessalonians 5. The history of interpretation is an unreliable criterion in this case, since commentators seem to have ignored Joel 2:9 as a possible source of 1 Thessalonians 5:2 because of the widespread identification of Matthew 24:42 as its source, the validity of which this paper has questioned. Joel 2:9 is overall a more satisfying allusion in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 than Matthew 24:42. Cumulatively, these seven points make the case that Paul derives his comparison of the day of the Lord to a thief in the night from Joel 2:9 rather than from Jesus tradition.

³³ Beale, *Handbook*, 33.

³⁴ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 206.

Identifying Joel 2:9 as Paul's allusion in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 has contemporary significance. Paul's interpretation of Joel 2:9, consistent with its context in Joel 2:1–11, is a model for how Christians should continue to interpret OT prophetic literature. If Paul was alluding to Joel 2:9 in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, then he was modeling typology. "Typological interpretation attends to historical correspondence and escalation. Real events that took place in history are seen to match in sequence and import, and as we progress from a type to fulfillment, we find an increase in significance."³⁵ Even in Joel, the day of the Lord functioned typologically. The historic days of the Lord recounted in Joel 1:1–2:17 became a pattern for a future day of the Lord prophesied in Joel 2:18–3:21.³⁶ Paul followed this typological trajectory in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 by recycling the thief simile of the historic day of the Lord depicted in Joel 2:1–11 to describe the eschatological day of the Lord. Paul's interpretation of the day of the Lord from Joel 2:1–11 in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 is normative for Christians today. Such a lesson could not be gleaned from this text if Matthew 24:42 were the source of Paul's iconic image of the thief in the night. However, when one recognizes Joel 2:9 as the source of this comparison in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, one finds an example of typological interpretation in Scripture that is based not only in the NT but also in its original OT context and that is thus normative for contemporary Christian hermeneutics.

³⁵ James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 365.

³⁶ Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence*, 173–74, 265–67.

What Must She Do to Be Saved? A Theological Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:15

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Abstract: In 1 Timothy 2:15, Paul asserts “the woman will be saved through the childbirth.” This essay asserts that this “woman” is Eve and that this “childbirth” is the birth of the Messiah. Although this interpretation is by no means new, the contribution of this essay rests in its proposal of the evidence for this view, namely, Paul’s use of the Adam/Christ contrast. This essay first analyzes the grammar and context of 1 Timothy 2:15 to assert that a messianic reading of this passage is an exegetically viable option. Subsequently, each instance in which Adam is mentioned by name in the NT is examined (Luke 3:38; Rom 5:14 [x2]; 1 Cor 15:22, 45 [x2]; 1 Tim 2:13, 14; Jude 14), thereby proposing a pattern for when to expect Paul to develop the Adam/Christ contrast.

It is no overstatement that 1 Timothy 2:8–15 is an exegetical battleground.¹ There is no lack of opinion regarding this passage as a whole, nor is there a shortage of discussion on the fifteenth verse—the focus of this essay.² Numerous views exist regarding whether Paul asserts that *women* are saved through “childbearing” or *a woman* is saved through “the childbirth,” what this “salvation” entails, and the meaning of the need for them to “continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” Despite the diversity of views, this essay proposes that τῆς τεκνογονίας should be viewed as a reference to a specific childbirth—not to childbearing in general—and therefore that Paul intended a messianic un-

¹ For a survey of historical perspectives on this passage, see Andreas Köstenberger, “Ascertaining Women’s God-Ordained Roles: An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” *BBR* 7 (1997): 107–44. Köstenberger classifies the various interpretations into seven major views: 1) the bearing of “spiritual children” (i.e., good works), 2) perseverance in the faith of physical children, 3) messianic typology, 4) literal preservation through physical childbirth, 5) women saved through bearing of children, 6) child-bearing is a synecdoche, and 7) adherence to God-ordained domestic role. Others combine the interpretations into fewer, broader groups. For example, Ralph Earle divides them into three interpretations (*1 Timothy*, EBC [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978], 362–63); Gordon Fee, discusses four views (*1 & 2 Timothy*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011], 74–76). Also, see Jay Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 47–48.

² The interpreter runs the risk of showing his hand merely through his choice of translation. For example, compare the ESV, “she will be saved through childbearing,” with the NASB, “*women* will be preserved through the bearing of children,” or the Twentieth Century New Testament, “women will find their salvation in motherhood.”

derstanding of this passage.³ Although this interpretation is by no means new, the contribution of this essay rests in its proposal of the evidence for this view, namely, Paul's use of the Adam/Christ contrast.

What is consistently overlooked in discussions of 1 Timothy 2:13–15 is the theological contrast built by the NT authors regarding Adam and Christ. This paper proposes that in every instance where Adam is mentioned by name in the NT (Luke 3:38; Rom 5:14 [x2]; 1 Cor 15:22, 45 [x2]; 1 Tim 2:13, 14; Jude 14), he is used as a direct contrast to Christ. In other words, every time Adam is discussed, it is always in reference to the expectation that one will come to undo what Adam did in Genesis 3. If this Adam/Christ contrast can be demonstrated as valid throughout the NT, it provides additional support to a messianic reading of 1 Timothy 2:15.

To accomplish this goal, Paul's overarching purpose in 1 Timothy is first considered, along with a grammatical analysis of 1 Timothy 2:13–15. The purpose of this section is not to exegetically prove the veracity of a messianic approach, but rather, to simply demonstrate the grammatical viability of this view. Subsequently, each NT passage where Adam is mentioned by name is examined. Special focus is given to Paul's letters, though each instance is still considered. Overall, the goal of this essay is quite modest. It does not attempt an exhaustive consideration of historical approaches to 1 Timothy 2:15, it does not focus exclusively on the grammar/context of the passage, and it does not synthesize the conclusions with the topic of the role of women in the church. On the contrary, it merely asserts that a messianic interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15 fits with the Adam/Christ contrast developed throughout the NT.

I. Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:15

First Timothy was written as a personal and practical epistle, instructing Timothy how to organize the church in Paul's absence.⁴ Specifically regarding the passage under examination, Paul writes in 2:8–12 about the role of men and women in the church.⁵ There is significant discussion regarding this

³ This interpretation has received significant discussion throughout the centuries. Some of the more prominent commentators who have advocated this view include George W. Knight, Donald Guthrie, and Charles J. Ellicott. George W. Knight writes, "The most likely understanding of this verse is that it refers to spiritual salvation through the birth of the Messiah" (*The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992], 146). Charles J. Ellicott, states, "It seems difficult to avoid deciding in favour of it" (*The Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul* [London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer, 1869], 39). Donald Guthrie opts for this view, though he acknowledges, "If that were the writer's intention he could hardly have chosen a more obscure or ambiguous way of saying it.... This suggestion is attractive in spite of the obscurity involved" (*The Pastoral Epistles*, TNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 89). Köstenberger disagrees with this view yet provides a valuable survey of past advocates ("An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15," 117–18).

⁴ Following the lead of numerous evangelical scholars, Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy is assumed. See, among other resources, D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 331–53, 554–70.

⁵ In 1 Timothy, Paul reminds Timothy to "remain at Ephesus" (1:3), to instruct the church according to sound doctrine (1:4–5), and to rebuke false teachers (1:6–11). After reflecting on the accomplishment of Christ (1:12–17), he charges Timothy to "wage the good warfare, by holding faith and a good conscience" (1:18b–19a). He urges Timothy to pray diligently (2:1–3) and to instruct men and women to live wisely (2:8–12). Throughout this passage, he focuses extensively on the reality that Jesus Christ is the "one mediator" (2:5) who gave himself as a ransom for all people (2:6). In essence, 1:12–2:7 presents Paul's understanding of Christ's salvation. Subsequently, Paul details specific qualifications for church leaders (3:1–13) as well as various instructions for the church (5:1–

passage, which is largely outside the scope of this essay.⁶ However, it is important to note that Paul's discussion regarding Adam and Eve (2:13–15) is given as support to his assertions in 2:8–12.⁷ Evidently, Paul's rationale for his position regarding the roles of men and women was the scriptural precedent of the Creation/Fall account of Genesis. Paul introduces this evidence with the conjunction γάρ (2:13), indicating that what follows serves as evidence for the assertion which precedes.

It appears that 1 Timothy 2:13–15 is one distinct discourse unit, which focuses on Adam and Eve. Paul begins by introducing his allusion to the OT in 2:13, and concludes in 2:15. Below, the text under examination is provided, along with the proposed translation (which will be defended below). In the following discussion, commentary is offered on the three underlined portions, demonstrating the grammatical and contextual reasons why a messianic translation is a viable option. Subsequently, a summary is given to discuss the emphasis Paul appears to have made in this passage.

Ἀδάμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὔα. καὶ Ἀδάμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν, σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, ἔαν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἀγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης· πιστὸς ὁ λόγος. (1 Tim 2:13–3:1a)

For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. (1) But she [Eve] will be saved through the childbirth, (2) so long as they [Adam and Eve] should remain in faith and love and holiness with self-control; (3) a trustworthy saying. (AT)

1.1. But She Will Be Saved through the Childbirth

In 1 Timothy 2:13–14, Paul alludes to the creation account of Genesis. He first makes a direct connection to Genesis 2:7, which reads “God formed the man” (ἐπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον) in the LXX. Paul uses the same vocabulary as he notes that Adam “was formed [ἐπλάσθη] first.” Additionally, Paul alludes to the concepts presented in Genesis 2:18–25, in which the Lord declared, “It is not good that the man should be alone,” and announced that he would “make a helper fit for him” (2:18). Paul develops this account through his statement that Eve was formed after Adam. Overall, in 1 Timothy 2:13, Paul causes his readers to reflect on Genesis so that they might consider God's creation design.⁸ As

6:2). Although it is true that, as Earle notes, “the pastoral Epistles are primarily practical rather than theological” (*1 Timothy*, 345), this by no means diminishes the theological basis from which Paul argues for practical action. Paul is clear that he toils and strives because he has his “hope set on the living God” (4:10).

⁶ Related to the role of women in ministry, there is significant discussion pertaining to this passage. From a complementarian perspective, see Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), as well as several of the essays in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006). From an egalitarian perspective, see several of the essays in Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, eds. *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005).

⁷ As is proposed below, it appears that 2:13–15 serves as evidence for 2:8–12, not only as evidence for 2:12 (“I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; rather, she is to be quiet”).

⁸ Regarding Paul's development of the Genesis account, this essay follows the proposal of Andrew B. Spurgeon, “1 Timothy 2:13–15: Paul's Retelling of Genesis 2:4–4:1,” *JETS* 56 (2013): 543–56. Spurgeon's proposal is discussed below.

Paul continues in 1 Timothy 2:14, he builds upon the account of Genesis 3:1–7, where Eve was deceived by the serpent, ate from the tree, and gave the fruit to Adam.

In contrast to the results of the Fall discussed in 2:13–14, Paul comments in 2:15, “But she will be saved through the childbirth.” The verb “she will be saved” (σωθήσεται) is *singular*. Contrary to translations such as the NIV, NASB, NLT, which translate this phrase as “women shall be saved,” Paul does not appear to be focused on women in general, but rather on a *specific woman*.⁹ The antecedent of σωθήσεται (2:15) appears to be ἡ γυνή (2:14), which again, is not “women in general,” but is simply another label for Εὔα (2:13).¹⁰ In this view, Paul’s point is that Eve “will obtain salvation” through τῆς τεκνογονίας.

Although it is possible that, as Köstenberger asserts, Paul’s use of the term ἡ γυνή points “to Eve’s representative role for womankind in general at the fall,”¹¹ this position is not without its difficulties. On the one hand, it could be said that the mere reference to Adam and Eve points to the representative roles of men and women.¹² This is true even in 2:13, where their names are given. Surely, Paul intended to draw general correspondences to his audience—after all, 2:13–15 is the evidence to support the roles of men and women in general (cf. 2:8–12). However, it seems that Paul is far more concerned with the specific Adam and Eve in these verses than he is with generalities. As Payne notes, “Verse fifteen should be understood in its context as a direct contrast to the negative statements about woman’s deception and transgression in verse 14.”¹³ Contextually, the focus seems to be on Eve throughout this passage.

Evidence for the position that Paul is focused on Eve includes the following: (1) It is the most natural reading. Adam and Eve are both mentioned specifically in 2:13, and there are no textual markers to distinguish a shift in subject. As such, the burden of evidence rests with those who propose a shift in subject. (2) Paul’s use of ἡ γυνή fits well with the Genesis account, especially considering that the woman’s name is not given until Genesis 3:20. Until that point, she is consistently referred to as ἡ γυνή, *not* as Εὔα. (3) As is argued below, the childbirth (τῆς τεκνογονίας) appears to be a reference to a specific childbirth expected by Eve, and promised to her while she was still referred to exclusively as *the*

⁹ About the plural rendering “women shall be saved,” Robert W. Yarbrough notes, “The outcome obscures something important: the individuality of the woman envisioned in vv. 11–15a” (*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018], 186).

¹⁰ An alternative reading understands the subject to be “a woman” (γυνή, singular), from 2:11, 12. In this view, Paul returns to his discussion of the role of women in general and thereby applies the Genesis text to his present audience.

¹¹ Köstenberger, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” 122.

¹² This is true throughout the NT, both of Paul’s discussion of Adam in Rom 5:14 and 1 Cor 15:22, 45, as well as Jesus’s reference to Gen 2:24 in Matt 19:4–6.

¹³ Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 417.

woman.¹⁴ Overall, it appears that the most likely position is that Eve was in view throughout 1 Timothy 2:13–15.¹⁵

Regarding the sense of the verb σώζω, spiritual salvation seems to be in view (in contrast to physical deliverance).¹⁶ Porter rightly comments, “In virtually all authentically Pauline contexts, σώζω denotes a salvific spiritual act, perhaps eschatological in consequence.”¹⁷ This verb is used seven times in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 1:15; 2:4, 15; 4:16; 2 Tim 1:9; 4:18; Titus 3:5), each time denoting the act of spiritual salvation. The instance perhaps most pertinent to this discussion is 1 Timothy 2:4. This passage occurs in the context immediately preceding 1 Timothy 2:13–15. In 2:3–4, Paul writes of “God our Savior [σωτήρως], who desires all people to be saved [σωθῆναι].” He then states, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (2:5). That is, Paul asserts that Jesus is the agent of salvation; he is the one “who gave himself as a ransom for all ... at the proper time” (2:6). Given Paul’s developing argument in 1 Timothy 2, the most natural reading of σώζω in 2:15 should align with the use of σώζω in 2:4. If this is the case, spiritual salvation is in view throughout this section of the epistle.

Although it may appear odd that the future tense is used in reference to this salvation (especially in reference to *Eve’s* salvation), this is characteristic of Paul’s writing in the Pastoral Epistles. In both 1 Timothy 4:16 and 2 Timothy 4:18, σώζω is used in the future tense, in reference to final salvation (or sanctification). In 1 Timothy 4:16, it is used to refer to the salvation of Timothy and his congregation through Timothy’s perseverance and proclamation of the gospel message (“the teaching”). In 2 Timothy 4:18, it is used in reference to Paul’s entrance into the Lord’s “heavenly kingdom.” This interpretation fits well with the argument of 2:13–15, where Paul references the Genesis account to provide evidence applicable to his readers (note the use of γάρ in 2:13). Eve is not merely mentioned for her own sake, but rather, to present the salvation accessible to Paul’s readers.

¹⁴ Among those who hold that 1 Timothy 2:15 refers to Genesis 3, there are differing views. For example, Royce Gordon Gruenler, holds that these verses allude to Gen 3:15 (“The Mission-Lifestyle Setting of 1 Tim 2:8–15,” *JETS* 41 [1998]: 215–38; cf. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 146). On the other hand, Andrew Spurgeon views them as referring to Gen 3:16 (“Paul’s Retelling,” 543–56; cf. Anthony Daw, *What Is “the Childbearing” in 1 Timothy 2:15?* [MA thesis, Western Seminary, 2016], 33–34). For a general discussion of the various views, see Stanley Porter, “What Does It Mean to Be ‘Saved By Childbirth’ (1 Timothy 2:15)?” in *Studies in the Greek New Testament: Theory and Practice*, Studies in Biblical Greek (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 258–60. Porter writes, “Since no explicit subject of the verb is designated, it makes best exegetical sense in the grammatical context to begin from the assumption that the subject of the verb corresponds in some way with the last mentioned possible antecedent, ‘the woman’ (ἡ γυνή) of v. 14. But who exactly is this woman?” (p. 258). Porter concludes favoring a focus on women in general, but provides a valuable discussion as to the exegetical options.

¹⁵ As Andrew Spurgeon states forcefully, “Paul was still talking about Adam and Eve: Eve was the subject of σωθήσεται” (“Paul’s Retelling,” 555). Yarbrough agrees that Eve is the focus in 2:15; however, he views this as a reference not to Gen 3:15, but rather to Gen 3:16. He states, “In light of the proximity of mention to Eve in vv. 13 and 14, and with Gen 3 being the contextual background to Paul’s reference to Genesis in v. 14, it is reasonable to suggest that in v. 15 Paul has in mind, not Gen 3:15 and the seed of woman, but Gen 3:16 and the curse of pain in childbearing” (*Timothy and Titus*, 188).

¹⁶ Moyer Hubbard argues against this view, claiming that σώζω should be understood as denoting physical deliverance in 1 Tim 2:15 (“Kept Safe through Childbearing: Maternal Mortality, Justification by Faith, and the Social Setting of 1 Timothy 2:15,” *JETS* 55 [2012]: 744–49).

¹⁷ Porter, “Saved by Childbirth,” 260. Porter continues, “σωθήσεται is virtually guaranteed a salvific sense (the passive voice is probably a divine or theological passive, that is, God is the agent of salvation)” (p. 261).

The text continues in 2:15 by describing how this salvation is realized: “through the childbirth” (διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας). Given the context, it seems best to take διὰ as denoting *means* (or *instrumentality*), and therefore, as describing the manner by which this salvation (σώζω) is accomplished.¹⁸ That is, this salvation is accomplished *by means* of τῆς τεκνογονίας.¹⁹

Part of the inherent difficulty of this passage is that 1 Timothy 2:15 contains the only occurrence of τεκνογονία in the NT. Various surveys of the use of this term in Greek literature are available.²⁰ However, as Payne notes, “The scarcity of occurrences of the noun τεκνογονία prior to Paul precludes a dogmatic answer to the question of whether it refers to childbirth ... or to the process of childbearing.”²¹ However, the use of the article does offer some assistance. Much has been made of Paul’s inclusion of the article τῆς in the statement τῆς τεκνογονίας. While this use of the article by no means demands that a specific childbirth is in view,²² it is certainly consistent with the OT expectation of a single childbirth.²³ Had Paul wanted to communicate “the (*singular*) childbirth,” the simplest way to do so would have been to use the article to denote the definiteness of this specific childbirth—exactly the construction found in 2:15.²⁴

¹⁸ The phrase σώζω διὰ + genitive is used seven times in Paul’s epistles: Rom 5:9; 1 Cor 1:21; 3:15; 15:2; Eph 2:8; 1 Tim 2:15; Titus 3:5. Of these instances, only 1 Cor 3:15 uses this phrase to indicate attendant circumstance. The other five (or six, including 1 Tim 2:15) all use the phrase to indicate instrumentality. This does not prove that 1 Tim 2:15 indicates instrumentality, but it certainly provides evidence in favor of this understanding.

¹⁹ Hubbard argues that here, “διὰ with the genitive ... indicates attendant circumstance: saved *in the circumstances* of childbirth” (“Kept Safe,” 756). He proceeds to argue that this passage refers to physical salvation during the process of bearing children. Hubbard’s evidence, however, is lacking. He claims that instrumentality “leads to an impossibly un-Pauline reading: saved by means of childbirth” (p. 756), yet his reason that this is an “impossibly un-Pauline reading” is that it “conflicts with the doctrine of justification by faith” (p. 761). It does not, however, conflict with the doctrine of justification by faith if “the childbirth” is understood as the birth of the Christ, a view which Hubbard dismisses out of hand as “special pleading” (p. 751).

²⁰ For example, see Payne, *Man and Woman*, 431–33; Köstenberger, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” 140–42.

²¹ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 433.

²² See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 227–29. Köstenberger, arguing against a messianic understanding of this verse, writes, “The presence of the definite article in the original Greek (τῆς τεκνογονίας) merely indicates the generic nature of childbirth rather than pointing to a specific birth of a child” (“An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” 118). Although this is possible, Köstenberger’s evidence in favor of this assertion is minimal. He concludes, “An elaborate salvation-historical typology would be unexpected in the present context, especially in the light of the sparse use of the OT in the Pastorals in general” (p. 118). However, the assertion of this present essay is (in Köstenberger’s words) that a “salvation-historical typology” *should* be expected in the present context, due to the use of the Adam/Christ contrast throughout the NT. This is argued below.

²³ This expectation of a coming singular offspring who would accomplish the promises given in Genesis is certainly not foreign to Paul. See Jared M. August, “Paul’s View of Abraham’s Faith: Genesis 22:18 in Galatians 3,” *BibSac* 176 (2019): 51–61.

²⁴ In 1 Tim 5:14, Paul used the related verb (τεκνογονέω) as an infinitive in reference to younger widows “marrying and bearing children.” Both these terms (τεκνογονέω and τεκνογονία) appear to be related, as both refer to the birth of a child/children (BDAG 994c). Porter devotes significant discussion to the denotation of this term (“Saved by Childbirth,” 262–63). He concludes, “Apart from later Christian writers, in all four [extrabiblical] contexts in which this word is used, where the meaning can be determined with any degree of certainty it denotes the specific act of bearing children” (p. 263). The only difference is that Paul uses the verbal form (τεκνογονέω) in 5:14 and the articular noun (τῆς τεκνογονίας) here in 2:15.

Consistent with this view is (as above) the singular nature of σωθήσεται. That is, this “childbirth” will come from one specific woman. As Witherington states forcefully, “Last I checked multiple women cannot give birth to a single child. This means Paul is referring to a particular childbearing—namely the birth of Jesus.”²⁵ Paul’s point is that a single individual (Eve) would obtain future salvation through the birth of a child. Again, this childbirth appears to be unique in that it is *salvific* in nature. This is consistent with the OT expectation of a coming Offspring who would bring blessing to all nations.²⁶

1.2. So Long as They Should Remain in Faith and Love and Holiness with Self-Control

In the second half of 1 Timothy 2:15, Paul continues his argument by using the third-class condition (thereby expressing hypothetical fulfillment).²⁷ In so doing, he connects the concept of “salvation through the childbirth” with the need (though uncertainty) of “continuing in faith and love.” Although it has frequently been assumed that “they” refers to women in general,²⁸ this is not necessarily the case. Andrew Spurgeon has effectively demonstrated that Paul’s discussion of Adam and Eve continued from 1 Timothy 2:13 through 2:15. Spurgeon writes as his thesis, “Paul was still narrating Adam and Eve’s stories in all three verses (1 Tim 2:13–15), that is, Paul was retelling of Adam and Eve’s creation (Gen 2:13), fall (Gen 2:14), and restoration (Gen 2:15).”²⁹ In this view, “they” (i.e., those who were “to remain in faith and love and holiness with self-control”), refers to Adam and Eve.³⁰ Due to his use of the third-class condition, Paul is not necessarily commenting on whether or not this couple actually obtained this salvation, but merely noting that this salvation was *offered* to them, should they have “remained in faith and love.”

This approach fits the context well for several reasons: (1) There is no pronoun “they.” Rather, the verb μένωσιν (aorist subjunctive of μένω) simply assumes a plural subject. The most natural antecedent,

²⁵ Ben Witherington III, “Literal Renderings of Texts of Contention—1 Tim. 2.8–15,” *Ben Witherington*, 25 February 2006, <http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2006/02/literal-renderings-of-texts-of.html>.

²⁶ Köstenberger dismisses this view with little interaction. He states, “While verse fifteen may allude to Gen 3:16, there is absolutely no hint in the text that the author of the Pastorals intends to refer to a Messianic rendering of Gen 3:15, the so-called ‘proto-evangelion.’ It must also be noted that the presupposed understanding of Gen 3:15 as the ‘proto-evangelion’ is found only in the second century and nowhere occurs in the NT” (Köstenberger, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” 118). On the contrary, when Gen 3:15 is exegetically considered in light of the broader context of Genesis (especially Gen 22:17b–18), the expectation emerges of a coming individual who would restore creation and bring blessing to all nations. This is argued extensively in Jared M. August, “The Messianic Hope of Genesis: The *Protoevangelium* and Patriarchal Promises,” *Themelios* 42 (2017): 46–62; and “The *Toledot* Structure of Genesis: Hope of Promise,” *BibSac* 174 (2017): 267–82.

²⁷ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 696–99. Additionally, Porter devotes considerable discussion to the implications of the use of the third-class condition in 1 Tim 2:15 and concludes that this condition “makes no implication whether in fact ‘they remain,’ only that ‘they might remain’” (“Saved by Childbirth, 266).

²⁸ Among the numerous interpreters who hold this view, see Köstenberger, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” 132; Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy*, 76; Earle, *1 Timothy*, 362.

²⁹ Andrew Spurgeon, “Paul’s Retelling,” 543.

³⁰ Spurgeon proposes to read 2:13–15 as follows: “Adam was created first; then Eve. His wife [Eve], being deceived, fell into transgression [with Adam and with God] but would be restored [to fellowship with Adam] through bearing children, provided they [i.e., Adam and Eve] remained in faith/faithfulness, love, and holiness with clear-mindedness [and thus restored to fellowship with God]” (“Paul’s Retelling,” 545–46). Spurgeon does not, however, understand 2:15 to be messianic in focus.

then, is Adam and Eve, from 2:13 and 2:14, as Paul does not shift from his focus on this couple. (2) In this view, Paul begins his discussion of proper male/female behavior in 2:8, and concludes in 2:12. The characteristics described in 2:15, then, (“faith and love and holiness with self-control”) may be understood as describing correct male/female behavior.³¹ (3) The statement πιστὸς ὁ λόγος in 3:1a serves as a summary marker, providing commentary on Paul’s discussion of Adam and Eve (this is discussed below).

One implication of this view is that if Adam and Eve were both the focus of 2:13–15—in contrast to the position that these verses focused exclusively on Eve—then Paul’s discussion is equally relevant for both men’s roles (2:8) *and* women’s roles (2:9–12). Additionally, here Paul seems to draw a direct contrast between Adam/Eve and Christ. In 1:14, Paul discussed the “faith and love” (πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης) which were “in Christ Jesus,” and then in 2:15, he describes the need for Adam/Eve to have demonstrated the very same characteristics: “faith and love” (πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ). Paul’s point is not that these characteristics were salvific in and of themselves; after all, he already made it clear that salvation occurs “through the childbirth.” Rather, his point seems to be that these characteristics were the means by which one demonstrates faith, just as 2:8–12 was the means by which men and women might demonstrate faith through their distinct roles.

1.3. A Trustworthy Saying

It is suggested by UBS⁵ and NA²⁸ that πιστὸς ὁ λόγος (3:1a) is best taken as a summary of what immediately precedes, and is therefore Paul’s commentary on 2:13–15.³² In this view, Paul understands the entire discussion regarding Adam and Eve—and the salvation which comes “through” (διὰ) “the childbirth” (τῆς τεκνογονίας)—as “a trustworthy saying.” This grammatical placement and textual understanding of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος fits well with Paul’s other uses of this same phrase throughout the Pastoral Epistles, all of which refer to the implications of Christ’s salvation. This phrase also occurs in 1 Timothy 1:15; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; and Titus 3:8. In each of these instances, it serves as commentary regarding the implications of Christ’s coming and the resultant salvation.³³ As such, in 3:1a, this phrase contextually better relates to the salvation accessible through “the childbirth,” as opposed to the typical understanding where it relates to one’s aspiration to serve as an overseer (3:1b).³⁴

³¹ In this view, the act of “remaining in faith and love and holiness with self-control” (2:15) provides the concluding commentary to 2:8–12. Men were to remain in their God-ordained roles (cf. 2:8), and women were to remain in their God-ordained roles (cf. 2:9–11).

³² In both UBS⁵ and NA²⁸, the statement πιστὸς ὁ λόγος concludes the paragraph from 2:8–3:1a. The next paragraph begins in 3:1b and reads Εἴ τις ἐπισκοπῆς ὀρέγεται (“If anyone desires to be an overseer”). In contrast, the Tyndale House and SBL Greek New Testaments both take πιστὸς ὁ λόγος as introducing the first paragraph of chapter three.

³³ This understanding of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος has been argued extensively by L. Timothy Swinson, “Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος; An Alternative Analysis,” *Southeastern Theological Review* 7.2 (2016): 57–76. Swinson argues that πιστὸς ὁ λόγος serves “as a concise summation and commendation of the apostolic proclamation of the gospel and ... relates to the basic content of that proclamation while permitting the content to assume various forms” (p. 60).

³⁴ The clause πιστὸς ὁ λόγος may occur either prior to or subsequent to the statement Paul comments upon. In 1 Tim 1:15, Paul writes πιστὸς ὁ λόγος prior to introducing his statement (the statement which follows is introduced with ὅτι). In 1 Tim 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; and Titus 3:8, Paul first offers his statement and then writes πιστὸς ὁ λόγος (Paul uses γάρ subsequent to πιστὸς ὁ λόγος in 1 Tim 4:9 and 2 Tim 2:11; he appears to refer to the prior statement in 1 Tim 3:1 and Titus 3:8).

In 1 Timothy 1:15, the πιστὸς ὁ λόγος is “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” In 1 Timothy 4:9, 10, it is that “the living God ... is the Savior of all people.” In 2 Timothy 2:10–11, Paul writes, “that even they might obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.” In Titus 3:7–8, he states, “that being justified by his grace we may become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Since each of these instances appear to qualify the results of Christ’s coming as πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, it is best to view this phrase as a key word used by Paul to discuss the results of Christ’s salvation. Therefore, in 1 Timothy 3:1a, it appears that Paul regards his discussion of Adam and Eve as intrinsically related to the salvation achieved through Christ’s coming.

1.4. Summary

The above examination of 1 Timothy 2:13–3:1a demonstrates that a messianic interpretation of 2:15 is an exegetical possibility. Contrary to the prevailing opinion that this passage is exclusively about women *in general* bearing children *in general*, it has been proposed that it is about a *specific* woman (Eve) expecting a *specific* childbirth which was anticipated to have salvific implications. The flow of thought might be illustrated something like this:

Assertions: 2:3–12 (*all pertaining to “living a quiet, godly life” [2:1–2]*)

- (1) there is one mediator between God and men: Christ, the ransom for all (2:3–7)
- (2) men are to pray, lifting holy hands (2:8)
- (3) women are to be characterized by godliness (2:9–10)
- (4) a woman is to receive instruction with submissiveness (2:11)
- (5) a woman is not to teach/have authority over man (2:12)

Evidence: 2:13–15

- (a) for support of (4) we see that God created Adam/man to lead (2:13; cf. Gen 2:18)
- (b) for support of (5) we see that Eve was deceived by the Serpent (2:14; cf. Gen 3:1–6)
- (c) for support of (1) even Eve will be saved through the childbirth (2:15b; cf. Gen 3:15)
- (d) for support of (2), (3), (4), and (5) we see the importance of faith exhibited through obedience for salvation (2:15b). Indeed, had these characteristics been exhibited by Adam and Eve, they could have avoided (b), which would have allowed them to carry out Paul’s admonition in (2), (3), (4), and (5).

Paul’s point, then, is that 1 Timothy 2:13–15 is “a trustworthy saying” (πιστὸς ὁ λόγος) because it pertains to the salvation accessible through τῆς τεκνογονίας, i.e., the coming of the Christ. This reality was presented by Paul first in 1 Timothy 1:15, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and again in 2:4, “God our Savior ... desires all people to be saved.” Paul is clear that this salvation is only accessible through the “one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus” (2:5). Therefore, in 2:13–15, after discussing the roles of men and women (2:8–12), Paul returns to this same concept of God’s “saving” action. His point appears to be an argument from greatest to least: If even Adam and Eve were offered salvation after plummeting the world into the cursed state, this salvation is offered to everyone else as well. In this view, the passage might be paraphrased: “But Eve was *promised* future salvation

through the childbirth, so long as *Adam and Eve* should *live in response to this promise* by remaining faithful, loving, and holy through self-control. This is a trustworthy saying” (2:15–3:1a).

In this view, Adam and Eve serve as examples of those to whom salvation is offered. This argument is very characteristic of Paul; even he acknowledged just a few verses prior, “I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost sinner, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who believe in him” (1:16). His point is that salvation hinges exclusively on the revolutionary nature of τῆς τεκνογονίας, “the childbirth.” Even the transgression of violating God’s ordained male/female roles can be redeemed through Christ. It is this event—the birth of Christ—that is contrasted from Adam’s sin. One brought death, the other brought life. Far from being an obscure passage about motherhood, this passage appears to be a striking recognition of the ramifications and implications of Christ’s coming.

2. *New Testament Passages that Discuss Adam*

Up to this point, the proposed understanding of 1 Timothy 2:13–3:1a as a messianic passage has been considered. Admittedly though, the above summary has not sought to definitively prove this reading. On the contrary, it has merely offered a (hopefully) viable proposal that deals with the grammar, syntax, and context of the passage. The purpose of the remainder of this essay is to offer theological evidence in favor of the above proposal: Every time Adam is mentioned in the NT, it is always in reference to the expectation that one will come to undo the curse.

Adam is mentioned by name nine times in the NT, in five separate passages.³⁵ He is mentioned in Luke 3:38; Romans 5:14 (2x); 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45 (2x); 1 Timothy 2:13, 14; and Jude 14. Two instances are brief, possibly incidentally references (Luke 3:38; Jude 14), and three are more substantive, theological arguments based upon Adam’s role in the OT (Rom 5:14 [x2]; 1 Cor 15:22, 45 [x2]; 1 Tim 2:13, 14). However, in each of these five instances, Adam’s role is consistency contrasted with the accomplishment of Christ. In each case, Adam is viewed as the one who brought the curse upon creation, and Christ is understood as the one who brings salvation.

If this theological Adam/Christ contrast can be maintained in each of these instances, it should perhaps likewise be applied to 1 Timothy 2. If this is the case in 1 Timothy 2, it provides support to a messianic reading of 1 Timothy 2:15. Rather than viewing τῆς τεκνογονίας as the general bearing of children, it would be understood as the antithesis of Adam’s transgression. That is, Adam (and Eve’s) transgression—which brought judgment—is directly contrasted with God’s promise of one whose coming would bring salvation.

2.1. **Luke 3:38**

The Gospel of Luke records Jesus’s genealogy in 3:23–38. The verse under examination notes that Jesus was born “the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God” (3:38). This is the only mention of Adam by name in any of the Gospels.³⁶ In the context of Luke, the genealogy appears

³⁵ Additionally, Eve is mentioned by name one additional time in 2 Cor 11:3, which describes her deception as an illustration for Paul’s reader’s being “led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

³⁶ Jesus is recorded as having cited Genesis in both Matt 19:1–12 and Mark 10:1–12. However, neither Adam nor Eve were mentioned by name in these passages.

immediately subsequent to Jesus's baptism and God's declaration, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (3:22) and Jesus temptation in the wilderness (4:1–13).

Through this structure, Luke develops the contrast between Jesus and Adam.³⁷ About the genealogy, Liefeld and Pao assert that Luke's point was to contrast "Jesus, the obedient Second Adam ... with the disobedient first Adam."³⁸ This contrast between Jesus and Adam is perhaps made most clear in Luke's statement that Jesus was God's "beloved Son," the one with whom God was "well pleased" (3:22), and the statement that Adam was "the son of God" (3:38). Both Jesus and Adam are said to be God's son; though one failed when tempted by the Serpent in the Garden (Gen 3:1–7), and the other was victorious when tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Luke 4:1–13). One has brought the curse upon creation, and the other brings salvation to all people. About this, Geldenhuys asserts that Luke "draws attention very expressly to the fact that Christ (through Adam) is ... related to the whole human race. As the second Adam ... His coming and appearance have a universal significance."³⁹ This same theme of salvation for all is developed substantively throughout Luke-Acts.⁴⁰ Luke's inclusion of the name Adam evidently served an important function with his audience, reminding them of God's plan throughout the ages, from Genesis to the present time. Luke's message of hope stems from the reality that Jesus, as the obedient Second Adam, has come to offer salvation to those under the curse of the first Adam's disobedience.

2.2. Romans 5:14

The book of Romans focuses extensively on the accomplishment of Christ. In Romans 5, Paul writes about the "peace we have with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1). In the verses that follow, Paul discusses the manner of love which was demonstrated by God in Christ (5:1–11). Then, as Paul begins his discussion regarding the Adam/Christ contrast, he writes about how "sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin" (5:12). Moo argues that 5:12–21 is best viewed as the "basis for what has been said ... in 5:1–11."⁴¹ In this understanding, the Adam/Christ contrast bears direct implications on the "peace we have with God" (5:1).

In 5:14, Paul writes, "But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come."⁴² The point of comparison is that the actions of both individuals had universal implications. Adam was a "type" or "pattern" (τύπος)

³⁷ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao write that Luke focuses on Jesus "as a member of the human race, a son of Adam" ("Luke," in *Luke—Acts*, EBC 10, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007], 99).

³⁸ Liefeld and Pao, "Luke," 99.

³⁹ Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 153. Similarly, Darrell L. Bock states, "The account concludes with the name *Adam* and then mentions that Jesus is the Son of God. This connection indicates Jesus' relationship with all humankind as their representative. The universal perspective fits very nicely with the Lucan emphasis on salvation for all" (*Luke 1:1–9:50*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 348).

⁴⁰ For a discussion against this Adamic connection in Luke, see Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies: With Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 233–35. For an argument specifically against Johnson, see Bock, *Luke*, 348–49.

⁴¹ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 345.

⁴² Of importance to the comparison between Romans 5:14 and 1 Timothy 2:13–15, is the repeated use of the word παράβασις ("transgression") in both passages, a word that is used only seven times in the NT. In Romans 5:14, the "transgression" is committed by Adam, whereas in 1 Timothy 2:14, the "transgression" is committed by Eve. This serves to build the concept that *both* were responsible for this disobedience against God.

of the one to come, in that his disobedient action brought death to all, while Christ's obedient action has brought life to all.⁴³ By using the term τύπος, Paul developed a strong correspondence between the actions of Adam and Christ.

In his discussion, however, Paul is clear that there are major distinctions between Adam and Christ. He writes, "the free gift [of Christ] is not like the result of [Adam's] sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification" (5:16). Paul's point is that Christ's obedience is far superior in both power and effect to Adam's disobedience. Bird summarizes this argument well, "In Christ we have a story of a world put right, as Christ is faithful where Adam was faithless, and is obedient where Adam was disobedient. Through his act of righteous obedience, Jesus overturns the transgression of Adam and so is able to deliver and transform the fallen progeny of Adam."⁴⁴ Overall, Paul's reference to the disobedience of Adam serves to significantly develop the theological Adam/Christ contrast.⁴⁵ Adam's action brought death; Christ's action brought life.

2.3. 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45

In perhaps the clearest example of the Adam/Christ contrast in the NT, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 about the expectation of future resurrection. In a manner similar to Romans 5, Paul offers two parallel statements in 1 Corinthians 15:21–22:⁴⁶

For as through a man came death, also through a man has come the resurrection of the dead. (15:21)

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. (15:22)

Paul's point in these verses is to directly contrast the "death" resulting from Adam's transgression with the "life" resulting from Christ's victory.⁴⁷ Mare comments on the similarity between Paul's argument in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, "These verses sound like Paul's two-category contrast in Rom 5:12–21. The man who brought death is Adam, and the one who will bring about the resurrection

⁴³ There is much discussion regarding the concept of "typology" that is outside the scope of this essay. See, among numerous resources, the discussion on typology in Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 101–41; as well as the essays on how the NT authors used typology in G. K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 311–71.

⁴⁴ Michael F. Bird, *Introducing Paul: The Man, His Mission and His Message* (Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2008), 42.

⁴⁵ Additionally, this concept of Christ's coming undoing the curse is also extensively discussed in Romans 8:18–25. Although Adam is not mentioned by name here, the concepts mentioned in Romans 5:12–21 are developed in greater depth. In this passage, Paul states that the creation "was subjected to futility" (8:20), yet that creation and those who trust in Christ "wait eagerly" for the coming restoration, "the redemption of our bodies" (8:23). This is yet another instance where Christ's accomplishment is directly contrasted with the results of Adam's disobedience and the results of the fall.

⁴⁶ Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), comments, "It is noteworthy that the typology of Adam and Christ seen in 15:21–22 and here in vv. 45–47 points toward the development of the them in Romans 5:12–19" (713).

⁴⁷ Gardner writes, "Paul uses the phrase 'in Christ' on a number of occasions in this epistle and regularly throughout his epistles. His expression 'in Adam' is by analogy. Christ stands as the head of his people. They are represented by him as their king" (*1 Corinthians*, 675).

of the dead is Christ.”⁴⁸ Paul’s point in mentioning Adam in this context appears to be to provide a theological contrast for his readers to better understand the victory accomplished by Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 15:45, Paul continues his discussion regarding resurrection and again mentions Adam by name. He states, “So it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”⁴⁹ It can easily be overlooked that Jesus Christ is actually referred to as “Adam” here, albeit “the last Adam.” Paul could not be clearer: For life to come forth out of death, another individual in the likeness of Adam was needed. About this, Gardner comments, “Paul sees Jesus not only as starting something new and making resurrection possible but also as being part of the old order of things. Jesus becomes truly ‘Adam’—not only in the sense of heading a people but in becoming truly *human*.”⁵⁰ Again, by discussing the OT individual Adam, Paul enables his readers to understand the victory of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, the one who came to undo the curse brought about by the first Adam. Overall, throughout both Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, Paul makes the Adam/Christ contrast to draw a strong distinction between the results of the actions of these two individuals.

2.4. Jude 14

Of all the NT passages that mention Adam by name, Jude 14 focuses very little on his OT role, and is therefore of minimal importance to this study. In each of the other eight times Adam is mentioned by name, he is developed substantively by the biblical author. Here, however, he is merely mentioned to give a chronological perspective on the OT individual Enoch who received a prophecy of the Lord’s return.⁵¹ That is, the Enoch of Genesis 5:22 is distinguished from the Enoch of Genesis 4:17. However, in a minor way, even this passage focuses on the expectation of God’s future victory over the wickedness first brought about by Adam’s transgression (cf. Jude 16), and is therefore still relevant to the thesis of this essay.

Although Enoch is never officially referred to as “the seventh from Adam” (Jude 14) in the OT, he is recorded as the seventh in order in Genesis 5:1–24 and 1 Chronicles 1:1–3 (counting Adam as the first). In Jude 14, the epistle cites 1 Enoch 1:9, a prophecy given to Enoch which develops the general expectation of the Lord’s future victory over evil. Since this prophecy describes the Lord’s future judgment, it is relevant to this essay in that Adam’s name is mentioned in the context of God’s future victory over the sinful world.

⁴⁸ W. Harold Mare, *1 Corinthians*, EBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 285. Gordon D. Fee comments that Paul’s “varied use of this theme suggests that it is a commonplace with Paul, for whom Christ stands at the beginning of the new humanity in a way analogous to, but not identical with, the way Adam stood at the beginning of the old order, both temporally and causally” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed., NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014], 832).

⁴⁹ Compare the citation from Gen 2:7 with the text of 1 Cor 15:45: ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν (Gen 2:7); Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν (1 Cor 15:45). Paul cites this passage carefully, yet adds πρῶτος and Ἀδὰμ to reenforce his emphasis.

⁵⁰ Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, 713.

⁵¹ Jude 14–15 states, “It was also about these that the seventh from Adam, Enoch, prophesied, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their acts of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.’”

3. Summary and Implications

As has been demonstrated through the brief survey of the above NT passages, in every other instance where Adam is mentioned by name, the biblical author sought to demonstrate an Adam/Christ contrast. Luke 3:38 presents Jesus Christ as the Second Adam, the one who has come as the true “Son of God.” In Romans 5:14, Paul presents an Adam/Christ typology, demonstrating the universal scope of death brought by Adam and life brought by Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45, Paul again develops this concept that death has come into the world through Adam’s sin, yet Christ’s accomplishment has brought life. Although Jude 14 merely mentions Adam in reference to Enoch, even this passage presents the anticipation of God’s coming judgment of evil. To summarize, in every instance where Adam is named in the NT, he is always mentioned in reference to the expectation that a future individual will come to undo what he did.

Given this consistent Adam/Christ contrast, the only remaining passage in the NT where Adam is mentioned is 1 Timothy 2:13–15. The first part of this essay sought to demonstrate the validity of a messianic understanding of 1 Timothy 2:15 through a grammatical and contextual analysis. The second part of this essay has proposed that in every instance where Adam is mentioned, the victory of Christ is also mentioned. Taken together, these two pieces of evidence serve to bolster the claim that this passage may be understood messianically. That is, the childbirth (τῆς τεκνογονίας) that offered salvation to Eve is the birth of the Second Adam, the birth of Christ. Not only does this interpretation deal with the textual evidence in 1 Timothy, but it also deals with the theological evidence throughout the NT.

To summarize, in this view 1 Timothy 1:12–2:7 presents Paul’s understanding of Christ’s salvation. In 2:8–12, Paul offers a brief excursus on the roles of men and women in the church. Then, in 2:13–15, Paul offers the Scriptural support for these roles. His presentation of this support is very fitting, and centers around Adam and Eve as examples to whom salvation was offered (a return to his central point in 2:3–7). Paul’s assertion is that salvation was offered to Eve through τῆς τεκνογονίας (the birth of one who would undo the curse), despite her violation of the ordained male/female roles. Had this couple adhered to the male/female roles from the beginning, the curse could have been avoided. However, in an unexpected twist, Paul reveals in 2:15 that even amidst Adam and Eve’s transgression, God was still working redemptively to bring about salvation through τῆς τεκνογονίας, the coming of the Christ. In turn, this serves to exhort Paul’s readers on two accounts: (1) they were to adhere to the ordained male/female roles, and (2) they were to rejoice in God’s salvation offered to all. This, Paul states, is truly “a trustworthy saying” (3:1a).

On Words, Meaning, Inspiration, and Translation: A Brief Response to Bill Mounce

— Dane Ortlund —

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Abstract: This article is a brief response to Bill Mounce’s recent *Themelios* essay in which he argues that functional equivalence translations such as the NIV are the most effective approach to Bible translation as they carry over the meaning of the original text. I offer some clarifying remarks and reflect on three areas of disagreement: the usefulness of “literal” as a label, the relationship between words and meaning, and, most significantly, the nature of the divine inspiration of the Bible.

I am deeply grateful for the life and ministry of Bill Mounce. His Greek grammar was my introduction to biblical Greek as a sophomore at Wheaton College in 1998, and after using others over the years I still commend his as the best by far.¹ I am also thankful for his work with Crossway and the English Standard Version Translation Oversight Committee in the early years of the ESV, as well as his support of the Tyndale House Greek New Testament that Crossway has published.² So this brief interaction with him on Bible translation is offered out of a personal context of respect and gratitude.

In a recent *Themelios* article³ Mounce considers the relationship between an evangelical view of inspiration and translation theory, and in the course of the article favors a “functional equivalence” translation philosophy as opposed to formal equivalence.⁴ As someone committed to the translation philosophy he critiques, perhaps it would be useful to *Themelios* readers for me to offer a brief response. In this short reflection I’ll sketch out a handful of areas of agreement and then three points of

¹ Now in its fourth edition: William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

² Dirk Jongkind, ed., *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

³ William D. Mounce, “Do Formal Equivalent Translations Reflect a Higher View of Plenary, Verbal Inspiration?” *Them* 44 (2019): 477–86, <https://tinyurl.com/r2auvyp>.

⁴ I prefer the designation “maximally transparent” to “formally equivalent,” as discussed below.

disagreement. I won't engage all the issues relevant to this discussion but only a few that Mounce raises in his essay.

1. Areas of Agreement

There are many points on which it is easy to affirm agreement with Mounce. First, we agree that the goal of translation is to carry over the meaning of the original text. I further agree that if each word is mechanically carried over in a wooden, *literalistic* way, meaning is inhibited, not gained (versions such as the 1901 American Standard Version lie open to such a critique). I would create a tighter bond between the meaning and the actual words used in the original text, viewing accuracy of meaning as more closely tied to transparency to the original words, but we both agree on that ultimate goal.

