

themelios

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

Volume 45 Issue 2 August 2020

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EDITORIAL

Pursuing Scholarship in a Pandemic: Reflections on Lewis’s “Learning in War- Time”

— 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.

The first time I wore a facemask and plastic gloves to our local grocery store, I was struck by the reality that things were not “normal.” In January 2020, the world first learned about a “novel coronavirus” outbreak that infected thousands of people in China. But by March, this faraway epidemic had become a worldwide pandemic that had infected millions and killed thousands, caused dramatic upheavals in the global economy, and fundamentally disrupted business-as-usual for most societies.¹ Church buildings were closed on Easter Sunday. Schools at all levels from preschool to post-graduate studies were forced to adopt online and distance learning options and to hold “virtual” commencement services for graduates. Many universities and seminaries also eliminated faculty positions and degree programs due to declining enrollments, significant budget shortfalls, and uncertain futures.² Even as “stay-at-home” orders lifted and businesses and churches began to reopen, an article in *The Atlantic* offered the sober assessment: “There’s no going back to ‘normal.’”³

An eighty-year-old sermon by C. S. Lewis offers timely perspective for these abnormal times. T. R. Milford, the vicar of St. Mary’s in Oxford, turned to Lewis—a veteran of the Great War and well-known Christian lecturer at Magdalen College—to address the concerns of Oxford undergraduates at the beginning of World War II. So, on October 22, 1939, Lewis addressed a large, attentive crowd of Oxford students and faculty with the sermon “None Other Gods’: Culture in War-Time.” The address was initially published as a pamphlet entitled “The Christian in Danger” and later appeared in a collection of Lewis’s occasional messages as “Learning in War-Time.”⁴

¹ See further Brian J. Tabb, “Theological Reflections on the Pandemic,” *Themelios* 45 (2020): 1–7.

² For example, Liberty University laid off philosophy professors and cut its philosophy program. “Enrollment Trends a Factor in Ending Philosophy Degree Program,” *Liberty University*, 12 May 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/yd2kb729>.

³ Uri Friedman, “I Have Seen the Future—And It’s Not the Life We Knew,” *The Atlantic*, 1 May 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/ydbhpda7>.

⁴ Walter Hooper, “Introduction,” in C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (1949; reprint, New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 17–18.

Lewis reminds us that “life has never been normal.”⁵ He explains why and how we should pursue serious learning for the glory of God—whether in war or peace-time—and highlights three acute challenges that distract or discourage such scholarship. This article seeks to glean wisdom from Lewis’s “war-time” address to inform and encourage pastors, theological students, and other readers who labor during what the apostle would call “the present distress” (1 Cor 7:26).

1. The Need for Serious Learning

Why would any sane person undertake serious study in theology, humanities, or the arts in the middle of a world war or a global pandemic? Such pursuits may seem futile and misguided: an unwise investment of resources and time given the uncertain job market. Some pundits might even proclaim it socially irresponsible to have one’s head in the books when the lives of millions of people hang in the balance. We might be tempted to think that engaging in patient, careful scholarship at such times is analogous to “fiddling while Rome burns” (p. 47). Lewis addresses these sorts of objections to traditional university studies due to the uncertainties and urgencies of World War II by arguing that we must attempt to “see the present calamity in a true perspective” (p. 49). A war—or a pandemic—does not really create a “new situation”; rather, it forces us to recognize “the permanent human situation” that people have always “lived on the edge of a precipice” (p. 49). “Normal life” is a myth; if people wait for optimal conditions before searching out knowledge of what is true, good, and beautiful, they will never begin. Lewis reminds us that past generations had their share of crises and challenges, yet human beings chose to pursue knowledge and cultural activities anyway. It’s not possible to suspend our “whole intellectual and aesthetic activity” during a crisis (p. 52). We will go on reading even in war-time—the question is whether we will read good books that challenge us to think deeply and clearly or whether we will spend our time on shallow, banal distractions.

Lewis argues that we should not sharply distinguish between our “natural” and “spiritual” human activities since “every duty is a religious duty” (pp. 53–55). Whether someone is a composer or cleaner, a classicist or carpenter, their natural work becomes spiritual when they offer it humbly “as to the Lord” (pp. 55–56). Thus, intellectual pursuits of knowledge and beauty even in war-time can and do glorify God, though Lewis warns against making scholarly success into an idol if we “delight not in the exercise of our talents but in the fact that they are ours, or even in the reputation they bring us” (p. 57).

What vocations are “essential” in a modern society? During the COVID-19 pandemic, most federal, state, and local governments temporarily closed many sectors of society while allowing only “essential” workers to remain on the job. The work of philosophers, historians, and theologians (for example) may seem expendable, while the work of emergency doctors and vaccine researchers is deemed critical in a society pummeled by a deadly disease. However, such an assessment is short-sighted if we consider the long-term flourishing of human society.

Philosophy concerns the pursuit of wisdom.⁶ Students of philosophy learn to make sound arguments, reflect deeply on what is true, good, and beautiful, and consider how we should live in a complex world. A society with little regard for truth, logic, aesthetics, or morals would be “a brave new world” indeed! Lewis calls on Christian scholars to serve the church by working harder and thinking more deeply to

⁵ C. S. Lewis, “Learning in War-Time,” in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (1949; reprint, New York: HarperCollins, 1949), 49. Hereafter I cite Lewis’s address with parenthetical page references.

⁶ Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 1177a.

promote “good philosophy” that offers true answers and reasonable defenses against the philosophical fads and fashions of the age (p. 58).

Similarly, we need to study the past to rightly evaluate the challenges and concerns of the present. As the Preacher reminds us, “What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl 1:9). Words like “unprecedented” have often been used for the coronavirus pandemic, yet ours is hardly the first generation to face the threat of deadly disease. Good history allows us to “relativize ourselves and our times,” leading to greater understanding of our world and our place in it.⁷ By analyzing past times and peoples, Lewis suggests that the serious student of history builds up intellectual antibodies that offer some immunity “from the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone of his own age” (p. 59).

Lewis does not directly address the nature and need for serious theological study in “Learning in War-Time,” but elsewhere he reasons that “any man who wants to think about God at all would like to have the clearest and most accurate ideas about Him which are available.”⁸ He insists that theology is practical, particularly in war-time, as everyone has their own ideas about God (many of them wrong) and is susceptible to various theological novelties “which real Theologians tried centuries ago and rejected.”⁹ While the coronavirus pandemic has disrupted the global economy, claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, and radically altered “normal” life for most people, it has also forced many to wrestle with their own mortality and ultimate questions. Lewis reasons, “War makes death real to us.... We see unmistakably the sort of universe in which we have all along been living, and must come to terms with it” (pp. 62–63). Applying Lewis’s words to our present crisis, we realize that there is a critical need and urgent opportunity for serious biblical and theological scholarship that expounds “the bed-rock foundation of the historic faith” in humble service to Christ and his church.¹⁰ Wars and pandemics remind people that something is deeply wrong in our world. Christian theology informs that intuition by revealing that armed conflicts and rogue viruses are symptoms of the deepest problem in the universe: humans have rebelled against the Creator God, who will judge everyone according to their works. Thus, the true solution to our ills runs not through the White House or the W.H.O. but through Calvary, where the Son of God suffered and died for sinners and then disarmed death by conquering the grave.

A search of the library archives reveals that many students did indeed go on “learning in war-time” at Oxford and other universities.¹¹ The noted scholar of the early church, W. H. C. Frend, completed his DPhil thesis on North African Christianity at Oxford in 1940. George B. Caird finished his Oxford doctorate in 1944, writing on the New Testament concept of glory, and went on to serve as the university’s Dean Ireland’s Professor of the Exegesis of Holy Scripture. To these examples we could add war-time Oxford theses on Bacon’s use of Scripture (1940), post-biblical Hebrew syntax (1943), Bucer and the English Reformation (1943), the worship of the English Puritans (1944), Barth’s conception of grace (1945), Augustine’s work *Against the Academics* (1945), and dozens more. This historical perspective

⁷ Carl R. Truemann, *Histories and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 174.

⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 153.

⁹ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 155.

¹⁰ Brian J. Tabb, “*Themelios* Then and Now: The Journal’s Name, History, and Contribution,” *Themelios* 44 (2019): 4.

¹¹ The examples in this paragraph come from the British Library’s EThOS catalog, <https://ethos.bl.uk/Home.do>.

should offer encouragement to contemporary seminarians and graduate students committed to learning in pandemic-time despite financial pressures, library closures, and uncertain employment prospects.

2. Three Enemies of Serious Learning

Lewis identifies three “enemies” that rise up against scholars in times such as war: excitement, frustration, and fear.

2.1. Excitement

The first such enemy is *excitement*, by which Lewis means “the tendency to think and feel about the war when we had intended to think about our work” (pp. 59–60). That is, scholars can become distracted by a current crisis and fail to invest their full energy in their scholarly pursuits. Today, danger of “excitement” takes the form of preoccupation with social media, constantly scrolling Twitter and searching Google to follow the latest news and analysis about the number of confirmed coronavirus cases, the perilous economic situation, and the state of political turmoil in Washington, London, or Johannesburg. This is not an obvious enemy to scholarship; it feels natural to stay up-to-date on current events, and who wants to appear uninformed when people are losing their jobs and suffering from a lethal virus? Such “excitement” or distraction hinders us from pursuing what Cal Newport calls “deep work”—activities in which we focus our full concentration and push our cognitive capacities to their limits.¹² Distraction-free work hones our abilities and harnesses our energy to create something of true and lasting value. It’s much easier to write tweets and scan headlines than it is to analyze Hebrew syntax, develop philosophical proofs, or read dense Puritan prose.

Lewis reminds us that “there are always plenty of rivals to our work” (p. 60). COVID-19 did not create the enemy of “excitement” but only aggravates our preexisting condition. Long before the recent coronavirus outbreak, people spent far too much time consuming social media on their smart phones and watching CNN “breaking news.” Tony Reinke writes, “The human appetite for distraction is high in every age, because distractions give us easy escape from the silence and solitude whereby we become acquainted with our finitude, our inescapable mortality, and the distance of God from all our desires, hopes, and pleasures.”¹³ We crave what seems immediate, exciting, and relevant, and we are often all too willing to break from our deep work that feels tedious or mundane to make sure that we do not miss out on a friend’s status update or the latest headlines about today’s troubles. Lewis cautions, “If we let ourselves, we shall always be waiting for some distraction or other to end before we can really get down to our work” (p. 60). There’s never really an optimal time to learn an ancient language or to write a monograph or a thesis. We must pursue knowledge and the work of scholarship even when conditions seem unsuitable, because “favourable conditions never come” (p. 60). We may imitate the awareness and resolve of the men of Issachar, “who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chr 12:32). For a proper perspective on our present circumstances, “we need intimate knowledge

¹² Cal Newport, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 3.

¹³ Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 44–45.

of the past” (p. 58). Thus, the pastor unsure how to lead his church amid a pandemic may learn from how Christians responded to epidemics and pandemics in previous generations.¹⁴

2.2. Frustration

Frustration or anxiety is the second foe that scholars must face—“the feeling that we shall not have time to finish” (p. 60). The Oxford undergraduates and others who gathered to hear Lewis’s 1939 address had family and friends on the front lines of the war. They worried about German air raids and experienced the challenges of war-time blackouts and paper shortages.¹⁵ Lewis reasons, “If our parents have sent us to Oxford, if our country allows us to remain there, this is *prima facie* evidence that the life which we, at any rate, can best lead to the glory of God at present is the learned life” (p. 56).

Scholars will never finish every book and article that they aspire to write; pastors will likely retire or die before completing the sermon series that they have planned. Virgil—the greatest Roman poet—died in 19 BC before finishing his epic work, *The Aeneid*.¹⁶ Likewise, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Franz Kafka, Mark Twain, and countless other writers left behind unfinished novels. One also thinks of “America’s theologian” Jonathan Edwards, who died before completing his great magnum opus, *A History of the Work of Redemption*.¹⁷ And the great biblical scholar J. B. Lightfoot left unpublished commentaries and detailed exegetical notes on John’s Gospel, Acts, 2 Corinthians, and 1 Peter that were discovered and published over a century after his death.¹⁸

Lewis reminds us, “Happy work is best done by the man who takes his long-term plans somewhat lightly and works from moment to moment ‘as to the Lord.’ ... The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received” (p. 61). Thus, we should not respond to the foe of “frustration” with inaction like the foolish servant who hid his master’s money in the ground rather than investing it (Matt 25:18, 24–27). At the same time, we must guard against the proud presumption that James 4:13–16 warns about by recognizing that whenever we enroll in a degree program, plan a sermon series, or sign a book contract, we must humbly acknowledge, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that” (Jas 4:15).

2.3. Fear

Fear is the third enemy that confronts those who would learn in war-time. “War threatens us with death and pain,” yet Lewis urges us to remember, “100 percent of us die, and the percentage cannot be increased” (p. 61). War—or a coronavirus—may impact the cause or timing of death, but it does

¹⁴ See, for example, Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity: How the Jesus Movement Became the World’s Largest Religion* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 114–19; Geoff Chang, “5 Lessons from Spurgeon’s Ministry in a Cholera Outbreak,” *The Gospel Coalition*, 17 March 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y7scygfh>; Jonathan Leeman and Michael Haykin, “Pastoring in a Pandemic, Episode 10: How Christians throughout the Ages Have Responded to Plagues and Pandemic,” *9Marks*, 15 May 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/yccujywm>.

¹⁵ Alister E. McGrath, *C. S. Lewis, A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013), 191–92.

¹⁶ F. J. Miller, “Evidences of Incompleteness in the ‘Aeneid’ of Vergil,” *The Classical Journal* 4 (1909).

¹⁷ George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 193–94.

¹⁸ Ben Witherington III explains the circumstances of this discovery in his introduction to J. B. Lightfoot, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Newly Discovered Commentary*, ed. Ben Witherington III and Todd D. Still, *The Lightfoot Legacy Set 1* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 21–25.

not change its certainty. In fact, a perilous crisis such as a world war or a global pandemic forces us to “remember” death and “be always aware of our mortality” (p. 62). The World Health Organization began publishing daily situation reports about the coronavirus on 21 January 2020, when there were only 282 confirmed cases; four months later, the global count exceeds 6 million cases and 375,000 reported deaths.¹⁹ These swelling numbers are shocking and sobering, yet they also remind us of what has been true all along: we are mortal and will all die. This realization that we “are not here to live forever” in fact moves us to live more fully today for others and for God.²⁰ As creatures living in uncertain and abnormal times—because times are *never* certain or normal—Lewis challenges us to humbly offer to God our pursuit of learning as “one of the appointed approaches to the Divine reality and the Divine beauty which we hope to enjoy hereafter” (p. 63).

Moses powerfully confronts us with our own mortality and offers us needed wisdom in Psalm 90.²¹ We must reckon with our creaturely limits—“the years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty”—and say to our Maker, “From everlasting to everlasting you are God” (vv. 2, 10). Whether we face armed conflict, coronavirus, or some other toil and trouble in this life, we pray, “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom” (v. 12). Our days have already been numbered by the one Daniel calls “the Ancient of Days.” With our mortal span in mind, we ask the everlasting God to gladden and satisfy us for all of our days and then to “establish the work of our hands” (vv. 14–15, 17).

This closing prayer fittingly expresses the dependence and determination of Christian scholars committed to learning in war-time, as well as all followers of Christ who trust that their labors “in the Lord” are not in vain (1 Cor 15:58).²²

¹⁹ “Coronavirus Disease (COVID-2019) Situation Reports,” *World Health Organization*, <https://tinyurl.com/y9uuc9t9>.

²⁰ David Gibson, *Living Life Backward: How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live in Light of the End* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 114. See also Daniel Strange, “The Rolling Stones Will Stop,” *Themelios* 43 (2018): 173–77.

²¹ See Mike Bullmore, “Numbering and Being Glad in Our Days: A Meditation on Psalm 90,” *Themelios* 41 (2016): 289–92.

²² Thanks to Kristin Tabb, Andy Naselli, and Matthew Westerholm for sharing helpful feedback on an earlier version of this article.

STRANGE TIMES

Praise *and* Polemic in Our Global Pandemic

— 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.

The ninety-second psalm is an oasis in our COVID-19 desert, a one-stop-shop, not merely for our survival, but for our thrival needs. The only psalm in the Psalter dedicated for the Sabbath day, it is for those of us feeling withered and weary, diverted and distracted. It is for those of us slowly slowing down, shuffling ‘Zoombies’, turning in tighter and tighter circles on ourselves and within ourselves. It is for those of us for whom every day has become Blursday. With a menthol freshness, this song wake-up-calls us to behold the Lord in rituals, rhythms and remembrances (vv. 1–5)—not simply out of duty but of out of joy, and to do so habitually and corporately. It amazingly promises that when we *behold* so we *become*, when we exalt (v. 8), so we are exalted (v. 10)—strong and fecund (vv. 12–14) with almost supernatural sensory perception (v. 11). Behold this vision of spiritual hydration:

¹² The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,

they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;

¹³ planted in the house of the Lord,

they will flourish in the courts of our God.

¹⁴ They will still bear fruit in old age,

they will stay fresh and green.

In his commentary (which often reads like poetry), Derek Kidner titles these closing verses ‘Endless Vitality’, noting, ‘It is not the greenness of perpetual youth, but the freshness of age without sterility, like that of Moses whose “eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deut. 34:7); whose wisdom was mature and his memory invaluable rich. It is a picture which bodily and mental ills must often severely limit, but which sets a pattern of spiritual stamina for our encouragement and possibly our rebuke.’¹ For Christian believers, this is a psalm whose promises are grounded and inviolable in the crucified, risen and exalted Christ, the One whose deeds make us glad, the One in whom there is no wickedness, the One who has defeated his enemies and scattered all evildoers, *the* mighty, righteous, flourishing One. What a refreshment in strange and sapping times! Having said all this, these aspects though are not really the focus of this *Strange Times*.

What I have found most interesting as I’ve reflected on this psalm in recent weeks is what has happened to my hermeneutic given my own particular cultural context. Certainly this psalm has much

¹ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, TOTC (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 337.

to say, and to say explicitly *for* all kinds of things. However, what I have been drawn to is rather what implicitly the psalm says *against*. Much of my thought here revolves around verse 8, which many commentators note both structurally and theologically is the heart and hinge of the psalm:

But you, LORD, are forever exalted.

What I have seen emerging more and more clearly from the page is a parenthesis which reads:

But you, LORD [*alone, and not x*], are forever exalted.

In other words, it is the *polemic* as much as the *praise* that has been impressed upon me and that I would like to unpack a little.

During the last three months, I've been trying to work through a COVID-19 conundrum that is both confused and confusing. On the one hand, and one might say 'bottom up', has been a flurry of grassroots and groundswell encouragement (if not really 'excitement') amongst some British Christians regarding the general public's attitude towards prayer and church during the crisis. At first anecdotal (e.g., 'we've had more Zoom guests to our service than normal'), some research has been undertaken which does make for interesting reading.² On the other hand, and one might say 'top down', is the British government's pronouncements and policies that, to my mind at least, have been thoroughly scientific, immanentistic, disenchanted, and yes, 'modern'. How do we properly account for both 'bottom up' and 'top down'? The societal spaghetti gets even more tangled when we note across the country acts and behaviours of both virtue and vice. We have witnessed, and continue to witness, much civic goodness, kindness and altruistic service. But we also have witnessed much virtue-signalling, judgmentalism, hypocrisy and self-righteousness. Herein lies the problem: the dividing line between the humane and the humanistic is a fine one. How do we know which is which?

At the level of sociology and phenomenology, teasing all this out in terms of the specifics of British secular religiosity is complex and will take time. Theologically though, the above picture is eminently explainable. Yes, COVID-19 has been disruptive but it doesn't call us to scrabble around for a novel theological anthropology. It's changed our human lives but not human life. It hasn't eradicated the doctrines of total depravity and common grace. Indeed it's highlighted once again that suppress as we might, we are worshipping creatures—*homo adorans*. Need I say more than present as evidence British Prime Minister Boris Johnston, who in his statement to the nation in early May stated, 'We are shining the light of science on this virus, and we will defeat this devilish disease.'³

² See the research commissioned by *Tearfund* available at <https://comresglobal.com/polls/tearfund-covid-19-prayer-public-omnibus-research/>. Highlights include: Over two in five (44%) UK adults say they pray, including a quarter of adults (26%) who say they pray regularly (i.e., at least once a month or more often). A quarter (24%) of UK adults say they have watched or listened to a religious service since lockdown (on the radio, live on TV, on demand or streamed online). Over half (53%) of UK adults who pray say they have prayed about family during the COVID-19 lockdown. A third say they prayed about friends (34%), while over a quarter say they prayed about frontline services (27%) during the COVID-19 lockdown. Two thirds (66%) of UK adults who pray agree that prayer changes the world. A third (33%) of UK adults who pray say they prayed since the COVID-19 lockdown because they believe that prayer makes a difference.

³ Matthew Parris has some helpful points to make on the current rhetoric of the using the definite article in talking about 'the' science: 'Ministers Can't Keep Hiding behind the Science', *The Times*, 24 April 2020, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ministers-should-stop-hiding-behind-the-science-h6gklfg6b>.

1. The NHS: Religion of the English

Shining the light of Scripture on our current crisis, I'm even more convinced (if that was possible) of a biblical theological anthropology that wishes to keep the heuristic tool of 'idolatry' firmly centre stage. In my wandering around and careful look at our objects of worship,⁴ there is one British example *par excellence*. On April 12th this year, broadcaster Piers Morgan tweeted this to his 7.5 million followers:

Most disgusting tweet of the Coronavirus crisis so far – & the bar was very, very low.

What could have provoked such an extreme reaction? It was a tweet from Andrew Lilico:

NHS worship is going to be even more insufferable once this is done than it was before, isn't it?⁵

Britain's National Health Service (the NHS) is the largest employer in the UK (with about 1.5 million employees), and the fifth largest in the world. It was the former Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson who back in 1992 remarked, probably somewhat wryly, that 'the NHS is the closest thing the English have to a religion, with those who practise it regarding themselves as a priesthood.'⁶ In general, the public attitude towards the NHS in these last few months has taken its profile to a new level.⁷ There has been extensive media coverage every Thursday evening for the public's 8:00pm 'Clap for Carers' with 'Thank you NHS' rainbow pictures displayed in homes up and down the country.

What I have found both fascinating and ironic is that the deployment of religious language to articulate and analyse the phenomena of NHS support has come from critics who are not Christians, some being prominently atheist. Historian David Starkey in a recent article states,

the C[hurch] of E[ngland] is dead; the new national church is the NHS.... And, what is worst of all, it is this capture of the English/British state by the transmogrified NHS ... that lies at the heart of our disastrous response to the pandemic. We have committed national idolatry and we are paying the price.⁸

Political commentator Matthew Parris has written on what he believes is the Government's 'near-ecstatic embrace of our national religion':

Subliminally, political decision-making these last two months has been partly driven by a powerful political imperative to be associated with the National Health Service and to harvest some of the respect, even adoration, the NHS commands; and by an equally powerful political dread of being seen to have failed the NHS at a moment of danger.... Our health service enjoys a position akin to the Thai monarchy: no breath of complain, question, or even levity is permitted.

⁴ Cf. Acts 17:23.

⁵ <https://twitter.com/piersmorgan/status/1249385441058598915>.

⁶ Nigel Lawson, *The View from Number 11: Memoirs of a Tory Radical* (London: Bantam, 1992), 613.

⁷ See the ongoing five year research project at Warwick University, 'The Cultural History of the NHS', <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/chm/research/current/nhshistory>.

⁸ David Starkey, 'The NHS is the New Church—Militant and Triumphant', *The Critic*, June 2020, <https://the-critic.co.uk/issues/june-2020/the-nhs-is-the-new-church-militant-and-triumphant/>.

... And how about applause for the nation's small shopkeepers and supermarket counter staff, largely unsung heroes? But no, a secular society whose first fear is death is making cathedrals of our hospitals, priestly vestments of personal protection equipment, and altars of ventilators. And cabinet ministers, knowing it, scurry to lead the congregation in prayer, hoping some of the divine authority will rub off on them.⁹

Of course, one's response to all this is that 'worship' and 'idolatry' language is rhetorical, hyperbolic and to that end a superficial analysis on my part. Another response might be that in lock-down people just want to gather around a common cause and have a sense of identity—it doesn't really matter what the focus is, any opportunity to come out of our houses and see the neighbours in our street. Yet another response might concentrate on the virtue-signalling and 'slacktivism' characteristics that might motivate such behaviour. While there might be truthful elements to such responses, I don't think it takes away (indeed it supports) that we are in idolatry territory. As Jamie Smith notes, 'when your ultimate conviction is that there is no eternal then you're most prone to absolutize the temporal.'¹⁰ Continuing the medical theme, put through the diagnostic tests I use in my teaching in terms of identifying idolatry, this attitude towards the NHS passes with room to spare. Functionally, if it looks like an idol and quacks like an idol....

2. *The Polemic in Our Praise*

With this background noise, let's return to Psalm 92. And I mean *literal* background noise. Imagine in Britain, my 'secular' 'post-Christian' Britain, my often fragmented and fractured Britain. Imagine *that* Britain where every Thursday evening for ten weeks in row millions of people have come out of their houses, clapping, cheering and banging all kinds of household items. Imagine that scene and then you read this:

A Psalm. A song. For the Sabbath day

¹ It is good to praise the LORD
and make music to your name, O Most High,
² proclaiming your love in the morning
and your faithfulness at night,
³ to the music of the ten-stringed lyre
and the melody of the harp.