Second, we both agree that while the exact syntax of neither Semitic languages nor Greek can be cleanly carried over into English, we each “favor syntactic correspondence when it accurately conveys meaning.”⁵ It is a little surprising to me that Mounce affirms this, given his prevailing concern to argue that it is purely the meaning and not the words themselves that translators should capture.

Third, I agree with Mounce's observation, “No translation explicitly translates every word.”⁶ That is true for even the most literal translation. In the Old Testament a sentence such as “I am Joseph” is communicated simply as **אֲנִי יוֹסֵף**, “I—Joseph” (Gen 45:3). Every sensible translator, of whatever translation philosophy stripe, will add “am” in such cases. To do so is not to move away from a “word-for-word” translation. It is simply to use sensical English. In the New Testament, the common little word **μέν** is an affirmative particle that tends to function as a marker of correlation; sometimes “indeed” captures it, but other times it would be more disruptive than helpful to try to explicitly capture it with a corresponding single English word (sometimes it is best represented with an exclamation point at the end of the sentence). A “word-for-word” or “essentially literal” translation philosophy strives to represent each word in the original as transparently as possible—a very different ambition than seeking to mechanically give one English word for each word in the original.⁷

Fourth, I agree that “the doctrine of inspiration extends only to the autographs; no translation is inspired.”⁸ I do believe that to the degree we hear a faithful rendering in a non-original language, to that degree we are hearing the very Word of God. But it is only the original texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek that receive the full weight of what the doctrine of divine inspiration is seeking to guard.

Where else do Bill Mounce and I agree? On about a thousand evangelical truths not raised in either his article or mine, but which should not be forgotten in exchanges such as this one.

2. Areas of Disagreement

On a handful of fronts it may be useful to engage Mounce with regard to “essentially literal” translation theory, at least for clarification and at most for disagreement. I'll mention three areas: the

⁵ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 485.

⁶ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 480.

⁷ Even in an interlinear one sees immediately many places where a word in the original text cannot be captured with a single corresponding English.

⁸ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 481.

origin and validity of “literal” as a category for understanding translation, the relationship between words and meaning, and verbal inspiration.

2.1. “Literal” Translation

First, Mounce states, “The ESV marketers have invented a category called ‘essentially literal.’”⁹ Whether one agrees with this translation philosophy or not, it is not true that those associated with the ESV, whether its marketers or otherwise, created this nomenclature. In the Preface to the 1989 NRSV, for example, Bruce Metzger, writing on behalf of the NRSV committee, explains that the committee “followed the maxim, ‘As literal as possible, as free as necessary.’ As a consequence, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) remains *essentially a literal translation*. Paraphrastic renderings have been adopted only sparingly, and then chiefly to compensate for a deficiency in the English language.”¹⁰ Some translators in recent years have gotten squeamish about the word “literal,” but they need not. It is a perfectly serviceable word. Barr’s cautions were salutary 40 years ago, clarifying that “literal” and “free” as descriptors of Bible translation need qualification and care as they are used.¹¹ But the category “literal” is not useless. In any case, when paired with the adverb “essentially” it should be clear to any reasonable mind that what such a translation philosophy is seeking to do is be as transparent as possible to the original.¹²

That word “transparent” may be worth lingering over for a moment. The term “literal” has indeed become polarizing in discussions of translation philosophy, though I do not think it is as fraught with peril as some, including Mounce, suggest. In any case, I commend the category of *transparency* alongside that of literalness. What the ESV and similar translations are seeking to do is to use English in as transparent a degree to the original as possible, in elegant, sensical English. I am not myself willing to jettison “literal” as a meaningful category for understanding translation. But if it would retain what is meant by “literal” or “essentially literal” without the unhelpful associations some have with the language of literalness, I suspect transparency may be an equally fruitful label for what a translation such as the RSV or ESV is seeking to do. Such striving to be as “literal” as possible is an effort to be *maximally transparent*. We want the English text to be a thin veil, not a thick one, to the original text—like clean glass, not fogged up glass. We want to get that 99 percent of the church who will never learn the original languages as close to the inspired text as we possibly can. There will always be *some* amount of fog, of course. Mounce and I agree on this. Translation is never a mechanical one-to-one kind of exercise. But my preference for essentially literal translation is simply a desire for our English Bibles to minimize the fog as much as possible.

⁹ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 478.

¹⁰ Emphasis added.

¹¹ James Barr, *The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations*, MSU 15 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979).

¹² A little after mentioning “ESV marketers” Mounce says, “Despite a translation team’s best intentions or a publisher’s marketing ... no English translation translates every Greek word” (“Formal Equivalent Translations,” 479–80). If Mounce is alluding to Crossway here, as would seem to be the case since his last reference to marketing was to the ESV marketers, we should simply clarify that never has Crossway claimed that the ESV “translates every Greek word.” This is a straw man. An essentially literal translation labors to translate every word effectively, not every word mechanically. An example of a translation seeking to translate every word mechanically would be the Literal Standard Version, just released in 2020, which is a revision of Young’s Literal Version.

Indeed, this is what Bible translators have long been seeking to do, going all the way back to Aquila, whose translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek was maximally transparent (sometimes to the point of creating unnatural Greek syntax). Theodotion was not as excessively literal as Aquila, and Symmachus even less so, though even Symmachus would be classed as an “essentially literal” or “word-for-word” translation under today’s nomenclature. All three strove for transparency to the Hebrew *Vorlage*. Similarly, Jerome’s operating principle in Bible translation was to labor toward rendering word-for-word as much as possible from the original text into Latin. Jerome allowed more paraphrastic liberties with non-biblical texts, but not for the Bible¹³—which simply underscores his own reverence for carrying over the very words of the Scripture as transparently as possible. The creation of functional equivalent translations in the middle of the twentieth century is a novel introduction in the long history, stretching across thousands of years, of Bible translation.

In his recent fascinating reflection on Bible translation (mainly from a Hebrew-to-English perspective), Robert Alter not only retains the language of literalness but commends the King James translators as operating with an “inspired literalism.” By this he is not referring to the doctrine of divine inspiration but the way that “the seventeenth-century translators worked with the theological conviction that every word of the Bible was revealed to humankind by God and that one didn’t play games with God’s words.”¹⁴ This conviction carries forward to the present day in the recently published translation by John Goldingay, who takes a word-for-word approach in his rendering of the Old Testament.¹⁵

My first clarification, then, is that the nomenclature “essentially literal” is not new to the ESV; and whatever the chronology of labeling, the actual practice of this kind of Bible translation has venerable, ancient pedigree.

2.2. Words and Meaning

A second area needing clarification is the relationship between words and meaning. Mounce argues that “all true translations are meaning-based, not word-based.”¹⁶ Ought we really to erect a stark either/or here? Is not a faithful translation seeking to carry over the meaning of the original, doing so attentive to each and every actual word in the original, as the way in which meaning is most accurately and comprehensively mediated from source language to target language? Later he reiterates, “There is a sliding scale, and some translations lean more toward the word side (formal equivalent) and others lean more toward the meaning side (functional equivalent).”¹⁷ But it is simplistic to view words and meaning as either ends of a scale, one rising as the other falls, because carrying over the words as precisely as possible often rises and falls with sharpness of meaning. Again: “all true translations ultimately translate

¹³ Matthew A. Kraus, *Jewish, Christian, and Classical Exegetical Traditions in Jerome’s Translation of the Book of Exodus* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 45–46. This distinction between sacred and non-sacred texts, translating the former as literally as possible and the latter being definably less concerned to do so, was reflected in the King James translators’ work (Adam Nicolson, *God’s Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible* [New York: HarperCollins, 2003], 184).

¹⁴ Robert Alter, *The Art of Bible Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 3.

¹⁵ John Goldingay, *The First Testament: A New Translation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018), vii. Miles Van Pelt reflects on the degree of success with which Goldingay delivers on this goal of word-for-word translation in his review of *The First Testament* in *Them* 43 (2018): 454–59, <https://tinyurl.com/wgtl42m>.

¹⁶ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 481.

¹⁷ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 482.

meaning, not just the words.”¹⁸ Well, yes, of course—but naturally the meaning is found in the words, so this way of framing the relationship between meaning and words unhelpfully bifurcates the two. Translating with maximal attentiveness to the actual words of the original does not *sacrifice* meaning; it preserves meaning.

An example that may help flesh out the difference I have with Mounce is in the example he raises from Acts 11:22. Many in Antioch are turning to the Lord, and the Greek text says ἠκούσθη δὲ ὁ λόγος εἰς τὰ ὦτα τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς οὔσης ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ, which the ESV renders as “The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem.” Mounce notes that the NASB and ESV have “the ears” for τὰ ὦτα, whereas the NIV says “news of this reached the church in Jerusalem.” He commends the NIV: “The leaders of the church in Jerusalem *heard* about God’s activity in Antioch. That’s what the Greek means. That’s what God inspired.”¹⁹ Mounce thus contends that it is meaning that God inspires, not specific words.

But consider what is lost by blinding the English reader to the use of the Greek word for “ears.” First, something of the sheer vividness of the text is diluted—the earthiness, the concreteness, the colorfulness of the text.

Second, and with more significant implications, by omitting any explicit reference to the ears of those in Jerusalem, readers are blinded to any possible connections with other references to ears in Acts or elsewhere in the Bible. As it turns out, οὖς (ear) appears five times in Acts. The other four are not merely bland references to physical ears but spiritually and theologically loaded uses: Stephen refers to his hostile opponents as “uncircumcised in heart and *ears*” who “stop up their *ears*” (7:51, 57), and Paul cites Isaiah 6:9–10—“with their *ears* they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their *ears*”—to express the spiritual apprehension of his hearers (Acts 28:26–27). Might Luke wish us to see the Jerusalem hearers as successfully doing what Stephen’s opponents did not, about which Isaiah prophesied of old? I am not myself certain that this is a meaningful connection, but that is beside the point; based on Mounce’s translation principles, *the English reader is never allowed even to consider the possibility* due to the loss of literary concordance.²⁰ Whatever the meaning and significance of these other four instances of οὖς, any possibility of a Lukan connection between these various uses of ear-language is eliminated by translating Acts 11:22 as news simply being “heard” or any other equally colloquial equivalent that loses explicit ear-language. Not only does Mounce think “heard” sufficiently translates the text, he thinks that what is inspired by God is the notion that the report was heard, but not the words communicating that notion. I disagree with the first and am astonished at the second. We will return to the nature of inspiration more fully below.

However we may wish to handle Acts 11:22, there is a broader, global danger in functional equivalence that Mounce does not acknowledge. To the degree that a translator focuses on “meaning” without a corresponding striving to carry over the actual words that convey that meaning, to that degree the translator is doing more interpreting in the translation. To be sure, all translation necessitates some degree of interpretation. But the more we focus on transparency to the original, the less risk we run of unwittingly importing our own erroneous interpretation of what the text means. It is the job of the pastor, teacher, author, commentator, and indeed every studious Christian to interpret the text. It is the

¹⁸ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 482.

¹⁹ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 484, emphasis original.

²⁰ Goldingay labors to retain concordance in his fresh translation of the OT (*First Testament*, viii).

job of the translator to translate the text. “The words of the Bible should be conveyed,” as Alter puts it, “not explained.”²¹

I might note in passing that at times Mounce reveals that he does in fact see the superiority of translating as transparently as possible. Why, for example, does he prefer “walk” to “live” when translating περιπατέω?²² Why should a functional equivalent translation “try to honor the structure of the original if possible”?²³ Why does he prefer English syntax that reflects the original syntax as much as possible?²⁴ If he were consistent to his own principles, he would not have these preferences, since the original words and the original word order would not need to be reflected, but only and simply the final meaning of the text.

2.3. Verbal Inspiration

The third and weightiest matter to engage is that of inspiration, especially verbal inspiration. It is here that I find Mounce’s article most surprising.

Mounce contends we should not define inspiration more precisely than the Bible does; and since the Bible does not itself extend the doctrine of inspiration to the actual words of Scripture, neither should our doctrine of inspiration. He writes, “The idea that God determined every single word and every grammatical construction simply goes beyond what Scripture says about itself, and we should be cautious at being more specific than Scripture is.”²⁵ I appreciate the heart behind what Mounce says. He wants us to be in sync with how the Scripture itself speaks of itself. But there are at least two problems with this.

The first difficulty, briefly, is that there are many points of doctrine where we rightly formulate healthy teaching by reasonable deductions based on the whole of Scripture, even if we cannot put an exact chapter and verse to the doctrine that spell it out as explicitly as the creedal formulation. The doctrine of the Trinity is a clear case of this—nowhere spelled out as explicitly as the first half of the Athanasian Creed, but everywhere in Scripture assumed, an assumption so pervasive and ringing that one cannot deny the doctrine of the Trinity without denying the Scripture itself. The doctrine of inspiration is similarly a faithful deduction from a constellation of Bible texts, which brings us to the next problem.

The second problem with Mounce’s claim that the Bible does not itself define inspiration down to the level of the original wording—and this is worth reflecting on at a little more length—is that Mounce does not with sufficient comprehensiveness reflect the ways the Bible actually speaks of itself. He writes: “Second Timothy 3:16 defines ‘inspiration’ as the doctrine that Scripture ultimately comes from God, that it is ‘God-breathed.’”²⁶ Based on this definition of inspiration, Mounce goes on to say that “the idea that God determined every single word and every grammatical construction simply goes beyond

²¹ Alter, *Art of Bible Translation*, 64.

²² Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 484.

²³ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 478.

²⁴ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 485.

²⁵ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 479.

²⁶ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 479.

what Scripture says about itself.”²⁷ Rather, “every single statement and affirmation in Scripture is God-breathed.”²⁸ Not the words, then, but the statements and affirmations are inspired.

But in fact the Bible does not simply say that “Scripture ultimately comes from God” but that “*all* Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Tim 3:16). Would not “all” Scripture be naturally understood to include not only the “statements” and “affirmations” but the words that make up those statements and affirmations? How can the two be divorced? This would appear to be the case especially when one considers not only 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 (which Mounce cites) but also texts such as Deuteronomy 8:3 or Matthew 4:4 (“every word”) or Matthew 5:18 (“not an iota, not a dot”) or Revelation 22:18–19 (“if anyone takes away from the words”), which underscore the significance of Scripture at the level of the individual words (and not merely at the level of statements or affirmations).²⁹ To take the statements and affirmations as inspired but not the words is like saying we should be sure to enjoy the recipe while not worrying too much if we get the ingredients right. The recipe and the ingredients making up that recipe—the affirmations and the words making up those affirmations—are bound up with one another.

Mounce’s contention that the doctrine of inspiration does not reach to the level of the actual words of Scripture continues in his discussion of verbal inspiration.³⁰ He disagrees with the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, which states that “Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration” (article VI) and that “We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities” (article VIII). Mounce says he is “troubled” by these statements, asserting that this articulation of inspiration effectively collapses into the dictation theory.

Yet the Chicago Statement does not teach the dictation theory because the dictation theory suggests that God bypassed human agency in inspiring the biblical texts, whereas the Chicago Statement explicitly affirms that God inspired the text through meaningful human agency. I would appeal to the very notion of mystery that Mounce brings into his argument³¹ to assert both that God inspired the very words and also that the authors wrote out of their own personalities and available word banks (“*concursum*”). This is a both/and to understanding inspiration expressed with particular elegance by Bavinck.³² The church fathers often used the analogy of a musical instrument in speaking of the relationship between the divine and the human in Scripture, likening God to the musician and the human authors to the instrument: while each instrument sounds different (corresponding to different human personalities), God played the notes he wished to play (corresponding to the words of Scripture). Down through the corridors of church history, Warfield in particular has argued for the inspiring of the actual words of

²⁷ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 479.

²⁸ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 479.

²⁹ Strangely, Mounce goes on to affirm that “all of the Hebrew and Greek words are inspired.” But it is difficult to know what he means by this when he immediately re-affirms the prevailing contention of the essay, that it is going too far to see the Bible teaching “that God determined every single word and every grammatical construction” (“Formal Equivalent Translations,” 479).

³⁰ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 480–81.

³¹ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 481.

³² Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008), 1:433–42.

Scripture,³³ though the church fathers had already said in essence what Warfield argued for at length.³⁴ Packer fruitfully draws our attention to Jeremiah 1:9 to understand the doctrine of biblical inspiration.³⁵ There God says to Jeremiah, “I have put my words in your mouth.” That captures the classic doctrine of inspiration: the “my” really meaning “my,” and the “your” really meaning “your.”

The example Mounce gives to make his point is from the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. He asserts that God inspired Luke to communicate that the father hugged his son (Luke 15:20) but that God did not “inspire Luke to write specifically ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ.”³⁶ This is puzzling indeed, coming as it does from a seasoned evangelical Bible scholar. It is difficult to understand what is meant by “inspiration” if all we are affirming is that God successfully communicated general notions through the biblical authors. Indeed, under Mounce’s framework, I am not sure why any pastor or student of the Bible would wish to learn the languages in the first place. If it is the meaning *and not the words* that are breathed out by God, why study at the level of the original words? It was Tregelles’s supreme commitment to verbal (and plenary) inspiration that impelled his own trailblazing work with the Greek New Testament.³⁷ Is not a reverent desire to attend to the very words God has given us the driving reason that healthy church leaders continue to study the languages today?

In short, Mounce effectively denies verbal inspiration—or at least, he redefines and dilutes it, describing it simply as the belief that “the Bible is God’s revelation in human language.”³⁸ But surely inspiration is a sharper doctrine than that. Or as Mounce defines verbal inspiration at the end of his essay: “Verbal inspiration requires us to believe that the words used by the human authors accurately reflect the mind of God”³⁹—a different commitment than saying more precisely that the words the human authors used are in fact exactly what God wanted said at the level of the words themselves. Mounce’s definitions, true as they are in themselves, stop short of affirming the particular point verbal inspiration upholds. Verbal inspiration is the classic evangelical conviction that God inspired the very words of Scripture.

³³ Fred G. Zaspel, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), esp. 111–78.

³⁴ See e.g., Gerald Bray, *God Has Spoken: A History of Christian Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 736–63.

³⁵ J. I. Packer, “The Adequacy of Human Language,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 198. I am grateful to Justin Taylor for drawing my attention to this essay.

³⁶ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 481.

³⁷ Tregelles said, “I believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments to be verbally the Word of God, as absolutely as were the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God on the two tables of stone; and because I thus fully believe in its verbal inspiration, I judge that it is not labour ill bestowed to endeavor to search into the evidence which is obtainable as to what those words are” (Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *The Book of Revelation in Greek Edited from Ancient Authorities* [London: Bagster, 1844], quoted in Timothy C. F. Stunt, *The Life and Times of Samuel Prideaux Tregelles: A Forgotten Scholar* [Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019], 123).

³⁸ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 481.

³⁹ Mounce, “Formal Equivalent Translations,” 486.

3. *The Presenting Issue*

The presenting matter of his essay is raised in the title of his essay: “Do formal equivalent translations reflect a higher view of plenary, verbal inspiration?” The question apparently is asking: Do formal equivalent (or as I prefer, maximally transparent) translations reflect a higher view of plenary, verbal inspiration than functional equivalent translations?

There are a few possible ways in which this question could be taken, and they need to be disentangled before proceeding. The question as posed may have in mind the *translators* and their own convictions about inspiration. Alternatively, the question may have in mind the translation itself. If the former is meant, I have no trouble affirming that those men and women I know personally who serve on translation committees for functional equivalent translations have as high a view of plenary, verbal inspiration as anyone I know. (I exclude Mounce from that assessment as it is not clear to me that he retains a meaningful commitment to verbal inspiration, as discussed above.)

But it is another question, a more complex question, if what is meant is whether one translation theory, and the translation it produces, reflects a higher view of verbal inspiration. I leave aside for now *plenary* inspiration, since it is easier to see that we all agree on the extent of inspiration. But what about *verbal* inspiration? To repeat the title of Mounce’s article: “Do Formal Equivalent Translations [not the translators but the translations they produce] Reflect a Higher View of Plenary, Verbal Inspiration?”

My answer is: no, not necessarily. There is not a one-to-one correspondence between verbal inspiration and any particular translation theory. Once again, for the sake of clarity: some of the most committed evangelical scholars, with supremely high views of verbal inspiration, are leaders in functional or dynamic equivalence translations. But the point I wish to make is that I do believe there is a more natural *fittingness* between verbal inspiration and a maximally transparent approach. To be sure, I fully acknowledge that at times a string of English words will be needed to effectively capture a corresponding Hebrew or Greek phrase, not one word of which will map on to any word in the original in a one-to-one way (μή γένοιτο is a good example). But I believe that a primary-use Bible should strive for as much of a word-for-word approach as possible, in elegant, sensical English. The reason is *transparency*. Such an approach gives English readers as sharp and clear a view as possible of what God himself says. It is the words and their corresponding meaning that is inspired, not the meaning at some distance from the words.

4. *Conclusion*

I close with a brief thought experiment. Imagine discovering a long lost love letter from your great-grandfather to your great-grandmother. It is written—I’ll use my own ethnic background for this example—in Swedish. The letter is filled with vivid imagery and earthy metaphors as the one professes love to the other. You don’t read Swedish, so you take it to a translator. How would you instruct it to be translated? If the letter refers to the loveliness of geographic features specific to Sweden in speaking of your great-grandmother’s beauty, would you want the translator to carry over only the meaning and not worry about the precise words, so that “Your loveliness rivals a cascading fjord” becomes “You are very beautiful”? Of course not. You would instruct the translator to give you, in good English, a maximally transparent rendering of the original, and then you would do whatever interpretive homework was necessary to figure out any obscure cultural references.

In any case, translation theory is not a one-dimensional matter. We all need continual sharpening in how to think about it comprehensively and faithfully. I am thankful to Bill Mounce for helping us to do that. The purpose of this article is to offer a few clarifications and cautious pushback for the sake of the Scripture that we all love and want to see held high and obeyed in our generation.

Affirmations and Denials Concerning World Mission

— The Southgate Fellowship —

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:9–12 ESV)

1. Preface

In the summer of 2016 a group of theologians, missiologists and reflective practitioners convened to discuss the state of missions within the evangelical world. Drawn from Europe, Canada and the United States, participants reflected a variety of backgrounds, church denominations, and diverse cross-cultural experience. Following the success of this initial symposium it was decided to establish a formal identity with a clear mission. We began to meet again under the title of *The Southgate Fellowship* (named after the location of our first meeting in North London; hereafter, *TSF*). *TSF* is a fellowship of theologians, missiologists, and reflective practitioners fully committed to the visible church and her Christ-appointed mission. In obedience to Christ and his Word, *TSF* exists to advance biblical thinking and practice in world mission, as captured in the *solas* of reformational theology.

The *summum bonum* of mission activity is the glory of God. This ultimate aim—under Jesus Christ, Head of the church and Lord of the nations—must retain uncompromising primacy for each and every missionary and mission endeavour. In order to bring glory to Christ in the fulfilling of his mandate (Matt 28:18–20), we must let God's authoritative and sufficient Word define the design and execution of mission strategy. In short, all mission activities must draw upon Scripture and its self-interpreting authority. To heed Scripture is to obey the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church and the Head of her mission.

As we affirm these core principles, *TSF* observes that due to a convergence of forces in contemporary theology and the global church, many in the study and practice of world mission have strayed methodologically from the sure foundation of Scripture; they functionally deny the categorical uniqueness of the Christian faith, and impose non-biblical and even anti-biblical interpretive grids upon people, religions, culture, and the work of mission.

TSF Council, the author of these 'Affirmations and Denials Concerning World Mission,' does not set out to determine the motives behind such trends. Rather, for the sake of Christ and his global church, we identify, challenge, and offer corrections to the errors we perceive in the world of missions. Thus, in

keeping with the *solas* of the Reformation, the following Affirmations and Denials seek to rearticulate biblical mission thought and practice, attempt to locate and expose weaknesses and errors in various contemporary paradigms, and seek to call missiologists, missionaries, mission agencies, and Christ's global church to biblical fidelity in belief, thought, methods, and goals—all in obedience to Jesus Christ, the Lord of the nations.

The writing of the 'Affirmations and Denials Concerning World Mission' has been a labour of love. We have strived to write these statements in a way which recognises complexity without sacrificing clarity. We have strived to write these statements with epistemic humility and confidence, recognizing both our own contextual locatedness and the kerygmatic unity and universality of biblical revelation. That this work has been done within the context of a fellowship of loving, listening, united and prayerful believers is of vital importance in terms of the context and spirit in which we believe such theological construction is to be undertaken and received. A consensus document, the following sets of affirmations and denials then are the fruit of lengthy reflection, debate, and collaboration. Each statement draws upon the study and experience of *TSF* Council and its external advisors, with a view to express precisely the biblical framework for missions and missiological questions, the lenses through which we must discern and determine every question of faithful contextualization.

We believe that the academic and ministerial background, missiological experience and ecclesial diversity of its authors, in combination with the valuable guidance of nationals and missionaries from all over the world, means that these affirmations and denials are a substantive and significant piece of work deserving of a wide circulation within the evangelical community and beyond. We offer them not as the end of a conversation but rather as a contribution to ongoing global missiological reflection and conversation. For the glory of Christ Jesus, Head of the Church, and Lord of gospel mission, we pray that they will produce the faithfulness and fruitfulness that we long to see in the advance of Christ's name to the nations.

TSF Council humbly and prayerfully offer these affirmations and denials to the global church with the aim that God's name will be glorified among the nations. *Soli Deo Gloria*.

—David B. Garner and Daniel Strange, *TSF* Co-Chairs on behalf of *TSF* Council

2. Introduction: Why Affirmations and Denials concerning World Mission?

In the following 100 sets of affirmations and denials, *TSF* has sought to provide a biblical response to a host of missions, missiological, and theology of religions questions. We have decided to use the method of affirmation and denial under the conviction that Scripture lays down fundamental guidelines for faithful missions thinking and practice, and that within those God-given guidelines lies God-given latitude for faithfully creative self-theologising and contextualisation. We recognise that methodologically, within our current late-modern cultural context, the decision to use 'affirmations' and 'denials' may need a little explanation and perhaps even justification.

In his ambitious and seminal study, *The Gagging of God*, D. A. Carson entitled one of his chapters 'On Drawing Lines, When Drawing Lines Is Rude'.¹ Twenty years on, and the drawing of lines can be perceived, both inside and outside the church and academy, to be even more offensive, oppressive, pedantic, simplistic, and stifling.

¹ D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), 347.

However, the capacity and necessity to create boundaries and make distinctions is what God's image bearers have been endowed with since creation. We image a Creator God who creates by placing boundaries, making distinctions and separations, and distinguishing truth from error. Indeed, the capstone of the Christian worldview has rightly been called the 'Creator-creature *distinction*'.

Therefore, unpacking the specifics of a Christian worldview ontologically, epistemologically and ethically concerns the making of distinctions and setting of boundaries. Discrimination and boundary setting are not inherently confining or destructive, but when applied according to the divine order (that is, according to a biblically defined structure and interpretation of reality), ensure beautiful, God-exalting, clarifying, and life-giving peace. Conversely it is the blurring or erasing of God-given boundaries that generate sub- and non-Christian worldviews, which evidence and perpetuate rebellion, confusion, human misery and futility.²

It is from this perspective that we understand the worldview of the New Testament writers who are constantly making distinctions and creating boundaries for the building up and protection of Christ's church. In terms of justifying our own exercise in 'Affirmations and Denials,' it is in this pastoral, and not pedantic, spirit that Paul exhorts Titus to hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, to encourage others by sound doctrine *and* to refute those who oppose it (1:9). To exhort, encourage and refute, one needs not only an *affirmation* of what the trustworthy message is, but a corollary *denial* of what it is not, or by implication, what it cannot be.

Therefore, the following affirmations and denials can act as a foundation upon which, and a fence within which, missional methods can and must operate. The goal of these statements then is not to stifle but to articulate, and ultimately stimulate, healthy and faithful missiology and faithful mission.

For the sake of transparency, a few explanatory points are worthy of disclosure:

- Though deeply aware of our fallibility, the authors self-consciously seek to submit to God's Word completely in each and every affirmation and denial. These words are reliable only insofar as they honour Holy Scripture.
- The affirmations and denials are saturated with biblical reflection, yet in order to avoid the perils of proof texting, we determined not to include any. When using exact biblical wording, we have put phrases in quotation marks and noted references in the glossary.
- Each affirmation and denial targets specific mission thinking and practice, presenting critiques of extant errors and constructive formulations to engender biblical thought and practice.
- This document should be read as a whole, as each section depends on the others before and after it.
- At several points, we employ phrases common to missiological publications. These quotation-marked phrases and italicised terms are defined in the glossary.
- Not every affirmation has a corresponding denial and vice versa. We have sought to frame each statement according to what we believe to be most useful—sometimes multiple affirmations and sometime multiple denials. The goal at each point therefore

² As Os Guinness notes, 'The story of creation is a story of distinctions, a story of discrimination between heaven and earth, which the Tower of Babel tries to undo, between male and female, etc. In fact, the Jews called the Lord, "the Great Discriminator," because His creation discriminates between things, and if you remove the discriminations, you create idols.' Os Guinness, 'Christian Courage and the Struggle for Civilization,' *C. S. Lewis Institute Broadcast Talks 2.4* (2017): 6, http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm_send/6110.

is not to impose an artificial affirmation/denial symmetry, but to deliver theological, methodological, and missiological clarity.

- Throughout this document, we use the term “visible” church to include individual local churches, groups of local churches, presbyteries, and synods.

TSF invites every reader of the ‘Affirmations and Denials Concerning World Mission’ to express support for its contents by endorsement at www.TheSouthgateFellowship.org, and to share this document with churches, church leaders, church mission committees, missionaries, and mission agencies.

Finally, *TSF* wish to express thanks for the detailed input, correction and feedback along the way from national church leaders and missionaries in many nations around the world. Indebted to their input, *TSF* still assumes full responsibility for the following affirmations and denials.

3. Prolegomena and Theological Method³

3.1. Scripture and Mission

1a) We affirm that the Christian faith is given by supernatural special revelation, and inscripturated in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments.

1b) We affirm that the Bible reveals the good news of salvation provided only through the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

1c) We affirm that the whole of Scripture is to be believed and obeyed by people in all places, all times, and all cultures.

1d) We deny that what Scripture affirms lays obligations of belief and obedience only on its original recipients, only on some cultures, or only in some situations.

1e) We affirm that Scripture authoritatively and uniquely reveals and explains the meaning of the redemptive work of God in history, centering in and accomplished by Jesus Christ, and provides authoritative and sufficient instruction for faith and obedience, including authoritative and sufficient instruction for faithful dissemination of that unique message.

2a) We affirm that the primary interpretive lens for understanding Scripture (including the book of Acts) concerning various religions and practices of the Jews and Gentiles is the Bible’s inherent redemptive historical framework.

2b) We deny that the primary interpretive lens for understanding Scripture (including the book of Acts) concerning the religious practices of Jews and Gentiles is culture, ethnicity, race, or regional diversity and local autonomy.

2c) We deny that the context of the receptor bears ultimate epistemological and interpretive authority, and we further deny that a people in any given epoch of human history has the authority to impose its unique interpretive grid upon the Scriptures.

2d) We deny that this redemptive historical interpretive lens weakens the comprehensive authority of Scripture, but rather draws from Scripture’s own claims and thereby acknowledges and submits to the Bible’s own self-interpreting authority.

³ Select affirmations and denials in this section draw upon ‘Affirmations and Denials Concerning the Doctrine of Scripture,’ Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia), December 2008.

2e) We affirm that some commands and practices of Scripture are of such a nature that their application to our present circumstances must reckon with the changed redemptive-historical conditions in which God addresses us. For example, animal sacrifices that were prescribed in the Old Testament are no longer legitimate now, because Christ has offered the final sacrifice.

3a) We affirm that study of the practice of the church in the New Testament is essential to mission, yet all such interpretation must yield to the unique redemptive-historical factors at work in this description of the early mission of the church, and indeed at each stage of biblical revelation.

3b) We affirm that the book of Acts and the New Testament epistles reveal certain non-repeatable features unique to the apostolic age, and that functionally affirming these features is essential to drawing proper contemporary missiological principles.

3.2. Theology of Religions

4a) We affirm that Scripture uniquely presents the one true faith and the one true religion.

4b) We deny that any faith, spirituality, or religion that claims written, oral, or institutional authority above or on par with Scripture is a true, saving faith or divinely-given religion.

4c) We affirm that God has created all humans to be worshippers and that all humans are created to be in a covenant relationship with him. Thus, he is the origin of all true worship and all true covenant-keeping.

4d) We affirm that in absolute contrast to all other faiths and religions, which are idolatrous counterfeits by their very existence, the faith expressed in Scripture is divinely-given and as such is unqualifiedly distinct.

4e) We deny that the Christian faith and religion are purely human constructs.

4f) We affirm that trust in any god other than the triune God revealed in Scripture, any false understanding of the triune God revealed in Scripture, or any resistance to the triune God revealed in Scripture requires full repentance.

5a) We affirm that as a result of the perpetuity of the *imago Dei*, God's common grace, and the historical influence of special revelation, traditions and cultures *formally* share many religious practices.

5b) We deny that any belief or practice of non-Christian religions is spiritually profitable or pleasing to the one true God.

5c) We affirm that releasing anyone from their inescapable moral and epistemological opposition to the Creator requires the regenerating work of the Spirit.

5d) We deny that outward religious similarities reflect degrees of spiritual proximity to the true faith or that devotion to such practices evidences a greater readiness for spiritual conversion.

6a) We affirm that the practice of false religions and the moral posture of unbelievers make them blind to saving knowledge, unwilling to embrace the one true God by faith, and unable to reverse their eternal judgment.

6b) We deny that someone who holds a false monotheistic religion is spiritually closer to belief in the gospel than one who holds a polytheistic, pantheistic or atheistic worldview.

6c) We affirm that the offer of salvation in Christ is directed without exception to all people who are not yet bound to him in conscious faith.

6d) We deny that the adherents of any non-Christian religions and worldviews can receive salvation, except through faith in Christ alone.

6e) We affirm that Israel, too, finds salvation only in turning to Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of Old Testament religion.

6f) We deny that non-Christian religions and worldviews also offer ways of salvation.

6g) We affirm that a correct response to the foundational questions posed by any and all humans (e.g., 'How did we get here?'; 'What went wrong'? and 'How can this be fixed?') is impossible without revelation from the triune God.

3.3. Sufficiency of General and Special Revelation

7a) We affirm that universal general revelation is sufficient to render all people accountable before God and without excuse.

7b) We deny that general revelation is sufficient for salvation.

8a) We affirm that God's special revelation has always been needed, even before the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, to properly interpret, supplement, and therefore, complement God's general revelation.

8b) We deny that these two modes were ever meant to be separated from one another or work independently from each other, as special revelation employs the tools of general revelation.

9a) We affirm that special revelation, as inscripturated in the canon of the Old and New Testaments, is necessary for salvation because it reveals the good news of Jesus Christ.

9b) We affirm that Scripture presents saving faith having its object in Jesus Christ, and that the efficacy rests not in faith itself, but in Christ who saves.

9c) We deny that faith can be saving if Jesus Christ (as revealed in Scripture) is not the object of faith.

10a) We affirm that the Bible teaches the need to learn the gospel (*fides ex auditu*) from reading Scripture or a human messenger proclaiming it.

10b) We deny that the Bible prescribes personal salvation by means of private revelation.

10c) We deny there is scriptural evidence to warrant belief in any form of post-mortem evangelism or post-mortem salvation.

11a) We affirm that Old Testament believers, both Israelites and those gentiles ingrafted into Israel, were saved by Christ as he was revealed to them at their stage of redemptive history.

11b) We deny the inclusivist contention that there is a valid analogy between the salvation of those who lived before Christ and those today who have never heard of Christ.

3.4. Biblical Revelation and Other Sacred Texts

12a) We affirm that the sacred texts of non-Christian religions are an extension of their entire worldviews, and thus they must be interpreted in light of this comprehensive grid.

12b) We affirm that the sacred texts and readers of non-Christian religions advance their own hermeneutical rules, which are not necessarily monolithic, yet uniformly entail attempted autonomy and epistemological rebellion.

12c) We deny it is valid to impose a Christian reading of non-biblical sacred texts as a means of reframing and thereby legitimising the texts as divinely inspired or authoritative.

12d) We deny that one can pick aspects of the non-biblical sacred texts and declare them in any way to be Holy Spirit-inspired.

12e) We affirm that biblical truths and historical events can be presented in other non-biblical documents, yet their proper description and meaning come ultimately from Scripture.

13a) We affirm that when Christians are called to analyse and interpret the data found in non-biblical sacred texts, they must do so under biblical authority and according to the clear teaching of Scripture.

13b) We deny that a hermeneutical importation of content from non-biblical sacred texts which conclusively influences an interpreter to adjust their understanding of a biblical text is ever helpful or warranted.

3.5. Extraordinary Means

14a) We affirm that while the Old Testament records many cases of extraordinary immediate revelation to the prophets, God's final extraordinary revelation is in his Son and the once-for-all apostolic witness he appointed and preserved in the New Testament.

14b) We affirm that God uses his prophetic and apostolic Word proclaimed as his appointed ordinary means of salvation.

14c) We deny the existence of any biblical accounts of faith and repentance without human agency.

15a) We affirm that if God were to use extraordinary means today (e.g. miraculous events, dreams or visions), that these occurrences should be interpreted providentially either as pre-evangelistic *praeparatio*, uncommon tools in God's hand for sovereignly drawing people to himself, or as divinely purposed tools for hardening unbelievers in their unbelief.

15b) We deny that any extraordinary experience or extra-biblical insight is of equal or similar authority to Scripture, that these experiences in themselves warrant any epistemic reliance or that they provide adequate basis for faith in Christ.

15c) We affirm instead that all believers everywhere should trust solely in the Word of God inscripturated in the Old and New Testaments, rather than mystical, emotional, or otherwise extraordinary experiences.

16a) We affirm the authority, necessity and sufficiency of biblical revelation, coupled with the Spirit's illumination in the heart and mind of the hearer, for true faith and epistemic certainty.

16b) We deny that we can properly speculate concerning the precise nature of the causal chain of events between providential *praeparatio* and providential contact with a human messenger, who articulates the biblical faith.

3.6. Biblical Authority and the Social Sciences

17a) We affirm that God has gifted the church with many tools, including the social sciences, which aid in understanding societies, norms, ethics, religions, and human relationships.

17b) We deny a dualistic view of reality in which nature and grace (or the sciences and faith) oppose each other.

18a) We affirm that Scripture is the ultimate authority to which all human disciplines, including missiology and social sciences, must be subject.

18b) We deny that any extra-biblical tool should ever or in any way supplant Scripture, explicitly, implicitly or functionally, as the determinative authority for defining human relationships or missional method.

18c) We deny that the Bible's norming role precludes the need for diligent study of human circumstances, such as the details of various religions, people groups, and perceived identities.

3.7. The Usefulness of Extra-Biblical Tools

19a) We affirm that God in Christ and through the Holy Spirit actively sustains and governs all of creation.

19b) We deny that all of God's work in this world can be empirically researched, explained or measured. In other words: data that are related to faith convictions or practices cannot be reduced to mere empirical facts.

19c) We deny that empirical facts can be assessed apart from religious and interpretive precommitments.

19d) We deny a use of ethnography which reduces practical theology or biblical missiology to a purely descriptive tool.

20a) We affirm that Christian believers must take a self-conscious stance in the assessment of all things, including empirical facts, according to the self-interpreting authority of Scripture and its revealed worldview.

20b) We deny a positivist-empiricist claim of scientific neutrality or agnosticism, which denies or hides the presuppositions of the researcher.

20c) We affirm that the use and interpretation of empirical data must be governed by divine revelation, whereby biblical revelation exercises interpretive and methodological authority over all data research, including, but not restricted to the process of observation, the research methods used, and the ways in which the Christian ethnographer's interpretations are formed and practiced.

20d) We deny any claim of relativism, which rejects the possibility of discerning truth in or through created reality.

21a) We affirm that in order to be really useful for theology and mission, social sciences must be sanctified through their thorough submission to Scripture.

21b) We deny that ethnographic research offers no valuable assistance to theologians from different contexts and cultures for delivering faithful contextual articulations of the gospel.

4. Trinity/Doctrine of God

4.1. God as He Is and as He Is Revealed

22a) We affirm the historic creeds and confessions of the church concerning the Trinity, including, but not limited to the Apostles', the Nicene-Constantinopolitan, and the Athanasian Creeds.

22b) We deny that God reveals himself in any way other than he is.

22c) We affirm that this revealed God is the very trinitarian God of Scripture.

23a) We affirm the biblical revelation of the Trinity as unique, sufficient, and solely reliable.

23b) We deny that the teaching of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity requires any source of light or wisdom outside of the Bible itself.

23c) We affirm the Trinity was revealed progressively in Scripture, culminating in the coming of the Son and the outpouring of the Spirit.

23d) We deny that the doctrine of the Trinity is a later philosophically-derived compromise with pagan culture.

4.2. Trinity and Redemption

24a) We affirm the uniqueness of Christianity and its sole source to be the triune God of Scripture.

24b) We deny that the gospel can be separated from the revelation of the Trinity without repudiating the biblical meaning of redemption.

24c) We deny that anyone who believes in any aspect of the gospel but still rejects the Trinity is a true Christian and possesses authentic hope of salvation.

25a) We affirm the confession of Christ as Saviour is only possible within a trinitarian redemptive framework.

25b) We deny Christ may be effectively or redemptively associated with any other faith system.

25c) We affirm there is no meaning to redemption without a sending Father, a sent and saving Son, and a perpetually proceeding and sanctifying Spirit.

5. Anthropology

5.1. Anthropology and Scripture: Mankind Created

26a) We affirm that all human beings are *homo adorans*: created uniquely in the *imago Dei*, covenantally related to and dependent upon God, and commissioned to reveal and represent him as his royal vice-gerents on earth.

26b) We deny this created and covenantal relatedness can ever be essentially lost however radical the noetic, moral, and epistemological consequences of human rebellion and idolatry.

27a) We affirm that the perpetuity of the *imago Dei* means the perpetuity of human dignity and sanctity of human life which should inform all engagement with the non-Christian religions.

27b) We deny that human beings at any stage of history are ever in a state where they lack accountability to their Creator.

27c) We affirm that being created in the image of God entails a 'sense of the divine' and 'seed of religion' which accounts for a common structure in human religious response.

27d) We deny that that 'sense of the divine' and 'seed of religion' are unaffected by the fall or can ever on their own construct a valid and reliable natural theology.

28a) We affirm that the Bible provides a single, coherent, and complex theological anthropology which provides the normative hermeneutical framework through which we are to interpret and evaluate all human religious responses to divine revelation.

28b) We deny that this norming theological anthropology obviates the need for diligent study of the variegated and dynamic religious responses of human beings and the social scientific disciplines associated with such study (including anthropology, phenomenology, sociology, ethnography, etc.).

5.2. Anthropology and Scripture: Mankind Fallen

29a) We affirm that in the fall of Adam under the covenant of works/life/creation, the *imago Dei* was distorted but not completely erased.

29b) We affirm that a biblical anthropology presents the effects of the fall as being so severe that all human beings deserve wrath, judgment, and condemnation.

29c) We affirm that the fall was an idolatrous act of de-creation which blurred the Creator -creature distinction—pulling God down to the level of the creature and tyrannically and rebelliously elevating Adam and Eve to the level of the Creator.

29d) We affirm that Adam and Eve not only disbelieved God and his Word but believed lies about him, and that such false faith is the characteristic of all idolatrous worship.

30a) We affirm that any deity—conceptual or physical—worshipped that is not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not the living God but an idol behind which lie the spiritual forces of darkness.

30b) We deny that such categories as idolatry and false faith are irrelevant and unsuitable categories by which to interpret human religion today.

30c) We affirm that in our sinful state human beings universally suppress the truth inescapably revealed in God's creation and substitute idols for the truth of God.

30d) We affirm that the comprehensiveness of human idolatry means there is no truth that has not been suppressed in some way.

30e) We deny that universal human suppression and substitution are either uniform or static but rather variegated and dynamic, yet restrained by God's work of common grace.

31a) We affirm the doctrine of common grace which describes the non-salvific operation of the Spirit whereby sin is restrained and civic good engendered in human beings.

31b) We deny that common grace regenerates a human heart or provides religiously neutral ground between believer and unbeliever.

32a) We affirm the doctrine of the antithesis which describes the radical difference and spiritual enmity between the people of God and those not belonging to God.

32b) We deny that as a theological reality (though not necessarily in human perception) there exists any liminal space between these two bounded, mutually exclusive spiritual states.

33a) We affirm that a biblical anthropology must be explicated within the boundaries of the doctrines of idolatry, false faith and antithesis on the one hand, and of the doctrines of the *imago Dei* and God's common grace, on the other hand.

33b) We deny that the universal human religious response to divine revelation can ever be satisfactorily explained without recognising its idolatrous character which evidences both elements of continuity and discontinuity when compared to true worship.

33c) We affirm that the gospel of Jesus Christ always both confronts and connects with our human idolatrous religious response, rebuking and correcting all unbelief and every idolatrous practice, and simultaneously fulfilling God-given desires and purposes more richly and supernaturally than any man-made religion or custom could envision.

5.3. Biblical Identity, Religious Studies, and Social Science

34a) We affirm that the Bible teaches personal identity to be fundamentally divinely revealed rather than humanly conceived; all people are either identified with—and *sinful in*—Adam, or identified with—and *redeemed in*—Christ.

34b) We affirm that this theological identity, as taught by Scripture, defines and frames every other dimension and perception of identity.

34c) We deny that perceived cultural or religious diversity is more essential to human identity than divinely revealed identity.

35a) We affirm the development and promotion of explicitly biblically-governed religious studies and missiology.

35b) We deny that anthropology, ethnography, phenomenology or any other social science can be studied with epistemological neutrality or a-theologically.

35c) We affirm that describing human religious responses to divine personal revelation is complex, properly mysterious and defies simplistic or superficial analyses.

35d) We deny that biblical anthropological complexity is incoherent, contradictory or dialectical.

35e) We deny that the human sciences can arrive at a full understanding of human nature, psychology, sociality, and history without presupposing and submitting to divine revelation, supremely held out in the Christ of Scripture.

6. Christology

6.1. The Two Natures of Christ

36a) We affirm, with the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds, that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man, and that Christ's human and divine natures are united in his one person without confusion, conversion, division or separation.

36b) We deny any theology from below, in which the being of God is solely determined in and through the historical work of the incarnate Son.

37a) We affirm that all depictions of the person, work and natures of Christ not controlled by Scripture are idolatrous.

37b) We deny models of the incarnation which find connections with non-Christian depictions of the person of Christ by asserting or assuming an emptying of the divine nature, rendering him only human.

38a) We affirm that in the incarnation the Son of God took on a full human nature, entering into our weaknesses and experiencing temptation, yet without sin.

38b) We affirm that he grew physically, cognitively, culturally and in covenantal obedience to his Heavenly Father.

38c) We deny the validity of any theologies or methodologies that depreciate the divine nature of Christ as the eternal Son of God or seek to recast the divine sonship of Christ in exclusively human categories of royalty.

39a) We affirm that in his resurrection and appointment as exalted Son of God, Christ secures the adoption of believers.

39b) We further affirm that any minimisation of filial categories for the identity of Christ, and the status of the believers in him, represents a distortion of the gospel.

39c) We deny that the modification, minimisation or removal of Father and Son language from gospel presentations or Bible translations preserves and faithfully proclaims the triune God or his gospel.

6.2. The Incarnation and Christ's Determinative Presence in Mission

40a) We affirm that the incarnation was an unrepeatable movement of God toward mankind in which the second person of the Trinity became incarnate as the last Adam, lived a life of obedience to the Law, died under the curse of the Law, was raised to life and ascended bodily to the right hand of the Father.

40b) We affirm that the incarnate life of the Son of God—including his death and resurrection—grounds and patterns the believer's love for God and love and mercy toward our neighbour.

40c) We further affirm that a sincere, God-honouring life of love toward God and neighbour is only possible through union with Christ, whereby Christ is present to his people—and through them to the world—through the regenerating and indwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

41a) We affirm the perpetual humanity of the Son—now raised and exalted.