Within this context, note where we are pushed to put the stress as we read each line. Such an observation is not original to me. One of the most formative articles I have read in recent years is one I stumbled across a few years ago as I prepared for a lecture on idolatry in the book of Isaiah. In it, John Witvliet addresses Isaiah in Christian liturgy. The relevant section, and worth quoting in full, concerns the polemic function of praise:

Significantly, the context of the prophetic critique of idolatry helps us sense what to emphasize as we hear them—and as we sing them ourselves. Often we naturally approach

⁹ Matthew Parris, 'The Difficult Balance of Public vs Political Agony', *The Spectator*, 25 April 2020, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-difficult-balance-of-public-vs-political-agony>.

¹⁰ James K. A. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*, Cultural Liturgies (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 29.

a song of praise with a kind of blank-slate reading. We express our praise songs as ‘Sing to the LORD a new song’ (as opposed to simply speaking our praise) or ‘Sing to the LORD a new song’ (as opposed to singing some old songs). However appropriate those interpretations might be in other contexts, here the force of context conveys, rather, ‘Sing to the LORD a new song’ (as opposed to singing to idols or false gods). These are hymns offered as polemic statements; they are offered against the gods even as they are sung to YHWH. When we sing ‘Praise God from whom all blessings flow,’ we are also saying ‘Down with the gods from whom no blessings flow.’ The polemic function of praise has been memorably described by Walter Brueggemann: “The affirmation of Yahweh always contains a polemic against someone else.... It may be that the [exiles] will sing such innocuous-sounding phrases as “Glory to God in the highest,” or “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” Even those familiar phrases are polemical, however, and stake out new territory for the God now about to be aroused to new caring.’ When we sing our pretty songs of praise, it is as if we are singing ‘take that you false gods (!)’¹¹

Therefore, returning to our climactic verse 8 of Psalm 92, ‘But you, LORD, are forever exalted,’ note some undertones or overtones that we begin to hear,

‘But you LORD *alone and not the NHS*, are forever exalted.’

Certainly I think it is legitimate to read Psalm 92 in this way, particularly if, as some commentators note, v. 8 is a subversive re-appropriation of a pre-existing Ugaritic hymn to Baal.¹²

3. *Finickity Pedantry?*

Why make this point? Am I not being overly negative, churlish and just a bit grumpy? Am I not being an ignoramus forgetting the NHS’s Christian roots (Labour politician Aneurin Bevan, one its architects, famously called it ‘a piece of real Christianity’¹³), and more recent statements like that of Justin Welby, the current Archbishop of Canterbury, who calls it ‘the most powerful and visible expression of our Christian heritage, because it sprang out of a concern that the poor should be able to be treated as well as the rich’?¹⁴ On both accounts, I really hope not.

In a heartfelt piece, the evangelical writer Nick Spencer acknowledges his thanks to the NHS and its workers who he has observed up close and personal in the last few months.¹⁵ While he too notes the ‘religious’ overtones in the British attitude towards the NHS, he writes, “This might be the cue for a pious warning about idolatry. Perhaps, but not here and not now.”¹⁶ That Spencer holds back in his own

¹¹ John D. Witvliet, ‘Isaiah in Christian Liturgy: Recovering Textual Contrasts and Correcting Theological Astigmatism,’ *CTJ* 39 (2004): 142–43.

¹² See Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 336.

¹³ In a 1959 speech, extracts of which can be heard here: <https://tinyurl.com/yausj4x5>. I should note that in the sentence preceding the one quoted, Bevan also calls the NHS ‘a piece of real socialism.’

¹⁴ Justin Welby, *Reimagining Britain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 123.

¹⁵ Nick Spencer, ‘Clapping for the NHS, Our New Religion,’ *Theos*, 27 March 2020, <https://www.theosthink-tank.co.uk/comment/2020/03/27/clapping-for-the-nhs-our-new-religion>.

¹⁶ Spencer, ‘Clapping for the NHS.’

article is perhaps appropriate, but here I'm happy (and not grumpy) to be a little pious in making two points, one 'vertical' and the other 'horizontal'.

The Apostle Paul was distressed and provoked in Athens when he observed a city submerged in idolatry (Acts 17:16). His zeal for God's glory imitates God's zeal for his own glory, 'I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols' (Isa 42:8). I'm a Brit, so I don't really do paroxysm, but I do shift uncomfortably in my seat when I see a photo of a huge holograph of the NHS logo emblazoned on the side of a church building. We are told in 1 John 5:21 to 'keep ourselves from idols'. The pressure to go with the cultural flow, or more appropriate, be 'pulled under' by a cultural undertow is always strong. Such sirens are not simply intellectual but emotional, habitual and ritualistic. Psalm 92 reminds us that on the Lord's Day we need to re-orientate and reset, remembering, in case our week has anaesthetized us, that *the Lord* is of first importance, He is forever exalted: 'alone and not x'. I need a good weekly dose of polemical praise to stir me up to be more provoked and distressed than I often am.

In our imminent secular culture, the difference between thanking the NHS and our carers, and thanking *God* for the NHS and our carers is not finickity pedantry. Not only does this model the biblical pattern of thanksgiving ('God, and not his gifts, is the primary focus of Pauline thanksgiving'¹⁷), but failing to give thanks to God is strongly linked with idolatry and the root of humanities sinfulness.¹⁸ As Peter Leithart concludes in his richly illuminative intellectual study of 'gratitude', it is a whole *worldview* of difference:

A social order that functions within the infinite circle of Christianity must take its cues from the church, which is the original community of absolute gratitude and focused ingratitude. If the church is going to play a central role in the renewal of modern society, it has to cultivate habits of ingratitude. Christians, and churches, must learn to renounce debts of gratitude, giving thanks only to God.¹⁹

I'm not saying here that Christians should not have participated in the weekly clap-for-carers. But we do need to 'stop and think' about these rites and rituals (cf. Isa 44:19). Because our culture is so fragmented and fractured, there are good and proper civic, communal and connectional reasons why one might participate and do so gladly. But might we think creatively of ways in which our participation might witness our thanks *to God* for our carers. How do we provide a Christian commentary that accompanies and wraps around the rite? Please let me know. More awkwardly, might we ask ourselves and our churches some hard questions if our hearts are more expectant, more excited and more moved by this act than we are in our weekly gatherings to worship the Lord.

Horizontally, in the long run, we will be found to be for more caring for our carers and for an institution like the NHS when we recognise its createdness and penultimacy. It's obvious, but idolatry deifies and makes the peccable, impeccable. Making something an idol makes critique very difficult if

¹⁷ David W. Pao, *Thanksgiving: An Investigation of a Pauline Theme*, NSBT 13 (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 37.

¹⁸ Cf. Romans 1:21. See Pao, *Thanksgiving*, 159–61.

¹⁹ Peter J. Leithart, *Gratitude: An Intellectual History* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 229. To explain what Leithart means here by ingratitude, 'Jesus and Paul look like ingrates because they renounce gratitude. They look like ingrates because their gratitude is so big, so indiscriminate, that it confuses and destroys normal expectations about giving and receiving. They look like ingrates because they look past every benefit to thank a Divine Benefactor. Anyone who does not believe in that Benefactor is going to find Jesus and Paul deeply offensive, if not deluded' (p. 77).

not impossible. To continue the 1992 Nigel Lawson quotation, ‘the NHS is the closest thing the English have to a religion, with those who practise it regarding themselves as a priesthood. *This made it quite extraordinarily difficult to reform.*’²⁰ Back to the present, here’s Matthew Parris again:

Overlooking the fact that other countries’ health systems seem to have done as well as or better than ours, we applaud from front windows or crowd on to Westminster Bridge (flouting health advice) to clap. Many find this moving. I find it as mawkish as teddy bears and flowers for [Princess] Diana. Of course front line NHS staff are dutiful and brave. The poor bloody infantry always are. The monolith they work for, however, has appeared slow-footed and logistically challenged, its command structure so tangled that nobody seems to know which levers are actually connected to anything. Are we clapping the bureaucracy when we clap?²¹

Moreover, if we believe that Christ has the right to be Lord of all, then not only do Christians have a duty to challenge areas where this rule is not respected, but accounts of anything in creation that do not relate that something to Christ and the Christian worldview are necessarily incomplete, and to that extent misleading. When put in its proper place, penultimate matters like the healthcare system of a society, are inextricably linked to matters of ultimate concern which for us are Christ shaped. However, contentious, complex and seemingly intractable these issues might be, we need to allow the Christian worldview to speak publicly into matters of healthcare provision, which of course historically it has. To continue to do so will need not only a great deal of biblical wisdom, patience, and imagination, but godly motivation fuelled every Lord’s Day by our corporate praise and polemic:

‘But you, LORD, are forever exalted.’

²⁰ Lawson, *The View from Number 11*, 613.

²¹ Parris, ‘The Difficult Balance of Public vs Political Agony’.

The Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12: A Redemptive-Historical Reassessment

— Jason S. DeRouchie —

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Abstract: Paul cites Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12 in order to support that “no one is justified before God by the law” (Gal 3:11). Leviticus 18:5 portrays the principle of “doing” in order to attain life that characterized the Mosaic law-covenant, and when this principle met human inability, the law became an enslaving guardian until Christ (3:21–26) and identified how “all who rely on works of the law are under a curse” (3:10). To say “the law is not of faith” (3:12) means that the era of the law-covenant was not characterized by faith leading to life but by rebellion leading to death.

Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” (Gal 3:11–12 ESV)

You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD. (Lev 18:5 ESV)

In Galatians 3:6–14, the apostle Paul draws on a number of OT texts to show how salvation history culminates in Christ.¹ He appropriates Leviticus 18:5 to substantiate his assertions that “no one is justified before God by the law” (Gal 3:11) and that “the law is not of faith” (3:12; cf. Rom 10:5). Is the apostle actually viewing Habakkuk’s claim that “the righteous shall live by faith” (Hab 2:4) as counter to Moses’s declaration, and did not Moses himself celebrate the life of faith (Gen 15:6) and grieve over Israel’s lack of it (Num 14:11; Deut 1:32; 9:23)? What should the interpreter make of Paul’s use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12? Silva asserts that this question is part of what is perhaps “the most difficult

¹ Galatians 3:6 cites Genesis 15:6; Galatians 3:8 cites Genesis 12:3 with 18:18/22:18; Galatians 3:10 cites Deuteronomy 10:26; Galatians 3:11 cites Habakkuk 2:4; Galatians 3:12 cites Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:13 cites Deuteronomy 21:23.

problem ... in the whole Pauline corpus.”²

Recently, Etienne Jodar has attempted to bolster the positive readings of Howard, Kaiser, and others that Paul does *not* pit Leviticus 18:5 against Habakkuk 2:4.³ Jodar argues that Paul’s point in claiming, “the law is not of faith,” is indeed to say, “faith is from law,” which he believes is the meaning of Leviticus 18:5.⁴ Conversely, this study draws significantly on the OT background of Paul’s thought and argues that in Galatians 3:11–12 he treats Leviticus 18:5 as part of a contrast between redemptive-historical ages. The apostle associates Leviticus 18:5 with the old covenant period when faithlessness and inability dominated, and this stands in contrast to the new covenant age of faith secured in Christ. While there has always been a remnant of true believers, the old covenant community as a whole was never characterized by believing, from the days of Moses to the end the OT (e.g., Num 14:11; Deut 1:32; 9:23–24; 29:4[3]; 2 Kgs 17:14). The old covenant called people to glorify God by fearing him, loving him wholeheartedly, and obeying his voice (e.g., Deut 6:4–5; 10:12–13), yet the covenant itself included no power to awaken such realities (cf. Deut 29:4[3] with Rom 11:7–8). As such, Moses himself anticipated both that the old covenant would end in Israel’s destruction (Deut 4:25–29; 31:16–18; 27–29) and that it would be superseded by a new work of God (4:30–31; 18:15–19; 30:1–14). This aligns with Paul’s statements about the law’s ministry of death and condemnation (2 Cor 3:7, 9), which stood against the new covenant’s ministry of righteousness and age of faith (Gal 3:24–26; cf. 3:12–14).⁵ An antithetical reading of Galatians 3:11–12 fits best within Paul’s redemptive-historical argument. I will evaluate how Paul uses the OT by employing G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson’s methodology.⁶

1. The Literary and Pauline Context of Galatians 3:12

The initial step in this study is to establish the context of Galatians 3:12. While many will quibble with certain aspects of this overview, it should effectively identify how I understand Paul’s argument within Galatians 3. Earlier Paul declares, “We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal 2:16). The apostle sees two possible means by which God will declare people right: “works of law” and “faith in Jesus Christ.” The former relates to doing what the Mosaic

² Moisés Silva, “Galatians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 800. For a history of interpretation, see, most recently, Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul*, WUNT 2/241 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 142–51, 168–70.

³ Etienne Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith: A Positive Reassessment of Paul’s View of the Law,” *Themelios* 45 (2020): 43–57. Cf. George E. Howard, “Christ the End of the Law: The Meaning of Romans 10:4 ff.,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 331–37; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14 (1971): 19–28.

⁴ See especially Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 52–56.

⁵ See Jason S. DeRouchie, “From Condemnation to Righteousness: A Christian Reading of Deuteronomy,” *SBJT* 18.3 (2014): 87–118.

⁶ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, “Introduction,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), xxiii–xxviii; cf. G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 41–54.

law-covenant requires—actions by which Paul says a mere human “is not justified” (2:16; cf. 3:11).⁷ In contrast, the latter is the only means for a sinful person to enjoy right standing with God (2:16) and is linked to “believing” (2:16), “life” (2:19–20), “grace” (2:21), “the Spirit” (3:2–3), and “hearing with faith” (3:2, 5).⁸ In Galatians 3, it is also only by faith in Jesus that one can become a “child” of Abraham (3:1–6; cf. 3:26, 29).

In Galatians 3:7–29 Paul builds on this understanding of justification and identity to clarify how only those who believe in Christ receive God’s declaration of righteousness and inherit all the Abrahamic promises. Having stressed positively that all people of faith, including Gentiles, are blessed with Abraham (3:7–9), the apostle now emphasizes negatively in 3:10–14 that those who relate to God by works of law are cursed. I will provide a general overview of Paul’s thought-flow and then develop two significant features of the text.

Galatians 3:10 opens with γάρ (“for”) in order to identify that what follows provides an argument for why “those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham” (3:9). 3:10 itself notes that reliance on keeping the law brings curse to all mere humans, because, as Deuteronomy 27:26 declares, God curses everyone who does not fully heed the law. 3:11–12 then develop the argument (using δέ) by clarifying why doing works of law fails to secure justification but results in curse. Paul first cites Habakkuk 2:4 (“The righteous shall live by faith”) in Galatians 3:11 to stress that mere humans enjoy life only by believing. In 3:12 he then contrasts this fact (using δέ) by asserting, “But the law is not of faith,” and then quoting Leviticus 18:5 (“The one who does them shall live by them”).⁹ Here he highlights how “doing” characterizes the call of the Mosaic covenant, which redemptive history has shown resulted in Israel’s disobeying the law, experiencing death in exile, and deeply needing God to save and restore them through Messiah Jesus. Opening with an asyndetic construction, 3:13–14 then synthesize the implications of Paul’s argument, concluding how faith alone in Christ’s obedient, substitutionary, curse-bearing work secures the Abrahamic blessing of justification and the resulting seal of God’s Spirit.

Two features in the context of Galatians 3:10–14 place focus on Christ rather than the Mosaic-law as the answer to humanity’s right standing with God: *First*, throughout this chapter Paul is contrasting two redemptive-historical eras: (a) the age of enslavement, where the law served as an imprisoning guardian, and (b) the age of faith, where Christ frees believers and secures justification and sonship (Gal 3:23–25; cf. 4:3–9; 5:1).¹⁰ The apostle appears to associate Leviticus 18:5 with the earlier era (3:12),

⁷ For this understanding of the phrase “works of law” (ἔργα νόμου) in Romans 3:20, 28 and Galatians 2:16 [3x]; 3:2, 5, 10, see Thomas R. Schreiner, “Works of the Law,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 974–78; Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 41–45; cf. Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 158–60.

⁸ For this understanding of the phrase “faith of Christ” (πίστις Χριστοῦ), see Moisés Silva, “Faith Versus Works of Law in Galatians,” in *The Paradoxes of Paul. Vol. 2 of Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, WUNT 2/181 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 217–48; Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 133–38; cf. Moo, *Galatians*, 38–48.

⁹ Jodar claims that “with the Leviticus 18:5 quotation Paul has moved on in his argument; he is no longer proving that those who rely on the works of the law are cursed.” Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 52. However, Galatians 3:13 is still addressing the theme of “curse,” which Jesus himself bears in our stead, thus curbing the death-dealing nature of the Mosaic law.

¹⁰ For more on Paul’s contrast of two redemptive-historical eras, see Ardel Caneday, “Redeemed from the Curse of the Law’: The Use of Deut 21:22–23 in Gal 3:13,” *TJ* 10 (1989): 185–209; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 141–48; James M. Scott, “For

which includes failed attempts at “works of law” that resulted not in Israel’s justification (2:16; 3:11) but in their cursed exilic death (3:10). In contrast, the age of faith is linked with Habakkuk 2:4 (3:11) and the coming of Christ (3:24). For all who are by faith “in Christ” (3:14, 26, 28), his substitutionary death has now “redeemed us from the curse of the law” (Gal 3:13; cf. 3:24–26; 2 Cor 5:21) and secured “the blessing of Abraham” and “the promised Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:14), adoptive “sonship” (3:26, 29; 4:5), and rights to the full Abrahamic inheritance (3:18, 29).

Second, Paul seems convinced of both the inability of the law to grant life and the inability of mere humans to gain life by it.¹¹ “If a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, *so that* the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Gal 3:21–22; cf. Rom 10:4). With respect to the law’s inability to grant life, Paul is clear: “By works of the law no one will be justified” (Gal 2:16), and “it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law” (3:11).¹² While “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom 7:12), “the very commandment that promised life proved to be death” to Paul and Israel as a whole (7:10; cf. Deut 8:1).¹³ The *revealed principle* that guided the Mosaic law was “the one who does them shall live by them” (Gal 3:12; cf. Lev 18:5). Nevertheless, God’s *sovereign purpose* for the law-covenant was never that it “give life” or secure “righteousness” to the many (Gal 3:21). Instead, it bore a “ministry of death” and a “ministry of condemnation,” all so that, in Christ and the new covenant, God might work a “ministry of righteousness” with greater glory and grace (2 Cor 3:7, 9; cf. John 1:16–17).¹⁴ Through the Son, God did “what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not

as Many as Are of Works of the Law Are Under a Curse’ (Galatians 3:10),” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Don Garlington, “Role Reversal and Paul’s Use of Scripture in Galatians 3.10–13,” *JSNT* 65 (1997): 103–8; Joel Willitts, “Context Matters: Paul’s Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” *TynBul* 54 (2003): 105–22.

¹¹ The wording of this sentence is adapted from Sprinkle, though he thinks Paul’s focus is primarily on the law’s inability. Preston M. Sprinkle, “Why Can’t ‘The One Who Does These Things Live by Them’? The Use of Leviticus 18.5 in Galatians 3.12,” in *Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality: Volume 2: Exegetical Studies*, ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, LNTS 392 (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 129.

¹² Seifrid correctly asserts, “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).” Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, NSBT 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 105.

¹³ For the centrality of the Mosaic law in Romans 7 and for Paul’s first-person speech expressing his own past as representative of Israel’s, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 354–67; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 448–65.

¹⁴ Meyer helpfully identifies how God disclosed grace in both the days of Moses and Christ that “the nature of grace differs between the Sinai (extrinsic grace) and new (intrinsic grace) covenants. God did not give [through Moses] a covenant that could change the heart of Israel. He demanded fidelity to the covenant, but He did not give any intrinsic provisions that would create or cause Israel’s fidelity to the covenant.” Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 6 n. 19. In contrast, the new covenant in Christ transforms all who are a part (Jer 31:33–34; cf. Heb 10:12–18).

do" (Rom 8:3; cf. Gal 3:21). Representing Israel and humanity, Jesus's perfect statute-keeping fulfills the law's demands and secures for us by declaration the righteousness leading to life (Rom 5:18–19; 8:4).¹⁵

As for mankind's inability, Israel's cursed state (3:10) arose because they had attempted by means of "works of law" to be "perfected by the flesh" rather than by the Spirit (3:3). They failed to identify their need and, like Abraham, believe God with respect to the promised seed, who is Christ (3:6–7, 16; cf. Gen 15:6 with 22:18).¹⁶ As Paul emphasizes elsewhere, "Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works" (Rom 9:31–32; cf. 11:7–8).¹⁷ The Mosaic law "obligated [everyone] to keep the whole law" (Gal 5:3), and a sinful human's inability to do this provides the best explanation for why "all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them'" (3:10; cf. Deut 27:26).¹⁸ Under the sphere of law, "the one who *does* them shall live by them" (3:12), and Paul's stress on mankind's failure

¹⁵ With Moo and against Schreiner and McFadden, I see Romans 8:4 addressing Christ's imputed righteousness—with God crediting Christ's perfect statute-keeping (δικαίωμα, singular) to the accounts of all who are in him (cf. Rom 5:18). Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 504–8; Schreiner, *Romans*, 400–3; Kevin W. McFadden, "The Fulfillment of the Law's *Dikaiōma*: Another Look at Romans 8:1–4," *JETS* 52 (2009): 483–97. Nevertheless, with Gathercole, Caneday, Schreiner, and McFadden and against Moo, I believe that the keeping of statutes (δικαίωματα, plural) in Romans 2:12–29 and the fulfilling of the law in 13:8–10 is addressing Christians who actually keep the law (of Christ) and through loving others fulfill the law. Simon J. Gathercole, "A Law unto Themselves: The Gentiles in Romans 2.14–15 Revisited," *JSNT* 85 (2002): 27–49; A. B. Caneday, "Judgment, Behavior, and Justification According to Paul's Gospel in Romans 2," *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 1 (2011): 153–92; Schreiner, *Romans*, 126–54. As McFadden notes, imperfectly loving others today truly fulfills the law but only because the Spirit's liberating work will become completed at the resurrection, at which time we will fulfill the law's righteous requirements completely.

¹⁶ See C. John Collins, "Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?," *TynBul* 54 (2003): 75–86; Jason S. DeRouchie and Jason C. Meyer, "Christ or Family as the 'Seed' of Promise? An Evaluation of N. T. Wright on Galatians 3:16," *SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 36–48.

¹⁷ In the old covenant, righteousness shown in character and deeds was the *goal* (Deut 6:25; 16:20) and means to life (4:1; 8:1), and the majority of Israel never reached it because, in their hardness, they sought it by works of law and not by faith in Christ (Rom 9:30–31; 10:4; 11:7–10; cf. Deut 9:4–6). In the new covenant, righteousness is both the ground and goal, the ground being secured through the perfect righteousness of Christ declared over us (Rom 3:24; 5:9, 18–19; 8:4; 10:10; cf. 2 Cor 5:21) and the goal being reached by our new position and Spirit-wrought power producing the fruit of righteousness, whose end is eternal life (Rom 2:7, 13; 6:23; 8:13).

¹⁸ Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, "Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible? A Re-Examination of Galatians 3:10," *JETS* 27 (1984): 151–60; Thomas R. Schreiner, "Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders," *WTJ* 47 (1985): 245–78; cf. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 53–58. Moo writes, "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." 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. Similarly, Westerholm states, "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." Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 329. I disagree with Watson that an assumption that "human action that leads to salvation of 'life' must be perfect or sinless ... is irrelevant to Paul's argument, and contradicts Leviticus itself." Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 326; cf. Jodar, "Leviticus 18:5 and the Law's Call to Faith," 47.

to do and keep all the law highlights why “by works of the law no one will be justified” (2:16) and why the law “imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed”—that is, “until Christ came” (3:23–24).¹⁹

<i>The Age of the Mosaic Law</i>	<i>The Age of Faith in Christ</i>
<p>The law-covenant called for perfect obedience to all the law in order to secure righteousness unto life (Gal 3:10, 12; 5:3).</p> <p><i>Gal 3:10 (cf. Deut 27:26). “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:12 (cf. Lev 18:5). “The one who does them shall live by them.”</i></p> <p><i>Gal 5:3. “I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.”</i></p>	<p>Mere humans are justified unto life solely by faith in Christ (Gal 2:16; 3:11).</p> <p><i>Gal 2:16. “We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.”</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:11 (cf. Hab 2:4). “The righteous shall live by faith.”</i></p>
<p>Sinful humanity’s inability to keep the Mosaic law meant that the law brought no justification but only curse (Gal 2:16; 3:10–11).</p> <p><i>Gal 2:16. “By works of the law no one will be justified” (2:16).</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:10 (cf. Deut 27:26). “All who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’”</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:11 (cf. Hab 2:4). Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”</i></p>	<p>Christ’s curse-bearing work redeems those once cursed and secures blessing, the Spirit, sonship, and inheritance through faith (Gal 3:13–14 [cf. Deut 21:23]; 3:26, 29).</p> <p><i>Gal 3:13–14. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us ... so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.”</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:26, 29. “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.... And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”</i></p>

¹⁹ Jodar asserts, “Many interpreters come to the Leviticus 18:5 quotation of Galatians 3:12 with the presupposition that sinless perfect is required to have the life that God promises. 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. 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.” Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 52–53. In contrast, I do not believe Jodar accounts enough for the redemptive-historical *contrasts* between the ages of law and faith that are evident Paul’s argument (see esp. Gal 3:23–26), for which the distinct principles of “doing” (Lev 18:5) and “believing” (Hab 2:4) provide exhibit A.