41b) We deny that the body metaphors for the church in the New Testament frame the church as Christ's earthly embodiment, whereby the church becomes *Christus prolongatus* or some other inimical ontological confusion.

42a) We affirm that the mission of the church is conducted in the magisterial presence of the exalted Christ who is freely and sovereignly present in the world, through the Spirit, as the one who rules, bears witness to himself through the Scriptures, and intercedes for his elect.

42b) We affirm that the Lordship of Christ, expressed in his rule over all creation; his self-attesting witness through the Scriptures and the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit; and his intercession for his elect in all contexts, nations, cultures, and times constitutes the grounds on which the church calls all peoples to turn to Christ and confess him as Lord.

42c) We deny that the *sui generis* incarnation of the eternal Son of God offers a proper analogy for construing contextualisation as 'incarnational'.

7. Soteriology

7.1. Necessity of Salvation

43a) We affirm that the human race, fallen in the first Adam, required the last Adam to fulfil the requirements of the Law, both passively and actively for the elect.

43b) We affirm the abiding importance of soteriology within an evangelical theology of religions.

43c) We deny that soteriology should dominate an evangelical theology of religions to the exclusion of other systematic theological *loci* that require study, understanding, and obedient faith.

44a) We affirm that Christ alone is the propitiation for sin, and that salvation is accomplished exclusively by his substitutionary atonement.

44b) We affirm that only those who are united to Christ by a Holy Spirit-wrought faith are declared righteous (justification) and made righteous (sanctification) in him.

44c) We deny the possibility of salvation outside of Christ, since all peoples are in the first Adam and ruled by the spiritual forces of darkness until, by God's grace, the elect are effectually called, through the proclamation of the gospel and regenerating work of the Spirit, to repentance and faith in Christ—the last Adam.

7.2. The Biblical Doctrine of Salvation

45a) We affirm that the Bible teaches a fundamental separation of humanity which at the final judgment is irrevocable and which leads to two eternal and unchangeable destinies—on the one hand, 'the new heavens and new earth', and on the other, hell.

45b) We affirm that hell is an actual place of everlasting, retributive judgment and torment and that one's entrance into it secures permanent alienation from the grace of God.

45c) We deny that final judgment is restorative covenant parental love, making hell disciplinary with the possibility of repentance.

46a) We affirm the sovereignty of God in salvation and the freedom of his Holy Spirit to work savingly when, where and with whom he wills.

46b) We deny that it is ever legitimate to speculate on matters which depart from the soteriological patterns and promises described and prescribed in Scripture.

46c) We deny that the family of positions identified by or associated with 'inclusivism' 'pluralism,' or universalism are consistent with biblical and reformational teaching.

46d) We deny the validity of categories such as the 'invincibly ignorant' or 'those who have never heard *through no fault of their own*'.

47a) We affirm the cosmic implications of God's work of redemption which brings renewal and restoration to the world.

47b) We deny that this renewal and restoration implies a universalism which holds that all individuals will finally be saved.

48a) We affirm the universal scope of the gospel that saves from among any nation and every type of background.

48b) We deny that for God to be loving and just, his salvific will must be universal and/or that salvation has to be universally accessible.

49a) We affirm that there is only one Saviour, Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-man, the only mediator between God and his people.

49b) We deny any form of the *logos spermatikos* theory which implies a salvific universal anthropological enlightenment and enabling by the pre-incarnate Christ.

50a) We affirm that Christ as the last Adam and true Israel fulfils the role of the image bearer under the Law, and has come to restore his elect to image bearing in him, under the new covenant made in his blood.

50b) We affirm that the risen Christ, as to his human nature, is the image of God to which the elect, his church, will be finally and fully conformed at the resurrection of the dead.

8. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

8.1. The Holy Spirit as the Third Member of the Trinity

51a) We affirm the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son.

51b) We deny that the Holy Spirit ever works independently of the Father or of the Son.

8.2. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God

52a) We affirm that the redeeming work of the Holy Spirit is only revealed in the Bible, the one Word of God.

52b) We deny that the saving work of the Spirit is present in non-biblical texts, that the Spirit inspires other sacred texts, or that the Spirit authorises or legitimates use of non-biblical texts as a bridge to Christ.

52c) We deny that the Holy Spirit can or will ever contradict the revealed Word.

8.3. The Holy Spirit and the Church

53a) We affirm the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity in the church, just as the Spirit is the Spirit of unity in the Godhead.

53b) We deny that the Holy Spirit would ever lead and empower any movement outside of the church of Jesus Christ or any movement in the name of Christ that pits one part of the evangelical faith against another.

53c) We affirm the discernibility of the work of the Holy Spirit according to his own given biblical parameters, and simultaneously affirm the Scripture's insistence upon the mysterious and secret work of the Holy Spirit, making it impossible to grasp his work and his ways exhaustively.

8.4. The Holy Spirit and Redemption

54a) We affirm that the Holy Spirit works through the proclaimed Word of Christ to bring eternal life to the lost.

54b) We deny that the Holy Spirit operates independently of the saving and interceding work of the Son.

54c) We deny that human beings may have eternal life through any means other than God's sovereign regeneration through the Holy Spirit.

8.5. The Holy Spirit and Non-Biblical Religion

55a) We affirm that the only way of faith, hope, and life is to be a member of the Body of Christ.

55b) We deny that claims about the work of the Holy Spirit or any other claim can be rightly used to justify a person's remaining within a Bible-denying or Bible-subjugating faith system.

55c) We deny that the Holy Spirit works to affirm, adapt or improve non-Christian religions.

55d) We affirm that when Christ saves those of other faith systems, he leads them by the power of the Holy Spirit from their false religion into the visible Body of Christ.

56a) We affirm the Holy Spirit working through the Word is the ultimate authority for a godly and ethical life.

56b) We deny that anyone may live in a manner pleasing to God by embedding a professed faith in Christ within an alien faith system that denies the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

9. Eschatology

9.1. The Nature of Eschatology

57a) We affirm that eschatology refers to the ultimate and final state of the world and its historical processes which lead to the *eschaton*, the consummation of all things.

57b) We affirm that eschatology is rooted in the eternal purpose of God and is therefore in place at the very creation of the world.

57c) We affirm that the redemptive work of Christ restores and perfects fallen creation.

57d) We affirm that the original created endpoint of the world is the selfsame reality secured by Christ's work of redemption.

57e) We deny that God's purpose changes even in the fall of mankind into sin.

9.2. Eschatology and the Work of Christ

58a) We affirm that Christ's resurrection inaugurated the last days and that, from that point forward, all people everywhere live in these last days and await the Last Day at the return of the Son of God.

58b) We deny that in terms of redemptive history or for the sake of mission method, these last days offer direct parallel to or unqualified analogy to those prior to the coming of Christ.

9.3. Eschatology and the Church

59a) We affirm that God's eschatological purpose in bringing all things together under Christ is the formation of a holy people, the church.

59b) We affirm that the church exists as the Body of Christ, according to the will of God the Father, by the work of Christ, and through the regenerating ministry of the Spirit.

59c) We deny that the church exists only because of her activity or by her participation in mission.

59d) We affirm that the church already exists and works in the last days, and that her redemptive-historical situation is characterised by the *already and not yet*, situated between the two comings of Christ.

60a) We affirm that in Christ and through the Spirit the church possesses all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places and, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, experiences the power of the age to come.

60b) We deny that God's activity is ever absolutely unpredictable and mysterious, the result of a capricious or arbitrary will, or contingent on random or autonomous turns of events.

9.4. Life of Believers in the *Already and Not Yet*

61a) We affirm that Christians live and work within the *already and not yet* of an inaugurated eschatology, awaiting the full realisation of our inheritance at the bodily return of Christ Jesus.

61b) We deny that it is illegitimate for Christians to exercise godly influence on this age, culturally, politically, economically, socially or in other structural or institutional ways.

62a) We affirm that, for believers, this age is characterised by fellowship with Christ in his sufferings and his glories, a mixed time of groaning and of joy, labouring for the Lord with tears but not in vain.

62b) We deny any proclamation that includes a 'prosperity gospel'—that Christians should normally enjoy peace, health, success, comfort, as the world conceives them.

63a) We affirm that the growth and influence of the gospel often remains hidden and unmeasurable until the Last Day.

63b) We deny that the church should operate in such a way that ensures her lack of community influence, that she seek to remain invisible or that she lazily or fearfully, or for any ungodly reason, pursue or relish isolation.

9.5. Eschatology and Mission

64a) We affirm Christ's heavenly and Spiritual rule, whereby under his authority, by his power, and in obedience to his command for his glory alone, disciples of Christ seek the expansion of his kingdom by making disciples from all nations, calling all to repentance and faith, and urging them to subject themselves to their rightful King and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

64b) We affirm that this age features the postponement of God's final wrath, judgment and punishment of his sinful creatures.

64c) We affirm that as we await the bodily return of Christ Jesus when he will come as Judge, grace, forgiveness, and reconciliation are extended by gospel proclamation for the redemption and gathering of God's elect.

64d) We affirm the church's God-given and urgent mandate to extend the way of salvation universally, to proclaim the gospel of grace to all human beings, whatever their ethnic, sexual, religious, national, cultural, social, professional, political, economic, and assumed identity.

65a) We affirm that our critical efforts to reach people of all tribes, nations and languages must be motivated by the love of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the love of the Bride of Christ, and the love of neighbour.

65b) We deny the idea that the church's effort to complete the reaching of the nations *causes* the Parousia or should be motivated by self-reliance or perceived quantitative successes.

10. Ecclesiology⁴

10.1. The Church's Role in Mission

66a) We affirm that the mission of the visible church can only be carried out with the verbal proclamation of the gospel, by which the Spirit of Christ calls people to turn in repentance and to exercise faith, for the glory of God.

66b) We deny that biblical mission prescribes mercy ministries or seeks to address social concerns apart from verbal proclamation of the gospel.

67a) We affirm that people have needs of all kinds, but that every person's greatest need is for faith in Christ and repentance from sin to the glory of God in Christ Jesus.

67b) We deny that addressing this greatest need precludes or diminishes the critical importance of acts of service for addressing other individual and social needs.

⁴ Select affirmations and denials in this section draw upon David Garner, et al. 'Affirmations and Denials Concerning Missions and Ecclesiology' and 'The Holy Spirit, Scripture, and the Church,' in *A Call to Faithful Witness, Part Two: Theology, Gospel Missions, and Insider Movements* (The Presbyterian Church in America, 19 March 2014), <http://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/2101-SCIM-2014-ALL-with-MRs-4-30-14.pdf>.

68a) We affirm that the Christ-ordained calling of the visible church is to be distinguished from, yet is inseparably tied to, every believer's unique vocation in the world.

68b) We deny that the visible church exists to redeem culture.

68c) We affirm that visible churches must carry the redemptive message of the gospel which impacts all of life.

69a) We affirm that membership in a visible church and regular participation in the means of grace are essential for all believers to equip them for gospel proclamation and acts of service.

69b) We deny that believers should seek independence or religious autonomy, refuse or avoid membership in a visible church, or seek to carry out Christ's mission independently of the visible church's direct oversight and care.

69c) We affirm that because mission belongs to Christ and Christ is head of his church, the visible church is his chosen agent responsible for sending out gifted and godly men and women to call people to repentance and faith.

70a) We affirm that the goal of mission is inextricably tied to the visible church—the means and end of Christ's work, through which God's Spirit by his Word gathers and perfects his people.

70b) We deny that new believers should ever be discouraged from joining with other believers in membership of a visible church.

70c) We affirm that missionaries should seek vital connection with a visible church in their mission context.

70d) We deny that missionaries should deem it unnecessary to join with other believers in membership of a visible church.

71a) We affirm that local expressions of the gospel should always function in the context of the catholic Christian church, so that local theologians are accountable to the formulations of the Christian faith in the historic creeds and confessions of the church.

71b) We deny that faithful contextual formulations of the gospel are merely 'local theologies,' which have their validity apart from the catholicity of the church.

71c) We affirm that all local theologising should be an obedient receiving and restating of the Word of God, which is true everywhere and at all times.

10.2. Church: Word and Deed⁵

72a) We affirm the primacy of the proclaimed Word for the mission of the church.

72b) We deny that ministry of the Word obviates the need for acts of mercy, since verbal expressions of the love of Christ entail tangible manifestations of that love.

72c) We affirm that biblical deed ministry is sincere service to meet the needs of people.

72d) We deny that biblical deed ministry is ever rightly employed as a diversion or tactic merely to secure an audience for gospel proclamation.

⁵ Select affirmations and denials in this section draw upon Phil D., 'Mercy Ministry in Mission Strategy,' *Southeast Asia Network for the Gospel*, 12 May 2018, <https://seagospel.net/mercy-ministry-in-mission-strategy>.

73a) We affirm the necessity of compassion and mercy to characterize the lives of those who proclaim the Word of the gospel.

73b) We deny that Word ministry occurs faithfully without evident compassion for those suffering or in need.

74a) We affirm that to separate mercy ministry and ministry of the Word is to be out of accord with Christ's commission.

74b) We deny that either form of ministry is an isolated or exclusive priority.

74c) We affirm that in the church's mission to the world, it is biblically informed wisdom which will recommend the order and leading priority of Word or deed for each occasion.

10.3. Relationship of Church, Denominational Agencies, and Parachurch Organisations

75a) We affirm that visible churches bear the primary responsibility for the theological, moral, and ministry-method oversight of missionaries.

75b) We affirm that the visible church has the primary responsibility to recruit, mobilise, and send individual church members into mission.

75c) We deny that denominational agencies and parachurch organisations should have the primary theological, moral, and ministry-method oversight of missionaries.

76a) We affirm the genuine value of denominational agencies and parachurch organisations, when they properly assist visible churches to engage in mission.

76b) We affirm that denominational agencies and parachurch organisations can carry out delegated oversight for such things as the logistical, financial, and health concerns of missionaries.

77a) We affirm the value of working across denominational boundaries (within or without mission agencies), according to biblical principles of ecumenism.

77b) We deny that denominational collaboration means ignoring doctrinal differences.

10.4. Mutuality and Accountability of Visible Churches

78a) We affirm that a visible church which sends a missionary, and the visible church which a missionary plants or ministers in, share a vital and mutually important relationship.

78b) We deny that such a relationship entails or permits only a unidirectional flow of resources.

78c) We affirm that the receiving church holds primary jurisdiction over its own ministry.

78d) We deny that such a vital and important relationship involves permanent control by the older, sending church(es).

78e) We affirm that such a vital and important relationship rightly facilitates humble teaching, correcting and rebuking of one another.

79a) We affirm that any church planted through a missionary ideally should grow toward local governance, local sustenance and local replication, while sustaining manifest connection to the historical and global church.

79b) We deny that a sending church has no theological, financial or moral responsibility to any church planted or otherwise served by missionaries it has sent.

79c) We deny that a younger church has no theological, financial or moral obligation to the sending church.

79d) We deny that any church planted through missionaries should be financially, or in any other way, controlled by the visible church which sent these missionaries.

11. Contextualisation

11.1. The Redemptive-Historical Context

80a) We affirm that the triune God and his comprehensive, redemptive-historical plan revealed in Scripture provide the only macro-context for properly understanding anything or anyone at any point in history.

80b) We affirm that the triune God has delivered his salvation plan in the context of specific individuals or groups set in specific local cultural contexts, such as the call of Abraham in a specific place and time.

81a) We affirm the epistemological and interpretive authority of Scripture for assessing every human context at every age.

81b) We deny the interpretive primacy of the receptor(s) of the gospel, the missionary or missionaries, or any other person or group of people.

82a) We affirm that the Bible's description of unregenerate people and their collective gatherings under the umbrella of their religions is not subject to interpretation, or re-interpretation according to the demands of cultural exigencies.

82b) We deny that the *Zeitgeist* of relativism, tolerance and subjectivism should influence the normativity of the Bible and its interpretation.

82c) We deny that contextualisation efforts which attempt to separate form and meaning are proper or useful (e.g., while in some contexts 'Isa' does mean the biblical Jesus, some renditions of dynamic equivalence linguistic theories *wrongly make* the Islamic 'Isa' dynamically the same as the biblical Jesus, or the Son of God dynamically equivalent to a legal representative).

11.2. The Ecclesiastical Context

83a) We affirm that as the pillar and ground of the truth, the visible church through the ages has been entrusted with the task of faithfully making disciples, according to God's prescribed methods, and by applying his prescribed means of spreading the message of salvation.

83b) We deny that adaptations of gospel presentation without considering Scripture and the visible church historically and globally are proper or helpful.

83c) We deny that the exigencies of any given local context should dictate how Scripture is to be read, interpreted, and applied.

83d) We deny that a Jesus redesigned to fit a particular context will ever bring ultimate glory to the triune God or aid the spiritual growth of the church.

84a) We affirm that theological teaching can legitimately adjust its teaching style, phraseology, selection of content, use of illustrations, and many other ways that prove significant in facilitating the communication and grasp of truth in the audience's target language and culture.

84b) We deny that such adaptation may rightly interpret any culture, religion, faith, and practice apart from the comprehensive authority of Scripture concerning the radical distinction between the Christian and non-Christian religions, between believers and unbelievers, and between the moral and religious antithesis that exists between those in Adam and those in Christ Jesus.

11.3. The Anthropological and Missiological Context

85a) We affirm that God-given, God-ordained methods are effective both for bringing an 'aroma of life' and an 'aroma of death'.

85b) We deny that humanly prescribed methods have any ultimate effectiveness of their own.

85c) We deny that the Bible contains any kind of elusive, mysterious or secret interpretive formula, such as a 'skeleton key' or 'golden key' exemplified by the 'person of peace,' or 'fourth (4th) soil persons.'

85d) We deny that any culture contains an elusive but inherently redemptive and 'salvific key,' exemplified by 'redemptive analogy thinking'.

86a) We affirm that theology must drive mission methodology, because a failure to deal adequately with the effects of truth suppression will generate an overly positive view of human nature and will manifest itself in distorted methodologies.

86b) We deny that any mission methodology is neutral or atheological.

86c) We deny that the historical, sociological, psychological, and cultural contexts of mission provide the epistemological and ontological preconditions for the rule, revelation, and presence of Christ.

86d) We deny that missiological methods are legitimised by the claim that 'God will surely recognise his own' at the second coming of Christ.

12. Culture

12.1. Culture Defined and Explained

87a) We affirm that the word 'culture' is used generally to describe the shared set of artefacts, characteristics, meanings and values that give shape to the total corporate life of a group of people.

87b) We affirm that culture is complex and multi-faceted and operates at many different levels—the external and observable artefacts of culture always expressing more deeply held beliefs and value systems.

88a) We affirm that each culture is dynamic and has providentially arisen over time in a concrete location; each is influenced by factors such as geography, climate, history, and interactions with other groups.

88b) We affirm that culture is inherent and unavoidable, a necessary part of human existence.

88c) We deny that culture is the final determiner in interpretation of either ancient or contemporary texts and settings.

12.2. Creator, Creation, and Culture

89a) We affirm that in order to define, understand, and make missiological applications concerning culture, it is necessary to submit ourselves entirely to what God the Creator has revealed about mankind and human culture in his written Word.

89b) We deny that it is possible for us, God's creatures operating from within human cultures, accurately, objectively, and adequately to define, understand, and make missiological applications concerning culture, independently from God's Word.

90a) We affirm that culture and religion are interrelated, interdependent and inseparable, the latter informing the former.

90b) We deny that any facet of human culture may truly be a-moral, a-theological, or a-religious.

90c) We affirm that all acts of mankind are inescapably religious at their core, because humanity is made in the *imago Dei*.

90d) We deny the existence of any human culture that functions disconnected from or uninfluenced by human religious thought and expression or by the spiritual forces of darkness.

90e) We deny that human activities can properly be evaluated by separating them into religious and non-religious components.

12.3. Origins of Culture

91a) We affirm that the Scriptures make clear that human culture was always part of God's divine plan, noting that the so-called 'Cultural Mandate' is given in the context of mankind's creation in the image of God.

91b) We affirm that cultural diversity reflects the intention of God's covenantal purposes and that such diversity manifests his glory.

91c) We affirm that culture and cultural development exist because God is the Creator and sovereign governor of all things.

92a) We affirm that, in and of itself, human culture manifests divine goodness and is the gift of the Creator to his creatures.

92b) We deny that human culture was a divine afterthought or a consequence of the fall of Adam.

92c) We deny that human culture is an evil thing *per se* or that it is purely an assertion of humanity's prideful rebellion against the Creator.

12.4. Effects of the Fall on Culture

93a) We affirm therefore that human sinfulness necessarily distorts both individuals and communities.

93b) We affirm therefore that every culture has been corrupted by sin.

93c) We affirm that all cultures advance strategies for the perpetuation of human suppression of truth.

93d) This notwithstanding, we affirm that because of God's common grace there is often much that is praiseworthy, helpful and delightful in every culture.

93e) We deny that any culture exists this side of the new heavens and the new earth that is either perfectly righteous, on the one hand, or perfectly evil on the other.

94a) We affirm that the Bible confronts and critiques human cultures and cultural practices at the points at which they diverge from what the Bible teaches.

94b) We deny that human cultures may be evaluated only in terms of cultural relativism or idolised in such a way that they escape biblical critique.

12.5. The Gospel and Culture

95a) We affirm that only the Christian gospel, as revealed in Scripture, is able to redeem people of all cultures and furthermore is the sole means of salvation for all peoples.

95b) We deny that there is any human culture where the gospel is irrelevant, incomprehensible, or powerless.

95c) We affirm that the Scriptures teach and illustrate that gospel communication from one human culture to another is possible, desirable and indeed commanded.

96a) We affirm that the proclamation of God in Christ, at one and the same time, stands over and above all human cultures, yet can and should be articulated meaningfully in the languages of particular local cultures.

96b) We deny that the gospel of Christ can be captured or restrained by any one human culture or that any one human culture may claim a monopoly on the gospel.

97a) We affirm that when the gospel of Jesus Christ redeems and transforms individuals from existing societies, their cultures are necessarily impacted and influenced in all spheres of life.

97b) We deny the existence of any so-called Christian culture that is cut off from, completely different from and disconnected from existing human cultures.

12.6. Churches and Culture

98a) We affirm that before the return of Christ, all Christian communities exist among other human cultures and are necessarily influenced by those cultures.

98b) We affirm that Christian individuals, whilst not abandoning their human cultural heritage, find their core identity as members together of the church, Christ's Body and the special locus of Jesus' kingdom.

98c) We affirm that the church is a 'new humanity': strangers and aliens, freed in Christ to resist pressures to conform to the patterns and methods of this world.

98d) We deny that Christian believers, including those influenced by individualistic western cultures, should find the main sense of their identity in their unbelieving culture.

99a) We affirm that all visible churches are necessarily contextualised expressions of the universal Body of Christ.

99b) We affirm that visible churches must take root in specific cultural settings: they should and indeed must use particular human languages, linguistic styles, biblically appropriate analogies, and thought forms to proclaim, apply, and live out the gospel in those local contexts.

99c) We deny that any visible church should seek to be uncontextualised—that it should ever seek to function aside of, apart from, or wholly disconnected from the local contemporary context where it worships and ministers.

12.7. Culture in the Eschaton

100a) We affirm that, insofar as contact and exchange is possible, Christian churches already enjoy mutual cross-cultural enrichment, as a foretaste of the new heavens and earth.

100b) We affirm that the new heavens and the new earth will be enriched by the unity and diversity of the universal people of God, the cultural and linguistic riches of people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation.

13. Glossary

‘Already and not yet’—The biblical conviction that expresses the overlap of two ages, this present age and the age to come. The age to come has been inaugurated by the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. However, we are still faithfully waiting for the fulness of the new age that will be brought about by the final and glorious return of Christ. Understanding our lives between these two ages is crucial to a healthy Christian life that recognizes the calling to live in this world while not conforming to its practices and beliefs. It is also necessary to the life and mission of the Church.

‘Aroma of life’ and an ‘aroma of death’—2 Corinthians 2:16.

‘Catholicity of the church’—The oneness of the universal church across time, space, and culture.

‘Creator/creature distinction’—The distinction between God the Creator and everything else (the creation, including humanity, the heavens and earth, the spiritual world, etc.) is fundamental to sound and biblical Christian belief. It is essential to acknowledge this distinction if we are to worship God, read Scripture, serve the Church, or participate in her mission.

Christus prolongatus—A concept, developed early by some church fathers, that conflates the Person of Christ with his church, wherein the church is the *incarnate* extension of Christ into the world.

‘Cultural Mandate’—The term first applied by Klaas Schilder to the commands in Genesis 1:26–28.

‘Culture’—‘Culture is religion externalized’ neatly paraphrases the position articulated by Henry R. Van Til in *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1959), 42: ‘The radical, totalitarian character of religion is such, then, that it determines both man’s cultus and his culture. That is to say, the conscious or unconscious relationship to God in a man’s heart determines all of his activities, whether theoretical or practical. This is true of philosophy, which is based upon non-theoretical, religious presuppositions. Thus, man’s morality and economics, his jurisprudence and his aesthetics, are all religiously oriented and determined.’

‘False faith’—The term used by Reformed scholastic Francis Turretin to describe what Adam and Eve wrongly believed about God following their deception by Satan.

'Fourth (4th) soil persons'—This is a phrase used by Kevin Greeson, author of the CAMEL method to describe strategies drawn from the Parable of the Sower to ensure rapid multiplication of churches.

Homo adorans—The worshiping man.

'Incarnational'—The adjective form of 'incarnation' frequently used to describe the work of missions. Notwithstanding the logical impossibility of humans 'incarnating' (becoming flesh—that is, becoming what we already are), use of 'incarnational' to describe Jesus as a model effectively undermines the *sui generis* character of God *becoming flesh* in Christ.

'Invincibly ignorant'—A term that arose within Catholic theology in the 16th century which describes a lack of knowledge which is not the fault of the person.

'Isa'—The Arabic name for Jesus, often, but not always, with a view of him from the Quran and other Muslim resources. For some 'Isa' is the biblical Jesus. For others, he is the Muslim one.

'God will surely recognise his own'—From the Latin, *Novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius*, drawing upon 2 Timothy 2:19a, 'But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his"' (ESV). This was used historically even to justify wholesale genocide. Presently the phrase is sometimes employed as a justification for employing poor or unscriptural missiological methods, asserting, at the end of the day, God will have to sort things out.

'Golden key'—Not unlike a skeleton key which fits all locks and ensures success in opening them, a golden key promises to do the same.

'Great Commission'—The command of Jesus given to the church prior to his ascension in Matthew 28:18–20.

'Local theologies'—The process of doing theology and interpreting Scripture in a given local context has often been labeled 'local theology'. For some theologians, such local theologies are context-determined, thus breaking the necessary link between theology and Scripture—the only absolute determining criteria of theology.

'Logos spermatikos'—This concept of a 'generative rational principle' inherent in the universe and the human mind was taken from Stoicism and adapted for apologetic purposes by Justin Martyr (in light of John 1:1–14, especially v. 9). It is often used today to claim that God's *saving* truth is present and accessible in all cultures and religions.

'New humanity'—Ephesians 2:15 (NIV).

'Person of peace'—Drawn from Luke 10, contemporary outreach methodologies search for an elusive person who will catalyze a movement of people to Christ.

Praeparatio (or *preparatio*)—Providential circumstances, prior to the hearing of gospel proclamation, used by God to draw sinners to himself.

'Prosperity gospel'—A false gospel that teaches that God always rewards faith and obedience, including tithing—with additional and larger financial, health, and other personal blessings. The promise to attain your full potential in Christ is another subtle form of prosperity gospel. This false gospel transforms faith and loving obedience to God into a partial God made in our image.

'Redemptive analogy thinking'—Derived from Don Richardson's *Peace Child* and *Eternity in Their Hearts* this approach suggests that God has providentially placed salvific signposts in every culture. Critics point out that it has a tendency to conflate general and special revelation.

Religious and non-religious components—Whilst individuals, groups and societies may see themselves as a-religious and describe themselves as such (whether atheistic, disinterested, secular or

other). However, though a superficial appearance of being a-religious is possible, all human beings are necessarily religious at a more fundamental level, on account of their being divine image bearers. Romans 1 reveals authoritatively that human ultimate commitments are always religious.

‘Salvific key’—A teaching that cultural artifacts such as the altar to the unknown god (Acts 17:23) can be apologetic keys that open the door to salvation.

‘Seed of religion’ (*semen religionis*)—God the Creator has implanted a ‘seed of religion’ in all people. However, the effects of the fall extend to the whole human nature, including the ‘seed of religion.’ This explains the apparent similarities between the Christian faith and other religions. This also explains that in all times and places, people worship spiritual or material ‘gods,’ but cannot attain the true knowledge of God apart from saving and transforming grace.

‘Sense of the divine’ (*sensus divinitatis*)—The conviction that there exists within the human mind an awareness of divinity. This, however, is not a general awareness of any divinity but of the true God. The *sensus divinitatis* also explains why, since this awareness subsists in all people, all are held inexcusable before God for failing to believe and worship him.

‘Skeleton key’—See ‘golden key.’

‘The new heavens and new earth’—Revelation 21:1, 26.

‘Those who have never heard *through no fault of their own*’—A common way of describing the category of the unevangelised and enshrined in Vatican II’s dogmatic statement *Lumen Gentium* 16. It is used to refer to people who have never had access to the proclamation of the gospel and therefore, as is argued, cannot carry any guilt from their failure to respond in faith to Jesus. It distinguishes them from those who had an opportunity to hear the gospel but for one reason or another within their control, they failed to do so.

14. TSF Council

David B. Garner

The Rev Dr David B. Garner (co-chair, The Southgate Fellowship) is a minister in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and a member of Philadelphia Metro West Presbytery. He is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Academic Dean, and Vice President of Global Ministries at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia, PA), where he has served since 2007. A former missionary to Eastern Europe, Dr Garner continues to teach around the world, most frequently in Asia. Dr Garner serves as the Systematic Theology Book Review Editor for *Themelios*. While teaching at Westminster, he simultaneously served as Pastor of Teaching at Proclamation Presbyterian Church (Bryn Mawr, PA) from 2012–2015. His most recent book is *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2016).

Daniel Strange

Dr Daniel Strange (co-chair, The Southgate Fellowship) is College Director and Tutor in Culture, Religion, and Public theology at Oak Hill College, London. A faculty and board member of Crosslands, an in-context theological training initiative created by Oak Hill and Acts 29, he also serves as a Trustee of Tyndale House, Cambridge. Dr Strange is a Contributing Editor for *Themelios*, and serves as an

elder at East Finchley Baptist Church, which is part of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches (FIEC). His book, *Their Rock is Not Like Our Rock: A Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), received an Award of Merit for Theology/Ethics in the *Christianity Today* 2016 Book Awards. His most recent book is *Plugged In: Connecting Your Faith with What You Watch, Read, and Play* (London: Good Book, 2019).

Yannick Imbert

Dr Yannick Imbert is professor of apologetics at the Faculty Jean Calvin (Aix-en-Provence). An expert on the work of J. R. R. Tolkien, on which he wrote his PhD dissertation (Westminster Theological Seminary), he works on themes of imagination and fantasy. He studies and writes on the relationship between faith and society, endeavors which began during his studies at the Institute of Political Science. He serves as president of Éditions Kérygma, as well as a member of the Theological Commission of the National Council (France). He is author of *Rechercher L'Immortalité: Folie ou Réalité?* (Lognes: Farel Press, 2016), a reformed analysis and critique of transhumanism, and a volume on apologetics, entitled, *Croire, Expliquer, Vivre: Introduction à l'Apologétique* (Charols and Aix-en-Provence: Excelsis, 2014).

Bill Nikides

The Rev Bill Nikides is a minister in the PCA and member of Rocky Mountain Presbytery. A retired United States Air Force officer and veteran of the Gulf War and Invasion of Panama, Rev Nikides serves with Reformed Evangelistic Fellowship (formerly Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship) training church planters around the world, particularly in the Muslim world. He also serves as assistant pastor at Great Plains Gathering (PCA), a Native American church plant in Montana. In addition to more than 20 published articles concerning missions and theology, Rev Nikides is co-author of *Muslim Conversions to Christ: A Critique of Insider Movements in Islamic Contexts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2018), and co-author and editor of *Chrislam: How Missionaries are Promoting an Islamized Gospel* (i2 Ministries, 2011). As part of his global mission concern, he directed a feature-length documentary, 'Half Devil Half Child', which profiles the effects of the Insider Movement in Bangladesh. Based on more than 200 ethnographic interviews with Bengalis, the film became a semi-finalist at the San Antonio film festival. Rev Nikides served as an adjunct/assistant professor at Sanford University for over five years and has taught in history, theology, and missiology at seminaries in the USA, the UK, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

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Robert Scott

Mr Robert Scott has a BA in Anthropology, an MSc in Developments Studies, and an MA in History. He worked for an NGO in Bangladesh and then with the World Health Organisation. Since 2001, Mr Scott has served as Director of Missions at St Helen's Bishopsgate, a conservative Anglican

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The Rev Dr John Span is ordained as a commissioned pastor in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and is part of the Returning Church, a group of pastors working towards a return to orthodoxy within the denomination. From 2000–2011, Dr Span worked with a CRC missions team among the Fulbe who Islamized Guinea. In 2012, Dr Span moved to Egypt, where he served for three years as the Vice-Principal of the Alexandria School of Theology. At present, he resides in Canada, where he is employed by Interserve, Canada. In April 2019 he completed his PhD thesis at the John Calvin Faculty in Aix-en-Provence, France. His dissertation analyzes attempted Christianization of the Qur'an in evangelistic strategies and examines their presuppositions from a Reformed perspective.

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The Rev Dr Jonny Woodrow is pastor of Christ Church Loughborough, a Reformed Baptist Church in the UK, which he planted 15 years ago. Christ Church seeks to reach the large Muslim community on its doorstep. Formerly a Lecturer in Psychology at Loughborough University, Dr Woodrow has spent the last decade teaching on and writing for theological distance education programs for ministry training. Jonny is studying for a PhD in Systematic Theology through Union Theological College in Belfast on the topic of John Webster's Doctrine of God and Creation. He lectures on Reformed theology and Islam for Cornhill Scotland and is co-author of *Ascension: Humanity in the Presence of God* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013).

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Book Reviews

— OLD TESTAMENT —

- Caroline Blyth and Alison Jack, eds. *The Bible in Crime Fiction and Drama: Murderous Texts*. 140
Reviewed by Paul Barker
- Stephen L. Cook. *Ezekiel 38–48: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. 141
Reviewed by Iain M. Duguid
- Antonios Finitsis, ed. *Dress and Clothing in the Hebrew Bible: “For All Her Household Are Clothed in Crimson.”* 143
Reviewed by John A. Davies
- Hendrik J. Koorevaar and Mart-Jan Paul, eds. *The Earth and the Land: Studies about the Value of the Land of Israel in the Old Testament and Afterwards*. 144
Reviewed by G. Geoffrey Harper
- Lissa M. Wray Beal. *Joshua*. 146
Reviewed by L. Daniel Hawk

— NEW TESTAMENT —

- R. B. Jamieson. *Jesus’ Death and Heavenly Offering in Hebrews*. 148
Reviewed by Thomas Haviland-Pabst
- Steve Mason. *Orientation to the History of Roman Judaea*. 150
N. T. Wright. *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology*.
Reviewed by Trevor A. Clark
- Andrew W. Pitts. *History, Biography, and the Genre of Luke-Acts: An Exploration of Literary Divergence in Greek Narrative Discourse*. 155
Reviewed by Steve Walton
- Patrick Schreiner. *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe. The First Gospel and Its Portrait of Jesus*. 157
Reviewed by Mark L. Strauss

— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

- Matthew C. Bingham. *Orthodox Radicals: Baptist Identity in the English Revolution*. 160
Reviewed by Jordan L. Steffaniak
- Shaun Blanchard. *The Synod of Pistoia and Vatican II: Jansenism and the Struggle for Catholic Reform*. 162
Reviewed by Thomas Haviland-Pabst
- W. Robert Godfrey. *Saving the Reformation: The Pastoral Theology of the Canons of Dort*. 164
Reviewed by Matthew Payne
- Justo L. González. *A History of Early Christian Literature*. 165
Reviewed by Stephen Lorange

Book Reviews

- Michael A. G. Haykin, Allen R. Mickle, Ian Hugh Clary, and Roy M. Paul, eds. *Once for All Delivered to the Saints: Essays on the History of the Christian Faith in Honor of Gerald L. Priest.* 167
Reviewed by Stephen A. Reynolds
- Thomas S. Kidd. *Who Is an Evangelical? The History of a Movement in Crisis.* 169
Reviewed by Jesse M. Payne
- George M. Marsden. *Religion and American Culture: A Brief History.* 171
Reviewed by Mark Fugitt
- Todd C. Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and Christopher J. Devers, eds. *The State of the Evangelical Mind: Reflections on the Past, Prospects for the Future.* 173
Reviewed by Shawn Varghese
- Ray Rhodes. *Susie: The Life and Legacy of Susannah Spurgeon, Wife of Charles H. Spurgeon.* 174
Reviewed by Amanda Wood Aucoin
- Nigel Scotland. *George Whitefield: The First Transatlantic Revivalist.* 176
Reviewed by Ryan Rindels
- James K. A. Smith. *On the Road with Saint Augustine: A Real-World Spirituality for Restless Hearts.* 177
Reviewed by Zachary A. Howard
- Grant Wacker. *One Soul at a Time: The Story of Billy Graham.* 179
Reviewed by Karin Spiecker Stetina
- SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY —**
- Joel Beeke and Paul M. Smalley. *Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 1: Revelation and God.* 181
Reviewed by Jared S. Poulton
- John M. Frame. *Nature's Case for God: A Brief Biblical Argument.* 182
Reviewed by Cameron Schweitzer
- Adam J. Johnson, ed. *Five Views on the Extent of the Atonement.* 184
Reviewed by Jonathan N. Cleland
- Fleming Rutledge. *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus.* 186
Reviewed by Nathan D. Shannon
- ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —**
- Jason K. Allen. *Letters to My Students: Volume 1, On Preaching.* 188
Reviewed by Simon Manchester
- Kenneth J. Barnes. *Redeeming Capitalism.* 190
Reviewed by John Anderson

James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds. <i>Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views</i> . Reviewed by Martin Davie	193
Lindsay Carlson. <i>Growing in Godliness: A Teen Girl's Guide to Maturing in Christ</i> . Reviewed by Ruth Lukabyo	196
Joshua D. Chatraw and Karen Swallow Prior, eds. <i>Cultural Engagement: A Crash Course in Contemporary Issues</i> . Reviewed by David Robertson	198
Greg Forster. <i>Economics: A Student's Guide</i> . Reviewed by Paul S. Williams	200
John Goldingay. <i>Old Testament Ethics: A Guided Tour</i> . Reviewed by D. Matthew Carver	202
Joel Hollier. <i>A Place at His Table: A Biblical Exploration of Faith, Sexuality, and the Kingdom of God</i> . Reviewed by David Peterson	204
David Horrell. <i>The Making of Christian Morality: Reading Paul in Ancient and Modern Contexts</i> . Reviewed by Andrew J. Spencer	207
Peter A. Lillback. <i>Saint Peter's Principles: Leadership for Those Who Already Know Their Incompetence</i> . Reviewed by Jeremy M. Kimble	209
Mark Yarhouse and Olya Zaporozhets. <i>Costly Obedience: What We Can Learn from the Celibate Gay Christian Community</i> . Reviewed by Jared S. Poulton	210
— MISSION AND CULTURE —	
Stephen M. Davis, <i>Crossing Cultures: Preparing Strangers for Ministry in Strange Places</i> . Reviewed by Rick Kronk	212
John Dickson. <i>Is Jesus History?</i> Reviewed by Peter Kozushko	214
Paul M. Gould. <i>Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World</i> . Reviewed by Jacob Haywood	216
Viateur Habarurema. <i>Christian Generosity According to 2 Corinthians 8–9: Its Exegesis, Reception, and Interpretation Today in Dialogue with the Prosperity Gospel in Sub-Saharan Africa</i> . Reviewed by Steven M. Bryan	217
Irving Hexham. <i>Encountering World Religions: A Christian Introduction</i> . Reviewed by Dallas B. Pitts	219

Book Reviews

- David Joannes. *The Mind of a Missionary: What Global Kingdom Workers Tell Us About Thriving on Mission Today.* 221
Reviewed by Mwana Hadisi
- Mary T. Lederleitner. *Women in God's Mission: Accepting the Invitation to Serve and Lead.* 223
Reviewed by Rochelle Cathcart Scheuermann
- Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele) and Kenneth N. Ngwa, eds. *Navigating African Biblical Hermeneutics: Trends and Themes from Our Pots and Our Calabashes.* 224
Reviewed by Abeneazer G. Urga

— OLD TESTAMENT —

Caroline Blyth and Alison Jack, eds. *The Bible in Crime Fiction and Drama: Murderous Texts*. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 678. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2019. £85.00/\$114.00.

I love crime fiction, my regular escape and, usually, lighter reading. Like others, I sometimes wonder if anyone will be left alive on the planet after so many murders in villages like Midsomer, towns like Oxford, and areas like the south of Sweden.

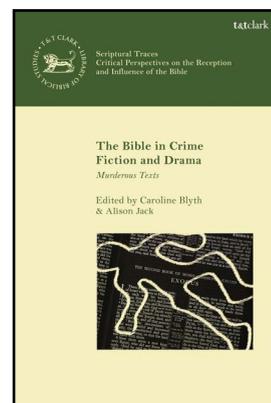
So, the title of this book grabbed me, less so the “drama” but much more the “crime fiction.” I am a reader, rather than a TV watcher, and only an occasional movie-goer. I assumed there would be comment on Dorothy Sayers and P. D. James, given their keenly Christian lives, but other authors were in focus in what is overall an interesting and stimulating collection of essays.

After an introduction by the editors, Matthew Collins reflects on a radio episode of *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* from 1945 entitled “The Book of Tobit” (chapter 2, pp. 9–28). In Tobit, the demon Asmodeus kills a series of Sarah’s husbands on each wedding night; in the Sherlock Holmes story, Holmes knows Tobit but identifies the bride herself as the murderer by “marrying” her himself, and being ready for her attack. Collins then seeks to reread Tobit as crime fiction, noticing that the demon Asmodeus never appears or speaks in Tobit, and is only named by others, and thus suspicion must be cast on Sarah for the death of all the husbands on their wedding nights, possibly under demon possession. This was a stimulating essay, one of the best in the book to my mind, raising interesting interpretative questions on Tobit.

Alison Jack’s essay on Tartan Noir (chapter 3, pp. 29–40), focusing on Peter May’s *Lewis Trilogy*, which I have read, was likewise interesting for picking out the biblical and Christian themes and allusions. Not least, themes of the sins of the fathers and vengeance, and the bleak and rather judgmental austerity of the church and its minister, which are significant in these books. The death of one character in saving another, and being like a “parody of Christ on the cross” (p. 33) on the rocks on which he fell, is typical of a range of biblical allusions. Jack also expounds the theme of “presence” in *The Chessmen*, with reference to Psalm 23 at a funeral and a sense of divine, or other, presence in the novel and events (pp. 38–39). This was another standout essay in the collection.

Caroline Blyth’s chapter dealt with one of my favorite writers, Henning Mankell, the late Swedish author, a man of great personal compassion. His novel, *Before the Frost*, is analyzed where awful murders gradually appear to have religious connections. The detective, Wallander, fails at first to notice these and does not even identify a Bible, reflecting the biblical illiteracy of modern Sweden (p. 47). While the savage and violent crimes are religiously motivated, Mankell “is at pains to remind us that religious and biblical violence is not part of mainstream contemporary faith; rather it is a sign of faith gone wrong” (p. 56).

C. J. Sansom’s immensely popular crime series set in Tudor England, with an explicit religious background in the tussle of the English Reformation, are discussed by Susanne Bray, arguing that Sansom is making a strong point against the religious fanaticism of current times (p. 70). Ben Bixler (pp. 59–93) addresses male antiheroes in the Book of Judges evidenced in television series such as *The Sopranos* and



Breaking Bad. I found the attempt to view *Breaking Bad* alongside Samson less than compelling as there do not appear to be direct links from the TV series.

James Oleson discusses the film *Se7en*, in which seven murders are each expressions of the seven deadly sins. Yael Klangwisan reads *The Man Who Died*, by Finnish author Antti Tuomainen, alongside the Book of Job. However, his key comparison and conclusion fails badly in my eyes. Klangwisan's point is that Job and the character Jaalko both come face to face with death. But he overlooks that for Job, his key encounter is with God, not death.

Dan Clanton looks at TV sexual violence alongside Hosea 1–2 and Ezekiel 16 (pp. 126–48). His concluding sentence is that in our current times of so much violence and the #MeToo movement, we need to grapple with sexual violence texts in the Bible and “hear the voiceless victims within these texts so our ‘Divine Unsub’ (God) and the sexually violent actions he perpetrates will not be “unknown” any longer” (p. 145).

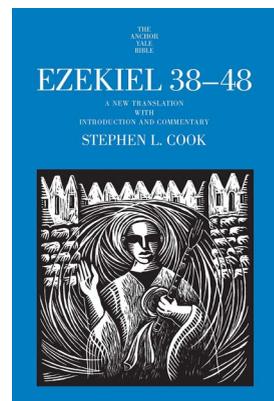
The final two chapters address Agatha Christie. Hannah Strommen argues that Poirot is a bourgeois prophet, picking up language of “calling” (pp. 153–4), forthtelling, and foretelling (p. 153) and drawing various Old Testament parallels. Finally, J. C. Bernthal looks at the hermeneutics of Agatha Christie's later novels, arguing that after World War Two, her novels were less light-hearted and more exploratory of human nature in an uncertain age. Her detectives were less “saviour” figures and less authoritative in these later novels and indeed there was more moral ambiguity (p. 168). Both these essays were intriguing and stimulating.

Like any collection of essays, this book is a mixed bag. Our own interests will, of course, determine which essays appeal to us. I imagine there is something for most crime fiction aficionados in this book.

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Stephen L. Cook. *Ezekiel 38–48: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Yale Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018. xxii + 338 pp. £50.00/\$65.00.

When I began my study of the Book of Ezekiel back in 1989, good commentaries on Ezekiel were thin on the ground—particularly those that took the theological dimensions of the text seriously. An essential companion in my early work was Moshe Greenberg's Anchor Bible volume, covering *Ezekiel 1–20*, written in 1983. That was later supplemented with *Ezekiel 21–37*, completed in 1997. Sadly, Greenberg did not live to complete a third volume, on *Ezekiel 38–48*; that task has been passed on to the capable hands of Stephen Cook, a regular presenter at the SBL Theology of Ezekiel group and professor of Old Testament at Virginia Theological Seminary. In the intervening time, the study of Ezekiel has exploded and the materials to be assimilated are vast, but there are few people in the world as familiar with this field of scholarship as Dr. Cook.



One of the attractions of Greenberg's early work for me as an evangelical was his conservative conclusions about the history of the text. Greenberg wrote: “the persuasion grows on one [as one reads the book] ... that a coherent world of vision is emerging, contemporary with the sixth-century prophet

and decisively shaped by him, if not the very words of Ezekiel himself” (*Ezekiel 1–20*, AB [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], 27). Cook is not quite so conservative as that: indeed, he believes that these chapters may in some parts have a complex redactional history. However, like Greenberg, he starts with the received canonical form of the book (p. xi) and insists on a substantive core of material dating from the exilic period (at least prior to the completion of the temple in 515 BC). Here and there, he will allude to material he thinks is secondary but for the most part his primary focus is, as promised, on the canonical text as a theological document.

But what kind of theological document is Ezekiel 38–48? Often in evangelical circles it has been treated rather flatly as future history (38–39) along with the blueprint for a future millennial temple in Jerusalem (40–48; in spite of the fact that Ezekiel unequivocally locates it much further north!). Or, alternatively, the vision has simply been ignored: Ezekiel as a priest may have been fascinated by temples, but most modern readers are not. Cook argues, rightly, that chapters 38–39 are proto-apocalyptic and belong together with the utopian vision of chapters 40–48 as a literary piece with a message to its original exilic and post-exilic audience. Here, he is able to draw on the extensive research that has been completed over the past thirty years, exploring the form and function of the temple design and its relationship to the rest of the prophecy, including a variety of diagrams and 3-D reconstructions. Cook ably demonstrates its function as an imaginative world that allows for the critique of the past and an affirmation that things in the future will be different. Seemingly insignificant details now pop into focus as part of that larger project of rebuilding the world destroyed by the Babylonian conquest on a new and better footing.

In any work of this complexity there will be quibbles. I think Cook is mistaken in his view that Ezekiel 44:6–8 is in inner-biblical dialogue (i.e., conflict) with Isaiah 56 (p. 208). He focuses on the similar terminology used for foreigners in both passages (בְּנֵי־נֹכַר), without noticing the substantive and different qualifiers attached in both passages. The “foreigners” (בְּנֵי־נֹכַר) who are excluded in Ezekiel are “uncircumcised in heart and flesh” (44:7, 9), while the “foreigner” (בֶּן־נֹכַר) who is welcomed in Isaiah is specifically one who has “joined himself to the Lord” (56:3). So, it is not as if Ezekiel has hung a “No entry” sign on Isaiah’s house of prayer for all nations; they are addressing entirely different groups of people. I also have mixed feelings about 3-D reconstructions of what is, as Cook notes, originally a deliberately “flat” ground plan. He says, rightly, “Ezekiel is less interested in visualizing buildings and structures than in the effort to control social space” (p. 7). Given that, there is a danger that 3-D reconstructions may confuse as much as they clarify, by placing the focus back on visualizing buildings and structures, and away from where Ezekiel intended it.

Overall, however, this is a masterful addition to the ever-growing stack of resources for understanding the prophet Ezekiel, and a worthy successor to Greenberg’s earlier work. It is a volume that no serious scholar can afford to be without.

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Antonios Finitis, ed. *Dress and Clothing in the Hebrew Bible: "For All Her Household Are Clothed in Crimson."* Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 679. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2019. xvi + 191 pp. £85.00/\$114.00.

What we wear makes a statement about who we are. In the ancient world particularly, one's dress served to mark status, character, role and emotional state. It is strange, then, that when the Bible tells us how people are clothed and adorned, so little attention has been paid to this aspect of Scripture. This book by a team of scholars from a research group of the Pacific Northwest regional meeting of the SBL makes a helpful contribution to address this lack.

Scholarly books of collected essays on a theme are often a disparate aggregation of vaguely related topics. Not so this volume edited by Antonios Finitis. The contributors workshoped their thinking over a three-year period before honing their contributions, which results in a more coherent corpus, with frequent interactions with one another's chapters.

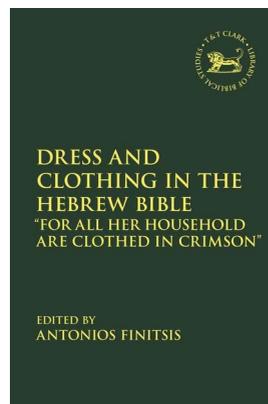
As several contributors observe, Hebrew narrative, unlike say a Jane Austen novel, is short on descriptions of appearance. Where we have indications of how the characters are clothed, and particularly when they effect costume changes, these are not mere padding but are integral to the depiction of character or plot development.

Finitis introduces the volume with the customary digest of the ensuing chapters and outlines the processing and significance of the crimson dye of the book's subtitle. Following this, the book is bracketed by chapters on the rare mentions of divine clothing imagery. With a helpful discussion of Hebrew clothing vocabulary generally, Shawn Flynn writes on God's flowing robes as envisioned in the temple scene of Isaiah 6, and God's majestic radiance in the kingship psalms (ch. 1). A careful correlation of textual references in Mesopotamia and iconographic depictions results in a rich wardrobe against which to set these accounts of YHWH's divine splendor. Ehud Ben Zvi's concluding chapter wrestles with why, when anthropomorphic language of God abounds, there is so little said about his attire (ch. 8).

Carmen Imes writes on the character and function of the priestly regalia (ch. 2). This is the one area that has previously been explored in some detail, though in part by those who are inclined to over-read the symbolism.

Joshua Spoelstra discusses the accessories (rosettes, tassels) to Israelite clothing (ch. 3). While there is a wealth of comparative material and insights here, I remained unconvinced that their function is to be seen as apotropaic.

Sara Koenig presents a close reading of the two Hebrew Bible narratives where a woman by the name of Tamar is central, Genesis 38 and 2 Samuel 13 (ch. 4). While both of these passages have been well worked over, Koenig brings them into relation with each other in fresh ways. There is a focus on the role clothing plays in the characterization and plot development of each story. In each case, Tamar's clothing, and what is done to it, highlights the injustices perpetrated against her. The changes in the women's dress communicate their protests against their mistreatment and are designed to effect a sort of "liberation" (though I wonder about the appropriateness of this word for the 2 Samuel Tamar). Koenig's treatment is generally insightful and gives particular attention to how each narrative fits in its wider context.



Sean Cook notes the apparently disproportionate judgment on Israel's first king, Saul, and proceeds to show how the writer of 1 Samuel uses descriptions of Saul's clothing and armor to "Other" him; that is, to depict him as more like one of Israel's enemies, a Philistine, rather than an Israelite (ch. 5).

Ian Wilson compares the two accounts (2 Sam 6; 1 Chron 15) of David's dancing before the ark, with their differing descriptions of his attire (ch. 6). Wilson draws on the ANE background on the king's relation to the cult and what was considered appropriate regal attire for ceremonial state occasions. Recent developments in cognitive psychology (how we foster forgetting) are invoked as a rationale for the Chronicles account—to downplay the fact that Michal, Saul's daughter and David's wife, may have been correct in her assessment of David's behavior, while still being critical of her. While this is a helpful comparison, one wonders if Wilson has sufficiently considered the possibility that the writer of Samuel, in his description of David's humbling/humiliating himself before YHWH, is critiquing ANE perspectives and suggesting where true honor lies. Wilson is right, however, to draw attention to the ambiguities of the narrative and, in particular, the cause of Michal's barrenness.

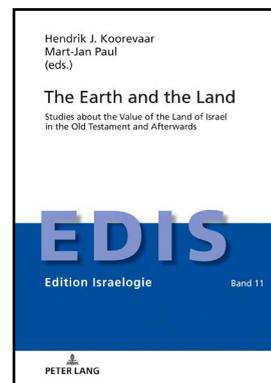
I found particularly rich the discussion by Scott Starbuck of the Isaianic metaphor of reclothing in a "robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10; ch. 7). This represented a democratization of royal and priestly garb for the remnant of Yehud after the exile. Though the vocabulary is different, a comparison with the similar reclothing of the high priest in Zechariah 3, also marking a change of status for the returned community, would have been instructive.

There is much more that could have been explored. I had hoped for an account of the garments and accessories of the wealthy women of Jerusalem in Isaiah 3. But, as the editor says, the book does not aim to be comprehensive. It is to be hoped that this exploration prompts further peeks inside the wardrobes of ancient Israel.

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Hendrik J. Koorevaar and Mart-Jan Paul, eds. *The Earth and the Land: Studies about the Value of the Land of Israel in the Old Testament and Afterwards*. Edition Israelogic 11. Berlin: Lang, 2018. 405 pp. £39.05/\$50.95.

Debates concerning land possession in the Middle East draw upon the theological and biblical as much as the political and economic. For Jews and Christians alike, the texts of the Old Testament provide crucial data. Recognizing the very real tensions that exist in relation to Canaan/Palestine, the editors—Hendrik J. Koorevaar (Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven) and Mart-Jan Paul (Christelijke Hogeschool, Ede)—bring together contributions from twelve European scholars to determine what can, and cannot, be asserted about land from an Old Testament perspective, and how that textual heritage has been appropriated in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theology. At the same time, the volume aims to be descriptive rather than prescriptive (p. 12). The driving concern is, "What is God's purpose with the special location of Eden and of the land of Canaan for the rest of the earth and the people that live there?" (p. 15).



The bulk of *The Earth and the Land* consists of nine chapters which successively analyze the Old Testament material (pp. 25–273). Five chapters by Hendrik Koorevaar, Raymond R. Hausoul, Mart-Jan Paul, Siegbert Riecker, and Herbert H. Klement chart the language of “land/earth/place” in the Torah and Former Prophets. An essay by Hetty Lalleman considers data from the Latter Prophets. A further three chapters explore the Psalms (Julius Steinberg), wisdom literature (W. Creighton Marlowe), and the land in the time of the exile (Geert W. Lorein).

The following section then explores how these Old Testament perspectives have been adopted and modified by the three monotheistic religions that maintain a claim on the land of Canaan/Palestine.

Boris Paschke surveys the New Testament material. The key issue here is determining to what degree land remains valued, if at all. Are territorial promises to Israel spiritualized by early Christian texts? Or are they universalized? Paschke argues that the topic of “land” must be examined in conjunction with other significant spatial locales, specifically “Jerusalem” and “temple” (p. 279). By doing so, Paschke critiques simplistic iterations of so-called “replacement theology” in which the church replaces Israel and its institutions *in toto*. He draws attention to John 2, where Jesus even though speaking of his body as temple, still cleansed the temple building, testifying to its (albeit relativized) value (p. 284). Moreover, Paschke finds New Testament texts that ascribe considerable importance to the land (pp. 288–98). He concludes that “one should not spiritualize the land of Israel and the city and temple of Jerusalem too hastily” (p. 299).

The next chapter, by Heiko Wenzel, investigates perspectives on land found in Islamic sources. The goal of the essay is to guide readers in their understanding of Islamic assumptions and arguments with respect to place. Essential ideas include Allah’s universal claim of ownership over all lands and, importantly, the eventual transfer of those lands to the Muslim community (pp. 312–17). The impact of these theological assertions on Islamic thought is teased out with respect to the significance of Jerusalem (pp. 323–28) and the *Hamas* Charter (pp. 328–33). Intriguing, to this reviewer at least, is how much influence Islamic eschatology exerts on the discussion. Accordingly, Wenzel suggests Christians must realize the inherently different perspective that Islam has concerning history. There is a distinct chronology in play. Thus, regarding Canaan/Palestine, “once Islamic territory, always Islamic territory.... It can never be surrendered to non-Muslims” (p. 335).

In the section’s final chapter, Kees de Vreugd considers the modern State of Israel. The history of Zionism is charted (pp. 345–50) as a precursor for exploring various facets of *Christian Zionism* (pp. 354–63). De Vreugd is careful to separate Christian Zionism from dispensationalism, rightly noting that the two are not synonymous (p. 355). Here, the provenance of the volume comes to the fore as specifically *European*, theologically motivated support for Israel is investigated, nuancing what is frequently (and reductionistically) assumed to be a North American position. Indeed, de Vreugd argues from his Dutch perspective for the necessity of a Jewish state in God’s eschatological plans (pp. 370–71).

A summary chapter by Koorevaar and Paul draws together the essential findings of the volume. They conclude, based on the texts surveyed, that Israel is not entitled to the land, at least not yet: “Israel by means of the Zionist state has taken the land through usurpation because the rupture of the covenant is still working. There is, however, the perspective, that this usurpation will be changed into rightful ownership with the coming of the Anointed One in splendor, when Israel repents, in whole” (p. 398).

The Earth and the Land bears the marks of being a translated volume: not all chapters read as smoothly in English as others. Nevertheless, the book accomplishes its goal: a thorough survey of the key biblical material related to land. The volume thus admirably serves anyone wishing to track the

importance of place, and especially Canaan/Palestine, across the canon. At the same time, the chapters by Paschke, Wenzel, and de Vreugd tellingly expose the hermeneutical forces that steer contemporary perspectives on the land to different outcomes. These chapters amply demonstrate that what one does with the data is as important as the data themselves. If nothing else, this realization ought to chasten over-zealous attitudes to land that claim more than is warranted. Profitable things may be said, but epistemological humility is crucial.

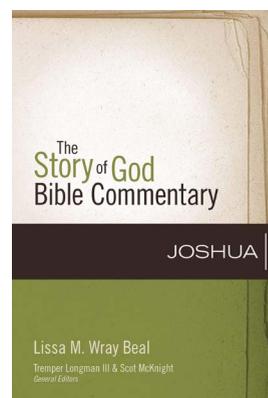
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Lissa M. Wray Beal. *Joshua*. The Story of God Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 454 pp. £35.00/\$39.99.

Writing a commentary on Joshua presents a daunting challenge for the interpreter, and especially so when it is written for evangelical lay and clergy readers. Joshua raises vexing questions of history and ethics that press hard on conservative sensibilities. Salient among these are the assessment of Joshua as a historical resource for Israel's origins in Canaan and the ethical challenge of the divinely-ordered massacres related in the first half of the book. Interacting with current scholarship on Israel's origins and with ethical critiques of divine violence, in short, has the potential to unsettle readers who may be unfamiliar with the complex issues the book raises.

Lissa Wray Beal knows her readership well and has written a commentary that succeeds exceptionally in helping readers grapple with Joshua's historical and ethical challenges, while providing an insightful reading of the text and thoughtful reflections on how the text may be lived out by the contemporary church. The volume's introduction offers a particularly lucid overview of what Wray Beal acknowledges as the "real interpretative challenges" Joshua sets before its interpreters (p. 20). Of particular note are her discussions of the book's relationship to history, the problematic issue of warfare, and the narrative's exploration of Israelite identity. On the topic of history, Wray Beal affirms that Joshua recounts actual events but reminds readers that Joshua's theologically-rendered account of the past, when read within its cultural milieu, differs considerably from the dictates of modern historiography (pp. 26–30). The contentious issue of divine violence is addressed by a canonical exploration of the motif of the Divine Warrior, which frames the problem within the context of God's relentless battle with destructive spiritual realities (pp. 35–39). Finally, Wray Beal explains how the narrative establishes an insider/outsider scheme that presents Israel as a community defined by covenant faithfulness (pp. 44–47), echoing a prominent argument in this reviewer's early work.

Wray Beal explores these and other aspects of Joshua more fully in the body of the commentary. Following the series format, she guides readers through each section along three different lines. "Listen to the Story" presents biblical and contextual background material relevant to the text. "Explain the Story" then offers accessible exposition of the text in its historical context. "Live the Story" concludes the comments on the passage with reflections on the meaning of the text in the light of the New Testament and its significance for contemporary Christians. Wray Beal returns repeatedly to the themes of theology-as-history, violence, and identity (as does Joshua itself) repeatedly throughout the volume, by



introducing relevant ancient Near Eastern texts, undertaking keen and lucid close readings of the text, and offering incisive expositions on the book's contemporary relevance. Each reiteration of a theme allows Wray Beal to explore it from a new perspective. Thus, over the course of the book, the reader is introduced to the complexity of Joshua's treatment of these and other topics and receives a wealth of resources for thinking about them.

The two sections on the campaign at Ai (7:1–16 and 8:1–29) are illustrative. Wray Beal introduces Achan's story by asserting that it raises the question of what makes one an Israelite and then reads the story accordingly. Reflections on the story's relevance comprise a discussion of the corporate character of sin and punishment (pp. 160–62), set in New Testament relief by the stories of Ananias and Sapphira and Paul's discussion of unworthy approach to the Lord's Table (pp. 167–69). Additional expositions on the Divine Warrior and on the redemption of sin follow. Her analysis of battle narrative against Ai includes diagrams and charts that illumine the narrator's rhetorical flair, followed by a discourse on divine anger and an account of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, cast as an example of the importance of remembering the past (pp. 190–92).

As a whole, Wray Beal's reflections on the contemporary relevance of Joshua follow conventional evangelical talking points, which means that other ways of living the story are not addressed. There is no exploration, for example, of how Joshua might speak to resurgent nationalism, ethnic strife, religiously justified violence, or the residue of Euro-American colonialism. The silence on these and related topics is disappointing, as it signals that contentious social issues are *not* significant for Christian faith and mission, reinforcing the idea that the Bible has little or nothing to say about such things and intimating that readers need not interrogate their assumptions on such matters.

To recognize why this omission diminishes Joshua's revelatory power, consider Wray Beal's proposal that the peoples of Canaan might have been spared if they had followed the example of Rahab and the Gibeonites and confessed Israel's God. The suggestion glosses the moral problem of Israelite conquest by effectively blaming the indigenous victims, implying that, had the peoples of Canaan not resisted the invaders, they might also have been allowed to survive "outside the camp" or as menial laborers for the conquerors. This thinking comes uncomfortably close to the logic of the *Requerimiento*, the Spanish conquistadors' proclamation that indigenous peoples recognize the supremacy of the Spanish monarch and submit to the Church and which, when ignored or rejected, provided the warrant for the massacre and subjugation of the population. Viewed from this perspective, the proposal may hint at a strain of colonial thinking that lurks beneath the collective unconscious, which Joshua might unmask and address if approached with different kinds of questions.

To be sure, Wray Beal's insightful explication of the text, along with her cogent reflections on Joshua's significance, distinguish this volume as one of the best in the series. I am left to ponder, nonetheless, whether application-oriented series best serve readers by confining conversations on relevance to variations on familiar themes, while ignoring the ways Scripture might speak to insistent socio-political subjects. If the Bible is to speak significantly to a culture in flux, both commentators and readers may have to move out of their hermeneutical comfort zones.

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

R. B. Jamieson. *Jesus' Death and Heavenly Offering in Hebrews*. Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series 172. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xi + 227 pp. £75.00/\$105.00.

R. B. Jamieson, associate pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington DC, offers us a penetrating look at Christ's work in the book of Hebrews with this "very light revision" of his Cambridge PhD thesis (p. ix).

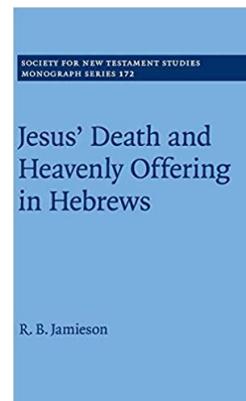
Jamieson divides the book into two parts. The first section is an attempt to answer what he describes as a formal question: "when and where does Jesus offer himself?" (p. 1). His answer is that "Jesus offers himself to God in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle in heaven, after his bodily resurrection and ascension." The second section is an attempt to answer a "twofold material" question, namely, "What role does Jesus' death play in Hebrews' soteriology as a whole, and specifically within Jesus' high-priestly self-offering?" (p. 1). Put simply, the author's answer to this material question is this: "what Jesus' death achieved is in fact what he gives to God in heaven" (p. 2).

As one might expect with a monograph on Hebrews, Jamieson is building on the ground-breaking work of David Moffitt's 2011 monograph entitled *Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill). Yet, he is careful to clarify that he is not merely responding to Moffitt's exposition; rather, Jamieson engages "directly with the full range of scholarship" on the aforementioned formal question (p. 2). In addition, while advocating for Christ's "heavenly self-offering," he sets himself apart from advocates of the same by providing "an account of the relationship between Jesus' death and heavenly offering" (p. 3).

The introduction offers a five-view taxonomy of the formal question, with the first view that Jesus's self-offering takes place at the crucifixion and the fifth view that "Jesus offers himself in the heavenly sanctuary, after his resurrection" forming the two ends of the interpretive spectrum (p. 11). For advocates of the fifth view, such as Jamieson, "the need to reassess Jesus' death in light of his heavenly offering" becomes obvious given the assertion by some of its advocates that "Jesus' death is not atoning" (p. 15). This then is the burden of part 2 of his monograph.

Some highlights will suffice to illustrate the main contours of Jamieson's argument. Drawing on Hebrews 2:10–14, 17; 5:5–10; and 7:28, he argues that these passages teach that Jesus's perfection follows after his earthly suffering and death. This perfection, in context, occurred at his resurrection (cf. 7:16, 23–25; 8:4). Taking these together, he asserts that Christ's perfection is the prerequisite for his high priestly appointment.

Building on this, Jamieson walks the reader through Hebrews 9:24–25; 8:1–5; and 9:11–14; he treats these passages in light of the author's interpretation of Yom Kippur (Lev 16), an interpretation that Jamieson argues "is employing the logic of the whole rite" (p. 47). These three passages of Hebrews, together with Leviticus 16, teach that Christ offered himself in the heavenly sanctuary typified by the Holy of Holies of the earthly sanctuary. Since Christ's resurrection, which made perfect his suffering and death, is the basis for his high priestly appointment and Christ's offering of himself takes place in heaven, then it follows that the timing of Christ's appointment as high priest *in order to make this*



offering was coincident with his exaltation and could not have occurred before, according to Jamieson's reading of Hebrews.

Moving to the material question (i.e., the role of Christ's death), Jamieson recognizes that an overreliance on the "Levitical framework" (p. 98) of Hebrews has caused some interpreters to deny that Christ's death effects atonement. Giving attention to three passage—Hebrews 2:9, 2:14–15; and 9:15–17—while employing plight and solution as a heuristic device, he argues that Hebrews employs "other conceptual resources" to expound Christ's death. Thus, for example, Hebrews 2:9 teaches that "by dying Jesus averts death" (p. 109) and Hebrews 2:14–15 teaches that "by dying on the cross, Christ achieved the decisive eschatological victory over Satan" (p. 114).

Chapter 5 explores three connections as the author focuses on the material question as it relates to "Hebrews' Christological appropriation of the Levitical cult" (p. 127), namely (1) death and blood, (2) blood and offering, and (3) death and offering. After working through these connections, especially noting the close connection between death and blood seen in the allusion to Leviticus 17:11 in Hebrews 9:22b and 13:20, he writes, "Jesus' death on the cross is not where and when he offers himself, but it is what he offers.... He gives to God the life he gave in death for his people's forgiveness" (p. 178). As a consequence, while Jamieson agrees with view five of the taxonomy noted above with regard to the when and where of Christ's offering, he agrees in large part with view one as understands "blood" to be "a metonym for Christ's death" (p. 178). In sum, Christ as high priest offers himself as the substitutionary sacrifice "to God in heaven" (p. 182).

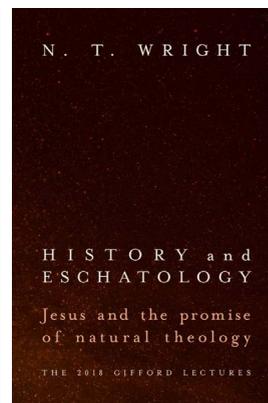
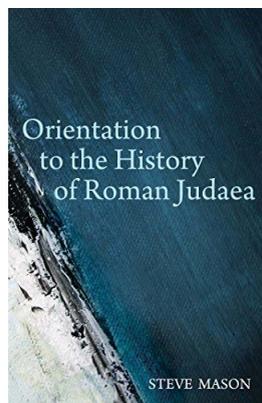
This is a superb and indeed invaluable contribution to scholarship in the book of Hebrews. Jamieson's detailed exegesis of Hebrews and its OT backgrounds offers a compelling account of Christ's work in the epistle and as such ought to be consulted by the student who wishes to have a clear grasp of Christ's death and priestly work, the pastor interested in teaching the same, and the scholar doing work in Hebrews or NT theology more broadly. This monograph is highly recommended.

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Steve Mason. *Orientation to the History of Roman Judaea*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016. 324 pp. £30.00/\$38.00.

N. T. Wright. *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019. 365 pp. £19.99/\$34.95.

Two recent works related to New Testament history will help students and scholars of the New Testament to clarify their task and to understand its significance. Steve Mason's *Orientation to the History of Roman Judaea* grew out of a larger project, *A History of the Jewish War, A.D. 66 to 74* (Cambridge: CUP, 2016). That book was too large to include Mason's notes of (self-)criticism aimed at clarifying the historian's task, so *Orientation* repurposes that material, restructuring it around two questions: "What does it mean to do the history of Roman Judaea? And how can we orient ourselves to ancient ways of mapping peoples and places?" (p. x). This pair of questions corresponds to the book's two parts. This work is intended to help students by taking up "matters that I sometimes wish had been raised more explicitly during my academic formation" (p. ix).



In chapter 1, Mason looks to Herodotus and Thucydides for an understanding of history as critical inquiry, not to be confused with tradition, religion, or education—it is to these latter categories that people refer when appealing to “the lessons of history” (pp. 12–18; cf. 36). Nor should history be equated with the events and facts that make up the past; rather, history is the disciplined attempt to answer our questions about the past using the evidence that has survived into the present. According to Mason, “Indeed, the most important—the only indispensable—part of history is the framing and pursuit of questions” (p. 275).

Scholars ask different questions of the past, using different methodologies for arriving at their answers. Such disagreements comprise chapter 2, in which Mason delineates social-scientific and humanist approaches to history. Whereas the former treats “society” as an entity, looking for and applying causal laws and tending toward determinism, the latter focuses on individuals and on unique and unrepeatable events, and places value on human agency and free will. Both approaches are necessary (p. 276) and properly historical (that is, “open-ended and problem-driven,” p. 14), but the author’s approach throughout the book is solidly humanistic, emphasizing “the thoughts behind the actions we are investigating” (p. 81).

Mason’s approach is shaped in part by factors unique to the study of ancient Judaea, factors which he considers in chapter 3. He notes five peculiarities: “(1) the unique prestige of archaeology; (2) the extraordinary importance placed on one literary source—Josephus; (3) certain conceptual and terminological idiosyncrasies, deriving partly from the influence of biblical studies; (4) a marked tendency to form polemical camps; (5) the field’s uniquely broad constituency at both professional and popular levels” (p. 58).

Chapter 4 returns to “the centrality of the question” (p. 74). Because historical inquiry necessarily begins with ignorance, it is no great travesty if it also ends in ignorance. Mason eschews a sense of obligation and entitlement that leads historians to believe something without adequate evidence. In a footnote he asks, “Why must we make a choice and not admit *that we do not know?*” (p. 74 n. 26). Those answers which the historian does give are rooted in probability and not certainty, and “dissertation-writers in particular should be wary of building a case that depends on a number of merely possible interpretations of evidence (p. 77). Because our evidence provides an inadequate foundation for frequentist or Bayesian probabilities, historians must operate within comprehensive comparative frameworks if their assertions of probability are to carry meaning.

Although historians are justified in asking whatever question they choose about the ancient world, they must interpret the evidence with an awareness that the ancients would not have asked the same questions or held to the same interpretive categories (pp. 61, 77). Thus, in part 2, Mason attempts to recover “the Classical paradigm” (chs. 5a and 5b), describes why that paradigm has shifted (ch. 6), and gives map-making as an example of the differences between ancient and modern ways of viewing the world and its peoples (ch. 8).

Within chapters 5a and 5b, Mason analyzes four categories of belonging or identity that dominated ancients’ descriptions of themselves and others: “[1] *ethnos*-belonging and all that goes with it (place, customs, laws, way of life, cult), [2] *polis*-belonging and its correlatives (territory, calendar, festivals, constitution, citizenship, leadership, cult), [3] bloody sacrificial cult (with temples, altars, priests, attendants, rituals, sacred and profane, polluted and consecrated), whether given by the *ethnos* and *polis* or voluntarily chosen, and [4] voluntary associations in the *poleis*, including philosophical schools” (p. 277). Grasping these categories will help students to understand the function of ancient colonies, the balance of friction and coexistence of ancient peoples and their customs, and the focus of particular conflicts within and between cities. If students could approach ancient texts with these categories in mind, they may better discern the motivations of their objects of study. Here, Mason also raises the unavoidable necessity of learning ancient languages, especially becoming familiar with the shared discourse embodied in the LXX.

Chapter 6 deals with “The end of the Classical paradigm,” assigning its demise to the ascendancy of Christianity in the fourth century A.D. Within the Classical paradigm, Christians were anomalous, a multi-ethnic people without any city. Furthermore, with respect to Jews/Judeans, the Christians would gain an advantage if “Judaism” could be turned into a religion and compared (unfavorably) with Christianity. In support of Mason’s thesis, we might draw attention to the New Testament’s vision of a heavenly city in Galatians, Hebrews, and Revelation—perhaps attempts to give the early Christians a city of their own. On the other hand, we might suggest that the Classical paradigm continued in some form beyond the third and fourth centuries—the rise of the papacy in Rome seems to indicate continuing regard for *polis*.

The final chapter is a striking revelation of the differences between ancient and modern understandings of the world, using the concept of geography and the practice of map-making. Mason discusses the paucity of ancient maps and relates how the ancients conceived of distances and boundaries for the purposes of science, general interest, travel, and war. When investigations of Roman Judaea are bound by modern maps, they may impose a foreign paradigm (governed by ideas of nations and politics) on ancient texts; such studies may miss the texture of interwoven and competing values and allegiances which were part of the Classical world and which shaped human motivations.

Mason's work succeeds in bringing both clarity and charity to the discussion of history: clarity, because of the attention given to the framing of questions and the evaluation of answers based on correctly interpreting the evidence; and charity, for as scholars come to understand the different questions asked by their peers, who inhabit different disciplines and adhere to different convictions, they might better appreciate both those questions and the people who ask them.

N. T. Wright makes use of Mason's work in his own *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology*, a volume based on his 2018 Gifford Lectures. Wright does not give simple answers to the questions of natural theology, "whether the *action* of God *in* the world or the *inference* of God *from* the world" (p. 63, emphasis original); rather, he challenges the worldview in which those questions have obtained their meaning, and he proposes a new form of knowledge, an epistemology of love. Central to Wright's task is the historical study of biblical theology and Jesus himself.

Wright begins by documenting the revival and rise of Epicureanism in the West in the 18th and 19th centuries (chapter 1). The defining feature of this worldview is the split between "natural" and "supernatural." Critics conceived of a world without God—of politics, economics, science, history, and "progress." Ironically, the task of natural theology, though designed to meet these challenges, was itself shaped by cosmological and ontological dualism, expressed in the distinction between "special" and "general" revelation. Jesus was excluded from natural theology as belonging to the former, and theologians began to speak of God apart from the world—a "perfect being" to complement Christian retrievals of Plato.

Wright next shows the effects of Epicureanism on the quest for the historical Jesus (chapter 2). Scholars were bound to misunderstand Jesus, not least the eschatological character of his ministry: "As one would expect within an Epicureanism which assumed the radical incompatibility of heaven and earth, for heaven's kingdom to arrive the earth would have to disappear" (p. 52). From the perspective of natural theology, Jesus could be set aside as simply mistaken. For others, including Bultmann, natural theology would be set aside and Jesus's words appropriated with an existential, gnostic twist. As such, the intellectual climate that shaped both natural theology and historical Jesus studies served to keep these two disciplines from dialogue.

In chapter 3, Wright posits "history" (as events, narration, task, and meaning) as a way toward rapprochement, although first history itself must be rescued from the Epicurean dualism expressed in Lessing's "broad, ugly ditch" and perpetuated through several loaded definitions of "historicism." Wright redefines the historian's task as an exercise in "critical realism" (p. 190) necessitating "an epistemology of love" (pp. 77, 95–99). Only love avoids the risk of "making the past in one's own image" (p. 103). Thus, history offers hope for those engaged in natural theology (since history, including the study of Jesus in history, involves the study of the real world), and it also exposes the main fault of Epicureanism—its antipathy toward love (pp. 37–39).

With these historical aims, Wright moves in chapter 4 to examine the apocalypticism and eschatology of Jesus and the early Christians. "Eschatology" refers not to the imminent end of the world, nor to an inexorable progression of events, or an invasion from above, or an internal/existential experience, or to something already fully realized, but rather to the "quite widespread Jewish view of 'two ages'" (p. 131) and to the belief that through Jesus's death and resurrection "'the age to come' *has already been inaugurated*" (p. 132, emphasis original). Similarly, "apocalyptic," in line with the genre of texts that bears that name, does not denote God's bringing creation to an end, but rather his work within the world to upset socio-political realities in a manner infused with cosmic and covenantal significance.

Wright's rigorous discussion of texts (e.g., Mark 9:1; 13:30, Rom 1:3–4; 8:18–25; 1 Cor 15) convincingly demonstrates that the concept of an inaugurated kingdom is not a "modern apologetic invention" (p. 139), but was the conviction of the earliest Christians, expressed in the language of the Psalms and the Prophets.

Wright begins his positive contribution to the questions of natural theology in chapter 5, through a recovery of the Jewish worldview as an alternative to the Epicurean. The discussion concentrates on three topics—temple, Sabbath, and the divine image. The temple represents a Jewish cosmology in which heaven and earth are in fact "overlapped and interlocked" (p. 166). Similarly, the Sabbath unites past, present, and future—"the Age to Come inserting itself into the rhythms and sequences of present time" (p. 166). Alongside temple-cosmology and Sabbath-eschatology stands the royal anthropology of image-bearing, the vocation "in which humans, particularly the king, reflect God into the world" (p. 178). Within this framework, Jesus's controversies within the Gospel narratives take on a new significance, and so does the task of natural theology: inherent in the human vocation and enabled by the Jewish view of space is "the summons to glimpse the new creation *and, on that basis, to discern and respond to the meaning in the old*" through a hermeneutic of love (p. 174, emphasis original).

Chapter 6 constitutes Wright's most thorough explanation of the epistemology of love, grounded in Jesus's resurrection. Drawing on categories laid out at the end of chapter 3, Wright defeats the defeaters, dismantles the distortions, and directs the discussion regarding the resurrection—"all the signs are that the first disciples really did believe that Jesus was bodily alive again ... and that easily the best explanation for this is that they were right" (p. 197). Yet, the goal of this chapter is not to prove that the resurrection occurred, but rather to explore the new mode of knowing that the resurrection necessitates—love. Playing on Wittgenstein's "it is love that believes the resurrection," Wright argues the statement is true for the historian who recognizes within the resurrection God's own love for and affirmation of the world, and who must answer that love in turn. Far from subjectivism or positivism, this epistemology involves the whole person and indeed whole communities. Perhaps the reason why the resurrection seems incredulous to us modern Westerners is that our culture has "*screened out 'love' itself*" (p. 211, emphasis original).

How might an epistemology of love attempt to glean wisdom about God from the world around us? In chapter 7, Wright addresses the riddle of natural theology directly. The alternative worldview of Jewish cosmology, eschatology, and anthropology bears some analogy to the traditional arguments of natural theology—the cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments. For Wright, the latter is the most promising, though the traditional questions, shaped by the Epicurean framework, have reduced the human vocation to ethics. A more complete understanding of human image-bearing reveals seven "vocational signposts" promising knowledge of God: justice, beauty, freedom, truth, power, spirituality, and relationships (pp. 224–34). But these are broken signposts, marked by disappointment, weakness, and failure—"all of them together will not lead the unaided mind to the God who is the Father of the crucified and risen Jesus" (p. 224). However, in their very brokenness they point toward the cross of Christ, the ultimate broken signpost. There we discover, again, the epistemology of love which infuses the other signposts with renewed meaning.

Chapter 8 is both the climactic summary of Wright's book and a summons to a new form of natural theology. Because true knowledge of God can only be had through the epistemology of love, the task of natural theology must be reshaped to include the mission of the whole church and all its members, celebrating and anticipating the fullness of God "in self-authenticating fashion" (p. 277).

Natural theologians are in the position of those who, having discovered an ancient chalice, are drawn to understand its significance. The world, like the chalice, promises both beauty and meaning; but just as the meaning of the chalice can only be fully grasped through participation in the Eucharist, so the significance of the world's broken signposts can only be glimpsed from the perspective of the new creation. It is the church's task to convey the knowledge of God in the present world: through mission (healing and justice), art, science, politics, and the sacraments themselves.

Although this review is primarily interested in *History and Eschatology's* vision of the historical task, many readers will be interested the book's philosophical and theological dimensions, particular the question of whether or not Wright affirms the task of natural theology. Probably the author would dismiss this question as hasty, pragmatic and reductionistic. In his discussion of Jewish vs. Epicurean cosmologies, Wright argues that the discourse of natural theology has been directed through false presuppositions, to be corrected through history: it is somewhat beside the point to ask if humans can "think up" to God if in fact we do not live in a "split-level" universe after all. Furthermore, Wright's insertion of eschatology into the conversation reveals that the knowledge of God has an eschatological character: the task of natural theology can be affirmed within the inaugurated kingdom; but simultaneously, attempts to derive proofs for God or an exhaustive theology of God from nature constitute a sort of over-realized eschatology (p. 258). Finally, Wright's discussion of the cross deserves further comment.

Speaking of the cross and natural theology, Wright draws on John's Gospel—"when the human 'quest for God' reaches a dead end *it may then discover God as the one who has himself died*" (p. 276, emphasis original). Here, Wright's logic is analogous to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's reflections on "costly grace," in which the essence of "justification by faith" is rightly preserved only as the *answer* to a sum, not as *data*, as a *conclusion*, not a *presupposition* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, trans. Martine Kuske and Ilse Tödt [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003], 9–11). Bonhoeffer draws from Goethe's *Faust*, "At the end of a life spent in the pursuit of knowledge Faust has to confess: 'I now do see that we can nothing know'" (*Discipleship*, 11). (Interestingly, both Wright and Bultmann [with whom Wright is in implicit dialogue throughout] also quote from Goethe's version of the German legend.) This same manner of reasoning characterizes Wright's argument, *mutatis mutandis*. The world's testimony about God, when followed to the end, reveals itself to be broken. But that brokenness, in light of the cross, the resurrection, and new creation, also reveals the manner in which God might be known and loved.

In comparing Steve Mason's work with that of N. T. Wright, we notice a number of correspondences—both authors maintain that the past must be understood on its own terms, and that modern categories such as "religion" and "politics" are not only anachronistic but unhelpfully reductionistic. Both focus on the internal motivations of ancient personages (Mason, p. 81; Wright, pp. 96–98). Finally, both trace the departure of the modern worldview from the ancient one, with Mason looking to the polemics of early Christendom and Wright to the rise of Epicureanism during the Enlightenment. Whereas Mason treats "the Classical paradigm" as an ancient phenomenon inclusive of Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions, Wright emphasizes the unique elements of a Jewish worldview.

For a more significant contrast of Mason and Wright, we might say that the former focuses on the *questions* that comprise the historical task, and the latter is more interested in the *answers* that history might provide. Now, Mason is not an inveterate postmodern (p. 66) any more than Wright is a recalcitrant positivist—neither label fits either scholar. Mason's focus on the question is necessary: it clarifies the historical task and engenders humility, enabling the scholar to remain "successful" whilst affirming that they "do not know" the answer to a given question—sometimes it is simply enough to

ask and investigate. Highlighting the question should produce charity among and between different scholars, when they stop and listen to what their colleagues are actually investigating, and along what lines. Mason's work has in part an apologetic purpose, examining his motives and explaining his own interpretive decisions (most notably concerning the debate over the translation of Ἰουδαῖος). As such, Mason's work exhibits a desire that points ahead to Wright's work, the need *to be understood*. The epistemology of love, which according to Wright defines not only the historical task but all reality, holds out the promise not only of knowing, but also of being known.

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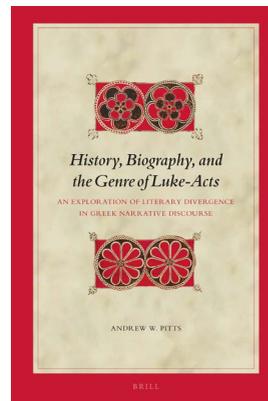
Andrew W. Pitts. *History, Biography, and the Genre of Luke-Acts: An Exploration of Literary Divergence in Greek Narrative Discourse*. Biblical Interpretation 117. Leiden: Brill, 2019. xvi + 235 pp. £90.00/\$119.00.

Andrew Pitts sets out in this book to contribute to debate about the genre of the Gospels and Acts, and specifically Luke-Acts. In particular, he seeks to critique of the mainstream and (these days) consensus position that Luke (in common with the other canonical Gospels) is ancient biography (*bios*). He argues that Luke-Acts should be considered as historical writing, by contrast with Matthew and Mark, which he considers to be *bioi*. He is thus aiming to overturn the key work of Richard Burridge, which underpins the recognition of the Gospels as *bioi* (*What are the Gospels?*, 3rd ed. [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018]), as well as Sean Adams's claim that Acts is collective biography (*The Genre of Acts and Collected Biography*, SNTMS 156 [Cambridge: CUP, 2013]).

Pitts's major methodological move is to suggest that previous study of Gospel genre has focused solely on identifying similarities with a particular genre of literature, to the neglect of differences which distinguish genres from each other. Thus, he claims that Burridge's work, while identifying features which the Gospels have in common with *bioi*, also "catches" features found in other genres: history, moral philosophy, religious/philosophical teaching, encomium, story/novel, and political polemic. Burridge's criteria are therefore inadequate to distinguish *bioi* from these other genres. Given that debate over the genre(s) of Luke and Acts has centred on whether they are *bios* or history, Pitts seeks to identify areas where those two genres differ in order to assess Luke-Acts against these differing characteristics.

Working with insights from systemic functional linguistics, Pitts argues that genres which are in close proximity, such as *bios* and Greek history, are best distinguished by gradations of difference ("clines") along a series of scales which he identifies. He identifies eight areas for the study of history and *bios* which provide such scales of difference, and the major chapters of the book (chs. 3–6) work through these areas in turn:

- *topical focus* (histories tend to be activity and event focused; *bioi* tend to be entity [person] focused)
- *participant identification* (histories tend to identify "generic" participants connected to events—often groups; *bioi* tend to identify individuals)



- *initiations/prefaces* (histories tend to open panoramically, “with a view to several related events or incidents” [p. 101]; *bioi* tend to open in a focalised way, zeroing in on the subject of the biography)
- *commencements* (histories tend to be framed by events; *bioi* tend to be framed by participants)
- the *self-identification* of the work’s genre in a preface, when present (histories tend to have a theoretical discussion of sources and prior histories; *bioi* tend to use *bios* language to specify genre)
- the use of *genealogies* (histories tend to embed them within the narrative; *bioi* tend to “stage” them, generally at the start of the subject’s story within the work)
- *time management* (histories tend to organise time “episodically,” around geography/nations, events, political regimes and the like; *bioi* tend to use “field time,” following the lead character’s life chronologically)
- *authentication strategy*, by which the author “establishes authority for their claims” (p. 135), focused on the author’s use of source material (histories tend to be “bounded,” i.e., less explicit in their citation of sources; *bioi* tend to be “unbounded,” i.e., more explicit by using citation formulae and the like when drawing on sources).

This is quite an agenda, and Pitts identifies a set of histories and *bioi* for comparison with each other and Luke-Acts. There is some overlap with Burridge’s group of *bioi*, although Pitts notes that the *bios* genre takes some time to appear. He selects “biographical predecessors,” such as Isocrates’s *Evagoras* (4th/5th century BC), the collected *bioi* of Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius (2nd and 3rd centuries AD), and the individual *bioi* of Lucian’s *Demonax* and Philostratus’s *Apollonius of Tyana* (2nd and 3rd centuries AD). His set of histories ranges from Herodotus and Thucydides (5th century BC) to Josephus’s *Antiquities* and Appian’s *Civil Wars* (1st/2nd century AD).

On each of Pitts’s criteria, he finds that Luke-Acts falls towards the historical end of each scale rather than the biographical, and he notes in some places that Matthew and Mark fall towards the biographical end. I found myself more persuaded on some points than others. His discussions of genealogies and opening features locate Luke nearer to the histories than the *bioi*, for instance. However, I found myself wondering how significant these features are in differentiating genres—some are not always present, so cannot be regarded as essential features of a genre. Pitts rejects the idea that Luke and Acts may belong to separate genres (pp. 170–71) and treats them as a unit, which somewhat skews the comparison. At times he uses evidence concerning Acts alone to make claims about Luke-Acts without seeming to recognize that he is doing this (e.g., pp. 142–43), and at other times he claims that evidence from Luke’s Gospel alone supports his case (e.g., p. 171). It would need a considerably longer discussion than this review to assess his arguments fully, for they are very detailed and include quite a bit of technical jargon (much of which is explained, it must be said). I imagine such assessment will be forthcoming in future scholarship on Gospel genre.

Three features of this book disappointed me. First, the proofreading and/or copy editing is inadequate: I found quite a number of errors of spelling, grammar, and word choice that careful checking should have avoided. Secondly, the book simply stops without answering the ‘So what?’ question. Pitts gives us no help in the difference his claimed results make to the way we read Luke-Acts, and particularly how we should read Luke differently from Matthew or Mark. I would have hoped to learn how my exegesis of these texts should change if I accept Pitts’s argument that Luke-Acts is history. Thirdly, I would have

liked to know the basis of the calculations of “citation density” (pp. 151, 154, 160, 162). Pitts gives the number of citations in a work, the work’s word count and the “citation density,” but the density is not number of citations divided by word count (I’ve checked some). So how was it calculated?

I’m glad to have read this book, and I am sure that libraries will want to have it. It’s certainly a book which doctoral students and scholars working on Gospel genre will wish to consult—and frequently argue with.

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Patrick Schreiner. *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe. The First Gospel and Its Portrait of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. xiv + 289 pp. £19.99/\$29.99.

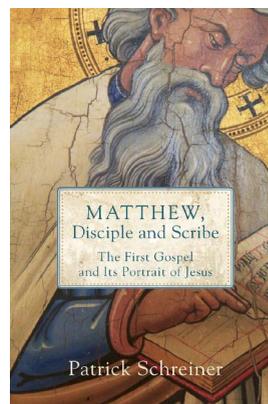
In this volume on Matthew’s narrative theology, Patrick Schreiner elucidates the portrait of Jesus found in the First Gospel and with it the role of the author as faithful disciple and scribe. Schreiner takes his cue from Matthew 13:52: “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of this treasure what is new and what is old.” Matthew, according to Schreiner, is a “discipled scribe,” who “expounds the wisdom of Jesus by becoming a scribe and teacher to future generations, mediating the instruction of his sage” (p. 2).

Part 1 (chs. 1–2), “The Scribe Described,” presents the thesis and sets out the methodological parameters of the study. “Matthew, the Discipled Scribe” (ch. 1) becomes wise by learning how to interpret Torah from his sage-king and then passing that wisdom on through writing. By calling and training disciples, Jesus establishes a new scribal school at odds with the old scribal tradition, passing on the true wisdom of the kingdom of God.

Chapter 2, “The Scribe’s Convictions and Methods,” sets out Matthew’s conviction that Israel’s hopes have been fulfilled through the arrival of the apocalyptic (= mystery-revealing and new-age creating) sage-messiah. Since Jesus has fulfilled all things, Jewish history (and all history) is now unified. All the events of Israel’s history (exodus, exile, etc.) are now seen through the lens of the Jesus event. Consequently, one can read Matthew’s Gospel most profitably by asking three questions. How does this echo Israel’s story? How does Jesus fulfill Israel’s story? And how does it move the story of Israel forward? (p. 8)

Rather than adopting just one term to describe Matthew’s use of the Old Testament (typology, intertextuality, inner-biblical exegesis, figural representation, etc.), Schreiner is eclectic, using the general term “shadow stories” to comprehend Matthew’s broad vision of fulfillment, which encompasses persons, events, institutions, things, offices, and actions. Matthew also reads the OT text both retrospectively and prospectively. “He sees things latent in the OT text before Christ’s advent and also sees things that can be recognized only retrospectively, after the coming of Jesus.” (p. 57)

Part 2, “The Scribe at Work” (chs. 3–7) shows by illustration how Matthew brings forth things old and new by describing Matthew’s presentation of Jesus as persons (David, Moses, Abraham, Israel) and concepts (kingdom, exodus, family, exile). Jesus comes as Moses accomplishing a new exodus and as



the nation Israel, passing through exile to restoration. This is storied Christology. Chapters 3 (“Jesus and the Journey of the Davidic King”) traces Davidic messianism in Matthew’s birth narrative and passion. Through the motif of journey, Jesus, the legitimate heir to the throne, follows in the footsteps of David through appointment, conflict, exile, and enthronement to ultimately install and reunite the kingdom. For Matthew, kingship is the “root metaphor” to describe Jesus, around which all other images revolve. Matthew’s birth narrative is permeated with royal and Davidic themes, from the genealogy, to the birth in Bethlehem, to the title “king of the Jews,” to the visitation of the magi (= kings), and the identification of Jesus as a Nazarene (= the “branch” of Isa 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). At the climax of Matthew’s story, Jesus returns to Jerusalem in the same way that David returned from exile (after expulsions by Saul and Absalom) to claim his throne. Yet this throne is achieved shockingly not through conquest, but through suffering and death—an enthronement on the cross as Isaiah’s servant of the Lord.