<p>God's sovereign purpose for the law was never for it to give life or to secure righteousness but for it to multiply transgression and to be an enslaving guardian until Christ came (Gal 3:19, 21–22, 23–24; cf. 4:1, 3, 8–9).</p> <p><i>Gal 3:19. "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made."</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:21–22. "If a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:23–24. "Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came."</i></p>	<p>God intended that Christ would free us from the law's enslaving guardianship and make us sons of God through faith (Gal 3:22, 24–26; cf. 4:5, 7).</p> <p><i>Gal 3:22. "But the Scriptures imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:24–26. "The law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no long under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith."</i></p>
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Figure 1. Paul's Contrasts in Galatians 3 of the Age of Law vs. the Age of Faith

In sum, Paul is contrasting two eras of salvation-history and seeing in them opposite means for pursuing justification. The era of the Mosaic law results in death, condemnation, and curse, whereas the age of faith in Jesus Christ results in life, sonship, and blessing. We will now consider how Leviticus 18:5 supports these conclusions within its own context.

2. The Pentateuchal Context of Leviticus 18:5

Leviticus 11–26 clarifies how Israel was to pursue holiness as a means for living in light of Yahweh's holy presence. Chapters 11–15 address ritual purity, chapter 16 celebrates the Day of Atonement, chapters 17–24 address relational purity, and chapters 25–26 call the people to heed God's Sabbath-establishing purposes. Leviticus 18:1–5 signals a minor shift in focus within the book away from proper worship at the tabernacle to inter-personal relationships and life within the promised land (chs. 18–24).²⁰ The unit includes a speech of Yahweh in two parts. The first is framed by the phrase "I am the LORD your God" in 18:2 and 4, which appears to operate as an unmarked ground for the series of directives in 18:3–4. 18:5 then reemphasizes the main charge, adds a motivation, and then reiterates the earlier assertion "I am the LORD."

Leviticus 18:1–5 also portrays Israel on a journey between two realities: God had redeemed them from slavery in "the land of Egypt," and now he was leading them into "the land of Canaan" (18:3). Such past and future grace supplies the context for pursuing holiness and fulfilling both prohibition and

²⁰ Leviticus 1–7 details the sacrifices; chs. 8–10 overview the consecration of the priests and first sacrifice; chs. 11–15 confront impurity that could defile the sanctuary; ch. 16 addresses the cleansing of the tabernacle on the day of atonement; ch. 17 lays out the guidelines for laity offering sacrifices at the tabernacle.

command. In light of their deliverance and future hopes, God urges them with a twice-repeated “you *shall not do*” to not follow the pagan, corrupt practices of either the Egyptians or Canaanites (18:3), which the context identifies as sins like sexual immorality (18:6–20, 22–23) and idolatry through child sacrifice (18:21). He then immediately follows this by clarifying what they *should do*: “You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes” (18:4). 18:5 then reads, “You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”

When we consider Leviticus 18:5 within the framework of the Pentateuch, three observations are pertinent here. *First*, God intended that the Mosaic covenant’s principle of retribution motivate holy living in the present. What people hope for or fear tomorrow should change who they are today (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). Thus, Moses frequently conditions life and blessing/good (Lev 26:3–13; Deut 28:1–14), death and curse/evil (Lev 26:14–39; Deut 27:11–26; 28:15–68), on a perfect keeping of *all* the law (Deut 11:26–28; 30:15–19; cf. e.g., 5:29; 6:25; 8:1; 11:32; 26:18) with *all* one’s heart and soul (4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; cf. 30:2, 6, 10).²¹ By their pursuing God’s standard of “righteousness” (צִדְקָה, 16:20) and by their keeping his whole commandment manifest in the various statutes and rules, the Lord would preserve their lives (6:24), they would enjoy the status of “righteousness” (צִדְקָה, 6:25; cf. Ps 106:30–31), and they would secure lasting “life” (Deut 8:1; 16:20; 30:16).

In light of the above, the prepositional phrase in the clause “they shall live *by them*” in Leviticus 18:5 most likely includes a sense of instrumentality (i.e., “by means of the statutes”) and not just locality (i.e., “in the sphere of the statutes”). The community needed God to preserve their present lives (cf. Deut 4:4; 5:3; 6:24), and the blessings they sought included temporal provision and protection (see esp. Lev 26:3–13; Deut 28:1–14). Nevertheless, in a very real sense the “life” Moses was promising also included a soteriological and eschatological escalation beyond their present state—one that he could contrast with being “cut off from among their people” (Lev 18:29).²² That is, the earthly existence that Israel would enjoy in the land typified the greater hope of lasting inheritance that the judgment against the serpent (Gen 3:15) and the promises given to the patriarchs (e.g., 17:4–6; 22:17–18; 26:3–4; cf. Rom 4:13; Heb 11:13–16) already anticipated, all of which were contingent on Abraham’s representative being a blessing and obeying the Lord. Just as Yahweh commanded the patriarch, “And be a blessing

²¹ Deuteronomy stresses the need to keep *all* (כָּל) the law (Deut 5:29, 31, 33; 6:2, 24–25; 8:1; 10:12; 11:8, 22, 32; 12:13, 28, 32; 13:18; 15:5; 17:10, 19; 19:9; 26:14, 18; 27:1; 28:1, 14, 15, 58; 30:8; 31:5, 12; 32:46).

²² So too Moo, *Galatians*, 208 n. 14. Wenham, Milgrom, Sprinkle, and Moo all identify the preposition בְּ to be instrumental. Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 253; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 1522–23; Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 28–34; Moo, *Galatians*, 208. In contrast, Kaiser, following Buswell, takes the locative rendering (i.e., “in the sphere of them”), believing that Moses is not treating law keeping as the means to gain eternal life but as the sphere in which people ought to live on the earth. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 80 n. 19; cf. James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 313.” Similarly, Sklar treats the phrase to mean “living in the sphere of [God’s] favor.” He adds, “His commands are like the borders of his kingdom, and those who stay within those borders proclaim their allegiance to him as King and remain within the sphere of his blessing.” Jay Sklar, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 229. Evans, too, states, “This blessing is not portrayed as a reward for keeping the law; it rests on God’s promise and is an automatic consequence of being in relationship with him.” Mary J. Evans, “Blessing/Curse,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 398. As I will show, this perspective does not go far enough.

so that I may bless those who bless you ... with the ultimate result that in you all the families of the ground will be blessed" (Gen 12:2–3, author's translation). And again, "I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him" (18:19; cf. 22:18; 26:5). Thus, Yahweh's pledge to make his dwelling among his people and to walk among them *if* they perfectly obeyed was promising something greater than they were already enjoying (Lev 26:11–12; cf. 2 Cor 6:16).²³ Furthermore, the Lord's commitment to circumcise the remnant's hearts upon his restoring them following exile would be "for the sake of your life" (Deut 30:6, author's translation), which from a whole-Bible perspective points beyond mere temporal blessing (cf. Rom 2:6–7 with 2:14–15, 26–29; 6:22–23; 7:10; 8:13).

Second, while Yahweh stood as Israel's God in the sense that he had redeemed them through the exodus and uniquely claimed them as his own through covenant (cf. Deut 4:32–35), the broader portrait of Scripture identifies the ruinous state and fate of the majority. While Yahweh would have regarded perfect obedience as "righteousness" (צִדְקָה, 6:25), the people were far from such status; indeed, their own wickedness resembled that of the nations whom the Lord was calling them to dispossess (9:4–7; cf. 9:27). By Leviticus 18, the narrator has highlighted how the people have tested God seven times since leaving Egypt, and by the time the ten spies fail to believe the Lord, the total testings would be ten (Num 14:21–23).²⁴ Thus, Moses rightly labels them "stubborn" (Exod 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27), "unbelieving" (Num 14:11; Deut 1:32; 9:23; cf. 28:66), and "rebellious" (Num 20:10, 24; 27:14; Deut 9:7, 24; 31:27; cf. 1:26, 43; 9:23). He also promises that their insolence would only increase in the promised land (Deut 31:16) and would result in curses climaxing in the death associated with exile (31:17, 29; cf. 28:15–68). With a vision to the future, Moses proclaimed how Israel would lose their special place in relation to God: "They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are crooked and twisted generation" (32:5; cf. Isa 1:4; Hos 1:8–9; Acts 2:40; Phil 2:15). While the Lord redeemed the nation from Egypt, he did not regenerate the majority, and while he gave them the law on tablets of stone, they remained spiritually disabled with sin etched on their hearts (see Deut 29:4[3]; Jer 17:1).²⁵

Kaiser, therefore, overshoots when he asserts that the "law-keeping here [in Lev 18:5] is Israel's sanctification, the grand evidence that the Lord was indeed their God already."²⁶ Schreiner, too, blurs matters when he does not distinguish the "salvation" Israel enjoyed with the spiritual rebirth we now have in Christ: "Israel had been redeemed from Egypt and liberated by God's grace. Therefore, in context the verse should not be construed as legalistic or as offering salvation on the basis of works."²⁷

The cry, "Do this law so that you may live!" came to a primarily *unregenerated* community. Yahweh was Israel's God in a distinct way: "To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of

²³ Jason S. DeRouchie, "Is Every Promise 'Yes'? Old Testament Promises and the Christian," *Themelios* 42 (2017): 24–26, 39–42.

²⁴ For the ten testings, see: (1) Exod 14:11–12; (2) 15:24; (3) 16:2–3; (4) 16:20; (5) 16:27; (6) 17:1–2; (7) 32:1–6; (8) Num 11:1; (9) 11:4; (10) 14:1–4.

²⁵ Cf. Meyer, *End of the Law*, 6 n. 19.

²⁶ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?)," *JETS* 14 (1971): 24; cf. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 79–80.

²⁷ Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 59.

the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” (Rom 9:4–5). Nevertheless, the Lord was *not* the majority’s spiritual sovereign, savior, or satisfier; they had other masters and other delights. The Mosaic covenant, therefore, in many ways mirrored God’s covenant with creation through Adam (Isa 24:4–6; Hos 6:7), with Yahweh’s relationship with Israel supplying a microcosmic picture of the larger relationship he has over all humanity. Indeed, the noun phrase “the man” (אָדָם) in Leviticus 18:5 may be an allusion to the first man (אָדָם) in the garden, who himself foreshadowed Israel’s existence.²⁸ God created the first man in the wilderness (Gen 2:7), moved him into paradise (2:8, 15), and gave him commands (2:16–17), the keeping of which would have resulted in his lasting life (2:17; cf. 3:24). Then, upon the man’s disobedience (3:6), God justly exiled him from paradise, resulting his ultimate death (3:23–24; cf. 3:19). This too becomes Israel’s story: God birthed them in Egypt and the wilderness, gave them commands to keep in order to enjoy life, moved them into the promised land where they continued to rebel, and then exiled them from the land under the curse of death.

The majority of Israelites in the old covenant were not eternally saved, and the covenant they were in bore a ministry that would only multiply sin (Rom 3:20; 5:20; Gal 3:19) and lead to their death and condemnation (2 Cor 3:7, 9; cf. 2 Kgs 17:13–18; Heb 3:16–19). The law itself truly foreshadowed the substance that is Christ (Col 2:16–17). Nevertheless, elements like the law-covenant’s grounding in deliverance (Exod 19:4–6), its portrayal of penal substitution (Lev 17:11), its expression of God’s righteousness through its moral ideals (Deut 16:20) served as means of grace only for a remnant few. As Paul elsewhere asserts,

Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.” And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.” (Rom 11:7–10; cf. Deut 29:4[3]; Isa 29:10–11)

Third, the upshot of the above observation is that the era of the Mosaic law-covenant was not one characterized by either faith or forgiveness. As for the former, Moses in the old covenant never explicitly called for faith (cf. 2 Chr 20:20), though it required it for any of its sinful members to enjoy the declaration of righteousness (cf. Gen 15:6 with 26:5). Instead what we hear is the repeated ring in various tones: “You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes.... If the person *does* them, he shall live by them” (Lev 18:5). “And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes ... that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do *all* this commandment before the LORD” (Deut 6:24–25). “The *whole* commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers” (8:1; cf. 11:32; 26:18; 28:1). We can affirm that Moses elevated Abraham’s believing (Gen 15:6) and the obedience that flowed from it (e.g., 22:16–18; 26:3–5)—even treating the patriarch as a model Israelite and covenant keeper before the law (26:3–5).²⁹ The old covenant mediator also celebrated

²⁸ I thank Brian Verrett for pushing me to develop this point.

²⁹ R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 144–45; cf. John H. Sailhamer, “The Mosaic Law and the Theology of the Pentateuch,” *WTJ* 53 (1991): 241–61.