While chapter 3 deals with Davidic messianism in the birth narrative and the passion narrative, chapter 4 looks at Jesus’s activities in Galilee (= exile) through three specific actions: living out the law, functioning as the righteous shepherd watching over the flock, and enacting justice as the Davidic merciful healer. While most commentators focus in the Sermon on the Mount on Jesus as prophet, Schreiner emphasizes his continuing function as king, embodying and living out the law. In contrast to the religious leaders, who are false shepherds, Jesus is the true shepherd king after the model of David (five Matthean texts employ shepherd imagery: 2:1–6; 9:32–38; 15:21–28; 25:32–46; 26:30–35). Finally, Matthew uniquely links Jesus’s healing activity to the title “son of David.” Although David was not known as a healer during his life, prophetic texts from Isaiah 11 and Ezekiel 34 emphasize that the coming Davidic king would heal the nation.

Chapter 5 examines Mathew’s presentation of “Jesus in the Mosaic Exodus.” As with his study of David, Schreiner looks beyond the explicit references to Moses to broad ways that Jesus’s story follows that of Moses. Jesus not only fulfills the role of Moses, he exceeds it. While Moses delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, Jesus delivers from slavery *to sin*. While Moses received the law, Jesus *fulfills* the law. While Moses fed the people with manna in the wilderness, Jesus prepares the messianic banquet on the mountain of God, etc. (p. 167).

In chapter 6, “Jesus and Abraham’s New Family,” Schreiner moves from David and Moses to Abraham. While David is associated with kingdom hopes and Moses is linked to the new Exodus, Abraham is defined by familial metaphors. Abraham was promised that through his family all the nations on the world would be blessed. Abraham’s children are now all who do the will of God (Matt 12:50).

Chapter 7, “Jesus and Israel’s Destiny,” presents Jesus as fulfilling Israel’s story. Not only is Jesus the new Adam, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Elijah and Jeremiah, “but Matthew also has Jesus recapitulate a broad chronological structure of the history of Israel, and therefore stands as the new Israel, who leads his people out of exile.” He comes out of Egypt, is tested in the wilderness, returns from exile, and rebuilds the temple (p. 239). Where Israel failed to be God’s light for the nations, Jesus succeeds.

The book concludes with a chapter reviewing Schreiner’s results and describing the disciplined scribe as one who faithfully follows Jesus, wisely interprets the law, and lives it out in their daily lives by practicing justice and mercy.

There is much to commend in this volume. Schreiner demonstrates a solid mastery of Matthean theology and writes with an energetic style, suggesting a genuine enthusiasm for Matthew’s agenda. Schreiner’s description of the theme of fulfillment in Matthew is also particularly helpful. He rightfully

points out that “fulfillment” for Matthew is not always tied to predictive prophecy, but rather means that “Jesus fills up Jewish history, he completes the time of Israel, and he brings Israel to its logical telos” (p. 39).

Another strength of Schreiner’s work is the breadth of Matthean scholarship that he draws from, and his inclusion of a wide range of perspectives. When it comes to background proposals, intertextual connections, and other debated issues, Schreiner tends to be less contrarian and more inclusive (more “both ... and” than “either ... or”).

One of the most original parts of Schreiner’s work is his emphasis not only on OT titles and trace phrases, but on parallels between Jesus’s actions and the great acts of redemptive history. It is not just parallels between David and Jesus, for example, but parallels between *the story* of David and *the story* of Jesus. Matthew’s program thus goes beyond mere typology to see Jesus living out or reenacting key events in the lives of David, Moses, Abraham, and Israel.

Of course, the most innovative parts of an author’s work can also be the most problematic. I was not convinced, for example, that Matthew is intentionally modeling Jesus’s ministry after the chronology of David’s life (ch. 3). It seems a stretch, too, to say that the gifts of the magi indicate the return of the temple treasures taken during the Babylonian exile or that Nazareth is meant to indicate a place of exile from the Davidic king’s true city.

There are other minor points of Schreiner’s presentation that I would not necessarily affirm, such as the claim that Matthew views Jesus’s crucifixion as his enthronement as the Messiah (pp. 93–99). It seems more likely to me that Matthew, like Luke, sees the enthronement announced in Psalm 110:1–2 as fulfilled at Jesus’s ascension/exaltation/enthronement rather than on the cross.

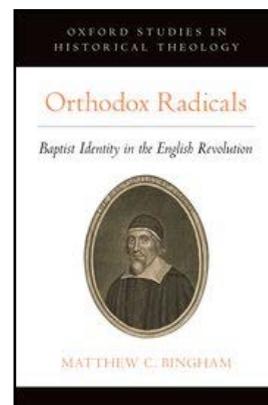
Despite these minor issues, this is an exceptionally well-researched, well-organized, and well-written volume that gets to the heart of Matthew’s theological portrait of Jesus.

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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

Matthew C. Bingham. *Orthodox Radicals: Baptist Identity in the English Revolution*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 248 pp. £64.00/\$99.00.

Matthew Bingham, lecturer in systematic theology and church history at Oak Hill College in London, sets out in *Orthodox Radicals* to properly locate “Baptist” identity in mid-seventeenth century England. He claims that the category of “Baptist” is an eighteenth-century invention imposed anachronistically on the mid-seventeenth century (p. 10). While most have lumped Baptists into a “pan-Baptist” identity retrospectively, he contends that this obscures rather than clarifies. Baptist tendencies alone did not automatically create a “Pan-Baptist identity ex nihilo” from which differing kinds of Baptists could be grouped (p. 91). Therefore, *Orthodox Radicals* intends to show the problems with the historical “Baptist” label for the mid-seventeenth century and show a better interpretive way forward.



Bingham defends his thesis with five chapters that engage various historical aspects of Baptist identity, focusing especially on those commonly called “Particular” Baptists in England. The first chapter sketches the beginnings of Baptist identity and the circle of London Calvinistic Baptist churches. The brief narrative he provides is largely uncontested. What is novel about his reassessment is that while most historians have assigned the labels of Particular and General Baptists to the early English Baptists, Bingham finds this problematic and shows that there is absolutely no evidence for a joint “Baptist” identity that could dovetail over soteriological differences. While those typically identified as Particular Baptists were willing to associate with paedobaptists, they outright rejected Arminianism (p. 22). Therefore, shifts in baptismal positions did not create a new “Baptist” identity from which Particular and General could be grouped. In reality, baptismal shifts for Calvinistic congregational churches were the “natural and unavoidable consequence of the congregational principles to which they were already devoted” (p. 37). So, instead of a joint “Baptist” identity, Particular Baptists emerged from congregational churches and remained in solid connection and cooperation despite their baptismal adjustments.

The second chapter dives into the specifics of the congregational background of these Calvinistic baptistic churches. Just what social and religious situations made possible the baptistic emergence from congregationalism without major theological fissures (p. 39)? The third chapter attempts to unpack the logic of congregationalism for those of a baptistic bent. It was not that baptistic congregationalists desired to leave congregationalism but that they saw inside congregationalism its own internal logic that they attempted to follow to its supposed natural end (p. 63). In their minds, the two distinguishing pillars of congregationalism (the denial of a national church and the affirmation that the members of each congregation are “visible saints”) eroded the logic of paedobaptism (p. 74). Therefore, congregational polity naturally gave birth to baptistic convictions.

The fourth chapter shows the positive fortunes of Calvinistic English Baptists during the 1650s, where those of the Magisterial Reformation willingly linked them with the party of “wise Presbyterians” (p. 90). None of the 1648 Blasphemy Ordinance’s “heretical” positions were rehabilitated and allowed to flourish openly during the 1650’s except for the rejection of paedobaptism (p. 101). And even Cromwell himself conflated baptistic and paedobaptistic congregationalists under the same term “independent”

(p. 113). The conclusion from such actions is clear—these “Baptists” should be understood as baptistic congregationalists rather than a brand new “Baptist” identity. The fifth and final chapter recounts baptistic self-identity during the interregnum (1649–1660). During this period two baptistic congregationalist styles emerged—one willingly embraced Cromwell’s regime and encouraging ecumenism, while the other became stringently separatist (p. 122). These Calvinistic baptistic groups, according to Bingham, are sufficiently different in their own identities that they should not be understood under a single label of “Baptist,” which isn’t to say anything of their differences with the General Baptists (p. 146). Thus, Bingham concludes that it is better to identify those Calvinistic Baptists of mid-seventeenth century England as baptistic congregationalists rather than Particular Baptists. Grouping them all as “Baptist” gives the faux impression that they were meaningfully connected and closely linked to other baptistic groups such as the “General Baptists.”

In making his argument, Bingham handles the historical evidence with careful precision, constructing an airtight argument against previous historical work. In doing so he has provided a treasure trove for Calvinistic Baptists to study and embody in their contemporary congregations. He also has served contemporary Post-Reformation scholarship of English theological identity. Bingham fills a gap which he notes in his introduction that “there is still no holistic, theologically sensitive yet historically rigorous study of mid-seventeenth-century Particular Baptists” (p. 7). His label of “baptistic congregationalist” better describes the identity of these early English “Baptists” and identifies their heritage appropriately. Besides his historical and theological conclusions, Bingham also writes with exceptional clarity and ease. One is never in doubt as to his point, his thesis, and his overall mode of argumentation.

This reviewer suggests a minor point of clarification and critique. First, readers should be advised that Bingham offers a focused monograph, rather than a general introduction. Readers looking for a larger scale treatise will have to look elsewhere. Second, the title mentions “Orthodox Radicals,” but this phrase is not explained or defined in the way one may wish.

In summary, Bingham’s work is one of ingenuity and rigorous historical scholarship. It is one all scholars of the Protestant Reformation should consult and one all Baptists should consume. His thesis should put to rest any thought that “Baptists” grew out of the Reformation as a distinct and homogenous group with a unified identity.

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Shaun Blanchard. *The Synod of Pistoia and Vatican II: Jansenism and the Struggle for Catholic Reform*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. xvi + 346 pp. £76.39/\$99.00.

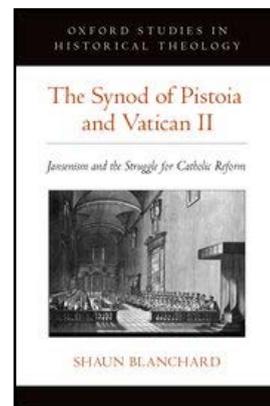
Shaun Blanchard offers us an intriguing look at Catholic history with this monograph, a revision of his PhD dissertation. Although scholarship has frequently discerned the “roots of Vatican II” as far back as the nineteenth-century, he contends that “going back no farther than this point renders the story incomplete” (p. 3). Thus, his aim in this monograph is to consider the eighteenth century, with specific attention given to the Synod of Pistoia (1786). Blanchard in turn hopes that by “addressing the roots of Vatican II and the nature of reform,” his monograph will contribute to “the Catholic debate over the hermeneutics of the Second Vatican Council” by offering a “hermeneutic of reform” (p. 4).

In the introduction, the author, after offering a summary description of the Synod of Pistoia, states that this Synod is “the best test case of eighteenth-century reform” (p. 7), both due to the significant overlap he sees between the Synod and the later Vatican II reforms and because it brought together “many reformist currents of its day.” Blanchard notes that although previous studies have seen some similarities between the Synod of Pistoia and Vatican II, they have failed to recognize “a connection” between them “that is deeper than mere surface parallels” (p. 13).

In the first chapter, he establishes the categories necessary for his later evaluation of the Synod of Pistoia. Helpfully, Blanchard clarifies what he means by reform, namely, it is a focus on merely four subjects: “liturgy and devotions, ecclesiology, religious liberty, and ecumenicism” (p. 24). This, he states, is the case because “these reforms ... were central to the [Vatican II] conciliar agenda,” and therefore these areas are his primary focus throughout the book. From this, he then describes the “threefold conceptual framework” (p. 29) for the Vatican II reform: (1) the theological response to new events and situations (*aggiornamento*); (2) the use of historical texts and data for the present (*ressourcement*); and (3) the development of doctrine. Consequently, the complexity of this framework suggests a combination of continuity and discontinuity with regard to past Catholic teachings.

In the second chapter, Blanchard discusses the various attempts at *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement* in the eighteenth century. He construes the Catholic Enlightenment as a clear case of *aggiornamento*, whereas the numerous failed reform movements, such as Richerism and Jansenism, are examples of *ressourcement*. Dividing Jansenism into three periods—early, middle and late—he argues that “the Synod of Pistoia” is the “strongest institutional expression” of late Jansenism (p. 79), which he defines as, among other things, “co-operation with Christian princes” to purify the church, returning it back to “what ... were believed to be practices of the Primitive Church” (p. 77).

In chapter 3, the author traces the development of “the reform agenda” of Scipione de’ Ricci, bishop of Pistoia, leading up to the Synod of Pistoia. Here, Blanchard concludes that “the close bond of all the strands of Ricci’s reform agenda” both served to galvanize supporters and create “powerful enemies” (p. 133), becoming at the same time the greatest asset and greatest liability to his reforming efforts. The fourth chapter, taking a topic approach, explores in detail “the theology of the Pistoians” by way of the



“synodal *Atti e decreti*” and “the condemnations of the Synod in the *Auctorem fidei*,” noting connections with Vatican II along the way.

The fifth chapter, similar in level of detail to the fourth chapter, discusses the reception of the Synod of Pistoia and offers an evaluation of it based on Yves Congar’s “four conditions for true reform in the Church” (p. 198). In the sixth chapter, Blanchard argues, with support from the Vatican II drafts and the six “evocations” (p. 272) of Pistoia during the second session of Vatican II, that “the Synod of Pistoia was ... a key moment in the Church’s collective memory” (p. 300) and thus influential in drafting documents and debates that arose. Blanchard, in his conclusion, offers the reader some implications that emerge from his study on the bearing of the “hermeneutic of reform” for a contemporary understanding of Vatican II.

There are a number of strengths to this book. Though it is clear that the author is writing from a Catholic perspective, this does not mean that he is unwilling to ask the hard questions of his own tradition or offer a critical reading of his tradition’s response to a subsequently condemned reform movement. Moreover, he clearly demonstrates the bearing a forgotten attempt at reform has on contemporary questions, showing in turn the importance of history for rightly evaluating the present. His thorough interactions with the complexities that surround Vatican II and the Synod of Pistoia, and the connections between them, make plain that his monograph is a substantial contribution to scholarship surrounding the roots, reception, and significance of Vatican II.

Beyond this, just as this study has implications for Catholic ecclesiology and practice, it also gives those not holding to Catholic teaching something of an insider’s view into the thought processes of the Catholic Church. Thus, though an insightful read, it can also be at times a painful one for someone of a more evangelical persuasion to realize how fully and forcibly the Catholic Church post-Vatican II, and therefore of our day, continues to reject the reforming efforts of the Protestant Reformation.

To conclude, this monograph is well-written and thoroughly researched. It ought to be read by any Catholic who desires to have a better grasp of their tradition or by the student of eighteenth-century church history. It would also be of benefit for those who are involved in ecumenical endeavors, especially given its clear demonstration of the importance of the past for the present regarding the Catholic Church.

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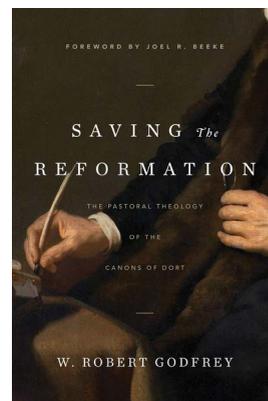
W. Robert Godfrey. *Saving the Reformation: The Pastoral Theology of the Canons of Dort*. Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2019. xiv + 265 pp. £13.99/\$19.00

Despite its importance to Reformed theology and identity, the *Synod of Dort* (1618–1619) is insufficiently understood today. This Dutch synod involved various international Reformed delegates and represents a uniquely international Reformed statement of the doctrines of grace. In *Saving the Reformation* Robert Godfrey has produced a translation and exposition of the Canons of Dort which fulfils an educational and pastoral need and appeals to pastors and laypeople alike.

After beginning with a brief historical introduction, the bulk of Godfrey's book is a fresh English translation of the Canons of Dort out of the original Latin, including their introduction and the statements of rejected Remonstrant (Arminian) errors. This material is followed by several chapters of exposition which read like a popular-level biblical exegetical commentary. The book's pastoral concerns shine through here as Godfrey highlights the practical implications and significance of the Reformed doctrines of grace. In this he echoes the intent of the canons themselves: they were written in terms that would be clear for interested laypeople, and not merely scholastic theologians (pp. 81–82). Ordinary believers need to understand the significance of sovereign predestination, the corruption of original sin, the redeeming efficacy of Christ, the regenerative work of the Spirit, and the perseverance of God's people. This is the basis for the book's title, *Saving the Reformation*. According to Godfrey, the goal of the canons was one of "clarifying and buttressing" the theology of the five *solas* of the Reformation against the claims of Arminius and his followers (p. 179). Beyond discussing the meaning of the canons, Godfrey offers brief comments on their structure that aid comprehension without dominating the discussion. The repetition within the canons themselves means that Godfrey's exposition is likewise a little repetitive, however overall his comments are judicious and valuable.

The book includes six appendices. Appendix 1 is the longest (42 pages) and offers an essay of the character of Arminius's opposition to Reformed theology. Here, Godfrey convincingly demonstrates that Arminius was a theological controversialist rather than of a mainstream Reformed tradition, and that he was probably somewhat disingenuous about his views at various points in his career. This is the most scholarly section of the book (the main text contains a total of 22 footnotes, whereas this appendix alone contains 121!). Whilst this is a useful discussion, it feels somewhat out of place in this book and doesn't markedly enrich the book's main purpose. The other appendices offer material that aids the reading of the canons, such as notes on their structural pattern, a detailed structural outline, and an index listing the relationship between the canons and refuted Arminian errors.

This book will frustrate some academic readers, though this is partly due to the book's purpose and intended audience. Whilst Dort sought to make its theology accessible to the laypeople of its day, formulations of Reformed theology have changed, and indeed narrowed, since the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, Godfrey applies this 400-year-old consensus document to modern Reformed Christians without sufficiently highlighting this hermeneutical distance. Indeed, Godfrey's equation of Dort's five heads of doctrine with the "five points of Calvinism" (p. 13) invites modern readers to conclude that Dort invented the TULIP taxonomy, whereas modern research has demonstrated that the TULIP



framework did not exist in the early modern period. It would have been helpful to explicitly delineate the differences between Dort and TULIP somewhere in the text.

This point becomes relevant when considering the extent of the atonement. Godfrey is aware that the canons expressed a theological consensus compatible with a range of views. Thus, he rightly recognizes that the canons deliberately allow for both infralapsarian and supralapsarian theological schemes (pp. 90–91). However, he does not mention the canons' compatibility with *hypothetical universalism*, presumably because he does not believe that this doctrine is true or helpful for modern audiences to consider. This might not matter in a book of this length and purpose except that Godfrey's discussion elsewhere frames the canons in terms of a contrast between (Reformed) definite atonement and (Arminian) universal atonement (pp. 118–21). This can give the impression that, according to Dort, hypothetical universalism belongs on the Arminian side of the issue, whereas the canons are framed such that the opposite is true. At the very least this issue ought to have been made explicit for the sake of clarity.

Finally, the book would have benefitted from featuring more of the views of the delegates to Dort where relevant to the exposition. For example, the British Reformed delegation raised concerns about including the doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints in the canons, not just the Arminians. Godfrey's exposition would have been enriched by highlighting how differences like these were addressed and what their pastoral significance would be.

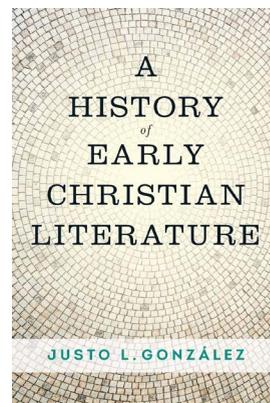
These criticisms notwithstanding, this is a useful book. For the layperson or pastor looking for an introduction to Dort and its theology, this book would be a great resource, not least because it centers on a clear translation of the canons themselves.

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Justo L. González. *A History of Early Christian Literature*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019. 414 pp. £27.99/\$40.00

In his newest volume, Justo González displays a rich familiarity with the literature of early Christianity and the persons behind the work. By attending to these ancient sources, González brings the reader into contact with the enduring witness of our brothers and sisters of the faith, who “make themselves present to us by means of their written words” (p. 4) and lead us down “the trail of their experiences and their faith in the vast literary production that through the centuries helped shape Christianity” (p. 399).

Whereas González structures his acclaimed *The Story of Christianity* around historical events, in the present volume he provides a complementary companion of sorts, wherein he charts the development of theology around the framework of early Christian literature. The scope of the current project, though, is no less daunting. González covers approximately 675 years, addressing 83 authors, and many others in passing, totaling upwards of 415 texts representing 10 different genres—and all in under 400 pages! The six sections walk the reader through the great changes in the history of the church: part 1—



the transition from the New Testament period; part 2—the “demographic and cultural change” of an increasingly Gentile church (p. 75); part 3—the beginning of systematic persecution and systemization of theology; part 4—the “golden century” of Constantine and the “century of iron” dominated by controversies (p. 175); part 5—arising differences between East and West; part 6—the “dusk of Early Christian literature” where the literary vitality of early centuries was lost (p. 375).

González unfolds the narrative with a steady hand, not getting bogged down in what oftentimes prove to be hot-button issues. For example, his treatment of both canonization and apocryphal writings (pp. 56–57) lacks the extended polemics that often characterize the discussion. Instead, he succinctly summarizes, “none of [the apocryphal writings] was ‘forbidden’ in the literal sense—among other reasons, because in those early centuries the church had no means to forbid books. They were simply excluded from among those that were to be read in worship” (p. 56). His pacing overall mirrors the metaphor he uses to describe the story’s original development: “placing one stone atop another so that others might follow along the same path” (p. 399).

González’s unique contribution is his ability to introduce remarkable depth in concision. His brief one-page introductions to each section include the historical setting, literary development, accomplished writers, and important themes of the ensuing era of Christian literature. This is also true when he engages the sources and persons themselves. With Athanasius, in a mere two pages (pp. 190–92), González outlines the main contours of his two great works, *Against the Heathen* and *On the Incarnation of the Word of God*, and summarizes Athanasius’s key, interlocking themes of anthropology, Christology, and soteriology with remarkable clarity and precision.

The diverse strengths of this book are most clearly epitomized in his treatment of Irenaeus of Lyons. Within the vast body of literature of that era, he intentionally engages one of the most influential but disproportionately “least commonly known” second-century theologians (p. 77). After a brief biographical introduction, González explains why he is difficult for the modern reader (the dense and polemical style of *Against Heresies*) and why he’s important (the significant insight he provides into second-century thought and his profound influence on Christian thought through Tertullian, the “father of Latin theological language” p. 79). He then guides the reader to where she can look to develop Irenaeus’s theological contribution. González then devotes an entire section to Irenaeus’s theology, showing both a broad understanding of his vision as well as familiarity with the particular nuances of his thought. To exemplify those two poles, he summarizes Irenaeus’s understanding of “the cosmic drama” (p. 82), the “sweeping vision of history in light of the redemption” (p. 87) that God works with his two hands (the Son and Holy Spirit), beginning with creation and culminating in the resurrection. Then González zeroes in on his unique contribution of “recapitulation,” correcting our current understanding—“a mere summary of what has gone before”—with Irenaeus’s own usage of “taking all of (history) to its culmination ... joining all things under a single head” (p. 85). In this way, González introduces the reader to the nuance of patristic theology that is not always expected, nor at times anticipated, from other historical introductions. And he does all of the above in ten pages (pp. 77–87)!

The main critique of this work is that the impressive theological introduction González provides with Athanasius and Irenaeus (see also the Great Cappadocians, pp. 217–26, and Augustine, pp. 292–311) leaves other sections, by comparison, to appear too dense with historical development and too little primary text engagement (note especially his treatment of Hilary’s *On the Trinity*, and the near absence of Cyril’s influential contribution *On the Unity of Christ*). However, such a critique is perhaps unfair

considering both the scope and purpose of this text. As González himself reminds readers elsewhere, “It is impossible to satisfy both those who want more on a given subject and those who want less” (*The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* [New York: HarperOne], xvi).

In this work the reader will find a lively introduction to early Christian literature. In addition, it will serve as a helpful compendium of Christian authors up to the 8th century, as well as a sourcebook for the major works of theology in the Early Church. While it may be too dense for some to read cover-to-cover, this book can still serve as a useful reference.

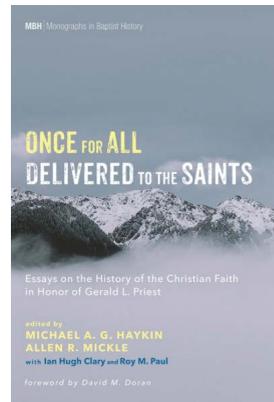
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Michael A. G. Haykin, Allen R. Mickle, Ian Hugh Clary, and Roy M. Paul, eds. *Once for All Delivered to the Saints: Essays on the History of the Christian Faith in Honor of Gerald L. Priest*. Monographs in Baptist History 10. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019. xiii + 131 pp. £16.00/\$20.00.

Gerald L. Priest served as professor of historical and practical theology at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary for over two decades from 1988 until his retirement in 2010. Prior to his academic appointment, he completed MDiv and PhD studies at Bob Jones University. His primary contributions to scholarship included numerous journal articles and essays related to Baptist studies. However, as the biographical essay at the beginning of this monograph details, Priest’s influence extended far beyond the academy, as he ministered as chaplain for the National Guard and filled numerous pulpits during his life.

This Festschrift includes six articles related to areas of Priest’s academic interests. The first three essays explore the thought and influence of two eighteenth-century theologians, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) and Andrew Fuller (1754–1815). Priest dedicated several published chapters and articles to Fuller’s Edwardsean response to high Calvinism at the turn of the nineteenth century, and these three essays discuss similar themes.

In the first article, John Aloisi critiques the concept of natural and moral inability expressed in Edwards’s *Freedom of the Will* (1754), concluding that the distinction contains as many weaknesses as it does strengths. While Aloisi repeats several objections raised by critics since Edwards first published the work, he also demonstrates that Andrew Fuller readily adopted this terminology in his theological confrontation of high Calvinism in his *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. The other two articles in the first half of this work discuss two implications of Fuller’s evangelical theology. First, Andrew Fuller’s rejection of high Calvinism included a denial of Antinomianism. Accordingly, Michael A. G. Haykin explores the topic of good works and their necessity in eighteenth-century Particular Baptist thought. According to evangelical theologians such as Fuller, both faith and sanctification were duties commanded by Scripture. Haykin demonstrates this conviction in the ministries of influential Baptists such as Robert Hall Jr. (1764–1831), Caleb Evans (1737–1791), and John Ryland Jr. (1753–1825). The



final essay of this section, written by Allen R. Mickle Jr., concludes with a discussion of Fuller's thoughts on preaching.

The final three chapters of the work consider yet another significant theme in Gerald Priest's career: the history of liberal theology and Fundamentalism in the twentieth century. Chapters 6–7 consider the development of American liberalism in the theology of William Newton Clarke (1841–1912) and George Burman Foster (1858–1918), respectively. These essays offer biographical accounts of the perceived downward spiral of academic theology in the late nineteenth century and position Fundamentalism as the proper response to this trend, a viewpoint present in several of Priest's publications. The final article concludes the work with an examination of Fundamentalist historiography in the writings of Clarence Macartney (1879–1957), a prominent pastor and amateur historian of the American Civil War. Macartney's published accounts of the Civil War demonstrate conservative beliefs in his selection of material as well as accrediting events to God's providence. The essay presents both strengths and weaknesses of such an approach.

Once for All Delivered to the Saints offers several positive contributions to the study of historical theology. Like most works of its kind, this tribute to Gerald Priest approaches numerous topics from diverse perspectives, and the essays vary in style and quality of material. Nonetheless, several common themes unite the articles into one work. First, like most *Festschriften*, the articles approach historical topics which proved significant in Priest's academic career. The editors have arranged the material topically, resulting in a cohesive, singular volume. Similarly, the essays of this work are united by a common Christian framework. While the authors may not always agree on the strengths and shortfalls of various movements in contemporary theology, they join Gerald Priest in a commitment to scholarship from a conservative Christian perspective. These harmonies characterize the work as a readable and beneficial contribution of historical theology.

This collection of essays will attract readership from several backgrounds. Students of historical theology will find a unique compilation of both academic and pastoral approaches to influential thinkers such as Jonathan Edwards, Andrew Fuller, William Newton Clarke, and George Burman Foster. Readers interested in American history will discover articles related to the rise of liberal theology in the late nineteenth century as well as the response and contributions of Fundamentalists in the twentieth century. Finally, those influenced by the ministry and scholarship of Gerald L. Priest will enjoy this tribute centered around themes that captivated his interest and prompted his academic career.

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Thomas S. Kidd. *Who Is an Evangelical?: The History of a Movement in Crisis*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019. 200 pp. £22.25/\$26.00.

These are interesting days for evangelicals. Intense debates about theological issues, cultural winds, and political realities abound. Emotions run deep. One question has perennially challenged the movement, and it continues to be debated today: just what does it actually mean to be an evangelical? Answering this question will aid in other swirling discussions.

In *Who Is an Evangelical?: The History of a Movement in Crisis*, Thomas S. Kidd offers his answer. Kidd, the James Vardaman Distinguished Professor of History at Baylor University and Distinguished Visiting Professor of Church History at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, argues that the modern conception of evangelicalism represents a deviation from the spiritual center that has historically defined the movement. According to Kidd, certain novel characteristics—Republican, white, 81%—have become synonymous with evangelicalism as a whole. For those interested in the past, present, and future of the movement, this state of affairs poses a problem, for it distorts evangelicalism’s rich theological and historical DNA.

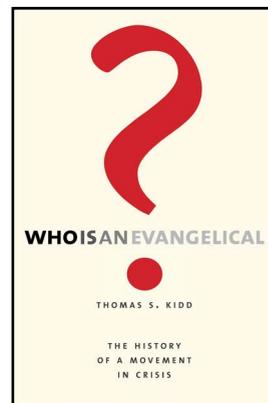
Kidd chronicles how the movement arrived at this place. He begins in eighteenth-century America and argues that, “at the outset, evangelicalism was basically a spiritual movement” of the born again (p. 26). It was multi-ethnic and socio-economically diverse. Their high view of the Bible, conversion-oriented ministries, and dependence on the Spirit took precedence over political aims. While never uninterested in politics, they were concerned with weightier eternal matters.

As they grew, their political interest increased. Eventually, the singular issue of slavery took center stage. Abolition was a “notable instance of black and white evangelicals entering the public square on behalf of oppressed people” (p. 49). Though many evangelicals opposed slavery, others (primarily white southerners and some northerners) either embraced the institution or remained passive and refused to comment (p. 49).

Kidd then explores the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. He sees the Scopes Trial as a harbinger of the contemporary evangelical crisis because of the “media access, establishment politics, and celebrity politicians” at play both then and now (p. 73). While white evangelicals were quite vocal during this controversy, they remained relatively silent on evils such as lynching. They became selectively political, and at times used spirituality as an excuse for their silence (p. 66).

Moving into the 1960s and 1970s, evangelicals welcomed a landmark development that would become significant for the present situation: media attention (p. 118). Kidd argues that “evangelical leaders enjoyed the increased media attention, but they failed to recognize that they were losing control of the public’s perception of their movement” (p. 118). The evening news is not a nuanced vehicle of communication, and the constraints of print and television led evangelicals to be identified with merely their “political behavior” (p. 118).

In the years from Reagan to Obama (ch. 6), evangelical affiliation with conservative politics increased. Evangelicalism ironically both grew and shrank—it grew in diversity but shrank in semantic range. By 2016, “white evangelicals who quixotically sought power in the GOP had come to represent evangelicalism itself for much of the American public” (p. 142).



Kidd concludes with the election of President Donald Trump. He explores why many evangelicals rallied behind the Trump campaign and why others disavowed it. Kidd challenges the notion that 81% of evangelicals supported Trump by arguing that self-identification and polling are poor measurements of classic evangelicalism. As he states, “millions of practicing evangelical whites are part of the 81 percent. But we should not define evangelicalism by the 81 percent” (p. 155). Kidd concludes by returning to the heart of evangelicalism (over and against its modern usage): “Conversion, devotion to an infallible Bible, and God’s discernible presence are what make an evangelical an evangelical” (p. 156).

Who Is an Evangelical? is an outstanding contribution from one of today’s premier historians. Kidd captures American evangelicalism’s past and connects the dots to their present. He highlights the influences—both internal (passivity to the oppressed, lust for cultural prestige) and external (media)—that have led to their contemporary situation.

Kidd refuses to paint conservative whites as the “normal” evangelicals (p. 4). He emphasizes the contributions of various ethnicities to the evangelical story. While some historical accounts limit their interaction with diverse evangelical traditions, Kidd broadens the scope and, in doing so, challenges the assumption that white leaders and majority white institutions represent the most important elements of evangelicalism.

As a historian, Kidd primarily looks backward and does not offer neat, packaged answers for the future. However, while he offers few explicit ways forward, implicit ones dot nearly every page. These are mainly focused on evangelicalism returning to its spiritual center, the need for evangelicals to be known for their mercy and message through word and deed (rather than being defined by outside agencies), and an embrace of a broad coalition of various ethnicities united around the gospel.

Kidd aims his book at journalists, pastors, politicians, and rank-and-file evangelicals (p. 3). The introductory nature might lead scholars to wonder “Well, what about X?” This is not a weakness but instead demonstrates the challenge of capturing a complex movement in a 150-page primer, which Kidd does well.

Kidd’s subtitle, “The History of a Movement in Crisis,” represents the animating concern of his book. Evangelicals face a variety of challenges, but Kidd focuses on one of identity. He believes that some evangelicals have drifted from their spiritual heritage toward a haven of political power that promised prestige but has ultimately hampered the movement’s witness. Kidd’s aversion to this development is discernable, but he is respectful in his evaluation of those who might disagree with his interpretation. He recognizes that faithful evangelicals can and will come to different conclusions. His rub is not that evangelicals are engaged in politics; it is rather the prioritizing of the political over the spiritual.

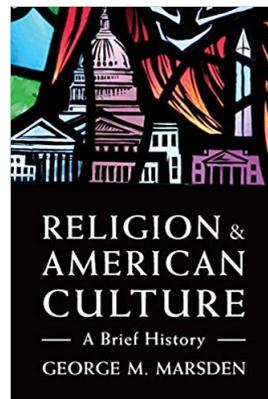
It matters that evangelicals be aware of both the historic and current connotations of their nomenclature. It has direct bearing on relevant questions: Will we be cornered into a myopic usage of the term “evangelical”? Or will we be known first and foremost for the *evangel* and the command to love God and neighbor while drawing on the riches of the evangelical tradition? Kidd hopes for the latter, and his volume offers evangelicals a view of their past in order to reclaim their strengths into the future.

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George M. Marsden. *Religion and American Culture: A Brief History*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. 292 pp. £23.99/\$30.00.

Reading George M. Marsden is therapeutic for any serious historian, and this particular work is no exception to his usual scholarship. *Religion and American Culture* sets out to tell the story of all Americans because all Americans have been impacted by religion's influence on culture. Despite his rigorous academic approach, the book remains highly accessible as well. While writing from a Christian worldview, Marsden does not exclude any potential audience.

Marsden earned a PhD in American History from Yale University after time spent at Haverford College and Westminster Theological Seminary. His teaching credentials include Calvin College, Duke Divinity School, and as a professor of history at the University of Notre Dame, where he maintains the title of emeritus professor. In this particular book, Marsden leverages his historical credentials and experience to tackle long-debated questions about the identity of America herself.



Is the United States a bastion of Christian heritage or the top cultural exporter of consumerism and secularism? Both are true according to Marsden. America's relationship with religion is a paradox. He begins his introduction by stating, "The United States is both remarkably religious and remarkably profane" (p. 1). He clarifies his own literary intentions by stating, "The central purpose of this book is to explore the interactions of religious faiths with other dimensions of American culture that have led to such striking paradoxes" (p. 1). The book then commences to expose the chameleon of a historical America that can be all things to all people—deeply religious at times while simultaneously the beacon of secular humanism. Marsden helps distill elements of truth from these two views of American culture.

According to Marsden, America would not exist without religion. Yet, he does not mean this in the typical sense of some political writers and cultural advocates. In Marsden's version, America is a product of all of the religious seeds sown into her past. The goal of the author is not to tell the story of Christianity in America, and this is a distinctive strength. The chapters progress chronologically but focus on major developments and changes as their pivot points throughout. Marsden does not shy away from addressing the impacts of new influences or religious groups. The presented evidence is clear: as religious life in the nation evolved, so did the culture.

For many chapters, the stories of great awakenings and ethnic migrations are somewhat familiar to students of American history. However, this time, the reader engages the same incidents from a different perspective. Events are illuminated from diverse angles as laws, lifestyles, and political movements are shown to be products of the culture rather than culture creators in and of themselves.

In the final chapters, the book addresses the massive shift and fragmentation in American cultural homogeneity after the 1960s. In Marsden's paternity test, the pluralistic society we live in today is a child of these decades of cultural self-searching—even if this child is barely recognizable to modern religious purists who see nothing but confusing changes. Evidence of this diversity is evidenced to change traditional dualistic viewpoints as well. Marsden notes, "One general factor leading way from any simple polarization of the culture was variety was the sheer religious diversity of America. No one group ... could pretend to speak for even one side of an issue" (p. 250). America was born with a wide variety of

religious opinions and continues in this tradition today. Therefore, understanding *our* America is far bigger than understanding a single religious viewpoint.

Marsden's survey of American religious culture is not just the story of big historical events either. The book also delves into specific moments of history. Instead of simply telling the reader when and where a movement began, the author presents the beliefs and scriptures that instigated the events. From the inner workings of Pentecostalism to the rise of Premillennialism and more, the book seeks to build true understanding of how each idea contributed to their own time and to our time.

This latest edition maintains much of the same scope and content as prior editions, yet Marsden has broadened both his interpretive analysis and his audience. Originally intended as a textbook based on his own years of collegiate teaching on the topic, the third edition has been reimagined to also welcome non-academic readers. Chapters that had been briefly focused on historical narrative now include more interpretive content. The advancing pluralism and religious angst in today's America is mined for new perspectives on earlier time periods in American religious history. The final pages in the second edition (2001) contained only a brief mention of expectations for the 21st century. This section has now been expanded to an entire chapter of information and analysis.

This brief volume is profoundly helpful in building an accurate understanding of our modern world—all of which has been impacted by American culture. It has value for use in the academic settings of both secular and religious institutions of higher education as the scholarship is robust and the presentation of all views is charitable. Marsden helps all readers understand “why” events happened.

Additionally, Marsden is exceptional in his ability to parse the difficult-to-bisect topic of God and country. His assumption that America was founded and defined by religion comes from a far different place than comparable authors. Instead of using the argument of the past to call people to relive a particular time of historical greatness, Marsden delivers the facts. The reality is that everyone in America today is currently being impacted by religion and its culture shaping abilities.

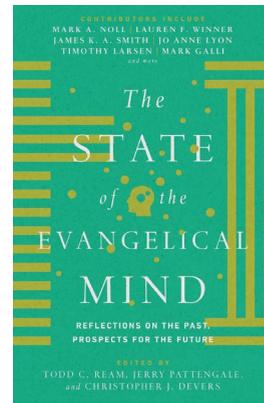
If any weakness can be identified it is that this is only the story of the America's journey of faith after the arrival of outside colonists and immigrants. From various strains of Christianity to our modern, pluralistic society, the story is immense. Yet, the author found only a few small moments to interact with the indigenous religions that were largely displaced. A less informed reader could come away with the false, and frighteningly common, assumption that colonists “brought religion” to the Western Hemisphere.

The strength of the book lies in its scholarship and its chronological structure. Marsden avoids one-sided bias even while writing from a Christian perspective. *Religion and American Culture* says: you don't have to take Marsden's word for it. His only predetermined effort is to tell the story of the impact of religion *on* America, *for* America, and *by* America. America would be a better place if everyone got their information from George Marsden. *Religion and American Culture* is a must read.

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Todd C. Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and Christopher J. Devers, eds. *The State of the Evangelical Mind: Reflections on the Past, Prospects for the Future*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. xi + 180 pp. \$28.00

No other book has influenced the evangelical mind in the past twenty-five years more than Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), which opened this way: "The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind" (p. 6). Noll, then a professor at Wheaton College, sought to write an epistle to the evangelical world from a "wounded lover." Quite tellingly, evangelicals heeded the call. Just one year after its publication, Christianity Today launched *Books & Culture*, which itself revealed the ascendancy of evangelicals' intellectual activity when the 25th anniversary edition embellished the question "What Scandal?" across its cover. This, as well as other markers, indicated relative prosperity for the life of the mind. But a series of developments within the evangelical subculture, including the end of production for *Books & Culture* in 2016, prompted scholars to gather at the Sagamore Institute in Indianapolis in September 2017 to question the current state of the evangelical mind. This book compiles some of the topics addressed at that gathering. As a reviewer, I will evaluate the contributions in this edited work by the rubric set out by the editors: "to assess the state of the evangelical mind, identify its unique contributions, and chart a way forward" (p. 13).



Mark Noll fittingly authors ch. 1, "Reflections on the Past." Though Noll has followed up on his book in a number of avenues since *Scandal*, here he offers a summary of the complicated status of the life of the evangelical mind. The complexity is due to the fact that, on the one hand, a number of periodicals and institutions that had facilitated evangelical thinking have terminated due to various practical reasons, yet, on the other, Noll notes "the demise of a particular enterprise by no means signified the end of intellectually meaningful activity by the sponsoring institution" (p. 26). In other words, from the ashes, resources were simply redirected towards other channels spurring intellectual activity.

Chapters 2, 4 and 5, rather than assessing the state of the evangelical mind (in churches, colleges and seminaries respectively), attempt to chart a way forward for evangelicals. Lyon attempts to redeem the phrase "evangelical," identifying (and encouraging) the church's contributions (e.g., towards social action), which stem from stalwart evangelical intellectuals (e.g., Edwards, Whitefield, Carl F. H. Henry, etc.). Larson dedicates most of his work to John Henry Newman's ideal of a liberal education *a la* Christian universities. Winner's contribution on seminaries is a very helpful reminder to instill in church pastors and leaders a deep and thorough education that caves not into the problems she defines as "extraction" and "instrumentation," but allows them to think and see "Christianly."

Chapters 3 and 6 are the book's strongest contributions. Mahan and Smedley are interested in legitimizing collegiate ministry as a means to informing evangelical thinking. They express their frustration over the perception that in college ministries "Christian thought and scholarship ... are not seen as arenas in which high priority is given to the life of the mind ... where academic work is promoted or produced" (p. 65). In the only chapter consisting of two parts, Mahan seeks to respond by arguing that the college campus itself and the intentional engagement with non-Christian contemporaries can stimulate an intellectually engaged faith. Following Mahan's demonstration of the positive intellectual impacts of university-based parachurch organizations, Smedley seeks to delve into historical reasons

why campus ministries were depicted so. He deconstructs some of Noll's claims in favor of J. P. Moreland's work on the subject as a better alternative (*Love God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* [Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997]). In Chapter 6, James K. A. Smith was tasked with "Prospects for the Future," and he begins with his perceptions of a bleak reality. Despite the fact that intellectual ventures thrive in evangelical institutions and wider contexts, Smith laments the fact that these activities are "utterly disconnected ... from the vast majority of evangelical congregations and networks that comprise 'evangelicalism' in the United States" (p. 144). He indicates the breach by citing evangelical complicity in the election of Trump, racial tensions, and the shallowness of its leaders, and then suggests that future energy dedicated to developing the evangelical mind should be "focused on closing this gap" (p. 147). Smith suggests one way to close the gap is to raise a generation of Christian scholars posed not for the academia, but the church, being willing to be branded by the academy as "popularizers." Such individuals would heed Galli's pastoral suggestions to do more than just "scold people into pursuing a life of the mind" (p. 163).

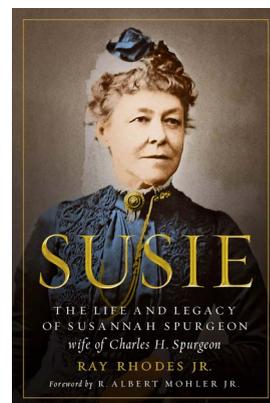
This resource is a valuable tool especially for theological students and pastors. Although the authors vary on the depth of their engagement, well-known contributors condense wide ranging material in service to inspiring the life of the evangelical mind. The chapters that assess this situation in churches, parachurch organizations, colleges and universities, and seminaries are sure to find interest among any who intend to have some impact on evangelical thought.

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Ray Rhodes. *Susie: The Life and Legacy of Susannah Spurgeon, Wife of Charles H. Spurgeon*. Chicago: Moody, 2018. 294 pp. £15.99/\$19.99.

The late Barbara Bush used to tell a funny story. One time when she and her husband (the future president) were on the campaign trail, their caravan stopped at a gas station in a rural area. Waiting for vehicles to be serviced, George spied a man on a tractor in a field across the way and teased Barbara, "See, if you'd married him you would be living on a farm." She cleverly quipped in reply, "If I had married him, he would be running for president and you would be riding on that tractor!" That playful exchange between a long time happily married couple often comes to my mind when considering the enormous influence a wife can have on her husband's life and vocation. In the case of Charles Spurgeon, I'm not sure we can go so far as to say his marriage to Susie changed his calling altogether, but her encouragement of him in life and ministry enhanced it in great measure. It is this enhancement of one of the greatest preaching ministries in history as well as Susie's own work for the kingdom that Ray Rhodes brings to full light in this timely and uplifting biography, *Susie*.

As a young woman, even girl, Susie was exceptionally attuned to the Lord's voice and leading in her life. Hers was not the story of a wasted youth later regretted. While she later said she experienced more spiritual enlightenment and refreshment reflecting daily on smaller portions of Scripture, she gained a firm command of the scope and sweep of the Bible from an early age. This undoubtedly enhanced her



later meditations and enabled her to engage with her pastor theologian husband in way that edified them both.

While the book is not easily divided into just two parts, it seems that Susie Spurgeon's ministry could be. First, she encouraged and facilitated her husband's ministry, enabling him to work, write, disciple and preach long hours, sometimes through the mental anguish of depression that plagued him for much of his life. Susie read to Charles, sat with him and generally provided the sweet companionship for which his soul longed. Even though she suffered from intense loneliness when his preaching engagements took him away for overnight trips, as they would many times in their marriage, Susie resolved not to complain or be any kind of obstacle to his ministry. As Rhodes makes eminently clear, "It was much easier for Spurgeon to preach, write, and lead in ministry because of the encouragement and cheers of his 'precious love'" (p. 249).

The other part of Susie's ministry included her important support of preachers and their families through her book fund as well as her own writing. Although one cannot really say this venture was independent of Charles and his work, as he authored most of the books distributed, it was Susie's personal ministry. Begun in 1875, Susie considered this work the joy of her life and consistently found strength and encouragement from the thank you letters she received from numerous grateful pastors. Eventually the book fund distributed over 200,000 volumes. As though this wasn't enough work for the wife, mother, and often suffering invalid, Susie also wrote five books and numerous articles, edited Charles's four-volume *Autobiography*, and corresponded with thousands over her lifetime.

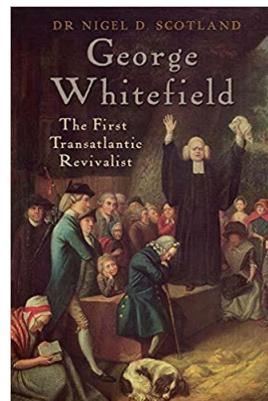
Although the whole of this very readable biography will provide interesting details of Susie Spurgeon's life and marriage, perhaps my favorite part of the book is the Epilogue. Here Rhodes summed up basic principle of her life "that are worthy of our consideration and imitation" (p. 237). In this brief but inspiring chapter, Rhodes highlights Susie's reliance on Christ, training of her twin boys (the upbringing of which seems to be a bit scant in the record) to treasure the Bible and good books, her love for pastors, and facing hardship with faith, among other admirable practices and qualities. This part of the book reads like a tribute as much as a biography and well sums up the contributions of its primary subject.

In the preface to the book, Al Mohler calls it "one of the strangest silences of church history" that wives of famous men in ministry do not receive more historical attention. Perhaps in our feminist age we simply cannot bring ourselves to give this role as much importance as it deserves. Also, we can admit that not all famous couples in ministry had a marriage of such uncomplicated devotion and mutual encouragement as the Spurgeons. Where they may have, historical documents often do not record nor reveal as much about the wife. When they do, however, we do well, as Ray Rhodes has, to give them our full consideration and glean from them the encouragement study of a life to devoted to God can afford.

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Nigel Scotland. *George Whitefield: The First Transatlantic Revivalist*. Oxford: Lion, 2019. 325 pp. £12.99/\$24.99.

There is no shortage of biographies on the 18th century revivalist preacher George Whitefield (1714–1770). The last several decades in particular have seen several scholarly contributions to Whitefield studies including Harry Stout’s *The Divine Dramatist* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), Frank Lambert’s *Pedlar in Divinity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), and most recently, Thomas Kidd’s *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). Nigel Scotland, honorary research fellow in religious studies at the University of Gloucestershire, is conversant with Whitefield biographies and seeks to distinguish his own work by drawing attention to Whitefield’s role in transforming the Methodism of the Oxford-based Holy Club into a national and international movement.



The book divides into thirteen chapters of 20–30 pages in length whose brevity, coupled with punctuated subheadings provides an engaging and steady pace. Scotland follows the basic historical sequence of Whitefield’s travels with several concluding chapters that deal with topical issues. The final chapters are particularly useful for readers who want a brief summation of Whitefield’s doctrine or practice.

Scotland demonstrates awareness of the controversies surrounding Whitefield’s life and ministry and engages other biographers with a firm yet genial tone. At several junctures, he notes that Whitefield’s skills as an organizer are too often dismissed by early and modern biographers alike (p. 137–38). To support this claim, he cites recent research showing that Whitefield managed three churches and that 28 societies were under his care (p. 302). As to the jaundiced assessments of Lambert and Stout that Whitefield’s effectiveness derived from his use of print media in an age of consumerism, Scotland observes that no known obituaries mention the impact of Whitefield’s writings. On the contrary, contemporaries noted his oratorical gifting (p. 212).

Scotland diverges sharply from Harry Stout’s assertion that Whitefield was driven by a craving for power, respect, and personal egotism, and that his emotionalism was insincere. Contemporary hearers, notes Scotland, attested to their belief in Whitefield’s sincerity—his tears included (p. 210–11). The author does not feign to attribute the uniqueness of Whitefield to a “vivid, almost physical sense of the presence of Christ” (p. 209). Supporting this claim *ad fontes*, the author draws from Whitefield’s own writings that he experienced the presence of Christ to a great degree, which he described as the “sealing of the Spirit” or “joy in the Holy Ghost” (p. 281).

In chapter 9, “preacher extraordinaire” Scotland analyzes a selection of 59 sermons by Whitefield from which he explores germane themes. The results are intriguing. For example, 27 of the sermons make no explicit appeal to sinners to be converted or make a commitment to Christ. At other occasions, however, Whitefield did make strong appeals that his hearers make a personal decision. The textual evidence thus reveals reasonable theological balance between the evangelist’s commitment to Reformed doctrine and the distinctive Methodist passion for reaching the lost.

Scotland mentions several interesting aspects of Whitefield’s life and ministry. For example, he preached without notes and believed that pastors should do likewise (p. 197). Whitefield’s practice of preaching on doctrinal themes, more so than the patterns of exposition common among Puritans,

made him the forerunner to various expressions of “topical” preaching that mark much of modern evangelicalism (pp. 204–6). Furthermore, Whitefield’s dream of meeting Bishop Martin Benson in 1734 and receiving money, coupled with its subsequent fulfillment several days later (p. 30–31), serves to remind modern readers of the “charismatic” nature of the revivalist’s early days. Such details should not be overlooked by modern admirers of Whitefield with cessationist views. Whitefield’s practice of prayer prior to preaching and the degree of its intensity are noted by Scotland as indicative of the preacher’s robust devotional life. In one sermon, Whitefield said, “I have prayed a thousand times till sweat dropped from my face like rain, that God in His Infinite mercy would not let me enter the Church before he thrust me forth in His work” (p. 272).

Though a curious reader may desire further exploration of Whitefield’s politics, defense of slavery in his own words, and reasons for his shift from the mystical to the conventional, such topics are only briefly discussed. Understandably, these subjects have been given fuller treatment in other works on Whitefield, and Scotland’s citations demonstrate his awareness of such. As with any text, the question for the critic is whether the author achieved their intended purpose. Scotland achieves his two-fold task: to narrate the chronology of Whitefield’s life and describe the nature of his theology, churchmanship, and spirituality.

George Whitefield is a fine introduction for those interested in 18th century evangelicalism and an accessible read for those without a background in theological or historical studies.

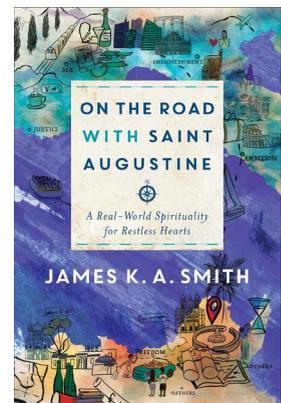
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James K. A. Smith. *On the Road with Saint Augustine: A Real-World Spirituality for Restless Hearts*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019. 256 pp. £16.99/\$24.99.

Life in the 21st century can be a disorienting journey. Many often feel lost, stuck, or out of control. The road ahead can seem endless, the signage confusing, and the destination uncertain. To navigate life’s journey in our secular age James K. A. Smith commends Augustine as a guide because he knows where home and rest can be found (p. xii). Augustine knows that “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (*Confessions*, 1.1.1).

Like Augustine’s *Confessions*, Smith’s book defies simple genre categorization. It’s not a biography nor an exposition of the *Confessions*. Smith insists it’s not even “about Augustine” but rather “a book Augustine has written about you” (p. xi). Although every chapter subtitle begins with “How to...” (e.g., “Freedom: How to escape” or “Sex: How to connect”), it’s no self-help book on common crises or the spiritual disciplines. Nor is it merely an apologetic for prodigals. Instead, it is a “travelogue of the heart” (p. xi) and “a hitchhiker’s guide to the cosmos for wandering hearts” (p. 55). Smith channels Augustine’s road-savvy wisdom into a 250-page heart atlas aimed at guiding restless hearts home to God.

In Part 1, Smith claims that our age of authenticity “is already Augustinian” even if we don’t recognize his influence (p. 34). Augustine is our contemporary because he asks the same kinds of questions we ask.



In Smith's telling, we have inherited the quest for authenticity from Augustine, but our own questions are mediated by an eclectic group of existentialists like Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus—each of whom wrestled with Augustine in their own work. Although Augustine's questions reverberate through their work, Smith argues that they rejected his answers. Smith wants his readers to return to Augustine's answers and to consider them alongside the questions his legacy has taught us to ask.

In Part 2, Smith charts ten “weigh stations” along the road to which our own—and Augustine's—longings bring us. These longings are the desires we all have for freedom, ambition, sex, mothers, friendship, enlightenment, story, justice, fathers, death, and homecoming. In each chapter, Smith first exposes the way we—and the unconverted Augustine—would naturally think about a topic (i.e., freedom or justice). Then he invites us to reconsider the issue in a new way—the way Augustine defends after a life spent encountering Christ and his Word. For example, Smith points to Augustine's exploration of freedom before his conversion and then his commentary on freedom as a seasoned pastor. Commonly, freedom is thought of as the absence of constraints, as self-discovery without limits. Augustine tried that too. But he discovered that the unconstrained self finds not freedom but addiction. According to Augustine, “Free choice is sufficient for evil, but hardly for good” (p. 68). Instead, true freedom begins in dependence; it begins with grace. “To desire the aid of grace,” Augustine writes, “is the beginning of grace” (p. 67). Smith emphasizes that for Augustine, grace comes wrapped in the gift of constraints, laws, and guardrails that guide us home.

As Smith guides us through each of these “weigh stations,” every reader will identify with some of Augustine's longings more than others. Similarly, the sheer range of references Smith makes to cultural artifacts—song lyrics, movie scenes, and contemporary book titles—will doubtlessly appeal to many readers but may bewilder others. The further you travel into the book, the clearer it becomes that Smith is not just the narrator; he is along for the ride too. Smith weaves his own story alongside his analysis of Augustine's spiritual biography. As he notes in the Acknowledgements, “I feel like I've been writing the book for half my life” (p. 224). The book has the atmosphere of both Smith and Augustine's personal experience, and in Smith's retelling, both become fellow travelers with us—travelers who know how hard the road is but don't offer false shortcuts. Rather, they turn us to the One who has sustained them on the road and will do the same for us.

Throughout the book, Smith displays his abilities as an interpreter *par excellence*. Like his *Whose Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) and *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), Smith makes the complex accessible. In this book, Smith speaks primarily to two overlapping audiences: first, so-called “Nones” who hate religious moralism and, second, young prodigals heading out the church door. To the first, Smith provides Augustine's biography to make “Christianity believable” and Smith urges the second to consider Augustine's Christianity “before you stop believing” (p. xiii). Thus, Smith *interprets* so that his readers *act*. Smith is not helping us comprehend the *Confessions* directly, but rather he is helping us decipher our own longings so that we direct them appropriately. Smith presents Augustine's “real-world spirituality” to help us know ourselves and know the road.

In this way, Smith does not merely *contemporize* Augustine but *retrieves* him for us. After teaching the *Confessions* to college students for several years now, I have found Augustine resonates deeply with students, but he still baffles them and, therefore, often feels distant from them. Smith doesn't smooth over the strangeness, but he allows Augustine's ancient vibes to catch our attention. Then he shows us

how Augustine's questions and experiences are so perennial that they feel contemporary. Encountering that Augustine makes this book worth the read.

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Grant Wacker. *One Soul at a Time: The Story of Billy Graham*. Library of Religious Biography. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. 256 pp. £19.99/\$24.99

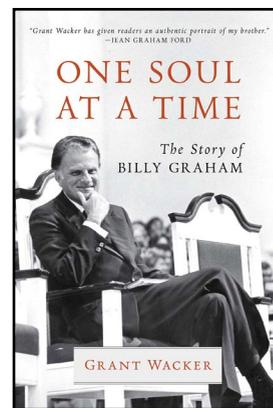
Billy Graham, appropriately designated “America’s pastor” by George W. Bush, is the only religious leader in American history whose casket has rested in the rotunda of the United States Capitol. While Graham served as a religious advisor to twelve consecutive presidents, he never held a political position, choosing instead to remain a minister of the good news of Jesus Christ. Historian Grant Wacker’s concise biography presents Billy Graham’s influential public career as an evangelist.

Grant Wacker is the Gilbert T. Rowe professor emeritus of Christian history at Duke Divinity School. He is considered the leading Billy Graham scholar, having authored significant works such as *America’s Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2014). Wacker, a self-designated Christian in the evangelical tradition, is highly suited to tell Graham’s story, having spent his career specializing in the history of Evangelicalism, World Missions, and American Protestant thought.

While previous works on Graham focus on his relation to the nation’s culture, *One Soul at a Time: The Story of Billy Graham* explores Graham’s ministerial life and influence. This biography is based on decades of research on Graham, including personal interviews, archival inquiries, new research, and previously unpublished photographs. In 51 short chapters neatly divided into four parts, Wacker portrays Graham’s finely tuned ability to understand trends and speak to individuals in a powerful, life-changing way. While Graham continually adapted the fine nuances of his approach, Wacker effectively demonstrates how his heart for sharing the gospel never changed.

In contrast to his earlier more philosophically sophisticated historical works, Wacker takes a more belief-inflected historical approach by telling the story the way he thinks Billy would have, focusing on God’s work accomplished through the evangelist (p. xiii). He traces his development, beginning with the “Young Barnstormer,” then moving on to his role as “Leading Evangelist,” “Priestly Prophet,” and finally “Senior Statesman.” In the first section, he examines Graham’s Southern farm boy roots, college years, and early days of ministry. He includes his early pastoral challenges and how they helped prepare him for his future evangelistic ministry. The historian points out three of Graham’s enduring traits that led to vocational success: his pragmatism, his well-chosen ministry settings, and his sensitively timed crusades. Furthermore, he describes how his engagement with President Eisenhower reveals the pivotal role he had as “a pastor to the presidents” (p. 59).

Part 2 examines how Graham inspired evangelicals to participate in the public sphere. The core for Graham, however, was always the gospel. Graham promoted it by using the latest advances, such as live



broadcasting of his crusades. Wacker points out that “everything Graham said and did behind the pulpit pointed toward one goal: the invitation” to follow Jesus (p. 95). While his enduring legacy primarily rests on people’s positive response to this invitation, Graham also faced opposition, both from the outside and within evangelicalism. Wacker admiringly points out how the Evangelist consistently chose not to retaliate to his opponents and instead focused on the gospel.

The third section chronicles Billy Graham’s significant role in American culture and politics. Wacker recounts Graham’s unique relationship with Roman Catholics and political leaders such as President Johnson. While Graham’s legacy primarily lay in his evangelistic efforts, his work toward waging war on poverty, his contributions to civil rights, and his role in the Vietnam War are also memorable, even if not always positively viewed. Wacker also points out how he was often perceived as a “symbol of the American good life” due to his close friendships with presidents and celebrities, rather “than as a prophetic critic of it” (pp. 175–76).

In the final part of his book, Wacker examines Graham’s enduring message that the gospel offers forgiveness to all. Wacker notes how the American preacher’s ambition for the evangelization of the whole world became even more conspicuous beginning in the 1960s. Graham’s “looks, style, sincerity, humility, and urgency, which propelled his success at home, propelled his success abroad” (p. 203). Yet Graham also received sharp criticism for his international work, including his unconventional ministry in the Soviet Union. Graham’s venerable nature, however, made him the natural choice to be both an international evangelist as well as the “nation’s chaplain” in times of crisis. Wacker concludes that Graham was a complicated man who evoked both criticism and praise, but “diligently sought never to forget God, not Billy Graham, was the one true source of his success. He walked the talk” (p. 275). He wraps up the narrative with a powerful epilogue about Graham’s impact on children, as evidenced in their letters to him (p. 277). The book also includes two helpful appendices on his letters and preaching events, extensive endnotes, and a detailed index.

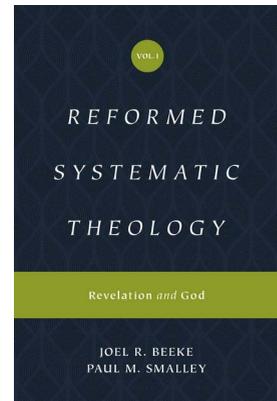
Overall, Wacker’s well-researched book does an excellent job portraying the “public” Billy Graham. This work skillfully reveals the Evangelist’s “singular ability to appropriate the trends of his day” in service of the gospel and moral reform (p. 5). His example remains a powerful legacy for evangelicals today who desire to proclaim the gospel to the current culture. While Wacker clearly respects Billy, he candidly discusses his flaws, including his naive loyalty to Nixon during the Watergate scandal. Yet his admiration for Graham leads him occasionally to excuse his missteps. For instance, he concludes that the Watergate incident may “have been the best thing that ever happened to the preacher. The experience opened his eyes to the dangers of dragging partisan politics into the pulpit” (p. 178). *One Soul at a Time* might be better subtitled *A Profile of America’s Most Famous Evangelist* since it primarily focuses on Graham’s public role as an evangelist and only briefly touches on his theology, inner life, and familial relationships. It reads at times more like news soundbites than as a cohesive, gripping story of his life. Therefore, it would appeal to an audience interested in the facts about one of the nation’s most influential religious figures to date. While the details are fascinating, for instance, Graham’s humanitarian evolution or his unique relationship with presidents and Catholic leaders, it is not a page-turner, nor does it intend to be so. Instead, it does what it sets out to do: to portray a compelling picture of the famous American Evangelist from the South.

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— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY —

Joel Beeke and Paul M. Smalley. *Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 1: Revelation and God*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 1309 pp. £43.99/\$60.00.

Theologian Joel Beeke recently published the first volume of his magnum opus, *Reformed Systematic Theology*. The first of four anticipated works, this volume presents the culmination of Beeke's theological labors at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. Beeke with his teaching assistant, Paul Smalley, invites readers into his seminary classroom, where he expounds the rich heritage of reformed, experiential systematics. This volume includes a presentation of Beeke's theological method and two loci of theology, the doctrine of revelation and the doctrine of God. His approach demonstrates a theological sensitivity to other disciplines—such as biblical, philosophical and historical theology—with an aim toward pastoral application.



Joel Beeke carries on the tradition of the great Reformed systematians. These theologians labored to present comprehensive visions for the Christian faith—such as Wilhelmus à Brakel's *A Christian's Reasonable Service* and Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*—for the purpose of living unto God. Their works examined the foundational principles for knowing God and illustrated doctrinal implications for polemics and pastoral application. Like these previous theologians, Beeke presents a comprehensive system applicable to contemporary doctrinal and experiential challenges.

Beeke echoes a concern of post-enlightenment theologians: theologians must ground Christian truth in God's revelation against the polemics of modernism and post-modernism. He follows other reformed theologians such as Herman Bavinck, who studied the leading philosophers of his time in order to critique contemporary philosophies and ideas. To illustrate, Beeke engages with newer forms of panentheism in process theology (pp. 596–98). This theological concern informs his discussions on the doctrine of inerrancy (chs. 20–21). Also, readers will want to read Beeke's arguments against the continuation of special revelation in the form of prophecy (ch. 24). In chs. 26–47, Beeke unfolds “the Doctrine of God's Triune Glory,” giving significant attention to God's nature and attributes and to the true knowledge of God that “transforms a person” (p. 502). Beeke defends the unpopular doctrines of election and reprobation. He concludes this volume by reflecting upon angels and demons, providing insight to the nature of spiritual warfare and the activities of demons.

This work assumes its reader will have previous knowledge of Scripture, historical theology, and the history of philosophy. Those familiar with the reformed tradition may find the content repetitious when compared with other works. Readers will hear distant echoes of their favorite theologians or see them repeatedly quoted and referenced. At times, Beeke jumps into the deep waters of various theological and philosophical debates, potentially leaving less informed readers behind. He introduces each doctrine with a review of relevant historical and philosophical discussions, figures, and definitions. I fear that many readers will lose interest in these sections, never arriving at the rich biblical reflection and application. That said, anyone who plods slowly through this volume will reap much spiritual fruit.

Beeke introduces the philosophical and theological debates surrounding these doctrines at the beginning of different sections, but he rarely returns to these different views while he builds each locus. The work would benefit from having the polemics and theological construction interwoven throughout

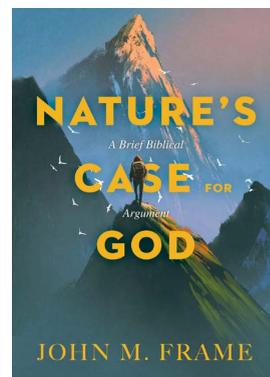
each section. In addition, Beeke's application seemed limited to theological debates, historical reflection, and personal piety. This volume serves as an opportunity for Beeke to speak to many important contemporary issues. One wonders how a figure such as Herman Bavinck would instruct Christians in a culture marked by the rebirth of paganism and identity politics. How would a reformed systematician speak to the controversies and various heresies that fill conservative churches and denominations? Hopefully, the future volumes will give Beeke an opportunity to fulfill the role of a public theologian.

A blending of biblical content, historical analysis, and personal application, this masterful work includes a sixty-four-page scripture index, a fact which bears witness to the deep biblical reflection driving this work. In addition, Beeke capitalizes on the decades he spent publishing historical and biographical works of the Puritans and Dutch Reformers. Writing in Puritan style, he adorns his theological conclusions with rich quotations from these historical giants. One of the trademarks of Puritan and Dutch Reformed pedagogy, numerous "uses" following exegetical and theological reflection appear in a contemporary form at the end of each section for the sake of personal application. Dry theological meanderings and high-tower polemics do not suit Beeke, as he aims for every reader to behold the glory of God and to apply truth to the heart. Readers will profit from the contemporary presentation of historic reformed theology in this volume. Joel Beeke's exemplary model of pastoral scholarship will influence the theological writing of the next generation of systematic theologians, pastors and layman.

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John M. Frame. *Nature's Case for God: A Brief Biblical Argument*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018. 124 pp. £9.99/\$11.99.

In this splendid little book, John Frame provides readers with a concise "natural theology." In distinction to some in his Reformed tradition who would contend that a natural theology is impossible, Frame believes that Scripture itself teaches that it is impossible for us to escape that "God is revealed everywhere" and that we must "obey his revelation in all creation" (p. 4). Far from "pushing Scripture to the side" in these theological musings, therefore, Frame desires to construct a "biblical natural theology" as he ruminates on the theological implications of nature within the revelatory confines of God's word (p. 9). The "fundamental goal" of the volume is to "show forth the glory of God in the world God has made" in order that readers may joyfully join their voices with the Psalms to proclaim that "the heavens really do declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (p. 13).



Frame's separates his work into two parts: the first examines the theological witness of the world, and the second, human nature's witness to the divine. He also includes an epilogue and four excerpts from personal correspondence that are germane to the topic. Part 1 is comprised of five brief chapters, each of which details how God's glory is observed in nature. Chapter 1 examines Scripture's testimony to God's greatness evidenced in creation. Frame argues that nature's "sheer size" moves the careful observer to affirm the indescribable greatness of creation and then appreciate and acknowledge the

Greatness. In chapter 2, Frame contemplates the way in which creation testifies to God's oneness: only One can unite the mesmerizingly complex stories of nature and history into one, unified story. The third chapter builds on the second to detail how God's wisdom is manifested in the knitting together of this great story, wherein both the parts and the whole bespeak of the wisdom displayed by the Great One. In chapter 4, Frame contends that the earth's consistent operations point to God's goodness, which he argues is the foundation of all morality. In the last chapter of this section, Frame discusses how creation evidences God's "nearness."

The second part of Frame's volume investigates how human conscience gives witness to God. Its four chapters detail four different "kinds" of consciences and their respective, divine testimonies. For Frame, the conscience is "our knowledge of good and evil, our knowledge of morals and ethics ... a deeply personal experience ... our actual sense of good and bad in ourselves and others" (pp. 77–78). Frame first speaks of the "seared conscience." Though warped and hardened, it is not without a moral witness, for the slightest prick of "moral principles" is the "voice of God" speaking even to the hardest hearts (p. 81). The next chapter describes the witness of the "accusing conscience," which can simultaneously accuse of wrongdoing, and excuse one of the same. Nevertheless, God's faint voice is still heard. In the third chapter of the second section, Frame describes the "awakened conscience." This conscience has been purified by God's grace in Christ and hearkens to his voice. The last chapter of this section highlights the witness of the "good conscience," which is "able to behave faithfully in the main thrust of his or her life." Such a person "may not be justly accused of fraudulent religiosity ... [for] the good conscience evaluates our conduct rightly" (p. 101). Summarizing these chapters, Frame states that "from the deepest depravity in the seared conscience to the highest level of Christian maturity in the good conscience, conscience bears witness to God, speaking to us of who he is and of what he wants from us: holiness and righteousness" (p. 102).

This little book was a delight to read. Its compact, one hundred pages are easily digestible. Frame uses helpful examples throughout and writes in a clear, easy manner. He provides a concise summary of how Bible-believing Christians can construct a natural theology with the help of the Scriptures. Its structure helpfully moves the reader from the general to specific in the first section, and from the lesser to the greater in the second. Readers familiar with Frame's other writings will find that this book strikes a different cord. Those expecting a careful, systematic, and comprehensive handling of the subject, therefore, will be disappointed. In several places, however, particularly in the preface, Frame points interested readers to his other writings where he engages the relevant theological and philosophical issues in greater depth.

Those familiar with Frame's other works, and especially with the presuppositional school of apologetics with which he is associated, may wonder if he is entirely consistent with what he and others have asserted elsewhere about the validity, or even the possibility, of natural theology in light of the fall and its noetic effects. A close reading of the preface, however, evidences that Frame is well aware he will be charged with inconsistency, stating "the school I am associated with" seriously questions the entire enterprise of natural theology, which is why he "must give an argument for its legitimacy" (p. 3). The preface serves as his justification for this attempt at a "biblical natural theology." Not only though, does Frame provide this justification, he seems to imply that he is more consistently "presuppositional" by attempting to construct a natural theology than those presuppositionalists who would reject the attempt all together. He argues that since "the Bible says that God is revealed in everything he has created," and since "presuppositional apologetics is particularly concerned to be subject to Scripture in

its reasoning,” he is the consistent presuppositionalist given that “our presupposition urges us to look at the world God has made” (p. 4). Even in the face of the noetic effects of sin (which is the significant, objectionable-sticking-point for those of the Reformed and/or presuppositionalist school), Frame argues for the “clarity of natural revelation” from the Scriptures, and this revelation’s “high importance” in the salvation of sinners, since it “serves as its presupposition,” “establishes the reality of sin,” and “makes the gospel necessary” (pp. 11–13). Frame contends, therefore, if the “arguments from this book are sound,” a consistent presuppositionalist must then affirm, in view of the Bible’s teachings, that nature teaches “not only that there is a God, but we can know him” (pp. 60–61).

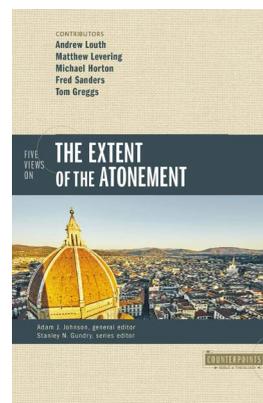
Having made such strong statements at the front of his brief volume, the reader may be surprised that Frame is not as consistently “biblical” in his construction of this natural theology as he proposes it will be. Some of his chapters appear more speculative than forcefully biblical, a few others are devotional in nature and use a text as but a starting point for his extended contemplation, while others are significantly biblical. So, one is left wondering if Frame or his presuppositional compatriots are more consistent in their application of their presupposition to the question of natural theology. In addition, one may also leave a bit foggy as to what Frame believes the various consciences are intended to particularly teach about God, short of their simple testimony to God’s existence.

With all this being said, while at first blush the book seems most appropriate for the “non-academic,” and a helpful, pastoral resource for an inquisitive parishioner about general revelation, the volume is in fact a significant, yet subtle, attempt by Frame to challenge a significant doctrine of the presuppositionalist school. For this reason, while the book is small, and could easily go unnoticed by Frame’s typical readers, it has massive significance within his corpus, and thus cannot go unnoticed by those interested in his writings or the larger conversations taking place within Reformational thought.

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Adam J. Johnson, ed. *Five Views on the Extent of the Atonement*. Counterpoints. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. 256 pp. £14.99/\$22.99.

Answering the question “for whom did Christ die?” is no simple task. Adam J. Johnson, associate professor of theology in the Torrey Honors Institute at Biola University and author of *Atonement: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), looks to provide a volume that presents responses to this question using an ecumenical approach. He does this by offering not only a chapter on the common Reformed and Wesleyan traditions, but also by dedicating a chapter to the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Christian Universalist views as well. In offering an introductory chapter which voices some of the different areas that are involved in this encompassing doctrine, Johnson paves the way for the presenting of these five different views on the extent of the atonement. True to the Counterpoint series, each view is given a chapter followed by responses from the four other authors.



First, Andrew Louth presents the Eastern Orthodox view. Louth claims that the idea of a forensic notion of atonement is far more prevalent in the Western theological tradition than it is in the East; therefore, the concept of the extent of the atonement in the East “hardly gets off the ground” (p. 32). To comment on the topic nonetheless, Louth mentions that it would be far better to speak of God’s redeeming love as unlimited than it would be to limit it, and that the purpose of such redemption is “to facilitate God’s original and eternal purpose for his created order, to draw it into union with himself, to deify it” (p. 36).

In the second chapter, Matthew Levering argues for the Roman Catholic view. After surveying the Catholic magisterial teaching and the influence of Augustine and Aquinas, Levering gives an account of his own position based on the biblical texts and the writing of Francis de Sales. In the end, Levering discerns a tension in the biblical teaching of God’s love. On the one hand, God efficaciously predestines some to salvation and permits others to remain in rebellion; on the other hand, God superabundantly loves each and every rational creature. Rather than subordinating one view over the other, Levering holds both sides in tension, concluding that Christ died “for the salvation of each and every human,” thus allowing that Christ “died for some whom he knew would reject him” (p. 89).

The third chapter, written by Michael Horton, presents the traditional Reformed view. He first clarifies some common misconceptions about Calvin and Calvinism before then discussing the importance of the Trinity for understanding God’s purpose in redemption. Horton provides ample biblical support for his view and argues that the Reformed understanding of the extent of the atonement is connected with its substitutionary nature. Horton then mentions three different answers concerning the purpose of Christ’s death, the first being Universalism, the second being Hypothetical Universalism or Amyraldianism, and the third being the one he argues for, which, in reference to the Canons of Dort, claims that Christ’s death is sufficient for all but is intended for the elect alone. Horton then responds to three objections to this view before closing his chapter.

The fourth chapter by Fred Sanders is dedicated to the Wesleyan view. Sanders view is heavily based on the doctrine of the Trinity, focusing on “the difference between nature and person, the difference between salvation accomplished and applied, and the difference between the Son and the Holy Spirit” (p. 158). Through the discussion of these three topics, Sanders argues that salvation is accomplished by the Son and applied by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the atonement is sufficient for all and intended for all, but it is effectively applied only to those who respond to Christ in faith. The tension of God not getting what he intends as some remain unreconciled to him is held to be a mystery “that resists final systematic solution” (p. 171).

Tom Greggs presents the fifth and final view, and argues for a Christian Universalist view. The chapter opens with the statement that the Christian Universalist believes not only that the atonement is universally offered to all humans, but that it is also universally effective for all humans as well. The chapter then follows with a clarification of how Christian Universalism differs from Pluralistic Universalism, and then offers a way that universalism can still allow for a motivation to evangelize the lost and how it can also make sense of biblical passages that speak about hell.

Johnson concludes the book by exhorting the reader to be patient in the working out of this doctrine, offers questions to be explored, and gives a call for further ecumenical discussion.

Overall, this book fulfills its purpose in giving a voice to those within traditions that are often neglected in this discussion, even though the views of the authors cannot be said to be representative of every person within that given tradition. Further, different aspects of certain chapters offer helpful

studies, such as Levering’s analysis of Augustine’s and Aquinas’s views on this topic. The different responses to the chapters are also at times helpful, although sometimes overly predictable.

My main critique of this book has to do with the ambiguity of its title. While it claims to offer five views on the extent of the atonement, it would be more appropriate to call it five views on the *intent* of the atonement. All five authors claim that in one way or another Jesus’ death is at the very least sufficient for all people. None of the authors claim that the atonement is limited in the sense that it is sufficient and efficient for the elect alone, a view that would have added to the contribution of this book. But as it is, this volume offers views that differ more on the intent of the atonement than on the extent of it.

Regardless, this volume remains a worthy contribution in offering an ecumenical discussion on the atonement. It is a helpful introduction to the field and will hopefully serve to encourage the reader to explore this topic more fully.

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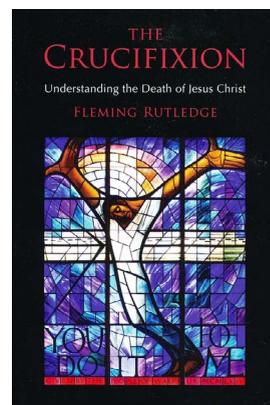
Fleming Rutledge. *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. xxv + 669 pp. £24.99/\$30.00.

In 1977, Fleming Rutledge became one of the first women ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal church. Although she has not held a tenure-track teaching position, her academic credentials are noteworthy as well: two fellowships at the Center for Theological Inquiry in Princeton, a residency at Wycliffe College, Toronto, a stint as visiting scholar at the American Academy in Rome, and a dozen or so books.

Rutledge divides her book in two parts. The first addresses the crucifixion specifically. Here Rutledge emphasizes the prominence of the crucifixion in the Gospels, the peculiarity of crucifixion itself—it matters not only *that* he died, but *how*—and, accordingly, the specific horrors of it, morally and physically. She explores the “non-religious” character of crucifixion, the detestable strangeness of it, and the “godlessness” of it, memorably calling the crucifixion “the most secular, irreligious happening ever to find its way into the arena of faith” (p. 54).

The first part also includes a chapter on Anselm, whose legacy is addressed at various times throughout the book. In sum, Rutledge defends substitution but not *penal* substitution—in fact she finds little biblical support for punishment as a feature of the atonement at all. Rutledge argues that the penal substitutionary model of “Late Reformed Scholasticism” (namely, Charles Hodge) is rationalistic and biblically narrow (p. 488). Anselm’s rationalistic manner, Rutledge suspects, may have led to such rigidity.

Noteworthy in this first part are three things. First, Rutledge compellingly reconsiders the crucifixion and of its shame, ugliness, and moral significance. Second, she astutely characterizes contemporary evangelicalism’s numbness to the manner, and thus the meaning, of Christ’s death as a form of Gnosticism in which God’s power to save is eclipsed by “*our capacity for being redeemed*” (p. 51 n. 23, emphasis original). Third, Rutledge’s take on Paul’s understanding of sin as “not something that



one commits” but rather “a power by which one is held helplessly in thrall” is of particular interest (p. 101).

Rutledge says in the preface that “it is the *living significance* of the death of Jesus, not the factual details concerning it as a historical event, that matters” (p. xvii, emphasis original), and this is borne out in part 2, “The Biblical Motifs,” which comprise roughly two-thirds of the book. Rutledge here makes good on her claim that the many atonement theories, and the many biblical themes and images which are fulfilled in the crucifixion, ought not to be thought in competition but should be allowed in concert to enrich our understanding of Christ. Thus, the many generic descriptions of Rutledge’s understanding of New Testament fulfillment of the Old Testament, in hermeneutical terms, resonate with evangelical exegetical and biblical theological sensitivities, though her views of the historicity and authority of Scripture, and of Satan, hell, and eschatology, ought to draw scrutiny from evangelical readers.

According to Rutledge, Satan and hell are artefacts of a New Testament cosmology now metaphysically irrelevant. (The absence of hell in Paul helps to explain away its appearances in the Gospels.). As far as the reality or true nature of these things (metaphysics), we must remain agnostic, at best. We should nonetheless revive such terms and symbols in order to preach the gospel in an age now facing evils which have outdone the available moral grammar. Truly there are no words for the evil we have seen; so, Rutledge argues that the crucifixion, and the full lexicon of biblical imagery which exposit it, provides that vocabulary. Evil, she says, is morally (and metaphysically) unintelligible: “there is no explanation” (p. 443). Therefore, she argues, myths and symbols are both necessary and necessarily non-real. The fall, too, is morally informative “myth” (p. 419 n. 65).

She says, putting this into practice, that “we may not demonize other human groups, but it is sometimes necessary to demonize *something*” (p. 438). In the Barmen Declaration, for example, Karl Barth resisted “demonic powers,” and in the same way, for contemporary readers, “[a] sense of the principalities and powers is necessary for discerning what the enemy is up to” (p. 417). The book is peppered with such applications of cruci-centric metaphor to present-day evils, from hate crimes to genocide. In my view, this is a mixed bag. Indeed, evangelicalism has still to sort out its view of the relationship between the gospel and a keen socio-political eye for injustice. Still, Rutledge’s emphasis on the physical suffering of Jesus on the cross (in part 1) and the mechanics and politics of crucifixion in first-century Palestine—themes which she admits are absent from the text of Scripture—indicates a curious hermeneutical move in which the death of Christ is interpreted as the fulfillment of extrabiblical themes. In this sense, Rutledge does not offer biblical theological reflections on the church organism and political participation, but tests a hermeneutical anomaly vulnerable to politicization of the gospel.

For Rutledge, the familiar notion of hell should be eclipsed by a deeper understanding of the crucifixion as Christ’s victory over Sin (Rutledge uses upper case “S”), understood as a subjugating power opposed to God’s good intentions for creation. The humiliation of Christ is so profound, and his victory so complete, that the eternal persistence of enmity against God is inconceivable. Rutledge reads Pauline justification in this way, too, as final rectification, restoration of a moral order consistent with Augustinian ontology: God the self-existent good, who has no opposite, and all that he has made. There is no eternal state of the reprobate.

The reader may understand, then, why Rutledge claims that in Romans 11:15, “Paul strongly hints at the redemptive activity of God *among unbelievers* even beyond the grave” (p. 408). Or why she says that “the Jacob-Esau dichotomy therefore becomes no dichotomy at all, but a summation of God’s dealings with the entire human race in its twinned identity—simultaneously *both* reprobate *and* elect” (p. 607).

Universal atonement in one place is unambiguously affirmed (p. 610), even though she says elsewhere that “many a preacher can testify that the good news of Jesus Christ frequently falls on deaf ears” (p. 606 n. 60).

Rutledge is careful, at many points, not to succumb to the politicization of redemptive language, but her hermeneutics and metaphysical reluctance may signal vulnerability to humanistic permutations of biblical ethics. She has acute concern for the preaching of the cross of Christ according to the Scriptures; indeed, her concern for the purity of the church is unambiguous and she is a sharp critic of cultural blind spots and indefensible conveniences. But what all this means, the reader learns, is a political posture of the church institution, along with hermeneutical and doctrinal adjustments, rather conspicuously inharmonious with conservative evangelicalism. Rutledge’s theology is too often unlike and in too many places adverse to the gospel of historic Protestantism not to be read with a more critical eye.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Jason K. Allen. *Letters to My Students: Volume 1, On Preaching*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2019. xviii + 173 pp. £12.99/\$16.99.

I have read many books on preaching, but I honestly think this may be the best brief introduction that I’ve come across.

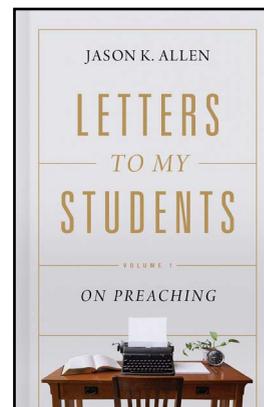
Jason Allen is the—relatively young—president of the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. He is obviously familiar with preachers who have been instrumental in the last two centuries and adapts the famous title of Spurgeon’s *Lectures to My Students* to come up with these *Letters to My Students*.

In twenty brief “letters” Allen identifies some of the best ways to preach faithfully and helpfully. (If I began the book unsure that it would be all that helpful, I finished it convinced that it is a very useful book to put into the hands of every preacher.)

The book is divided into three sections: (1) Preparing to Be a Preacher, (2) Preparing Your Sermon, and (3) Growing in Your Preaching.

In the first section the emphasis is on the preacher and the priority of exposition. Allen identifies four marks of a call to this ministry—two that are subjective (a desire for the work and a surrender to the work) and two that are objective (ability to teach and a holy life). He returns to this theme at the end because if there is no deep passion for the work it will be easily lost or abandoned.

Allen’s theology of preaching—conviction about sin, Scripture, the Spirit, exposition and character—is a skillfully presented and essential beginning point of the book. Unless we understand these things, we will never rise above the temptation to “entertain or simply fill the hour” (p. 12). Of great help in the book is Allen’s conviction that preachers can and will develop if the right priorities are in place.



Allen is convinced that the expositor “doesn’t merely preach *from* a text or *on* a text. He preaches *the* text” (p. 38). He gives twelve reasons why this is vital—not least as the way to a healthier church. Then he guides the beginner with some very great wisdom: start with a simple passage, prepare thoroughly, remove yourself from the sermon as much as possible, lift Jesus high, and trust the Lord despite your feelings—“the effectiveness of the sermon rests in God’s power, not yours” (p. 53).

In the second section of the book, Allen addresses every preacher in ways that I wish every preacher would be addressed! He writes as a pastor asking how the Scripture speaks to the ordinary person, the suffering, and the frightened. He appeals, therefore, for the preacher to know the context of their text and the context of their listeners. Preparation should be “more like a Crock-Pot than a microwave. Slow and protracted contemplation often will yield the best results” (p. 62). This will take time and effort.

There are basic questions to ask when beginning preparation—who, where, what, and why-type questions. The aim is to get an exegetical outline and then a hermeneutical outline. Allen guides the preacher through a “point by point” sermon—suggesting the introduction and conclusion be worked out last. There is wisdom on illustrations, good (and bad) words to use when preaching (pp. 96–97) and how to ground ethical imperatives in the Gospel: e.g., “don’t focus on giving a lot of imperatives without reminding the congregation of the indicatives of the gospel” (p. 92). In a day of unbelief there can hardly be a more important priority than this in restoring belief rather than crushing the last drops of it out of people.

Allen tackles some common (and highly relevant) problems in preaching today, from the fear of addressing a congregation as “you” to the weariness of promising to conclude and then not concluding!

The book’s third section (on growing as a preacher) grapples with questions like special occasions and whether to preach in response to events in the news. His advice on this is very wise. Are these events affecting your people substantially, do they pose a threat to people morally or doctrinally, is a pastoral response necessitated? He boldly suggests that we preachers may talk about our readiness to preach on the issues of life (e.g., “gender, race and racism, sexuality, and marriage”) but strangely “never come across them in the text” (p. 115).

Allen suggests that a sermon must “be an invitation” (p. 127) without having to attach an invitation at the end of the sermon. That is, people should be called to respond in some way without the necessary call to the front. And he rightly attacks preaching that is ranting, suggesting we preach *to* God’s people not *at* them (p. 148).

There is much more that could be said in a book on preaching but as a manageable introduction I would be glad to give this to all preachers and use it as a good discussion starter among pastors. In a day when much preaching is “a mild-mannered man encouraging milder-mannered people to be more mild-mannered” (p. 32) we could do with every help we can get.

The strengths of this little book include skillful advice on getting the text right and practical help on getting the message across. Permeating the book is the heart of a pastor with passion for the message but also compassion for people.

There are big issues raised by Allen—like the need to ground imperatives in the indicatives of the gospel and the importance of preaching Christ from the entire Bible—that offer a theological challenge to us all and should be pursued in greater detail by the reader.

There are some personal challenges—like putting self and family illustrations aside and being ready to tackle issues that our people are bewildered by in their Christian lives—that should provoke deep reflection.

As the young and the old preacher will benefit from these “letters,” this is a book to give to both.

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Kenneth J. Barnes. *Redeeming Capitalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. xiv + 224 pp. £21.99/\$25.99.

This book is a must-read for anyone committed to their fellow-citizens in an age of distrust of all things Western. It confronts us with the reality that, whatever its failings, capitalism is the only economic system that human ingenuity has come up with that has created real opportunity and prosperity, lifting countless people out of poverty and injustice across the centuries and the globe.

At the same time, it insightfully unpacks how capitalism has become so corrupted that it urgently needs redeeming. And it not only powerfully points to what needs to be done to reground capitalism on proper moral foundations, it identifies what those foundations are, how the regrounding might be done, and who might be best placed to take the lead in doing it.

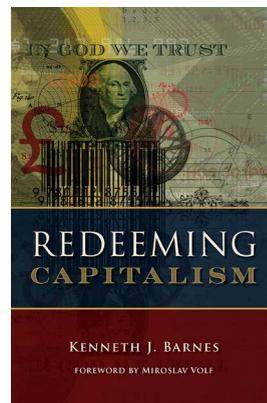
In his introduction, Kenneth Barnes (professor of workplace theology and business ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) points out that the global financial crisis of 2007–2008 was not the near miss that many believe it was, but the first shot in a battle for the very soul of capitalism, a shot that scored a direct hit. He is surely right, for not only does that event still threaten us (because it was a debt crisis only temporarily resolved by the taking on of unimaginable mountains of new debt—both private and government), it has furthermore ignited a deep and destabilising distrust of modern capitalism.

Regrettably, that mistrust is not without basis. With devastating clarity, Barnes tracks us through the collapse of Lehman Brothers—the single financial institution that triggered the crash. What emerges is not just a picture of extraordinary moral laxity in the management of a hither-too-trusted financial behemoth, but a clear window into the deep structural and moral fault lines that have come to characterise capitalism globally.

Barnes describes the development of financial derivatives and how, as a result of greed, perfectly legitimate, useful, and indeed legal instruments like them were used in highly reckless and frankly immoral ways to the point where totally unsustainable levels of indebtedness left huge businesses dangerously exposed.

Understandably, many argue that the answer must lie in better laws, and as we saw after the Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Banks and Financial Institutions in Australia in 2018, there is never a shortage of new ideas on offer. Some seventy new regulations and laws, with new levels of surveillance, policing and penalties, were recommended.

Barnes argues, surely correctly, that laws are not enough. Lehman Brothers collapsed in an environment of quite far-reaching prudential guidelines, yet not only did it fail, none of those responsible went to jail. Here, then, is the dilemma. When men and women won't do what they ought to do voluntarily, they need to be compelled to do so by law. We demand that those who threaten us be



obliged to operate under new restrictions. We bury ourselves under legal obligations and all the while our freedoms are silently but relentlessly wound back little by little.

Furthermore, Barnes reminds us, in a desperate attempt to avoid economic collapse, governments around the world bailed out many major businesses, effectively transferring private sector debt to the public accounts. This impacts citizens in two major and deeply concerning ways: it means that they must pay the interest on vastly inflated government debt through a combination of increased taxation burden and reduced government services, and it has seriously exacerbated the generational wealth divide. This is because in an attempt to both revitalise economies and devalue massive public debts, governments have been effectively 'printing money'. The outcome has been flat-lining real wages but considerable asset appreciation, in turn creating a serious intergenerational equity crisis, as those who hold property become richer while their children cannot afford housing.

And so, the author turns to the question of morality, and not only sketches out the classic and Christian virtues (i.e., prudence, justice, courage and temperance) but also mounts a convincing case that the early capitalists understood and—mostly—operated under those virtues, and that the key to redeeming capitalism now lies in resurrecting them.

Prudence, Barnes reminds us, was defined by St Augustine as 'the knowledge of what to seek and what to avoid' (p. 11). It is far more than mere caution; it is the subjugation of desire, or motive, to the principle of goodness or value, thereby producing virtuous actions. Justice, as Aquinas described it, is 'a stable and lasting willingness to do the just thing for everyone' (p. 13). It is necessarily aligned to the subordinate virtue of truthfulness. Courage 'keeps the will steadfastly attached to the good,' wrote Aquinas (p. 15). Among other things, it will oblige people of power and influence to be honest and to admit mistakes. Temperance (or moderation) is 'a special virtue of restraint operating in fields in which we find ourselves specially and exceptionally attracted' (p. 16). It is aligned to the subordinate virtues of 'mildness, clemency, and most of all, humility' (p. 16). This, in turn, checks our pride, which is the basis for all manner of wrong behaviour.

These virtues have been abandoned, even lost, by many in the West, and have been replaced by moral relativism. Key to the book's message is the proposition that just as our culture once operated in a vastly different moral universe, which also included the Christian virtues of faith, hope and love, so did business. And just as our culture has degenerated as a result of the loss not only of the almost universally accepted 'cardinal virtues,' as well as the more specifically Christian virtues, so has that peculiarly Western—even Protestant—economic system of capitalism.

Barnes's explanation of the influence of Christianity upon the development of capitalism is compelling, and will make fascinating reading for many with an interest in history. Calvin, for example, 'rejected any compartmentalization of a believer's life' (p. 112). All of life, including economic activity, should be lived according to God's precepts and in response to God's grace. Furthermore, everyone has a moral responsibility to look after their neighbour's property, and to help those in need. As Barnes illustrates in chapter 3, even Adam Smith, seen as the intellectual father of capitalism and so often demonised by those who rail against it as being based on greed and the profit motive alone, plainly believed that good business requires good moral behaviour.

As capitalist societies have lost their religious moorings, 'behavior once considered indecent is now celebrated' (p. 140). The accumulation of wealth and 'a hedonistic tendency toward excessive self-indulgence' (p. 140), are seen as desirable, even virtuous, in postmodern society. Worse still, instead of

growing in compassion for the poor, ‘our culture has developed a contempt for the poor’ (p. 140). This, needless to say, is deeply unchristian.

Barnes believes not only that we must but that we can redeem work, business, and money and markets—the three building blocks of our economic system. He sees it as a journey, not as a destination, and argues that it ‘will likely begin—and in some respects has already begun—in the religious sector’ (p. 206); that is, among Christians.

It is tempting to dismiss this as naive. Not only does it seem that the business world is hostile to notions of interfering and meddling do-gooders, many Christians themselves are (in my view) either disinterested or too ‘otherworldly’ to want to defend business, let alone seek to reform it. Many have also fallen prey to the idea that profit is a dirty word. (But provided that there is no coercion involved, it is the very fuel of poverty-busting machinery whereby one who has an excess of, say, woollen sweaters exchanges one for a loaf of bread and both parties benefit; i.e., profit.)