Israel's temporary faith in both him and Yahweh through the exodus (Exod 15:31). Nevertheless, he grieved deeply his own and Israel's lack of faith in God while in the wilderness (Num 14:11; 20:12; Deut 1:32; 9:23), the results of which were tragic (cf. Heb 3:16–19). And the very faithlessness of the exodus generation continued as the dominant motif throughout the people's tenure in the promised land into the exile. Thus, we read, "The LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer.... But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God.... Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah" (2 Kgs 17:13–14, 18). And again, citing Leviticus 18:5, "And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which *if a person does them, he shall live by them*.... Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands" (Neh 9:29–30). Rather than enjoying life, Israel experienced death, due in part to their lack of faith.

Jeremiah highlights the substantial lack of saving forgiveness in the era of the Mosaic law-covenant when he contrasts the old covenant with the new and better one that would include a democratized knowledge of God only *because* "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more" (Jer 31:34). Nehemiah highlights the sustained mercy of God throughout their history in pardoning his people (Neh 9:17, 19, 27–28, 31). Nevertheless, their hearts remained cold, and the death of exile became their lot. Recognizing that life was conditioned on a perfect obedience they could not attain should have pushed them to feel guilt, confess their sin, and trust in God's provision of a substitute by which they could be atoned (Lev 5:5–6; Num 5:6–7), counted for what they were not—righteous (Isa 53:11; cf. Gen 15:6). Seeing their own inability to "be holy" (Lev 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7), to "do" the law (18:5), and to "love" neighbor (19:18), should have driven them to the God who alone sanctifies (20:8; 22:32) and pushed them to trust in the past grace of substitution (Lev 1–7) and to hope in the future grace of blessing and curse (Lev 26). The perfect obedience demanded by laws like Leviticus 18:5 would have been a God-dependent obedience, but the fact that no one could remain perfectly dependent meant that if life was to be enjoyed by any, it would only be by Yahweh declaring them right by faith when in fact they were not (cf. Gen 15:6; Isa 53:11; Rom 4:5).³⁰ The life that the law promised is ultimately secured only by Jesus's own perfect obedience, whose "one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men" (Rom 5:18). Yet the majority of the Israelite community did not live in the context of spiritual reconciliation with God; they were covenant partners outwardly but inwardly they remained rebels.

Kaiser asserts that, because "one of the ways of 'doing' the law was to recognize the imperfection of one's life and thus to make a sacrifice for the atonement of one's sins," Leviticus 18:5 "is not referring to any offer of eternal life as a reward for perfect law-keeping."³¹ In contrast, what the law demanded was complete fear, whole-hearted love, and absolute obedience in order to be declared right (Deut 6:5; 10:12–13) and to enjoy lasting life (4:1; 8:1; 16:20; 30:16). When one recognized that he failed and could not meet this demand, trusting God's substitutionary sacrifice was a means for reconciliation. But we must not lower the law's demand for total and perfect surrender, for this alone provides the very context for Jesus Christ's faultless obedience that secures "justification of life" for the many (Rom

³⁰ See Jason S. DeRouchie, "Lifting the Veil: Reading and Preaching Jesus' Bible through Christ and for Christ," SBJT 22.3 (2018): 167–77.

³¹ Kaiser, "Leviticus 18:5 and Paul," 25; cf. Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 80.

5:18–19; cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9).³² If, as I have argued, most original recipients of Moses’s words were unregenerate, a call to “do in order to live” would have resulted in nothing less than a type of legalism for the majority, as the “gracious character of the Levitical system” would be inoperative without the feeling of guilt, confession, and trust (Lev 5:5–6; Num 5:6–7).³³ Thus Paul, with an allusion to Moses’s charge in Deuteronomy 16:20, “Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue, so that you may live,” asserted: “Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but *as if it were based on works*” (Rom 9:31–32). “Christ,” therefore, “is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (10:4). His arrival signals a transition from an age of death associated with the Mosaic covenant to an age of life enjoyed by a righteousness that comes by faith.

3. Relevant Uses of Leviticus 18:5 in the Rest of the Old Testament, Early Extrabiblical Jewish Literature, and Other New Testament Texts³⁴

Before directly wrestling with Paul’s hermeneutical and theological use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12, we must account for other uses of Leviticus 18:5 in the OT, extrabiblical Jewish literature, and other NT texts. There are some very significant references that affirm the interpretation this study is proposing.

3.1. Ezekiel, an Exilic Prophet

Ezekiel was a Yahweh prophet who ministered in the midst of Judah’s Babylonian exile. His teaching graphically contrasts the failure of human “doing” in the Mosaic covenant with the divine and human “doing” of the future everlasting (new) covenant.

First, with allusions to Leviticus 18:5, he stresses that the one who “walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the LORD God” (Ezek 18:9). And again, “If a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live” (18:21–22). The prophet was convinced that those in his audience who turned from wickedness back to Yahweh with full devotion would live (18:5, 9, 13, 17, 19, 21–24, 27–28, 32; cf. Amos 5:4). And in this sense, the directives God gave his people were “right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments” (Neh 9:13; cf. Rom 2:20; 7:12), for they guided the way to life. However, the challenge was that within the old covenant framework, Yahweh simply charged his people, “Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!” (Ezek 18:31). This is similar to how Moses had commanded, “Circumcise therefore the

³² See Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 777–82.

³³ The brief quote is taken from Hamilton, whose own view equally misses the point I am making. James M. Hamilton Jr., “The One Who Does Them Shall Live by Them: Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” *Gospel Witness* (2005): 10.

³⁴ For more on how extra-biblical Jewish literature appropriates Leviticus 18:5, see esp. Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 1–130; Simon J. Gathercole, “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.

foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn” (Deut 10:16), and to how Isaiah had urged, “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes” (Isa 1:16). What Israel needed was for the Lord to do for them what they were unable to do on their own. And this he would do, but only under a new covenant structure in a new era of restoration where he would enable what he commanded by his Spirit and in relation to a new Davidic king: “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ezek 36:26–27). And again, “I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live” (37:14; cf. 37:22–28).³⁵

Second, in Ezekiel 20 Yahweh cites Leviticus 18:5 a number of times when describing the era of the Mosaic covenant: “I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, *if a person does them, he shall live by them....* But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, *if a person does them, he shall live by them*” (Ezek 20:11, 13).³⁶ The prophet next repeats the same indictment against the post-exodus generation (Ezek 20:21), and then he asserts, “Moreover, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them from the countries” (20:23; cf. Leviticus 26:33; Deut 4:27; 28:64). Here Ezekiel portrays the exile as the opposite of the life promised for obedience; disobedience would bring the curse of death, evidenced in the scattering of the people away from God’s presence. This is why Ezekiel stresses that the Lord “gave them statutes that were *not* good and rules by which they could *not* have life” (Ezek 20:25; cf. Gal 3:21).³⁷ That is, Yahweh’s sovereign purpose for the very good law (cf. Neh 9:13; Rom 2:20; 7:12) was to condemn Israel and by this identify the need for a better covenant and better mediator to save the world (cf. Rom 3:19–22; 2 Cor 3:7, 9). As Ezekiel’s own exilic context testified, Israel had failed to “do” and therefore experienced curse not blessing, death not life. They had become like the dried skeletons of a defeated army in a valley (Ezek 37:1); this was where the Mosaic law-covenant had brought them, bearing as it did a “ministry of death” and “ministry of condemnation” (2 Cor 3:7, 9). In Paul’s words, “The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me” (Rom 7:10).

Yet into this setting Yahweh declares, “And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ezek 36:27; cf. 11:19–20). And again, “And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live” (37:14). Out of the valley of death would come resurrection, and what was not “done” in the age of the law-covenant would now be enabled by the power of God’s presence. We, therefore, read of this resurrected people: “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes” (37:24). Sprinkle rightly notes, “What was previously held out as a conditional possibility [in the Mosaic law-covenant in general and Lev 18:5 in particular] is here fulfilled by Yahweh himself in his program of

³⁵ Moses was the first to highlight Yahweh’s new creational enablement. Countering the command in Deuteronomy 10:16, the prophet declared, “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (Deut 30:6). Similarly, as an answer to his earlier charge in Isaiah 1:16, Isaiah foretold, “And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning” (Isa 4:3–4).

³⁶ See esp. Preston M. Sprinkle, “Law and Life: Leviticus 18:5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel,” *JSOT* 31 (2007): 275–93.

³⁷ So too Michael B. Shepherd, *The Textual World of the Bible*, StBibLit 156 (New York: Lang, 2013), 39.

restoration.”³⁸ Thus already in the OT, there is the explicit contrast of the old covenant as a failed, human deeds-based covenant and the coming better covenant as a divine-enablement covenant, ultimately by faith (cf. Hab 2:4).³⁹

3.2. Nehemiah and Malachi, Post-Exilic Biblical Voices

As already noted, during Israel’s initial restoration from exile, Nehemiah recalled Leviticus 18:5 when pleading for mercy and when speaking of the way Yahweh pursued his people in the past: “And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which *if a person does them, he shall live by them....* Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands” (Neh 9:29–30). Rather than enjoying life by remaining loyal to God, Israel rebelled and experienced a justified death at the hands of God’s agents of covenant curse.

While not echoing Leviticus 18:5 directly, Malachi, the last of the OT prophets, spoke on Yahweh’s behalf declaring, “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel” (Mal 4:1). Thus, until the prophet like Moses arose to mediate a new covenant (Deut 18:15–18; 34:10–12), the cry for Israel remained, “You shall ... keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them” (Lev 18:5). The anticipated shift in redemptive history had not yet come, and the age of death continued.

3.3. Early Extrabiblical Jewish Texts

The Jews of the Qumran community (ca. 250 BC–AD 135) recognized that curse awaited all who failed to keep the law and that life was promised for those who obey and who are redeemed. As it states in the Damascus Document: “His righteous laws, his reliable ways. The desires of his will, which man should carry out and so have life in them” (CD 3:15–16). And again, “You have chosen our fathers; you have given to their descendants the statutes of your truth, and the judgments of your holiness, which, if humankind shall do, they shall have life; and boundaries you have made for us, and they that transgress them you have cursed; but we are your redeemed people, and the sheep of your pasture” (4Q266 f11:11–13).

Reflecting on Yahweh’s promise in Leviticus 18:5, the Psalms of Solomon (ca. 2nd–1st century BC) stresses that the “life” promised is eternal:

Faithful is the Lord to those who love him in truth, to those who endure his discipline, to those who walk in the righteousness of his ordinances, in the law which he commanded us that we might live. The devout of the Lord shall live by it forever; the orchard of the Lord, the trees of life, are his devout. Their planting is rooted forever; they shall not be pulled up all the days of heaven; for the portion and the inheritance of God is Israel. (Pss Sol. 14:1–5)

³⁸ Sprinkle, “Law and Life,” 290.

³⁹ Why did God give the majority of Israel “a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day” (Rom 11:8; cf. Deut 29:4[3]; Isa 29:10–11)? Paul answers: “God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy” (Rom 9:22–23).

Similarly, the translation of Leviticus 18:5 in Targum Onqelos, the official targum on the Pentateuch (ca. AD 35–120), is equally explicit that the “life” promised is eschatological and eternal: “And you shall keep my covenants and my legal rulings that if a person does them, he shall live in eternal life through them. I am the Lord” (Tg. Onq. Lev 18:5). Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (1st century AD) is similar but then adds at the end, “His portion shall be with the righteous” (Tg. Ps-J. Lev 18:5). This latter addition identifies that at least some Jews in Paul’s day would not have contrasted Leviticus 18:5 with the claim in Habakkuk 2:4 that “the righteous shall live by his faith.”⁴⁰

3.4. Jesus in Luke 10:28

These statements set a context for Jesus’s allusion to Leviticus 18:5 in Luke 10:25–29, where we read:

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put [Jesus] to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; *do this, and you will live.*” But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus’s response to the man’s answer makes clear that knowledge is not enough to “inherit eternal life”; one must “do this” in order to “live.” Nevertheless, for sinful humans, the quest for self-justification will always end in condemnation. We must ultimately look beyond ourselves to Jesus Christ, “the righteous,” who is “the propitiation for our sins, and ... for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1–2).

3.5. Paul in Romans 10:5

The final NT citation of Leviticus 18:5 is in Rom 10:5, where Paul is engaged in a very similar argument regarding the means for justification. Throughout 9:30–10:13 Paul continually pits “doing” and “believing” as two opposing means for enjoying righteous status, but he also identifies that for fallen humans believing is the only real option. Verses 5–8 contrast the fruitless attempt to gain righteousness “from the law” (10:5) with trusting Christ for righteousness (10:6–8), and this antithesis provides the reason why “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (10:4; cf. Phil 3:9).⁴¹ That is, the goal and end of the law is believing in Christ *because* the law-covenant required an impossible perfect obedience to enjoy righteousness and life (cf. Lev 18:5), whereas trusting Christ supplies by faith what is impossible otherwise (cf. Deut 30:11–14). Paul’s ability to contrast Moses against Moses is most likely due to the fact that Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:11–14 address two different eras in salvation-history: Leviticus 18:5 relates to the “doing” era of the Mosaic law covenant, while Deuteronomy 30:1–14 predicts the “believing” era of the new covenant.⁴²

⁴⁰ Thus, after citing Habakkuk 2:4, the pesher from Qumran reads, “This refers to all those who obey the Law among the Jews” (1QpHab 8:1).