And yet, as the author points out, the tools at our disposal are powerful, if we will but use them: faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, courage, temperance, wisdom and common grace.

As I contemplated Barnes’s belief that we can make a real difference to the economic and social conditions of our world, it struck me that he has history on his side. The great Christian social reformer, William Wilberforce, is best remembered for his role in abolishing slavery. However, he was equally proud of his role in the massive reformation of the world’s biggest business at that time: the British East India Company. Effectively, the Company was ‘England in India’, and it behaved outrageously in its pursuit of profit. Wilberforce drove a totally new charter through the Parliament that obliged the Company to revolutionise the way in which it operated in India. The new charter was rewritten to reflect real virtues, and when coupled with the way in which the Evangelicals had so influenced British society as to make it almost fashionable to behave well, the effect was a genuine journey of transformation. Missionaries were allowed in, schools were opened, the appalling practice of suttee (the burning alive of widows) was outlawed, commerce was made fairer and, over time, millions benefited from efforts to counter the effects of the regular natural disasters that so often blighted the poor in particular. With hindsight, we might argue against colonialism, but that does not alter the reality that massive and humanitarian reform was driven, unexpectedly but effectively, by compassionate Christian men and women.

I am not persuaded by every aspect of the book. For instance, I believe Barnes is overly optimistic when he finds hope in the current rush by many business leaders to insist that they care about social and environmental issues. In my view, a great deal of it is shallow ‘virtue signalling’ in recognition of the low esteem in which they are now held rather than a sincere re-embracing of the classic and real virtues. It often amounts more to trying to placate the culture than lead it to a better place. I also believe that he underestimates the loss of understanding of, and therefore ability to recognise, those virtues in mainstream culture (though his native North America may be different to mine).

But these are minor quibbles, and in any case much the same general moral confusion confronted the great Evangelical reformers in Wilberforce’s day, and yet the reformers triumphed over time.

Redeeming Capitalism is a superb and very important book, and I could not recommend it more strongly. I hope that like Wilberforce’s famous book on real Christianity it sells vastly more than the publisher dared dream!

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James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds. *Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. ix + 258 pp. £16.99/\$24.99.

The “Four Views” series from Baker Academic presents different perspectives on a range of subjects of contemporary Christian debate. The latest book in this series is about how to understand the identity of transgender people—that is, those whose gender identity as man or woman or other does not match the biological sex into which they were born.

The book begins with an introduction by the editors in which they trace the development of the concept of transgender identities, give an overview of contemporary issues and controversies on the subject, and outline the range of different Christian perspectives on the matter.

The introduction is then followed by four chapters which set out four different understandings of transgender identity by five authors. Each of these chapters is followed by three responses by the other four authors. At the end of the book there is a glossary, a list of the contributors to the book, and Scripture and subject indexes.

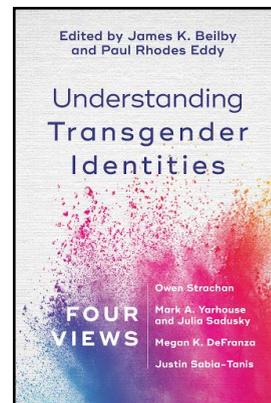
The first chapter, “Transition or Transformation? A Moral-Theological Exploration of Christianity and Gender Dysphoria,” is by Owen Strachan, associate professor of Christian theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. For Strachan,

the Scriptures speak with conviction and compassion on the contested matters before us. My view, the historic view of the millennia-old Christian Church, is that the sexes are binary—man and woman. Further, while we all undergo suffering as a result of Adam’s fall, men and women who experience gender dysphoria should not undergo bodily changes but instead, with vivified awareness of the witness of Scripture and a moral imagination ignited for God, should pursue something greater and more effectual than any transition: *transformation*. (pp. 57–58, emphasis original)

By “transformation” Strachan means people receiving strength from God through the Spirit to accept their biological sex is a gift of God, to repent of the desire to assume an alternative identity, and to live as the men and women God created them to be.

The second chapter, “The Complexities of Gender Identity: Towards a More Nuanced Approach to the Transgender Experience,” is by Mark A. Yarhouse, professor of psychology at Wheaton College, and Julia Sadusky, a postdoctoral fellow at ED Care in Denver, Colorado. Yarhouse and Sadusky consider three “frameworks” or “lenses” for “understanding the topic of gender identity and the people who are navigating gender identity concerns” (p. 102).

The first framework is the “integrity framework” (p. 102). This holds, on the basis of Genesis 1–2, that God has created human being as male and female, that what determines their maleness or femaleness is the sex of their body, and that Scripture prohibits behavior that goes against this sexual identity. The second framework is the “disability framework” (p. 104). This holds that an incongruence between someone’s sense of their own identity and their biological sex is a result of the Fall, but is not to be regarded as a moral issue because (like disability) it is something that has happened to someone rather than something they have chosen. The third framework is the “diversity lens” (p. 105). This holds that the different understandings of gender identity that exist today are something “to be embraced and celebrated” (p. 105).



Having set out these three frameworks or lenses, Yarhouse and Sadusky then sketch out how each of them provides a different way of approaching the issue of transitioning into a new gender identity and impacts ministry to transgender people. At the end of the chapter they offer “the possibility for churches to consider what it would look like to draw from each of the three lenses in a way that maintains doctrinal positions and offers the gift of hospitality to all persons” (p. 128). They emphasize that “there is no single experience of navigating gender identity concerns that captures all the experiences of people who identify as transgender” (p. 129) and “recommend a willingness to be ‘caught up’ on the life of the person in front of you, rather than making blanket statements that enact judgement on behavior before understanding the context of a person’s life” (pp. 129–30).

The third chapter, “Good News for Gender Minorities,” is by Megan K. DeFranza, a research assistant at the Center for Mind and Culture and a visiting researcher at Boston University School of Theology. DeFranza argues that although the human race is generally dimorphic in that most people are either male or female both in their biology and in their sense of self, there are exceptions—namely, those who are biologically intersex or who do not identify with their biological sex. She further contends that the way that the New Testament includes eunuchs within the people of God (in line with Isa 56:3–5) points to the truth that the biblical story “is not circular but linear. It does not end where it started” (p. 174). As she sees it, “Adam and Eve are but the beginning of the story” rather than “some masculine or feminine ideal against which we all fall short” (p. 174). Post Eden there can be a variety of different ways of being human (such as being a eunuch) and what matters is our “conformity to Christ” (p. 175) rather than some particular masculine or feminine identity.

The lesson from all this, DeFranza contends, is that “Christians must stop demonizing transgender people as rebellious against God and nature on account of the fact that their experience of themselves is different from the majority” (pp. 177–78).

The fourth and final chapter, “Holy Creation, Holy Creative: God’s Intention for Gender Diversity,” is by Justin Sabia-Tanis, assistant professor and director of the Social Transformation Program at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. Tanis argues,

Male and female define two categories of humans, but they are not meant to be exclusive boxes that limit our individual expression. Like night and day, land and sea, plant and animal, they are descriptors but have liminal spaces between them where aspects of both elements are combined. How people express these spaces, these differences, is part of the beauty that makes up the human family, part of the goodness of God’s creation. (pp. 196–97)

Like DeFranza, Tanis sees the inclusion of eunuchs into God’s people as a sign “of God’s recognition and acceptance of an array of genders” (p. 205). Tanis explains, “Being transgender or intersex is experienced by many of us as a gift from God, an opportunity to see life from more than one perspective, to understand the world through uncommon, but holy lenses” (p. 204). As Tanis sees it,

Christians with gender dysphoria have the right to pursue treatment that offers the greatest possibility for their health and well-being. For many transgender people, but certainly not all, this entails gender transition, which can take a variety of forms, including hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and gender confirmation surgeries. Moreover, I believe that our calling to compassion requires us to advocate for people’s right to make this decision and work to ensure equitable access to it. (pp. 204–5)

Understanding Transgender Identities is a useful introduction to the current debate about transgender identity in both society and the Church. The introduction and the subsequent chapters clearly illustrate the range of different positions that are taken concerning the nature of transgender identities and how best to provide pastoral care for transgender people. The responses by Strachan helpfully highlight the weaknesses of the more liberal approaches represented by the other four authors.

However, there are also a number of weaknesses in the book. First, there is a lack of attention to the vigorous social and political debate that is currently taking place about matters such as the use of pronouns for transgender people, what should be taught about transgender issues in schools, and whether male to female transsexuals should be able to take part in women's sport or have access to women-only facilities.

Second, there is a lack of engagement with the increasing body of evidence that suggests that gender transition will not necessarily be effective in resolving the mental anguish experienced by transgender people. The issue of the effectiveness of treatments for gender dysphoria is discussed on pp. 116–20, 137 and 213–14. But in all three places the evidence suggesting that gender transition will not necessarily produce the relief from mental distress that patients are looking for is not taken sufficiently seriously. In fact, the evidence of those who have de-transitioned is dismissed rather than properly discussed.

Third, the chapter by Strachan suggests that an orthodox Christian response to the transgender issue is linked to a conservative complementarian view of male and female gender roles. Strachan does acknowledge that evangelical egalitarians do generally take a traditional view of human sexual identity (see n. 55 on p. 80), but the chapter as a whole suggests a tight link between a traditional view of sexual identity and a complementarian view of gender roles in a way that evangelical egalitarians may find problematic.

Fourth (and most seriously), the book as a whole—including the material by Strachan—fails to clearly identify these key theological issues in the debate about transgender identity:

- Sex means the way that human bodies are configured to play a particular role as males or females in sexual reproduction.
- Human beings are made up of bodies and souls and, for the reason just given, their sexual identity is determined by their bodies.
- Intersex conditions are a result of disorders of human sexual development, which point to the inherently dimorphic nature of human sexuality by being developments which serve no positive functional purpose.
- It is impossible for either hormones or surgery to actually change someone's sex.
- The sex into which we have been born is to be welcomed and lived out as a good gift from God because it is an integral part of who God made us to be, and that rejecting it and adopting an alternative artificial identity instead is consequently a sinful rejection of God's will. (This point is noted by Strachan but not developed in any detail).
- Transgender people, like all other people, are both the victims and agents of sin. They are victims of sin in that they have sinful desires which they did not choose, and they are agents of sin in so far as these desires lead them to reject their God-given sexual identity.

Those who want more detail on these issues should refer to Ryan T. Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* (New York: Encounter, 2018); Martin Davie, *Transgender*

Liturgies (London: Latimer Trust, 2017); and Oliver O'Donovan, *Transsexualism: Issues and Argument* (Cambridge: Grove, 2007).

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Lindsay Carlson. *Growing in Godliness: A Teen Girl's Guide to Maturing in Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway: 2019. 128 pp. £10.99/\$14.99.

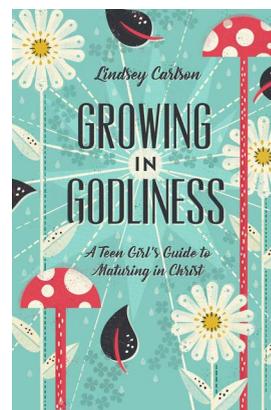
Teen ministry is facing a crisis of superficiality. With all the terrible statistics about teenage Christians giving up their faith (e.g., one recent survey of young Australians states that only 8% who grew up in Christian families remain “resilient disciples” today), the challenge for parents and youth ministers is to help teens grow deep spiritual roots. This is the worthy aim of Lindsay Carlson's book for teen girls—to help them understand the Bible's teaching on growing as a Christian (sanctification) and to give practical advice on how to grow.

In recent years, many books have been written to address the retention of young people in our churches (e.g., Kara E. Powell and Chap Clark, *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan: 2011]). Ironically, these books may stoke the fears of parents and church leaders by emphasizing the high rates of teens leaving their faith behind. But Carlson's is not an anxious book. The first thing that struck me as I read it was her optimism about the work of God through his Word and Spirit in a teen's life. Her message is not to fear the world and its temptations, but to get on with the life of discipleship. Carlson clearly states her goal on p. 13: “I'll challenge you to live to grow in Christ, to find purpose in all you do, and to trust God's sovereign goodness. We'll talk about limitations and I'll point you to the tools God uses to equip you through his Word, his church and prayer.”

Carlson writes from a conservative reformed perspective and displays both the strengths and weaknesses of her tradition. She focuses on the sovereign work of God in a teenager's life and on the importance of holy living. The focus on sovereignty is a strength of the book and one of my favorite chapters is on human limitations. Teenage girls in our world are often told that they should “do you” and not listen to the voices of others who will constrain them. Instead, this book is real about limits—including sin and a limited understanding of God and oneself. Carlson draws attention to Proverbs 12:15: “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.” For a teenage girl to take up the tools of godliness, she will need to start with a heart of humility, dependent on God for help and strength (p. 48).

Carlson has a high view of theology and the Scriptures. Moreover, she is optimistic about the theological literacy of her readers. This is not just a book of inspiring anecdotes, but serious theology and strong biblical teaching. She supports her points with generous biblical quotations, modelling to the teenage girl a deep commitment to the Scriptures. She includes wonderful theological quotations from reformed writers such as R. C. Sproul, Jerry Bridges, and John Piper.

Another strength is Carlson's focus on Word, church, and prayer as “tools” to help teenagers grow in godliness. The emphasis on these tools reflects the New Testament teaching on growth, but this truth



is also demonstrated in current research. In a recent Barna survey, the conclusions about strengthening the faith of contemporary young Christians are surprisingly conventional. It states that “prayer and scripture are the foundation of resilience”; that is, resilient disciples read the Bible and pray on their own and with others. They are deeply connected in the church community and the “Church is deeply impactful on identity and vocation” (*The Connected Generation, Australia, New Zealand Report: How Christian Leaders around the World Can Strengthen Faith and Well Being Among 18–35-Year-Olds* [Barna Group, 2019], 26–27). The new context of the young person is difficult, chaotic and anxious, but the means of grace remain the same: The Word, prayer, and the church.

One reservation I have about *Growing in Godliness* is that it may simply be too dry for the typical teenage girl who lives in the world of memes and snapchat. There are not enough concrete examples of the points being made or clear applications to the teen’s life at home and at school. Because it doesn’t engage sufficiently with the teenage girls’ context, the book seems strangely disconnected.

Contributing to this sense of disconnection, Carlson does not address key temptations that most teenage girls face. Adolescence is a time of questioning and challenges as a girl tries to work out her identity and sense of self. I was surprised that Carlson doesn’t address temptations such as the desire to be seen as “sexy” online, being vain and/or insecure about your body, bullying girls at school so that you will be more popular, judging yourself by your academic achievements, etc.

A final reservation I have about this book is that, despite the emphasis on God’s sovereignty, there is not as much emphasis on Jesus’s atoning death and resurrection. Although the gospel message of redemption is there (e.g., p. 39), the incredible news of God’s grace is not brought to life in the reader’s imagination. Because teenagers are fragile and still trying to work out who they are, and how to fit in and get approval, they need to be constantly reminded of God’s grace in the gospel. Ultimately it is the gospel message that shapes the heart and leads to faith and repentance. It is the gospel that will motivate the teenager to make use of God’s tools and grow in godliness.

Although I probably wouldn’t give this book to most teenage girls, I would use it as a resource in a small group setting. It would be easy to create a study using the many Bible passages and quotations as well as the reflection questions at the end of each chapter. In addition to these excellent questions, Carlson suggests prayer points and verses for teens to tape to their mirror to be a daily reminder of truth. What’s more, the book isn’t particularly gender specific and could be used in a mixed group.

The rapid evolution of teen culture means that every decade or so we need a new book to give to teenage Christians to help them grow in Christ and live faithfully in the world. This book does not engage the heart enough for me to think that it is “the one.” Nevertheless, *Growing in Godliness* is a good resource and may, of course, be just the right book for some.

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Joshua D. Chatraw and Karen Swallow Prior, eds. *Cultural Engagement: A Crash Course in Contemporary Issues*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. 359 pp. £40.00/\$29.99.

Of making many books about culture, there is no end, and much study wearies the body. So, it was with a degree of trepidation that I ventured into the unknown of this collection of short essays on a wide variety of cultural issues. I need not have feared, however—it ended up being rather brilliant.

Part 1 sets the foundation for how we understand culture and the church’s relationship to culture. The three chapters that comprise this part are worth the price of the whole book. Chatraw and Prior are clearly *au fait* with a wide variety of authors in this field—Mark Noll, Kevin Vanhoozer, James Hunter, Charles Taylor, Richard Niebuhr, Don Carson, Rod Dreher and Alasdair MacIntyre, amongst others. In fact, this section of the book would be an excellent summary for those who want to understand what these authors are teaching but just don’t have the time to read all their works.

Although *Cultural Engagement* is scholarly and well researched, it is also immensely practical. This is seen, for example, in part 1 where the issue of frequenting Starbucks is discussed. I read this on the same day that I read about Starbucks funding the Transgender activist group, *Mermaids*. It genuinely helped in clarifying my thinking and subsequent action.

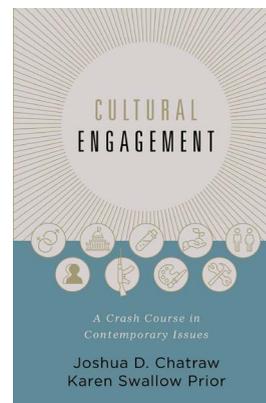
Perhaps the most important insight in this section is one that is reflected throughout the whole book. After citing James Hunter’s observation that in engaging the world there is no single strategic model for all times and places, Chatraw and Prior state this guiding principle: “Much in cultural engagement hangs on wisdom and virtue rather than a list of rules or universal plan that we might extract from the Bible” (p. 38). They also helpfully recognize that “Cultural issues are complex because each one involves holistic beings living in multifaceted communities with problems that are interconnected” (p. 50).

Part 2 is the substance of the book looking at nine different contemporary issues—each with a number of short (in some cases very short!) essays on the subject. I would have expected that these essays would interact with one another—but it is actually a strength of the book that they don’t. Each author writes from their own perspective on their given subject and (with a couple of exceptions) does not engage with what the others have written. The range of subjects is also fascinating and, in my view, spot on as regards the key issues in our culture: sexuality, gender roles, human life and reproductive technology, immigration and race, creation and creature care, politics, work, arts and war, weapons and capital punishment.

Any collection of essays is going to be of varied quality, and this book is no exception. However, with few exceptions, I found the vast majority of the essays to be thoughtful, well-written, and stimulating.

The first area of discussion, sexuality, was for me the most disappointing—I suspect because it is an area in which I have already done a great deal of reading. The quality was the most varied of any of the sections, from Rosario Butterfield’s “What It Means to Love Our LGBTQ Neighbors,” which should be published as a stand-alone leaflet, to the disappointing “Rethinking Same-Sex Relationships” by Matthew Vines, who sees being opposed to SSM as the modern equivalent to believing that the earth is the center of the universe!

But after that initial section the rest of the discussion subjects are more balanced. All are informative and stimulating. I don’t like reading books that simply confirm what I already think or know. I prefer to



be challenged and informed—and indeed even changed. There are a handful of books that have done this for me in the past few years, and this is one of them. I found the essays on in vitro fertilization informative and challenging—to the extent that they changed my mind. Charlie Camosy’s “Reproductive Biotechnology as a Product of Consumerism” was particularly outstanding.

Sometimes there is confusion and inconsistency in some of the essays. For example, Ellen Painter Dollar’s argument—“while I do not consider abortion a morally neutral or a good thing, I support abortion rights” (p. 145)—makes about as much sense as stating that although I don’t think slavery is a good thing, I still support slave-owners’ rights!

Inevitably, with such short essays there is a temptation to revert to oversimplification. For example, in his “Climate Change is a Christian Issue,” Jonathan Moo writes of the way in which biblical Christianity “challenges us to stand with the oppressed, the poor and the weak” (p. 195) before going on to mention the potential for a refugee crisis stemming from climate change but without mentioning the way in which some measures taken to limit climate change adversely impact the poor. Thankfully, this is corrected (inadvertently) a couple of pages later when Timothy Terrell cites the economist Cornelis van Kooten, who controversially declares, “To mitigate climate change one needs to force the vast majority of humankind to continue living in abject poverty. Preventing climate change does not help the poor, it dooms them! Poverty simply kills more people than climate” (p. 199).

One of the advantages of a book with such a large number of essays is that you are introduced to authors you have never heard of. In the section on art, for example, there are two outstanding essays which made me want to read more by their authors. Taylor Worley’s “Encountering God’s Story with the Arts” is beautifully written, somewhat unusual, and immensely helpful. Cap Stewart’s “When Art Becomes Sinful” was so challenging that I now have to go and rethink some of my previous ideas and probably change one of my viewing habits.

The closing section of the book contains a chapter by Chatraw and Prior on “Gospel-Shaped Cultural Engagement” and a final chapter by Andy Crouch on “Creating Culture.” These chapters help to drive home the editors’ conviction “that cultural engagement goes wrong if it’s not grounded in the truth, that creation is simultaneously and intrinsically good, deeply corrupted and in need of redemption” (p. 17).

One aspect of the book that I did not always find helpful was the questions at the end of each section. Far too often they asked, What would author A say to author B? The answer is, I don’t know and I don’t want to second-guess them. The essays are too short to allow that level of knowledge and dissection.

Another slightly frustrating aspect of the book (at least for me) is that it is very Americancentric. This is seen especially when it comes to discussing race, gun control, and politics.

These (minor) criticisms aside, *Cultural Engagement* is a book that has gone straight to the bookshelf marked “Read again—very useful.” Use it as a textbook and guidebook if you wish to understand the culture in order to engage in cultural evangelism. And remember: “Ultimately, engaging a culture is nothing more—and nothing less—than seeking the truth in order to love with a godly love” (p. 60).

David Robertson

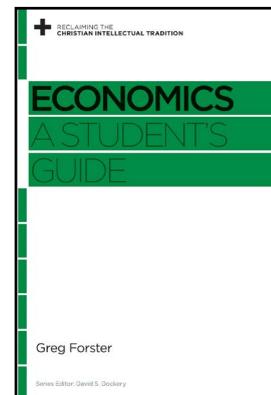
Third Space, City Bible Forum

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Greg Forster. *Economics: A Student's Guide*. Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 113 pp. £8.99/\$11.99.

The fundamental argument and approach of this book is also its greatest strength: that work and economics constitute a basic missiological category and, as such, form a battleground for competing ideological and idolatrous narratives, and therefore our perspective on them must be fundamentally spiritual and theological in nature.

This short introduction to economics is part of the 'Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition' series published by Crossway. The series aims to help Christian students, and their educators, better integrate faith and scholarship across all the major academic disciplines. Forster's treatment of economics is well pitched for this audience, being ideal for undergraduates of all disciplines and particularly important for first year students of economics and theology.



The author is director of the Oikonomia Network of theological educators in the US, and is associated with its sister network of local church leaders, Made to Flourish. Both networks seek to recover and centralise a more integrated whole-life approach to discipleship and mission in which faith, work and economics are key themes.

In the opening chapter, Forster frames his own task in terms of spiritual warfare: how we think about and act within the economic realm is very much on the front line of the advance of the kingdom of God in the world. The need to remain cognisant of this, and to develop a theological perspective on economics, constitutes the major part of the book's argument. Chapter 2 sets out the author's approach to this task. The challenge of recontextualising biblical texts for today is addressed within a narrative approach to Scripture and a pneumatological philosophy of history (somewhat reminiscent of Charles Williams's approach in his *Descent of the Dove: A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church* [Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2001]) that sees God working in and through the conflicts of history to achieve his purposes.

Three further chapters explore the crises provoked by the interaction of Scripture and Spirit in the ancient, medieval and modern paradigms. In the first case, Forster highlights the way in which early Christianity confronted the dualist and elitist hierarchicalism of the political-economic order of the ancient world with its radical anthropology insisting on the fundamental equality of each person before God. Forster then traces how an emphasis on remedying injustice and championing the poor gradually shifted during the medieval period from being about values that largely influenced individual and institutional practice, to the rise of a systematic reforming engagement with bodies of knowledge and social systems. In both scholasticism and humanism, Forster sees God at work confronting entrenched power and releasing ordinary people to create, learn, grow enterprises and develop scientific knowledge. The explosive economic growth of the modern period is characterised as one of the most dramatic changes in human history. Forster is even-handed in acknowledging the contributions to this growth of the various streams of medieval thought and reform, and highlights both the enormous benefits of dynamic growth and yet also the costs, particularly in terms of social and relational breakdown.

A final chapter focuses on the idolatrous nature of contemporary economic ideologies, particularly in the context of the collapse of shared moral commitments in late modernity. Both right- and left-wing idols of market and state are challenged, and readers are drawn to reflect on our fundamental

dependence on God and others, as well as our responsibility to work to cultivate and protect God's world.

This volume will prove an extremely welcome addition to the undergraduate reading list, and should take its place on core bibliographies for humanities and social science disciplines. The topic is not only central to a considered missional engagement with contemporary culture, but its treatment in this book is ideally pitched to frame the issues in missional terms. Moreover, Forster succeeds in illustrating this perspective in a manner that is characterised by a sustained political and theological balance.

The emphasis on a theological perspective does not mean that we jettison all of mainstream economics but rather that we resist both a neoliberal and a Marxist narration of economic institutions and objectives. Both the religious and the secular faces of humanism are given due credit in the birthing of the modern world. Both the market and the state are examined as idolatrous. Both the strengths and weaknesses of economic growth are acknowledged. As such, this volume meets two important needs. First it provides an accessible introduction to the subject area for the non-specialist. Secondly, by centralising an integrative biblical perspective on economics, it helps address the all too common tendency for Christians uncritically to baptise the competing narratives of left and right. By contrast, Forster's book repeatedly challenges contemporary ideologies across the political spectrum from a theological perspective.

Nonetheless, because the book is introductory, important points are undeveloped or treated in ways that a specialist might deem unsatisfactory. In chapter 2, the section on hermeneutics is balanced and accessible, but given the subject matter one might expect more attention to be paid to the detail of Israel's political economy. The Church's sustained and robust thousand year plus ban on charging interest is dismissed rather too easily (pp. 65, 75). The reduction of globalisation to international trade (p. 94) is too simplistic. The role of the state is imagined largely in terms of government programs and interventions in the market (pp. 108–9) without acknowledgement of the state's crucial role in assigning property rights and establishing contract law to underpin the existence and structure of markets in the first place.

But these quibbles are to be expected in an introductory text and do not detract from the book's fundamental aim: to help Christian students think and act more biblically and worshipfully in regard to their own participation in the world of work and the economy. There are also some extremely helpful insights that guide readers to notice the centrality of work and family in the Bible's creation account, and the centrality of materialist economics and hedonistic sexuality as twin contemporary idolatries in the secular paradigm. The overriding strength of this book is the way that it focuses the reader on the challenge to address these idolatries in the coming generation in faithful, winsome and life-giving ways.

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John Goldingay. *Old Testament Ethics: A Guided Tour*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. viii + 272 pp. £21.99/\$28.00.

Should Old Testament ethics be anything more than a passing interest for Christians today? Can they, or should they, continue to instruct us? Old Testament scholar John Goldingay addresses these questions in his latest non-academic work. Goldingay puts his prolific pen to what he calls a “guided tour” of Old Testament ethics. This is not, therefore, a typical treatment of the subject. He neither wades into the pedantic weeds of methodology nor systematizes his subjects into traditional categories. Instead, Goldingay takes the reader through dozens of brief reflections on the many ethical angles of the Old Testament.

Goldingay offers forty-three chapters in less than three hundred pages to show how the Old Testament forms an ethical world for its readers. In spite of this brevity, each chapter is peppered with large, block quotes of Scripture followed by Goldingay’s own deliberations that point to contemporary areas of practical relevance. The book is divided into five parts: qualities, aspects of life, relationships, texts, and people. The personal qualities Goldingay examines include godlikeness, compassion, anger, truthfulness, and contentment. The aspects of life that require ethical reasoning include wealth, violence, reparation, sabbath, and work. The section on relationships describes the Old Testament’s vision for how we relate to people, including friends, neighbors, women, “who you can’t have sex with,” parents, migrants, and cities. The section on texts treats various well-known Old Testament passages or books that carry profound ethical implications, including Genesis 1, Leviticus 25, Ruth, and Psalm 72. The final section of the book deals with biblical figures who found themselves in ethically weighty situations and whose performance, good or bad, stands to instruct readers. These figures include Abraham, Joseph, Shiphrah and Puah, Nehemiah, and Queen Esther. Goldingay concludes the book with a postscript that gives his thoughts on the infamous slaughter of the Canaanites.

Goldingay predicts in the preface that some of his conclusions may seem “a bit conservative” while others will seem “a bit liberal” (p. viii). Most of this ambivalence, however, emerges in the tension between what the biblical text affirms over against Goldingay’s own views or those he expects some of his readers to hold. For instance, he begins his chapter on “People Who Can’t Undertake a Regular Marriage” by recounting how he put it to a congregational vote whether his church should host same-sex weddings or not, which is a curious procedure if one is committed to an ethical standard derived from the Bible. He goes on to conclude that the biblical ideal for marriage is “heterosexual” and that “a same-sex marriage thus does fall short of the vision” (p. 142). Similar tensions emerge in the chapters on “Women,” “Who You Can’t Have Sex With,” and the postscript on the Canaanite slaughter.

For years, Goldingay has placed his scholarship in service to the church, and this volume is no different. In his lively, somewhat cheeky style, he makes engagement with Old Testament ethics interesting and fun. This volume will prove helpful for pastors and Bible teachers who need both a quick grasp of their subject and a series of biblical texts for further study. It will prove less helpful for academics and seminarians who require a more comprehensive treatment of the issues, a more transparent look at the exegetical scaffolding for Goldingay’s conclusions, or discussions of methodology.

The leading quality of this book is its relentless use of the biblical text to inform the ethical considerations of its readers. Goldingay genuinely wants his audience to wrestle with the Bible itself



instead of what he thinks the Bible says. As he puts it, “All the way through this book, I am wanting my readers to pay more attention to the Old Testament text than to what I write. Reading books about the Bible easily becomes a replacement for reading the Bible” (p. 179). To this end, every chapter brims with Old Testament quotations, allowing the reader to see firsthand why Goldingay’s remarks lean in the directions that they do.

More problematic is Goldingay’s analysis of why some Old Testament standards are shaped as they are. One example comes in Chapter 22, “Who You Can’t Have Sex With.” Explaining the rationale for the biblical criteria, he writes that “all of them have something to do with safeguarding order or structure or stability in the family and community” (p. 136). Such rules “have nothing to do with genetics but with what causes disorder, scandal, division, and disruption in the family and the community” (p. 137). In other instances, these rules derive “from a conviction that the way God created the world had a built-in order about it to which we should adhere” (p. 138). For this reason, animals are clearly meant to have sex with animals and men are clearly meant to have sex with women. On the surface, these remarks are uncontroversial. No one should deny that God’s legislation for Israel and all humanity is concerned with order, stability, and an in-built goodness that promotes our flourishing. However, to say or imply that these reasons exhaust God’s purpose in such laws is surely incomplete. God calls Israel to an obedience that mirrors God’s own character. Thus, he can say, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev 19:2, cf. Lev 11:44–45). Yahweh’s commands can certainly perform pragmatic functions and give wise, orderly direction for daily life. But the roots of these commands sink deeper than the functional. They originate in the character of God himself, which Goldingay fails to emphasize.

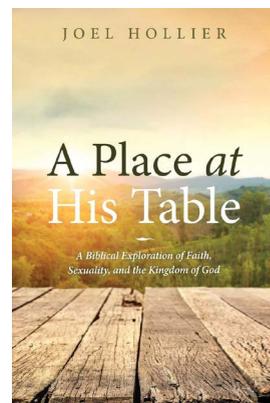
However, Goldingay’s book is marked by an even more problematic claim. It comes first at the beginning when he tells the reader that the Old Testament laws were not always meant to be read and obeyed literally. He writes, “Even faithful, Torah-keeping leaders don’t treat the Torah as a statute book. They know they are not supposed to be literalistic in interpreting these ‘laws’” (p. 5). This assertion shows up at various other places in the book (e.g., pp. 84, 89, 93, 135). Needless to say, this approach to Scripture will be quite alarming for readers who are convinced that the Old Testament laws were intended to be obeyed literally. For example, the case of the man who was executed for gathering sticks on the Sabbath would seem to militate against Goldingay’s construal (Num 15:32–36). Moreover, “that one can find little match between the prescriptions the Torah lays down and the way Israel actually handles offenses such as murder, idolatry, and adultery” (p. 5), is more likely proof of Israel’s disobedience than of anything else. Goldingay’s claim, therefore, requires far greater substantiation, with replies to expected objections, before readers can be expected to accept its validity.

In spite of these problem areas, Goldingay regularly stimulates the reader with his insights and applications. Although not a “must read” in the field, I recommend his book as a supplement or starter to one’s study of Old Testament ethics.

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Joel Hollier. *A Place at His Table: A Biblical Exploration of Faith, Sexuality, and the Kingdom of God*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019. xii + 220 pp. £22.00/\$26.00.

Joel Hollier identifies himself as an evangelical pastor, chaplain, and writer living in Sydney, who has degrees in social work and theology and is doing doctoral research on the experiences of LGBT people of faith. He spent over a decade advocating for a traditional view of sexuality before changing his mind about the Bible's teaching in this regard. As a practicing homosexual, who has recently married his partner, he is concerned for those "who are marginalized, whose voices are sidelined and whose lives too often play out as wounded soldiers in a barren no man's land of the culture war in which we find ourselves" (p. 6). I too am grieved by the failure of many churches to care for same-sex attracted Christians and engage in healthy debate about their needs, but I am equally disturbed by the direction that Joel's life has taken and the way he justifies same-sex marriage in his handling of the Bible.



His book moves from historical overview to biblical texts and finally to theological and pastoral reflection. The chapter on "Where are we and how did we get here?" begins with a summary of the development of community thought about homosexuality from the Kinsey reports (1948, 1953) to the present. In this context, he discusses the rise and fall of "ex-gay" movements in Christian circles and briefly notes the current emphasis on developing celibate friendships by writers such as Wesley Hill and Sam Allberry. In his pursuit of the ideal of monogamy, Hollier narrowly defines homosexual orientation as an enduring attraction to a person of the same sex, involving erotic arousal, emotional and/or romantic attachment. He uses the word "gay" as a synonym, though he acknowledges that it has social, political, and cultural connotations with which some same-sex attracted Christians would not wish to identify. The nature/nurture debate about the causation of homosexual orientation is briefly reviewed and the evidence for a change of orientation is discussed. He concludes that nailing down these issues is of little moral significance, "for the Christian only has the jurisdiction to bless that which God blesses and condemn that which God condemns" (p. 39).

The major portion of this book is devoted to reviewing traditional interpretations of key biblical passages concerning sex and marriage. Hollier draws heavily on the arguments of others in making his case and says little that is new. A preliminary chapter discusses basic hermeneutical principles such as contextualization and the application of ancient texts to our world today. Genesis 1–2 broadly tells us what it means to be human. The traditionalist reading of these chapters asserts a complementarity between male and female, but Hollier argues that there is no consensus as to what constitutes the gender difference. He rightly challenges attempts to define the difference in terms of "temperament, psychological otherness, and gendered skill sets." Specifically, hierarchical complementarity is said to provide "no grounded rationale for why male-female union is the only permutation that a one-flesh relationship can take" (p. 61). But the assertion of sex difference in Genesis 1:27 is immediately followed by the blessing and mandate of God to "be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (1:28). In narrative order, procreation through sexual union is the primary purpose of the one-flesh relationship articulated in 2:24. This link is side-stepped by raising the question of infertility. In Hollier's view, Genesis 2 simply asserts the primacy of meaningful human relationships and emphasizes the *sameness* of Eve to Adam in meeting his need for "a helper suitable for him." Rather than a sexual union

between people of different genders, the one-flesh relationship describes “indissoluble kinship (family ties)” (p. 64). Consequently, marriage must be open to people of the same sex.

This argument is a mixture of truth and special pleading. Genesis 2 certainly highlights our fundamental need for human companionship and love, and these themes are developed elsewhere in the Bible. But the specific context is a heterosexual relationship for the purpose of procreation. Only a man and a woman are present in this chapter, and a family emerges from their sexual union in subsequent chapters. Hollier conveniently removes the gender references in his final assessment of verses 24–25. He is right to challenge the view that “those who never enter a heterosexual marriage union will never fully be made in the image of God” (p. 69), as he is to question which parts of these narratives are descriptive, and which are prescriptive. In a sense, the rest of Scripture must determine that for us. But it is not honest to conclude that Genesis 1–2 “place no gendered requisites on these unions but rather require that they are the outcome of two people forming a kinship bond of powerful unity, what we would call ‘family’” (p. 70).

Turning to Genesis 19, Hollier has no doubt that “the men of Sodom sought to have sex with the two men who were Lot’s visitors, engaging in homoerotic behaviour” (p. 76). This was a violent, attempted gang-rape of two angelic visitors, designed to humiliate and exercise power over them. Hollier correctly points out that the biblical prophets condemn Sodom for arrogance and apathy towards the poor, a disregard for the alien and stranger in their midst, but not specifically for their sexual behavior. He rightly concludes that “violence, humiliation, sexual license, and wickedness play no part in God’s kingdom” (p. 83), but he asserts that this narrative does not address the issue of loving, self-giving homosexual relationships. Contrary to his own criticism of proof-texting, Hollier attempts to use the silence of this passage to prove his point! In so doing, he fails to grapple with its significance in the trajectory of sexual abuse narratives in the OT and their relation to the Fall narrative in Genesis 3.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are located in the holiness code that sets out the way Israel is to live in distinction from the nations surrounding it. The term rendered “abomination” (ESV) or “detestable thing” (NIV) has many applications in the OT, suggesting that in Leviticus the term may convey, at least in some measure, undertones of idolatrous behavior as a corollary of the cultural activities of those nations. Hollier relates the simple words “you shall not lie with a male as with a woman” to either cultic idolatrous worship or patriarchal notions of power and shame. Although it is true that practices associated with idolatry are mentioned in 18:21, 23, the remaining practices in vv. 6–20 are clearly concerned with the preservation of appropriate heterosexual relations amongst God’s people. Consequently, it is a rhetorical overreach to allow two prohibitions with cultic connotations (child sacrifice and bestiality) to be the interpretive key to the other sixteen prohibitions. Are we to suppose that God was only concerned with the avoidance of cult prostitution or with the avoidance of shame (a man being penetrated by another man)? Hollier contends that Leviticus 18:22 could not embrace all same-sex unions, despite the simplicity of the prohibition itself. He exposes some untenable interpretations, but effectively removes this text from having any contemporary application by relegating it to a context that no longer applies to us. At the same time, he misses the opportunity to explore the wider issues of kinship and appropriate sexual relationships raised by the preceding injunctions. His consideration of the way the law of Moses is applied to Christians in the NT is equally superficial.

The vice list in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 contains two Greek words, one of which means “men who have sex with men” (ἀρσενικοῖται). This rare term, which occurs again in 1 Timothy 1:10, may have been coined to reflect the LXX wording of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, and the broad condemnation of

homosexual behavior they express. The other term (μαλακοί) is more controversial because it is widely used in Greek literature with a range of meanings. While Hollier allows for these terms together to refer to the passive and active participants in homosexual activity, he argues that they most likely describe the specific sort of pederast relationships between men and boys that were common in Greco-Roman culture. Looking at the Pauline lists and later uses of the first term, he concludes that the focus is on exploitative sex, rather than “faithful, monogamous, self-giving gay relationships” (p. 116). He thinks it is “highly unlikely that Paul, Timothy, or the Corinthian church at large had a concept of homosexuality that included a lifelong experience of a gay orientation” (p. 118). This is an amazing supposition, considering his opening reflection on the early emergence and life-long persistence of a gay orientation. Why would this not have been the experience of people in the first century and beyond? Was all gay sex in the ancient world exploitative? Hollier disregards the sizable body of historical research into the nature of same-sex peer relationships by scholars (e.g., Thomas K. Hubbard, “Peer Homosexuality,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities*, ed. T. K. Hubbard [Oxford: Blackwell, 2014], 128–49).

Romans 1:24 is taken to mean “when God ‘gave them up to the lusts of their hearts’ in retribution for their idolatrous ways, their endpoint was destructive homoerotic activity.” In other words, Hollier contends that Paul is condemning “self-seeking, exploitative, and lust-driven ... homoerotic activity,” not “monogamous, faithful gay relationships” (p. 129). In fact, once again, the apostle is said to have had no knowledge of a gay orientation that issued in a loving, life-long commitment to a person of the same sex. Hollier correctly relates Paul’s narrative in Romans 1:18–32 to the post-Fall decline of humanity into idolatry and its consequences. Paul is undoubtedly reflecting on the extraordinary licentiousness of Greco-Roman culture, though the Bible records earlier examples of this in other cultures. However, this understanding of the passage does not justify restricting the phrase “against nature” (1:26, “unnatural” [παρὰ φύσιν]) to a culturally-bound, Stoic view of what is appropriate in sexual behavior. It is the *direction* of the lust that Paul considers “dishonorable” and “unnatural” (women with women, men with men), not simply the intensity of it. Is it really likely that Paul has put his biblical theology aside at this point and is not reflecting on God’s creative purpose for men and women, as expressed in Genesis 1–2 (especially given his specific use of ἄρσεν [“male”] and θήλυς [“female”]—the very terms that appear in the LXX of Genesis 1:27)? Furthermore, Hollier does not consider the implications of Genesis 3 for human sexuality in all its post-Fall manifestations.

This is an emotive work, in which Joel appeals to fellow Christians for a compassionate and careful reconsideration of biblical texts and their application to same-sex attracted believers like himself. He is critical of the theological approach that traditionalists take to the relevant texts, but he fails to expound a wholistic biblical theology of sexuality as he proceeds (see, however, pp. 178–81), opting to give key terms and passages a limited socio-cultural application. He points to the difficulty of applying Old Testament legal material to Christians, but he fails to explore the way Paul does this elsewhere, or more broadly expresses the teaching of Leviticus 18 in a passage like 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8.

The final chapters of this book deal with the negative aspects of celibacy, the possibility of gay marriage fulfilling the biblical ideals of marriage, changing our theology in the light of historic precedents, and a consideration of possible ways forward in the care of gay people in our churches. These issues call for more careful consideration than this review can begin to offer. Sadly, it is hard to respond to Joel’s genuine cries on behalf of the sexually marginalized, when he offers such a limited and tendentious view of the Bible’s teaching on human sexuality. He is right that at many times churches have drawn lines of exclusion in ways that are destructive, bullying, and not pastorally nuanced. But to

begin the book by claiming to have little agenda and end it by charging that a “huge portion of God’s people have idolized a traditional interpretation of sexual ethics” (p. 200) is disingenuous and plays by the very rules he seeks to condemn.

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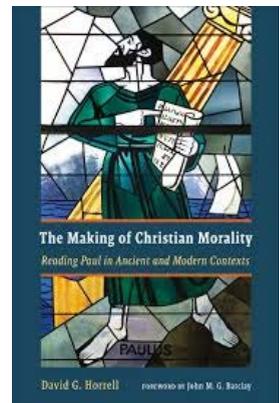
David Horrell. *The Making of Christian Morality: Reading Paul in Ancient and Modern Contexts*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. 264 pp. £34.99/\$45.00.

David Horrell is professor of New Testament studies at the University of Exeter. His most significant work has been in ecotheology, particularly in his attempt to re-read Paul’s letters through an environmentally friendly lens in *Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), and in his plea for revising Christian hermeneutics in light of environmental concerns in *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology* (London: Routledge, 2014).

The Making of Christian Morality: Reading Paul in Ancient and Modern Contexts is a collection of essays, all of which have been published elsewhere or delivered as conference papers. The result is a somewhat loose connection of individual entries in topics that interest Horrell rather than a cogent argument about a particular topic. Nevertheless, the essays all tend to highlight a basic assumption of Horrell’s that the apostle Paul had his own version of Christianity that is distinct from other versions of Christianity.

The book contains three parts, with each section focusing on a particular subject of concern. Part 1 deals with Horrell’s interest in the sociohistorical context of Paul’s writings. His first essay begins by ignoring the possibility of continuity between the authors of Scripture, but goes on to argue against the existence of distinct “Pauline” churches. In chapter 2, Horrell debunks some popular constructs about early church architecture largely by revealing the slim archeological evidence that some conclusions are based on. This is the most useful essay in the volume and relies on interdisciplinary research that basically calls for Christian scholars to hold their opinions until further evidence can be uncovered. The third essay argues from that Philemon may have been a middle-class Christian instead of a major patron of the church. If Horrell is correct, the financial loss of freeing a slave is much more significant and the subversive antislavery message of Paul’s letter even stronger. Chapter 4 explores the way the language of family functions in the Pauline corpus. Based on a comparison of the early “authentic” Paulines with the later “pseudo-Pauline” epistles, Horrell argues that, as Christianity evolved, household replaced family as the primary ecclesiological metaphor.

Part 2 shifts to the topic of Pauline ethics. The fifth essay emphasizes the centrality of the resurrection in Pauline ethics, but lurches to an odd conclusion as Horrell considers how that vision can help lead toward a Rawlsian consensus for ethics, which is an essential part of the liberal order as he sees it. In chapter 6, Horrell uses Pauline ethics to argue that ethics ought to be culturally determined; that is, ethics is about the enforcement of norms that are generally socially acceptable. For Horrell, then, Pauline ethics reject the model of Christians as a contrast community and promotes, instead, the idea



of the church as a community that affirms the values of the culture even better than the culture. The seventh chapter explores the concept of humility as a central part of Pauline ethics, arguing that there is little unique moral content in Paul's corpus.

In part 3, Horrell shifts to a discussion of contemporary applications of Pauline ethics. Chapter 8, which deals with various models of ethics, is largely a call to see Scripture as an insufficient basis for ethics. Horrell writes, "So, while reading Paul in the context of our contemporary debates can be suggestive and fruitful, using Paul's texts to 'think with' does not by any means suffice for the task of thinking about adequate models for Christian ethics, but only marks the beginning of the work" (p. 182). In a different context that statement could be taken as hopeful, but Horrell's intent is to reject the sufficiency and authority of Scripture and to encourage his readers to rely on other sources for moral authority. Chapter 9 approximates an abbreviated version of Horrell's book, *Greening Paul*, and is another entry into the genre of revisionist scholarship that tries to recover themes from Scripture that reinforce a particular desired outcome. This essay highlights the central emphasis of Horrell's lifelong project as he writes, "Reconfiguring our religious and cultural traditions in light of the new challenges that face us is a crucial task" (p. 207). For Horrell, Pauline studies are useful inasmuch as they power activism that matches cultural demands on topics of particular concern. The book concludes with the tenth essay, which outlines some contributions that Horrell feels Paul can make to ecojustice. However, the essay and the book end with a fizzle when Horrell concludes that Paul can be helpful to "reconfigure our vision of the world around us, and to ground a revised theology that (re)integrates humanity into solidarity with the whole community of creation—critical tasks indeed—but neither he nor any of the biblical writers can give us substantive answer to the question as to what, in concrete terms, we then should do" (p. 228). According to Horrell's own writing, then, the best thing for people to do may be to put the Bible down and start looking for answers in the ever-evolving pool of scientific research shaped by a never-static and rarely defined *summum bonum*.

Horrell's work is excellent by the measures of critical biblical scholarship. His writing is lucid and clear. Those who accept his assumptions will likely find this book illuminating and thought provoking. Christian scholars who accept the authority and integrity of Scripture will continually find themselves frustrated by the basic assumptions that seem to dictate the outcome of the analysis. Nevertheless, there is some significant value in this collection of essays, particularly where Horrell carefully treats issues related to New Testament backgrounds. Those essays make this volume a worthwhile addition to an academic library.

The Making of Christian Morality illustrates the need for Christian ethicists to continue thinking about Scripture, orthodox Christian theology, and how to apply the vision inspired by those sources to contemporary issues like creation care. Horrell provides an excellent conversation partner for those seeking to engage in such scholarship.

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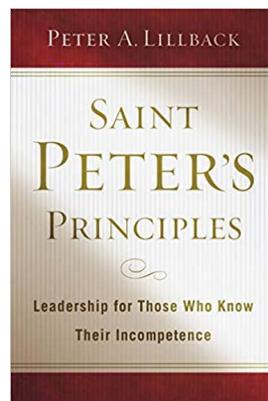
Peter A. Lillback. *Saint Peter's Principles: Leadership for Those Who Already Know Their Incompetence*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019. xxix + 595 pp. \$39.99.

The literature on leadership is ever-increasing, dealing with issues such as management, vision-casting, execution of strategy, and the like. However, one would be hard pressed to find many leadership books that deal with topics like incompetence and dependence, and focus on a particular corpus of Scripture as the main reference point for each principle. But this is precisely what one finds in Lillback's *Saint Peter's Principles*, as the author focuses on the apostle Peter in terms of his life and writings and brings out a treasure trove of biblical principles for those leading in some capacity.

Lillback is president and professor of historical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. He has served in pastoral ministry for over thirty years and has written numerous articles and books. *Saint Peter's Principles* contains seventeen sections, working through topics such as the formation of the leader, self-leadership, godly leadership, management, communication, planning, decision-making, and legacy. In cataloguing over one hundred different leadership principles, the uniqueness of this work is the focus on Peter, an encouraged awareness of one's weaknesses and shortcomings, and beneficial spiritual exercises that come at the end of each principle. All principles are summarized at the end of the book along with their corresponding biblical texts, and Lillback also provides an epilogue with sage wisdom on pastoral ministry.

Lillback combines a knowledge of both the biblical text, specifically in relation to Peter, as well as the leadership literature in general. As such, readers will be taken on a whirlwind tour of a range of differing principles, but each of them given in a few brief pages. The greatest strength of this volume is the obvious wisdom it contains, garnered over many decades of ministry. This wisdom is most readily demonstrated by the author's understanding of human weakness and incompetence. Riffing on the well-known "Peter principle," Lillback asserts that "a leader doesn't just rise to his highest level of incompetence, but begins with incompetence and seeks to learn wisdom in the midst of that incompetence" (p. 14). Such an attitude kills self-sufficiency and pushes one toward dependence on God for all matters of leadership. This approach is honest and, quite honestly, a relief to those of us who lead. And it is based on the life and writings of the apostle Peter, a character who we know went through his own growing pains and eventually served as a faithful apostle of Christ and key leader of the church.

There are moments within the book when the biblical exegesis, and thus the principles derived from specific texts, feels slightly strained. Admittedly, the author is clear that his intention is not for the book to be an exegetical study, stating that "the goal here is not so much to interpret Peter's writings as to apply them" (p. xviii). However, this only highlights the problem, as proper application stems from right interpretation of the text. For example, when dealing with "the autonomy of self-improvement," Lillback points to the occasion (recorded in Luke 5:1–11) when Peter was ordered by Jesus to cast his nets out again to catch fish, eliciting Peter's protest that they had caught nothing all night (v. 5). When they haul in a massive catch of fish Peter says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (v. 8). Lillback interprets this to mean that in this moment Peter "expressed the folly of believing that he could take care of his incompetence on his own" (p. 51). He thus uses this episode to castigate self-help. While not an impossible application of the text, this is hardly its main point, as the focus seems to be on Peter's



lack of faith in Jesus followed by humble recognition and repentance. Lillback's interpretation certainly gets at the issue of self-improvement, but this is one of a number of times when paying closer attention to issues of context and authorial intention would strengthen the applications he seeks to make from particular texts.

Notwithstanding this criticism, the book is a tremendous collection of wisdom that is sure to help any leader who humbly recognizes their incompetence and seeks to follow Jesus. The size will likely intimidate some potential readers, but they should not be put off; the time spent will be worthwhile. After reading *Saint Peter's Principles* for this review, I would suggest that the best way to take in this book with all of its principles is to read one per day—allowing time for measured reflection and the spiritual exercises at the end of each section (an approach I am now taking on my second read). Of the myriad of books on the market dealing with different aspects of leadership, this work stands out as a means of developing one's character and working out fundamental aspects of everyday life in leadership.

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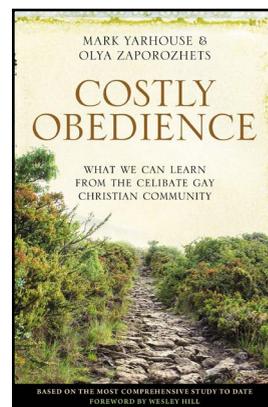
Mark Yarhouse and Olya Zaporozhets. *Costly Obedience: What We Can Learn from the Celibate Gay Christian Community*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 239 pp. £12.99/\$17.99.

In *Costly Obedience*, psychologists Mark Yarhouse and Olya Zaporozhets present the most comprehensive study to date of the celibate gay Christian community—otherwise known as “Side B gay Christians” (p. 79). This community gained visibility in the Revoice and Spiritual Friendship conferences of 2018. Such believers confess a historic, biblical sexual ethic—confining sexual expression to a monogamous heterosexual marriage—but they neither “hold out the expectation of changing orientation or attraction, nor hold the belief that it is sin to experience same-sex attractions” (p. 28). Convinced that “same-sex sexual relationships are morally impermissible,” they either enter mixed-orientation marriages or remain celibate (pp. 79–80).

Yarhouse and Zaporozhets explore the experiences of celibate gay Christians within modern Christianity. The work centers around a qualitative study of three hundred celibate gay Christians. The authors analyze the “milestone events in their sexual identity development, emotional well-being, psychological distress, attachment, and religiosity” (p. 20).

The authors clearly seek to support the celibate gay Christian community, declaring that “our hope in writing this book is that we might begin to see more constructive dialogue between fellow Christians of opposing viewpoints” (p. 223). While avoiding the current debates surrounding the utility and meaning of words such as “gay,” “identity,” and “attraction,” Yarhouse and Zaporozhets hope that this work will aid the inclusion of celibate gay Christians into the broader Christian community.

The authors also explore the current tensions between the church and the LGBTQ+ community. The first two chapters evaluate the relationship between the church, the LGBTQ+ community, and gay Christians. Yarhouse and Zaporozhets survey the various Christian “sides” of responses to same-sex attraction (Sides A, B, C, and X) and therapy movements such as Exodus International. This



section analyzes different Christian approaches to understanding the nature of same-sex attraction. They note how negative interactions between Christians and the LGBTQ+ community have wounded the relationships between these two communities. Many Christians are unaware of historic injustices committed against the LGBTQ+ people, which were supported by some Christians in the past. For example, at the peak of the AIDS crisis, conservative Christians lobbied the Reagan administration against helping individuals who were dying of AIDS (p. 76). The effects of these events are still felt within the LGBTQ+ community today.

In chapters three and four, Yarhouse and Zaporozhets disclose the findings of their comprehensive empirical study of the celibate gay Christian community. They review charts, personal testimonies, and surveys drawn from the experiences of celibate gay Christians. They also investigate the beliefs of gay Christians concerning the permissibility, mutability, and causes of same-sex attraction, as well as their emotional well-being and various relationship attachment styles (especially anxiety and avoidance).

In chapter 4, the authors explore the stages of sexual identity development by tracking the various points at which same-sex attracted people reached significant milestones. These events include experiencing an awareness of same-sex attraction (294 participants), engaging in sexual behavior with the same sex—from kissing (117 participants) to orgasm (100 participants)—and publicly identifying as gay (128 participants; p. 117). It is important to note that the gay identity of those surveyed did not limit their sexual interactions with the opposite sex. The authors report that many were also sexually active with the opposite-sex during the development of their sexual identity (99 participants were fondled by opposite sex to orgasm; 70 participants engaged in sexual behavior with opposite sex; p. 129).

The authors then draw contemporary applications for pastors and churches from their study. They show how celibate gay Christians want pastors and churches to adopt a listening posture (p. 143) and consistent standards (p. 153). They suggest that celibate gay Christians need visibility within the congregation (p. 145), support from other Christian families (p. 152), and intentional relationships (pp. 160–64). The authors also offer counsel for the process of adding a celibate gay Christian to a family nucleus (pp. 172–84). The book ends with a proposal for how celibate gay Christians can strengthen the church. These believers model to the broader Christian community a life marked by sacrificial living through the submission of their attraction to God's Word.

This volume brings visibility to the celibate gay Christian community. The authors reveal the fruit of many hours spent conducting studies and personal interviews. Yarhouse and Zaporozhets communicate the tensions, desires, and struggles of these Christians. Many gay Christians search for a church community that will walk alongside them through celibacy or mixed-orientation marriages. This study will serve as a reference for future studies on the celibate gay Christian movement.

Nevertheless, while Yarhouse and Zaporozhets's volume helps Christians understand the gay Christian community, its utility for future engagement is unclear. Empirical studies have natural limitations. While statistics and testimonies provide some level of evidence, all such research requires careful interpretation and application. Since the authors have stated their support of Revoice and the use of the term "gay" for a same-sex attracted Christian's sexual identity, their study is far from neutral. They have clearly taken a "side." Also, their reliance on psychological language and categories raises questions concerning the place, understanding, and authority of Scripture in these conversations.

Although this volume desires to study the experiences of the gay Christian community, it would benefit from a more thorough (and biblical) exploration of the nature of Christian identity. The label "Christian" is a theological label: it describes one who believes a certain set of truths (the gospel),

within a certain community (the church), under submission to a certain authority (the Bible), having experienced certain spiritual events (conversion), and walking in a certain lifestyle (holiness). Because the authors rely upon participants' self-identification and use empirical statistics of spiritual practices to determine Christian identity (pp. 87–88), it is not clear how “Christian” all of the participants are.

This concern is highlighted by the fact that a significant portion of the participants confess to having engaged in heterosexual and homosexual activity reaching orgasm outside of marriage. One wonders how the authors interpreted the fact that these participants claim to be Christians while engaging in sexual activity around the time of their sexual identity disclosure. This study would benefit from further investigation into the Christian background of these participants by analyzing their profession of faith, church membership, and evidences of conversion.

Many Christians are gaining more awareness of the need to think critically and carefully about the relationship between faith and homosexuality. Churches need to learn to minister compassionately and effectively to same-sex attracted Christians who are seeking to be faithful to Christ and Scripture in the expression of their sexuality. Yarhouse and Zaporozhets aid this process by revealing the current state of the celibate gay Christian community, and by encouraging us to pursue clarity and charity as we continue this conversation.

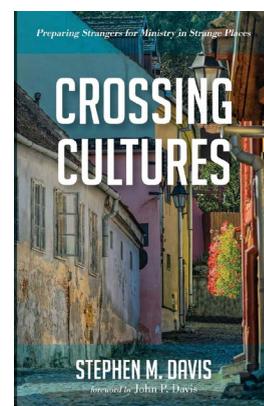
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— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Stephen M. Davis, *Crossing Cultures: Preparing Strangers for Ministry in Strange Places*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019. xvii + 86 pp. £14.00/\$17.00.

In *Crossing Cultures: Preparing Strangers for Ministry in Strange Places*, Stephen Davis puts together a user-manual of sorts designed to assist churches, mission agencies, and prospective missionaries in thinking through how to adequately prepare someone for cross-cultural ministry. In so doing, Davis brings years of personal experience in cross-cultural evangelistic and church planting ministry together with US-based pastoral ministry. He responds to an observation he and others have made: the challenges inherent in cross-cultural ministry are too great to allow men and women to launch without adequate missionary training before being sent. In his conclusion, he says, “Churches and mission agencies would do well to heed the concern that the uneven, inadequate quality of missionary training is one of the most serious and profound limitations to the cause of missions” (p. 84).

Furthermore, Davis is intent to argue that the nature of the missionary venture goes much further than that of the casual visitor to another culture. As he notes, in the global 21st century context, people are crossing over into other cultures all the time. Most of this, however, is related to tourism or business pursuits that engage another culture—and its hosts—only temporarily and in a limited manner. People who do this “have entered the culture. They have not crossed into it. Crossing into a culture requires



learning about the culture—the people, their history, their language, their food, their way of life, their religious commitments—and engaging the culture on more than a tourist level” (p. xiv). For Davis, failure to adequately equip those who intend to serve cross-culturally will only ensure that their service will be fraught with unnecessary challenges leading to, among other things, unnecessary early attrition.

In response to this inadequacy, Davis structures his approach around four sets of concerns: theological issues, missiological considerations, cross-cultural competencies, and cross-cultural challenges. In each section, he discusses what he considers to be the most essential elements to adequate missionary preparation. Following his treatment of each component, he ends with specific recommendations for three most important agents in missionary training: the local church, the mission agency, and the prospective missionary candidate.

One strength of this work is Davis’s call for the local church to actively engage in the entire missionary preparation process. Though much of the missionary endeavor focuses on establishing or strengthening the local church in a cross-cultural context, prospective missionary candidates generally are not given much training for this complex process. How then can they be expected to succeed in this exceedingly complex effort if they have never been a part of a church plant as part of their pre-field preparations? In response, Davis calls for the local church not only to lookout for potential cross-cultural workers but to create ministry platforms that allow prospective candidates to engage in ministry, explore their gifts, and be mentored by more mature believers. In this way, churches can ask questions, raise issues, and assess candidates’ suitability and capacity for cross-cultural ministry before they commit to a missionary context and departure schedule.

The length and scope of Davis’s work is both its strength and its weakness. What the book offers in its brevity and accessibility, it lacks (or cannot do justice to) the capacity to treat many of complex issues that need thorough treatment. For example, take the matter of cross-cultural service as a part of a multi-ethnic team. Successful long-term service in such a context requires the prospective candidate to master a number of interpersonal and cultural skills, develop a settled knowledge of his/her own self, and be spiritually mature. Though the increasing ethnic plurality of the North American church is a 21st reality, Davis’s work does not devote the space necessary to address these factors.

Nevertheless, Stephen Davis has done a great service for the church by putting in one accessible volume the key issues, questions, and challenges essential to preparing prospective missionary candidates for cross-cultural service. Though extensive complex field manuals, theological treatises, and missiological compendiums are available that deal at length with a myriad of issues related to this endeavor, Davis’s work provides an excellent primer into the most essential aspects of the task. It is done so with the experience of a former cross-cultural worker who now serves in the local church as an agent for preparing and sending the next generation of missionaries.

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John Dickson. *Is Jesus History?* Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2019. 144 pp. £7.99/\$12.99.

John Dickson is one of the few scholars who writes about contemporary historical Jesus scholarship in a down-to-earth, engaging manner. His recent book, *Is Jesus History?*, not only answers the most pressing historical questions raised by skeptics about Jesus and the New Testament; Dickson also shows how historians (both Christian and secular) analyze and assess ancient figures and sources.

The first three chapters address the question “Did Jesus exist?” Recent atheist literature gives the impression that Jesus’s existence is questionable and that the Gospels are mostly fabrications. Dickson explains how history is done, how historians study Jesus, and the difficulty of claiming Jesus never existed. He highlights two points. First, the study of the historical Jesus is a vast *secular* discipline found in major universities around the world conducted by scholars with varied religious convictions. With such a diverse group subject to the peer review process, no scholar could produce biased or fraudulent scholarship about Jesus’s existence.

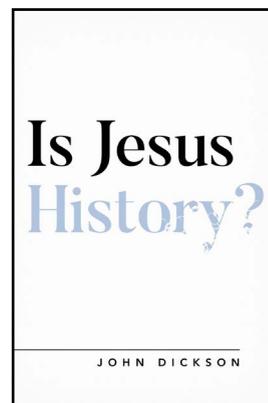
Second, after centuries of applying rigorous historical methodology to the man from Nazareth, scholars know more now about Jesus than when the quest for the historical Jesus began. Scholars are in fact less skeptical about Jesus, not more. Dickson quotes E. P. Sanders as representative of secular experts in the field. Sanders writes, “There are no substantial doubts about the general course of Jesus’ life: when and where he lived, approximately when and where he died, and the sort of things that he did during his public activity” (p. 19).

The claim that Jesus never existed, Dickson maintains, “has virtually no currency in contemporary scholarship” (p. 39). No reputable scholar entertains the notion. If anyone doubts this, Dickson suggests they glance at any academic article on the historical Jesus published in one of the major reference works housed in any secular university where the historical Jesus is seriously studied.

To underscore his point, Dickson issued a playful challenge years ago on ABC (Australia) that still has not been met. He would eat a page of his Bible if anyone finds a single full professor of Ancient History, Classics, or New Testament in any university in the world who doesn’t believe Jesus lived (pp. 34–35). Lacking such a professor doesn’t prove the existence of Jesus, but Dickson believes such “an obvious consensus of scholarship that places Jesus’ existence *beyond doubt* must count for something, not everything, but something” (p. 39, emphasis original).

Chapter 4 surveys how secular academia have studied Jesus over the past two centuries and today. It distinguishes three “quests” in historical Jesus scholarship. The vast majority of scholars today, “third-questers,” approach Jesus as ancient historians approach other figures contemporary with Jesus. The rest of the book presents key findings of the third quest and their significance.

One key finding is that third questers confidently say the central elements of Jesus’ life fit with what is known about life in first-century Galilee and Judaea (ch. 5). A second finding concerns how the New Testament compares with other ancient writings (ch. 6). Historians employ three basic tests: When were they written? What earlier sources did the authors use? How well preserved are the manuscripts? Dickson then shows how the Gospels and Paul’s letters compare favorably with the writings about Alexander the Great.



Third, non-Christian sources make valuable references to Jesus (ch. 7). Many people assume these sources are more objective evidence for Jesus than the New Testament. That is not how historians see it. Those sources were written well after the New Testament, their comments about Jesus are brief, and they show little interest in the subject. They add nothing to the portrait of Jesus found in the New Testament. These sources merely corroborate Jesus's death under Pilate and other basic facts about Jesus's life.

Fourth, Paul's writings provide valuable historical information about Jesus (ch. 8). They were composed within twenty years of Jesus's death. By historical standards, this is exceptional. Also, Paul makes numerous passing references to things Jesus said and did, perhaps over twenty historical details. Paul seemingly presume his readers know about the things he describes. Such familiarity is evidence that the events of Jesus's life circulated for years through what scholars call "oral tradition." Paul's gospel summary in 1 Cor. 15:1–5 is an example of oral tradition, which historians believe formed within the first months or years after the events themselves. Dickson captures the significance of this early summary: "This is as close to the events themselves as a historian could hope for" (p. 113).

Fifth, archaeology plays a vital role in historical Jesus research (ch. 9). Several discoveries confirm details mentioned in the Gospels. Its greater value, Dickson underscores, is in validating the cultural realities of first-century Galilee and Judaea as portrayed in the Gospels. The archaeological evidence leaves little doubt that this region was thoroughly Jewish.

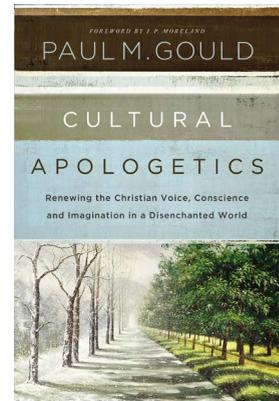
Finally, Dickson examines evidence for the resurrection (ch. 10). Historians regard it as a genuine puzzle. They concede the testimony about the resurrection is early, widespread, and credible. Hardly any scholar doubts the tomb was empty. Men and women sincerely thought they saw Jesus alive. Historians dismiss common naturalistic explanations (e.g., disciples stole the body, Jesus didn't really die, women went to the wrong tomb). Even in the face of such credible testimony, they remain agnostic on the matter. Dickson quotes E. P. Sanders as one speaking on behalf of many: "That Jesus' followers (and later Paul) had resurrection experiences is, in my judgment, a fact. What the reality was that gave rise to the experiences, I do not know" (p. 143).

Such agnosticism is not for lack of historical evidence. It's not really a historical problem; it's philosophical and personal. It involves one's background beliefs about the universe, life experiences, and personal preferences. So, Dickson concludes this chapter with a gentle challenge: "I would say that the evidence for the resurrection is good enough to warrant skeptical readers picking up one of the Gospels and studying it with an open mind—and, dare I say, an open heart—attuned to the possibility that the figure described in these ancient sources is not only unique but potentially life-changing" (p. 144). Dickson's book certainly has the potential to open many doubting minds. For this reason, I highly commend it.

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Paul M. Gould. *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 240 pp. £14.99/\$22.99.

Paul M. Gould's *Cultural Apologetics* is a holistic, paradigm-shifting primer on how to faithfully and effectively practice apologetics in the modern, disenchanted Western world. Not only does Western culture currently view Christianity as intellectually unconvincing; it now also regards its teachings as morally repugnant. Traditional models of apologetics rely on intellectual arguments, which according to Gould, are not enough to produce a genuine missionary encounter. What the apologist must practice is not simply intellectual argumentation but cultural apologetics. Apologists must show that Christianity is not only true but that it is good and beautiful. Therefore, they must engage the intellect, imagination, and conscience. Gould argues, "Cultural apologetics must demonstrate not only the *truth* of Christianity but also its *desirability*" (p. 25).



Gould's work functions as a catalyst for a fresh way of approaching apologetics as a whole. He builds upon scripture and voices of the past to lay the foundation for defining cultural apologetics as well as its purpose. Though he now makes a case to practice this holistic form of apologetics in the Western culture, many other apologists have previously defended not only the reasonableness of Christianity but also its beauty and goodness. Most notably, Gould builds upon the apostle Paul's discourse in Acts 17 and the apologetics of C. S. Lewis.

Through Paul's Mars Hill discourse, Gould reveals a "helpful model for engaging 'our Athens' with the truth, beauty, and goodness of the gospel" (p. 26). As Peter Kreeft has shown, reason, conscience, and the imagination guide the human soul and correspond with the three longings of the human soul: truth, goodness, and beauty. Like the apostle Paul in Athens, "we can utilize the cultural narratives embodied in literature, film, music, and art to build bridges to the gospel" (pp. 26–31).

Gould's approach to reach "our Athens" is by reenchancing what has been disenchanted. He argues, "While man's desire for truth, goodness, and beauty has become distorted, the desire remains. Part of our job as cultural apologists is to help reawaken these universal and natural human desires and redirect them toward their proper end" (p. 81). *Cultural Apologetics* is structured in the following manner. Gould starts with his explanation of disenchantment and the need for reenchancement. He then devotes the remainder of the book to revealing the practical aspects of reenchancing the imagination, reason, and conscience. Meanwhile, he breaks down barriers within the disenchanted to see the truth, beauty, and goodness of the gospel.

According to Gould, the arts are one of the best means for reenchancing the imagination (p. 100). Reenchancing the imagination awakens desire within the individual, which then leads one to return to reality (p. 113). Thus, the cultural apologist not only shows that the gospel is desirable but also that it is plausible (p. 124). Gould pursues this goal in two ways. First, he denigrates the strain of anti-intellectualism prevalent in the Western church today. Second, he presents some of the rational arguments classically used in apologetics (p. 143). In his explanation of reenchancing the conscience, he dwells on beauty, revealing beauty as a central component within the biblical narrative. He presents the need for Christians to be the "cultivators of the good, true, and beautiful" (p. 146).

In what way does this book offer a paradigm shift? Put simply, it explicitly contends for an apologetic of desirability, which posits engaging the imagination along with the intellect and conscience. Certainly, faithful apologists and theologians have done this very thing for many years. Most notably, C. S. Lewis, quoted throughout the book, famously engaged people's imaginations as well as their intellect when writing works of fiction. Frederick Buechner, Os Guinness, James K. A. Smith, and others who have sought to engage the world with the desirability of Christianity are also given a fair representation of Gould's approach. Inexplicably, Francis Schaeffer, who seems to be as much a cultural apologist as Lewis (minus the fiction literature), is rarely mentioned. Including Schaeffer could have added great value in explaining how to engage the conscience and imagination without being a fiction writer or artist.

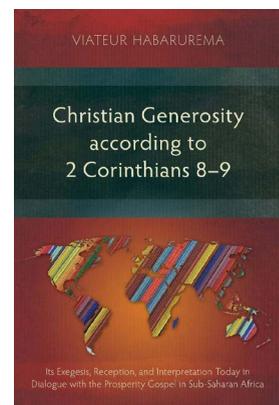
What makes Gould's *Cultural Apologetics* an important work is that it combines truths from the library of apologetics literature already available and then uses them cohesively and holistically to draw people to the gospel. While this book is a worthy primer into cultural apologetics, it has limitations. For example, Gould's *Cultural Apologetics* never dives very deep into its various subjects. It sometimes fails to present adequate explanation and argumentation due to its broad scope. He gives surface level and short explanations because he must deal with the next point. Therefore, the book sometimes omits objections to his arguments or else does not handle them fully. To be fair, Gould's intent is not to create an exhaustive guide to cultural apologetics but rather an overview.

With the nitpicking aside, Paul Gould's *Cultural Apologetics* is a significant publication in the field of apologetics. The core premise rings true and is necessary in this modern Western culture. Any apologetic that does not deal with intellect, conscience, and imagination is an incomplete apologetic. There is a need for much more work in the field of cultural apologetics, and further studies will be indebted to Gould.

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Viateur Habarurema. *Christian Generosity According to 2 Corinthians 8–9: Its Exegesis, Reception, and Interpretation Today in Dialogue with the Prosperity Gospel in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Carlisle, UK: Langham Monographs, 2017. xv + 352 pp. £26.99/\$30.29.

This fine work by Viateur Habarurema is a slightly revised version of a PhD dissertation presented to the Protestant Theological University in the Netherlands. Habarurema is a lecturer in New Testament at the Protestant University of Rwanda as well as a part-time pastor in the Pentecostal Church of Rwanda-ADEPR (Association des Églises de Pentecôte au Rwanda). He sets out to accomplish three goals. First, he seeks to understand the Apostle Paul's instructions on the collection of money for the poor in Jerusalem and Christian generosity in 2 Corinthians 8–9. Second, he surveys the reception of those instructions among key interpreters of 2 Corinthians from Chrysostom to Calvin. Third, he evaluates the use of Paul's instructions in the formulation of the "prosperity gospel" as promulgated within Pentecostal churches in Sub-Saharan Africa.



Habarurema rightly regards the last two objectives as the distinctive contributions of his work. This, however, is not to dismiss the value of his engagement with the biblical texts and, in particular, his careful analysis of the rich variety of ways that Paul uses the term, “grace” to root the motivation for generosity in the gospel. God’s grace in Christ toward the Corinthians stimulates their desire to participate in God’s gracious work to meet the needs of believers in Jerusalem. Having received the divine grace of financial assistance through the agency of other believers, the Jerusalem believers would in turn reciprocate. The reciprocation might take the form of thanksgiving and prayer for the Corinthians or even financial help should the economic situations of the two communities ever be reversed. At the center of this God-initiated fellowship of reciprocal grace is God himself, who becomes a participant in this dynamic, reciprocal exchange of grace. This communal context thus informs Paul’s understanding of what it means to have enough—what Paul calls “sufficiency” (2 Cor 9:8). Paul’s goal is not autonomy or self-sufficiency in service of self-enjoyment, as in a Greco-Roman context. Rather, he aims at the assurance of needs met by the dynamic of grace within community. The nature of grace is to overflow whatever it fills. Accordingly, “sufficiency” in Christian community is always the result of grace received and always results in grace given (p. 150).

Habarurema assumes (though he does not demonstrate) that some of African Christian thinking about these texts is shaped by the way they are interpreted in Catholic and Protestant traditions. Many African Pentecostals come from Catholic or Protestant backgrounds. This motivates his extended analysis of Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrus, Ambrosiaster, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin. None of this history of reception has any particular connection to Africa (with the possible exception of Ambrosiaster). Not all of Habarurema’s findings are wholly appreciative. He notes a theology of grace-motivated giving in these writers, and a motivation for generosity rooted in genuine care for poor. However, he also rejects the idea that almsgiving has an atoning function, a notion going back to the Apocrypha (e.g., Sir 3:30; Tob 4:10; 12:8–9) and found in Chrysostom. Habarurema believes that the theology of “recompense” that he finds in some of these writers—the idea that that God reciprocates giving with a reward—has carried over into the prosperity teaching of African Pentecostalism but without the accompanying qualification that the reward may be spiritual rather than material.

Habarurema begins his analysis of prosperity teaching by looking at factors that make African Pentecostalism particularly susceptible to the prosperity gospel. He cites, for instance, the embrace of mass media, the focus on physical healing, and a tendency to see widespread social problems as having spiritual not structural solutions. African Pentecostalism draws heavily on a sub-Saharan cosmology in which “the quest for life in fullness is conducted in a real combat against evil powers” and because of which the “talismanic and symbolic use” of the Bible is encouraged (pp. 236–40). Habarurema makes an interesting case that much of prosperity teaching is indigenous, that the influence is often *from* Africa rather than *to* Africa.

The final two chapters examine the nature of the prosperity gospel in African Pentecostal churches and their interpretation of 2 Corinthians 8–9. These churches often regard Christ’s atoning death as a basis for the Christian’s right and responsibility to claim not simply spiritual but material and physical blessings. Faith and prayer are the channels for these blessings, which are secured through the “spiritual law” of sowing and reaping. “The amount of the seed determines the extent of the harvest” (p. 256). The giving does not benefit the poor but a pastor or “a man or woman of God” whose luxurious lifestyle proves the spiritual law. This “transactional giving” resembles some features of African traditional

religions in which prosperity and well-being are interpreted as deriving from properly performed religious obligations.

Habarurema does not see prosperity teaching in an exclusively negative light. He notes that the teaching takes Scripture seriously and attempts to relate Christian faith to the concerns of daily life. Nevertheless, he highlights problems of greed, inequality, and lack of accountability that tend to arise in churches that subscribe to prosperity teaching. More fundamentally, the focus on the material concerns of daily life often pushes the central concerns of the gospel to the margins. Consequently, the centrality of the cross and resurrection to Christian faith and life are lost along with a clear conception of the cruciform nature of the Christian life and ministry.

The final chapter engages the interpretation of 2 Corinthians 8–9 in the written work of six African prosperity preachers. Given that much prosperity teaching is communicated orally, the identification of written sources is an important contribution. However, all six preachers hail from either Nigeria or Ghana. Habarurema makes no attempt to assess the scope of their influence or whether these preachers are representative. Habarurema's study does amply demonstrate the centrality of 2 Corinthians 8–9 for these prosperity preachers. They each understand this text as a guarantee that material sowing in faith automatically yields a proportional return of material abundance in this life. Such a reading ignores Paul's clear concern for the grace-motivated alleviation of poverty among believers.

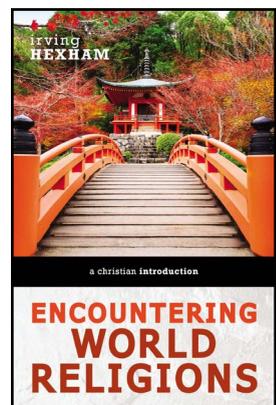
The book deserves a wide readership, especially by those preparing for ministry in contexts where authentic Christian faith is often undermined by prosperity teaching. This includes not only Christians in Africa but also Christians elsewhere who are increasingly subject to ideas originating in Africa. Habarurema's solid exegesis, his understanding of the history of interpretation, and his analysis of the African contextual factors that shape prosperity teaching combine to make this book very important indeed.

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Irving Hexham. *Encountering World Religions: A Christian Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 223 pp. £13.02/\$16.99.

Author and professor Irving Hexham offers another excellent work on world religions for a decisively Christian audience. With many Christians today in the Western world living with a myriad of neighbors, friends, and co-workers from various religious traditions, Hexham presents this nuanced introduction to the larger world religions and traditions. However, this introduction is not merely a recounting of beliefs; Hexham also helps readers think critically from a thoughtful, Christian perspective about various world religions.

In chapter 1, Hexham gives his reason for writing the book. He says, "This book was written to introduce Christians to other religious traditions to help us relate our beliefs to people who embrace religions very different from our own" (p. 23). From this perspective, *Encountering World Religions* will help both formal students and lay students in their quest for understanding and cultural



competence. One will not find an introduction to the Christian faith in this work. Rather, a Christian perspective is woven throughout the book as the critical lens through which each religious tradition is explored.

The book has fourteen main chapters and a short conclusion that urges readers to make disciples in keeping with the Great Commission. The book divides into three broad areas: primal African religions and Africa Christian heritage, yogic traditions, and the Abrahamic faiths. Readers have opportunity to reflect on each of these areas, including difference in their implicit worldviews. Again, Christian thought permeates each section. If one looks for a basic introduction to Christian doctrine, this book does not supply that need. However, for thoughtful students at home with the Bible's teachings, this introduction helps readers understand how the Christian message differs from the other world religions.

The first part of the book highlights the experience of those who follow primal and African religions. According to Hexham, the reason Westerners know little about primal and African traditional religions is because they lack a basic written text that many other religions have. This is very different from most Western religions, which emphasize written texts as divine revelation or at least ancient wisdom. Hexham also helps Western Christians move beyond a traditional understanding of Reformation Christianity to consider the far-reaching impact of the Christian message on Africa. He connects Christianity's influence on Africa as well as the syncretism that has crept in from African traditional beliefs.

In chapters 5–9, the book introduces the reader to the yogic traditions, i.e., Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. The yogic tradition is thousands of years old. It incorporates the ideas shared in one form or another across the religions mentioned above. *Samsara* (or what most Westerners understand as reincarnation) is a fundamental belief. Someone who is on this wheel of existence seeks liberation, or *moksha*, through good *karma*. This basic perspective on the world is essential for those holding to these belief systems.

Chapters 10–14 cover the Abrahamic religions of Judaism and Islam. They primarily concern how Christians relate to these two religions. Hexham explains how a Christian understanding of God's nature, as revealed in the Christian Scripture, contrasts similar concepts and persons found in Judaism and Islam. Hexham helps the reader understand Jews as a persecuted and displaced people, particularly in reference to the Holocaust. He also explores the rich heritage of the Jewish people and how it has shaped major expression of Judaism today.

Regarding Islam, Hexham aids readers unfamiliar with the holy days in Islam. Through the use of tables, he introduces and explains Islamic holidays, helping readers see how Muslims live their daily lives. He seems eager to build bridges of understanding between the Islamic and Christian worlds. This reviewer has concerns about book's approach in this section. Hexham seems too willing to instruct his Christian readership to downplay terms like "Father" and "Son," not wanting to avoid offending Muslims, when presenting a Christian understanding of God's nature. His desire for cultural competence and open dialogue is laudable. At this point, however, Hexham's approach is one one-sided. Christians should not avoid key terms when describing the nature of the God merely because they may offend others. A Trinitarian understanding of God is essential to Christianity and should not be deemphasized. Muslims need a basic understanding of differing religious beliefs.

In my estimation, Hexham volume is a solid explanation of Christianity in relation to the world's religions. He gives keen insight into many areas that most Christians know little about, especially Christianity in Africa. Readers are helped by his willingness to interact with and explore religions

that people find difficult to understand. Nevertheless, one should be cautious about his advice to give preference to other religions' terms in place of a Christian's own.

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David Joannes. *The Mind of a Missionary: What Global Kingdom Workers Tell Us About Thriving on Mission Today*. Prescott, AZ: Within Reach Global, 2018. xix + 287 pp. £9.40/\$11.99.

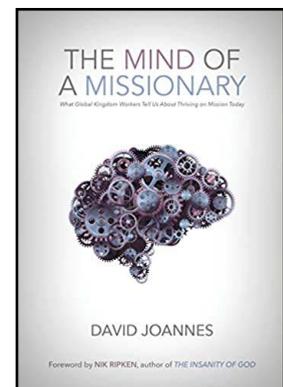
In *The Mind of a Missionary*, David Joannes explore the spiritual dynamics and psychological processes that motivate and sustain effective long-term, cross-cultural workers. By providing a descriptive analysis of these internal factors and demonstrating that they are available to all believers, the author makes a passionate plea for his readers to either consider missions or, if actively engaged, to persevere in that role. Joannes himself has spent the last twenty years in mission work, first in China, then Southeast Asia, and is the co-founder and president of Within Reach Global, an organization dedicated to evangelizing unreached people groups in the 10/40 Window.

Joannes divides his book into four broad categories relating to the missionary task: the motivations, expectations, risks, and rewards of missionary service. Each category is further divided into three narrower topics, with a chapter given to each. Motivations, for example, is subdivided into chapters dealing with compassion for the lost, obedience to the commands of Christ, and passion for the glory of God.

In order to carry out his analysis, each chapter introduces a “missionary ‘guide’ who gives you keys to thriving on mission today” (p. xviii). Six of these guides are famous missionaries from the past: C. T. Studd, Count Zinzendorf, Robert Moffat, William Carey, Hudson Taylor, and Amy Carmichael. The remaining six are more contemporary figures, some familiar and others unknown. They include Jim Elliot, Jackie Pullinger, David Eubank, Nik Ripkin, Don Richardson, and Heidi Baker. Joannes draws on the journals and biographies of these missionaries or, in some cases, on his own personal interactions with them.

This biographical information is supplemented with insights from psychology plus a wide variety of mission thinkers such as John Piper and David Platt. In addition, the author uses data derived from a number of published surveys of missionaries as well as feedback from his own survey and interviews.

This book has much to admire. As a missionary who has served for 40 years in Africa and the Middle East, I found myself spiritually reinvigorated by the author's message regarding both the necessity and joy of participating in the Great Commission. It's impossible to study the lives of great missionaries and not be caught up in their passionate love for Christ and lost people. Joannes also does a good job, contra modern trends, of arguing for the retention of the cross-cultural element within the concept of “missionary.” Because this element has been lost and every believer is called a missionary, Joannes argues that the unreached populations of the world are easily overlooked: “If the context of our disciple-making endeavors remains within our own zip codes, countless millions will perish without a chance



to meet their Savior” (p. 57). Finally, Joannes is a strong advocate for missionaries to learn the local language and be students of the culture to which they are sent.

But does the author succeed in giving us a more comprehensive understanding of how missionaries think and feel? I don’t think so. While Joannes skillfully blends his multiple sources, the only new perspectives are those he takes from psychology, and they only confirm what we already know. For example, after spending four pages in his first chapter explaining Edward Deci’s Self-Determination Theory and its impact on motivation, Joannes concludes with John Stott’s observation that the reason behind missionary service is missionaries’ unshakeable belief that Jesus alone is the way to God. Joannes continues: “The love of God compels us to trust His sovereignty, dare the impossible, and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit” (pp. 11–12). Well said, but hardly ground-breaking. The same results occur when the author introduces other psychological material such as Solomon Asch’s conformity experiment (pp. 86–88).

There are also drawbacks in Joannes’s work. The most serious is his use of David Eubank and Heidi Baker as two of his missionary “guides.” Eubank is the founder of Free Burma Rangers (FBR), a ministry that brings aid and medical care to conflict areas such as Burma, Iraq, and Sudan. Besides the danger, what makes this ministry highly unusual is that Eubank brings his wife and three children into these war zones to minister alongside FBR volunteers. Apart from my problem with intentionally exposing children to these situations, my concern is with Joannes’s recommendation, “Perhaps Eubank’s example will reset our portrait of ‘normalcy’” (p. 112). All missionary families, especially those serving in majority world contexts, experience dangerous circumstances along with God’s sustaining grace. To suggest, however, that the Eubank’s ministry ought to become the benchmark for ordinary missionary work is bizarre. Heidi Baker is troublesome because her ministry, punctuated by signs and wonders, involves her in the Toronto Blessing (p. 246). Given the excesses of that movement, to use her as a guide is off-putting for many readers, including myself. Perhaps it should be no surprise that Joannes’s own organization, Within Reach Global, is a member of the Full Gospel Fellowship of Churches and Ministers International. Joannes’s purpose would have been better served if he had chosen two workers whose circumstances and ministries are truly representative of the vast majority of missionaries serving around the world today.

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Mary T. Lederleitner. *Women in God's Mission: Accepting the Invitation to Serve and Lead*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018. 238 pp. £12.99/ \$20.00.

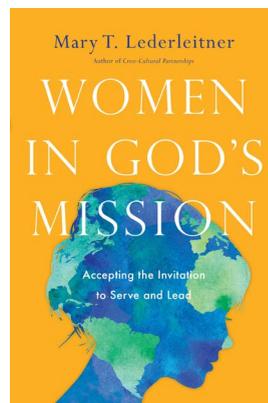
Women serving and leading in ministry is a widely discussed and contested topic. Most works that address this subject center on the theological and hermeneutical challenges of key biblical texts, making their argument either for or against women assuming leadership roles in the church, in parachurch ministries, and in mission agencies. But how do women leaders themselves view leadership and experience the ascent to ministry roles in the midst of this volatile landscape? With her book, *Women in God's Mission*, Mary Lederleitner steps into this void with a rich telling of women's experiences, thoughts, and convictions as leaders.

Lederleitner organizes her book into four sections, revolving around who these women leaders are, how they lead, the challenges they face (e.g., gender discrimination), and what helps them flourish. Each chapter opens with a quote and a story of one woman, and then moves on to explore various themes that emerge from the research. Each chapter closes with reflective discussion questions that allow readers to consider the issues raised and their implications for various contexts and organizations. What makes this book stand out? It is extensively researched and broadly inclusive. This study includes more than ninety Protestant, evangelical women leaders from 31 countries. These women are educators, pastors, missionaries, vice-presidents, board members, and more. Their voices are heard through thick description and extensive use of quotation, giving readers a greater sense of the women themselves. The women describe diverse paths toward leadership and the role of calling. They describe moments of both flourishing and discrimination as well as the wisdom needed to navigate through difficult circumstances. They explain how they persevere in ways that are confident yet humble. They do not look for a fight. Instead, they seek to find many ways to accommodate to the realities around them.

These women leaders embrace a holistic sense of mission. They strive for faithful service for and with others. They are high achieving and concerned for ministry impact, bathing their work and their lives in prayer. Most interesting of all, perhaps, is that for some characteristics, like collaboration, women's gender seems to trump women's culture. These women do not always act in ways that cultural leadership studies like GLOBE would predict (p. 70). In the end, Lederleitner's research suggests a new model of leading, *the faithful connected leader*.

Lederleitner weaves the women's stories together with various leadership theories and gender studies. She suggests that women in leadership is a normative reality in the work of God's kingdom, yet barriers (structural, social, and at times theological) continue to impede and disrupt the efforts of women leaders. Her work reveals the rich, albeit complex, lives of women who step (confidently and timidly) into positions of leadership. She calls readers to have a greater understanding for who these women are and the ways they can be supported.

Lederleitner is careful not to collapse each woman's experience and her conclusions include important notes on the differences that set each woman apart (e.g., life stages, marital status). She closes with points of application and includes tips and questions for organizations that desire to assess and address structural issues that affect women's access to and experience within the organization. There is much we should learn from the rich depth of research and experience that Lederleitner has collected in



this accessible book. No wonder it received *Christianity Today's* 2020 Book of the Year Award among mission/global church books. Both men and women will be well-served in reading it and taking its lessons to heart.

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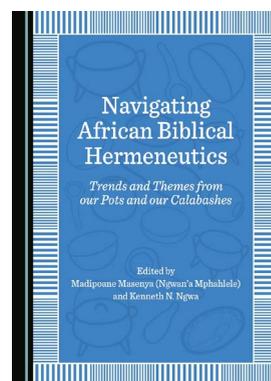
Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele) and Kenneth N. Ngwa, eds. *Navigating African Biblical Hermeneutics: Trends and Themes from Our Pots and Our Calabashes*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2018. xii +301 pp. £64.99/\$119.95.

Navigating African Biblical Hermeneutics is a compendium of papers presented at the 2014 SBL annual meeting. The book divides into five parts that address hermeneutical methods and themes revolving around power, wealth, sexuality, masculinity, HIV/AIDS, and the crises of war and violence.

In chapter 1, Alice Yafeh-Deigh argues that women are the victims of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. She employs a postcolonial Afro-feminist-womanist hermeneutic and Dale Martin's hermeneutic of love. She insists that 1 Corinthians 7 could address this social injustice by allowing the oppressed and marginalized to be involved and contribute to policymaking. In chapter 2, Funlola O. Olojede proposes that African hermeneutics needs to be both context-sensitive and gender-sensitive. She demonstrates the gender-sensitive method on the book of Proverbs, arguing that Proverbs is neither anti-women nor female-friendly. Instead, she finds Proverbs to reflect both the negative and positive character qualities of both males and females. In chapter 3, Aloo Osotsi Mojola presents Ubuntu as a hermeneutical method of Bishop Desmond Tutu, which calls for the adoption of an inclusivist reading of the Bible and concern for the oppressed.

In chapter 4, Robert Wafawanaka addresses the issue of the prosperity gospel in Sub-Saharan Africa. He insists that the health and wealth gospel exacerbates poverty in Africa rather than alleviates it. He argues that wealth, according to the Bible, is not just about money and individual success but is about a holistic "dynamic communal concept" (p. 85). In chapter 5, Ndikho Mtshiselwa responds to Wafawanaka by noting that Deuteronomy 14:28–29, Leviticus 19:9–10, and Exodus 35:4–9 speak against prosperity gospel preachers' proclivity to amass wealth for themselves and neglect the poor in their own congregations. The passages instead provide "liberative possibilities for the poor" (p. 99). In chapter 6, Hulisani Ramantswana reflects on the death of 116 pilgrims at the Synagogue Church of All Nations, where T. B. Joshua ministers. Based on Luke 11:47–51, he argues that the death of these pilgrims calls out for addressing structural injustices.

In chapter 7, Madipoane Masenya and Marthe Maleke Kondemo look at the book of Ruth and discuss the problem of heterosexual marriage's normativity among the Mongo women. The authors find seeking financial and emotional dependence on men among the Mongo women and in the world of Ruth through marriage to be patriarchal and disenfranchising. In chapter 8, Robert Kuloba Wabyanga argues that the homophobic stance of Sub-Saharan Africa is a patriarchal ideology implanted by the colonizers



and strengthened by the Bible. He showcases his argument using a case study on the Bamasaba and Baganda peoples. In chapter 9, Elna Mouton postulates that the household code of Ephesians 5:21–33 has a transformative potential if it is read christologically, as it confronts any hierarchical, patriarchal, and exploitative ideology.

In chapter 10, Kenneth Ngwa argues that the Bible and the gun are the two tools that play a significant role in the identity formation of colonial and postcolonial Africa. He asserts that both were introduced to the continent by the colonial powers. In chapter 11, R. S. Wafula uses a post-colonial reading of Genesis 18–19 to critique the ethnic violence done by the Kikuyus of Kenya against the Luo people group by gleaning from the violence sanctioned against the Moabites by Abraham's descendants. In chapter 12, Thema Bryant-Davis and four co-authors explicate the sexual atrocities committed against Liberian women during the civil war (1989–2003) using ethnographic and feminist theology and psychology. In chapter 13, Shelley Ashdown reads Ephesians 6:10–18 with the non-scholar people of Ndorobo of Kenya and makes the passage relevant to the African context.

In chapter 14, Dorothy Bea Akoto responds to the essays concerned with sexuality, gender, HIV and AIDS in this volume. She believes that the essays perpetuate a patriarchal reading of the Bible instead of providing alternatives. In chapter 15, Gilbert Okuro Ojwang responds to the essays related to violence. Ojwang pushes back on Ngwa's assertion that biblical hermeneutics contributed to the necropolis in the African milieu. He also doubts Wafula's argument that the Bible assisted in the colonization of Africa. Concerning the essay about sexual violence against Liberian women, Ojwang suggests involving both survivors and men as part of seeking a solution. He recommends the involvement of a scholarly reading of the Bible in tandem with non-scholarly reading, as Ashdown demonstrates in her chapter.

Of all the essays in *Navigating African Biblical Hermeneutics*, I found chapter 2 by Olojède to be the most even-handed. She resists the proclivity of many feminist scholars' attempts to make every text "gynocentric" and suggests complementarity of both genders in hermeneutics. Chapter 14 is eye-opening to the cost women and children pay during wars as well as the post-war physical and spiritual needs of women.

Although the book claims to be from the pots and calabashes of Africa, in reality, the essays in the book betray the fact that they are from the *Töpfe* and *Küche* of German theologians seasoned with the spices of American liberal scholars. There is nothing methodologically African here, making the book's title misleading. The inclination of most of the contributors is to blame the Bible for Africa's problems. Nevertheless, given their adoption of Western liberal hermeneutics, their disregard for the Bible is not surprising.

The methods employed in this work underplay the notion of sin and instead suggest that Africa's biggest problems are patriarchy and masculinity. Questions formulated in the West are wrongly assumed to be the burning questions of Africa, and thus these essays scratch where Africans are not itching. While the book is thought-provoking, its heavy reliance on Western liberal approaches weakens its arguments.

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