⁴¹ Schreiner, *Romans*, 535.

⁴² Jodar does not even consider the possibility that Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:11–14 are addressing two different eras of redemptive history. Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 47 n. 19, 48, 51. Nevertheless, in contrast to contemporary English translations, the verbless clauses in Deuteronomy 30:11–14 are most naturally read as futures, continuing the *future* predictions begun in 30:1, the whole of which anticipates that what Moses is commanding “today” will have lasting relevance in the new covenant age after God overcomes

4. Textual Issues

While there is minimal variation in wording, no substantial differences exist in meaning between the Hebrew and Greek treatments of Leviticus 18:5 and Paul's citation in Galatians 3:12.⁴³ The Hebrew text reads, "You shall keep my statutes and my rules, which, the man will do them and live by them" (author's translation). In contrast, the Septuagint translates, "As for the things a person does, he shall live by them." Paul's statement and citation reads, "But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does them shall live by them'" (Gal 3:12). Because the apostle is citing only part of the overall sentence, he changes the Septuagint's relative plural pronoun (αὐτά, "the things") to an independent pronoun (αὐτά, "them") after the participle. Also, having omitted the relative pronoun, he is forced to alter the construction, and he adds an article to the participle (ὁ ποιήσας, "the one who does"), thus making the word "man/person" unnecessary. The LXX citations of Leviticus 18:5 in Ezekiel 20:11, 13, 21 and Nehemiah 9:29 are so closely aligned to the LXX of Leviticus 18:5 that there is no reason to think Paul was citing those texts instead of Moses's words.

the curse with restoration blessing (30:2, 8, 11). Deuteronomy 30:11–14 begins with the subordinate conjunction כִּי ("for, because") and provides the logical reason why the people will turn to Yahweh in the latter days (30:10). Paul is, therefore, identifying the fulfillment of this prediction being realized in Christ. On this reading, see, for example, J. Gary Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy*, NSBT 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 94, 174–75; Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 118–21; Patrick A. Barker, *The Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy: Faithless Israel, Faithful Yahweh in Deuteronomy* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 182–98; Steven R. Coxhead, "Deuteronomy 30:11–14 as a Prophecy of the New Covenant in Christ," *WTJ* 68 (2006): 305–20; Bryan D. Estelle, "Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1–14 in Biblical Theological Development: Entitlement to Heaven Foreclosed and Proffered," in *The Law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 127–37; DeRouchie, "From Condemnation to Righteousness," 117–18; Colin James Smothers, "In Your Mouth and in Your Heart: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul's Letter to the Romans in Canonical Context" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018). Faithful Yahweh in Deuteronomy} (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004 For a detailed alternative reading of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 and Paul's use in Rom 10:6–8, see Douglas Moo, "Paul's Reading of Deuteronomy: Law and Grace," in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 389–412. Critiquing Moo's understanding of Paul's use of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 is beyond the scope of this essay, but the sources cited above do this effectively. It is significant that Moo admits that he "reluctantly ... must reject this option" and that my interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 "would, indeed, considerably diminish the apparent dissonance between this text and Paul's application" ("Paul's Reading of Deuteronomy," 408).

⁴³ See Silva, "Galatians," 802–3; Moo, *Galatians*, 220–21.

<i>Lev 18:5 in MT and ESV</i>	
וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּכֶם הָאֱלֹהִים וְחַי בְּהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה:	You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.
<i>Lev 18:5 in LXX and NETS</i>	
καὶ φυλάξεσθε πάντα τὰ προστάγματά μου καὶ πάντα τὰ κρίματά μου καὶ ποιήσετε αὐτά, ἃ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν.	And you shall keep all my ordinances and all my judgments, and you shall do them; as for the things a person does, he shall live by them; I am the Lord your God.
<i>Gal 3:12 in NA²⁸ and ESV</i>	
ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.	But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”
<i>Ezek 20:11, 13, 21 in LXX and NETS</i>	
καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτοῖς τὰ προστάγματά μου καὶ τὰ δικαιώματά μου ἐγνώρισα αὐτοῖς, ὅσα ποιήσει αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.... καὶ οὐκ ἐπορεύθησαν καὶ τὰ δικαιώματά μου ἀπώσαντο, ἃ ποιήσει αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.... ἐν τοῖς προστάγμασίν μου οὐκ ἐπορεύθησαν, καὶ τὰ δικαιώματά μου οὐκ ἐφυλάξαντο τοῦ ποιεῖν αὐτά, ἃ ποιήσει ἄνθρωπος καὶ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.	And I gave them my ordinances, and I made known to them my statutes, those that a person shall perform, and by them he shall live.... And they did not walk, and they rejected my statutes, those that a person shall perform and shall live by them.... They did not walk by my ordinances, and they did not keep my statutes so as to perform them, that a person shall perform and live by them.
<i>Neh 9:29 in LXX and NETS</i>	
καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσαν, ἀλλὰ ἐν ταῖς ἐντολαῖς σου καὶ ἐν τοῖς κρίμασί σου ἡμάρτοσαν, ἃ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.	And they did not listen but sinned against your commandments and judgments by the doing of which a person shall live by them.

Figure 2. Lev 18:5 Textual Comparison

5. Paul's Textual and Hermeneutical Warrant for Using Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12

In Galatians 3:12 Paul appears to employ Leviticus 18:5 in order to contrast the pattern for enjoying life and justification that the Mosaic law-covenant set forth from the pattern that must characterize all who are in Christ in the new covenant era.⁴⁴ More specifically, in Galatians 3:11–12 Paul is noting how the respective periods in salvation history testify to two different possible ways to enjoy right standing before God: “doing leads to life” (Lev 18:5) vs. “believing leads to life” (Hab 2:4).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ This is an example of an analogical use of Scripture, which Beale explains this way: “A NT writer will take something from the OT and compare it to something in the new covenant age in order to illustrate or draw an analogy (or perhaps a contrast) between the two.” Beale, *Handbook on the NT Use of the OT*, 67.

⁴⁵ For sound arguments that Habakkuk 2:4 intentionally echoes Genesis 15:6 (“And [Abram] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness”) and that the Hebrew noun אֱמוּנָה (= Greek πίστις) in Habakkuk 2:4 is indeed best rendered “faith” rather than “faithfulness” with an allusion back to the verb “believe”

The “doing” that the law in Leviticus 18:5 called for was a complete conformity to God’s definition of right order: “Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue, that you may live” (Deut 16:20; cf. Rom 9:30–31). However, “No one is justified before God by the law” because no person born in Adam was able to keep it and because the Mosaic law itself could only declare what ought to happen; it could not make it happen, weakened as it was by human sinfulness (Rom 8:3; Gal 3:10, 21). Thus, when God gave his holy law to sinful people without overcoming their resistance (Deut 29:4[3]), the law brought death and condemned (Rom 7:10; 11:7–10; 2 Cor 3:7, 9). In Paul’s day, for the Jews to require “works of law” as the means of justification was to go back to a death-dealing era in salvation history—an era that Christ’s own curse-bearing, perfect obedience alone overcame and destroyed (Gal 3:13–14).⁴⁶

When Paul asserts, “But the law is not of faith” (ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, Gal 3:12), he is not denying that there was a remnant of believers in the old covenant (see Rom 4:6; 11:7), nor is he denying that the charge to keep *all* the commandments should have pushed people out of self-reliance and works unto righteousness to believe in Yahweh like Abraham believed (Gen 15:6; cf. 2 Chr 20:20). The law rightly appropriated should have driven people to look outside themselves and to trust God’s provision of a substitute by which they could be atoned and empowered to pursue holiness. But this did not happen, at least for most. When Paul claimed that “the law is not of faith,” he likely meant that the age of the law-covenant was not marked by belief in God (in the majority) and thus resulted in curse climaxing in death—a death Christ ultimately bears on behalf of his elect.⁴⁷ As a whole, the Israelite community was faithless in the days of Moses after the exodus (Num 14:11; 20:12; Deut 1:32; 9:23), and the majority continued to not believe in Yahweh through their tenure in the land, thus bringing their destruction (2 Kgs 17:14, 18; cf. Deut 31:27, 29).

Paul is reading Leviticus 18:5 in light of the evident death-dealing nature of the Mosaic law-covenant. God’s *revealed will* within his holy law was that people should exalt him through lives of surrender and by this enjoy the blessings that come with delighting in his presence (“do in order to live”). Nevertheless, these revealed purposes (i.e., what Israel *ought* to have done) stood in contrast to the Lord’s more *sovereign purposes* for the law, namely, to multiply Israel’s sin (Rom 3:20; 5:20; Gal 3:19) so as to condemn them (2 Cor 3:9), and by this to point them and the rest of the world to Christ as the only means for right standing with God (Rom 10:4; cf. 3:19–22). Jesus alone fulfills the demands of the law

(Hiphil of נָסַח) in Habakkuk 1:5, see Michael B. Shepherd, *The Text in the Middle*, StBibLit 162 (New York: Lang, 2014), 32–36; E. Ray Clendenen, “Salvation by Faith or by Faithfulness in the Book of Habakkuk?,” *BBR* 24 (2014): 505–13; cf. Silva, “Galatians,” 802.

⁴⁶ Westerholm rightly understands that “his opponents’ error is their clinging to this path which, indeed announced by Moses, has proven unable to lead to righteousness ... a path which, moreover, has now and forever been set aside.” Stephen Westerholm, “Law, Grace, and the ‘Soteriology’ of Judaism,” in *Law in Religious Communities in the Roman Period: The Debate over Torah and Nomos in Post-Biblical Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Peter Richardson and Stephen Westerholm (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991), 69. Similarly, Rosner writes, “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 the universal sinfulness of humanity, and instead the law has led to death.” Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, NTBT 31 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 72.

⁴⁷ This view fits Paul’s redemptive-historical argument and, to me, seems much more likely than Jodar’s proposal that Paul in Galatians 3:12 uses Leviticus 18:5 “in a metonymical fashion for expressing the thought ‘faith is from/of the law,’ probably meaning that faith comes from the law.” Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 55. Jodar sees continuity where Paul sees contrasts between the Mosaic law’s temporary enslaving guardianship and the freedom gained by faith in Christ (Gal 3:23–5:1).

and by this secures the promised justification unto life for all who believe (Rom 5:18; 8:4). Leviticus 18:5 falls within the redemptive-historical context of death (i.e., imperfect human doing apart from imputed righteousness brings destruction), and therefore it stands in contrast with the life of faith. Blessing and curse, life and death were the options before the community (Deut 11:26–28; 30:15–20).

In light of the above, while I affirm that Paul in Galatians 3:12 is speaking from a redemptive-historical perspective, I disagree with Hamilton's view that the Mosaic era *was* one of faith but now is not considered so because of the coming of Christ.⁴⁸ Instead, Paul is indeed identifying that, because God gave the Mosaic law-covenant to a hard-hearted people, his call to "do this and live" became an impossible and, therefore, legalistic way of gaining justification. The inability to keep the law perfectly should have pushed the Israelites to recognize Christ as "the end of the law for righteousness" (Rom 10:4). It should have moved them to join Abraham in hoping in the coming offspring (Gen 15:1–6; 22:17–18; cf. John 8:56; Rom 4:18–25) and to see the tabernacle, priests, and substitutionary animal sacrifices as mere pointers (Exod 25:9; Zech 3:8–9; Heb 9:8–10; 10:1–10) to God's future saving provision through his suffering servant, who would triumph through tribulation (Isa 50:8–9; 53:11; cf. Gen 3:15; Zech 13:7–9). But instead, rather than attaining righteous status by faith (like many Gentiles in Paul's day were), Israel pursued righteousness not "by faith, but as if it were based on works," thus incurring shame (9:32; cf. 2:26–29; 9:30–33). The sacrifices in the old covenant provided a temporary and insufficient provision for sinners who believed, and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ nullifies the need for any more sacrifices (Heb 9:11–12, 25–28; 10:10, 14–18).⁴⁹ Nevertheless, when Paul asserts in Galatians 5:3 that "I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law," he is not asserting that this is only the case now that Christ has nullified the old covenant sacrifices.⁵⁰ No, he is asserting that the old covenant has *always* been associated with the need to keep the whole law (cf. Gal 2:21), and one must either trust in Jesus who alone fulfilled the law completely or be condemned in light of human inability and the historical failure of the Mosaic law-covenant.

Similar to my reading of Leviticus 18:5 and to the reception of this text in Ezekiel 20 (see above), Moses consistently urges Israel throughout Deuteronomy "do this so that you may live" (e.g., Deut 4:1; 5:33; 8:1; 11:8–9; 16:20; 22:7; 30:19; 31:13; cf. Rom 7:10). What is striking is that the only place in the book where he speaks differently is when predicting the new covenant era. There we read, "The LORD

⁴⁸ Hamilton, "The One Who Does Them Shall Live By Them," 10–12. Hamilton writes, "Before faith came' Leviticus 18:5 meant that the one who *by faith* kept the Mosaic Covenant would live. Now that 'faith has come,' the Mosaic covenant is no longer in force, it has served its redemptive-historical purpose, with the result that anyone who seeks to live by it must keep all of its regulations flawlessly since its sacrifices are now abolished" (cf. Gal 5:3). Hamilton, "The One Who Does Them Shall Live By Them," 12. For similar interpretations to Hamilton, see Meyer, *End of the Law*, 155–57; Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 62–63.

⁴⁹ Carson writes, "It is not at all clear that Paul would have admitted to any life-giving or salvific capacity in the Mosaic covenant: the law-covenant had quite different functions in the stream of redemptive history (Gal. 3). By the same token, judging by such passages as 1 Corinthians 5:7; 11:23–25; Romans 3:24–25; 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Paul would not have admitted to the atoning efficacy of the old covenant's sacrifices: sin's solution is the work of Christ. In other words, the center of gravity in Paul's thought is Christ, and the antecedent revelation points decisively to him and all that he brings." D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and New," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 2:434.

⁵⁰ Against Hamilton, "The One Who Does Them Shall Live By Them," 12; cf. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 62.

will circumcise your heart ... to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul *for the sake of your life*" (Deut 30:6, author's translation). Paul saw this text being fulfilled in the church age (Rom 2:29; cf. Phil 3:3), and it is in this era alone that God would work in his people "for the sake of their life," securing for them what they could not secure on their own.

6. Paul's Theological and Rhetorical Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12

When Paul cites Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12, he is identifying how the Mosaic law-covenant, characterized as it was by "works of law" and not believing, brought death to all and that, therefore, "the law is not of faith." The call to "do in order to live" set a context for Christ's complete, whole-life obedience, even to the point of death (Rom 5:18–19; Phil 2:8), but that same call should have pushed sinful people to turn away from "doing" as a means to righteousness and life (see Lev 18:5; Deut 6:25; 16:20) and to start "believing" in the provision of right standing and empowerment God supplied through substitutionary atonement (see Rom 9:30–31; cf. 10:4). The Mosaic law-covenant bore a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Cor 3:7, 9), characterized as it was by a hard-hearted, faithless people pursuing righteousness apart from faith. All those in Christ must turn away from "works of law" to faith in Christ, because "it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law" (Gal 3:11; cf. 2:16).

7. Summary

In order to support his claim in Galatians 3:11 that "no one is justified before God by the law," Paul contrasts his citation of Habakkuk 2:4 ("the righteous shall live by faith") with his claim in Galatians 3:12 that includes his quotation of Leviticus 18:5: "But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does them shall live by them.'" Far from Jodar's assertion that Paul has "moved on in his argument" and is "no longer proving that those who rely on the works of the law are cursed,"⁵¹ Paul's point is that the era of the Mosaic law-covenant was, as a whole, characterized by faithlessness among the majority and has now been superseded in Christ by an era of faith. And the failure to "abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them" resulted in "a curse" (Gal 3:10). Therefore, redemptive history has proven that justification comes only by faith in Christ, whose perfect obedience climaxing in the curse-bearing cross-event secured life and righteousness for all who believe, "so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles" (3:13–14).

Paul's understanding of the redemptive-historical contrast between the age of imprisonment under law and the age of freedom through faith in Jesus is what drives his entire argument in Galatians 3 (see esp. Gal 3:23–26). For Paul, to elevate the Mosaic law is to minimize the significance of the person and work of Christ. Attempts like the recent one by Jodar to see continuity where there is contrast fail to account enough for Paul's argument and for the way he exalts Christ as the one whose first coming decisively transforms redemptive-history.⁵²

⁵¹ Jodar, "Leviticus 18:5 and the Law's Call to Faith," 52.

⁵² *Author's Note:* I thank my doctoral students Nicholas Majors, Brian Verrett, and Beau Landers for carefully reading through this manuscript and offering valuable suggestions with respect to both copyediting and content. The whole is better due to their help.

Celebration and Betrayal: Martin Luther King's Case for Racial Justice and Our Current Dilemma

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Abstract: During the American Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King's principal arguments reasoned from theological ethics, appealing to natural law, *imago Dei*, and *agape* love. Today in the United States, with the prevailing ideal of public reason, such arguments are unacceptable in the public square. In lieu of King's theological arguments, are there philosophical principles or values adequate to sustain the cause of racial justice, establishing both a secure *rational foundation* for racial justice and providing sufficient *moral incentive* for citizens to work self-sacrificially for this cause? I assess the prospects of the major philosophical alternatives, specifically utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, virtue ethics, contractarianism, and the anti-theory option. I conclude that each of these approaches fails to provide the necessary conceptual resources to sustain the cause for racial justice. This presents a disconcerting dilemma: either we readmit theological considerations into the public square or surrender hope for the achievement of lasting racial justice in the United States.

Every Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Americans celebrate the legacy of a man whose work profoundly advanced the cause for racial justice in the West. King was a man of many admirable attributes—an eloquent orator, adroit strategist, and visionary leader. But most importantly, he was morally principled. His case for racial justice and the civil disobedience this required was rationally grounded and rigorously defended in his many speeches and publications. But how many of our memorials and celebrations recall the precise nature of those arguments? Indeed, how many Americans today are aware of, much less capable of articulating, the essence of King's case for civil disobedience and, ultimately, the social and legal changes his work brought about in the United States?

King's principal arguments for desegregation pivoted on ideas that are much less popular in the U.S. than they were a half-century ago, for they essentially reasoned from theological ethics, specifically natural law, the concept of *imago Dei*, and *agape* love. Today, to cite a higher moral law or transcendent values in public political debate is more likely to elicit wincing, ridicule, or dismissive hand waving

than a serious critical response. After all, appeals to such concepts contradict the standard of “public reason,” endorsed by the likes of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, which stipulates that the moral and political principles which guide public life must be acceptable to everyone to whom the laws and policies dictated by those principles will apply.¹ This standard, currently heralded by many, perhaps most, political theorists, has produced what Richard John Neuhaus called the “naked public square”—a public square “stripped” of the sorts of theological rationales for public policy which were central to King’s case for racial justice.²

So, to review King’s arguments, which served as the intellectual engine of the Civil Rights Movement, is at once to appreciate the genius of one of America’s greatest moral reformers and to throw into sharp relief how much American culture has changed in the last half century in terms of our currency of public discourse. Now this is not a mere matter of historical interest but potentially has implications for public debate and policy decisions regarding civil rights issues. For if our secular society has scuttled King’s theological rationale for racial justice, then what philosophical foundation is adequate to take its place? Are there alternative moral principles, values, or ideals which are sufficient to sustain this cause? In what follows I consider this question, ultimately arriving at the disconcerting conclusion that none of the major moral theoretic options available offer the necessary conceptual resources to philosophically ground an adequate conception of racial justice and provide the moral incentive needed to motivate people to work toward that end.

1. King’s Case for Racial Justice

When making the case for desegregation, King repeatedly appealed to natural law. For example, in his historic essay “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” King expounds upon the concept in relation to the Jim Crow laws which he aimed to overturn:

A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality.³

In taking this approach, King took his place in a long tradition of natural law ethicists that includes not only Aquinas but also the likes of Augustine, John Locke, and many of the American founding fathers. Like so many of his forbears, King recognized that the genius of natural law thinking lies in its capacity both to adequately ground and provide a means of assessing civil law. Furthermore, natural law provides an enduring *motivation* to achieve moral goods too lofty for civil law. As King puts it,

¹ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); and Jürgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, ed. C. P. Cronin and Pablo De Greiff (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1998.

² Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

³ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: Harper, 1986), 293.

unenforceable obligations are beyond the reach of the laws of society. They concern inner attitudes, genuine person-to-person relations, and expressions of compassion which law books cannot regulate and jails cannot rectify. Such obligations are met by one's commitment to an inner law, written on the heart. Man-made laws assure justice, but a higher law produces love.⁴

The binding nature of this law on all humans everywhere is guaranteed by another idea essential to natural law ethics: the universal kinship of humankind. This, for King, has a theological basis: the *imago Dei*. This is the idea that human beings possess an inherent dignity because we all bear "the indelible stamp of the Creator." And this inherent worth "is universally shared in equal portions by all men. There is no graded scale of essential worth; there is no divine right of one race which differs from the divine right of another."⁵

King understood the power of this idea as a motivation for non-violent resistance. Because those involved in the movement regularly faced severe mistreatment, it was crucial that they resist the temptation to respond in kind. King recognized that the natural human tendency to demonize one's oppressors leads to a violent recourse, and violence is never constructive. "To seek to retaliate with violence," says King, "does nothing but intensify the existence of evil and hate in the universe."⁶ Therefore, this impulse must be defeated at its root—in the very way that the oppressor is *conceived*. By emphasizing the universality of the *imago Dei*, King enables his fellow civil rights activists to eschew the demonizing thought. Rather than the irredeemable "white devil" so despised by Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and others in the Nation of Islam movement, King saw white racists as fellow children of God pathetically distorted by their fear and ignorance and therefore in need of help, not hatred. Rather than pure powers of evil to be defeated by the same violent means they employ, white oppressors are brothers and sisters led astray and therefore worthy recipients of our love and generous refusal to fight back. Thus, King declares, "our aim must never be to defeat or humiliate the white man, but to win his friendship and understanding."⁷ In this way, the oppressed overcomes the temptation to counter-oppression through a redemptive reconception of the oppressor.

In addition to his appeal to natural law and the *imago Dei*, King frequently used an argument from New Testament ethics. A major aspect of this derived from the command to love your enemies, as propounded by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. In numerous speeches and essays, King develops the idea by distinguishing divine *agape* love from merely human forms of love, such as *philia*, or friendship love, and romantic *eros* love. *Agape*, argues King, "does not begin by discriminating between worthy and unworthy people or any qualities people possess. It begins by loving others for their sakes. It is entirely 'neighbor-regarding concern for others,' which discovers the neighbor in every man it meets. Therefore, *agape* makes no distinction between friends and enemy; it is directed toward both."⁸ Though conceptually distinct, this argument is vitally connected to the previous two arguments,

⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Ethical Demands for Integration," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: Harper, 1986), 123.

⁵ King, "The Ethical Demands for Integration," 119.

⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Walk for Freedom," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: Harper, 1986), 83.

⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr., "An Experiment in Love," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: Harper, 1986), 17.

⁸ King, "An Experiment in Love," 19.

since the universal human kinship based in our sharing the divine image functions as the necessary and sufficient ground for *agape* love. Our fellow humans, even those who mercilessly abuse us, actually *deserve* our love and gracious non-violence, though they deserve it not in and of themselves. Rather, they warrant our love and grace because of the divine spark within them, that same spark which binds us as one collective people, God's children, notwithstanding our ethnic and cultural differences.

Another recurrent New Testament ethical theme in King's writings pertains to the redemptive power of suffering. In a way similar to Ghandi's use of the concept, the idea is deployed by King to remind civil rights activists of the power in voluntary weakness to effect dramatic social change. As King explains, "self-suffering stands at the center of the non-violent movement and the individuals involved are able to suffer in a creative manner, feeling that unearned suffering is redemptive, and that suffering may serve to transform the social situation."⁹ King's words here echo a theme in the New Testament, especially the Pauline letters, where we are told to "rejoice in our sufferings," because we know that suffering produces tremendous goods, including character and hope (Rom. 5:3–4) and even sharing in Christ's resurrection (Phil. 3:10–11) and eternal glory (Rom. 8:17). By applying this paradoxical concept in the socio-political realm, King created a formula for social revolution. Though neither soteriological nor eternal in nature, the hope and glory of the Civil Rights Movement was nonetheless profound—pervasive social justice. Although not concerned with the utter extermination of evil from the human heart, it did hope for the extinguishing of evil social structures. King's intuition seemed to be that if suffering can be redemptive unto eternal goods, then *a fortiori* it is useful for temporal goods. If it is effective for human salvation, then how much more so for bringing about racial justice in a civil society.

2. Philosophical Alternatives and their Problems

This is just a sampling of ways in which King made his case for racial justice using arguments from natural law and biblical theology. Now this is all well and good but, the critic might complain, such arguments aren't necessary to make the case for social justice when it comes to race and ethnicity. Though King effectively used theological ethics during the Civil Rights Movement, need we do so today? Perhaps there are other conceptual resources which may provide an adequate foundation for the cause. Let us consider the major philosophical alternatives to theological ethics, namely utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, Aristotelian virtue ethics, and social contract ethics. In doing so, we must keep in mind that the principal resources necessary for the cause of racial justice are both philosophical and motivational. Philosophically, the essential moral concepts are *equality*, *justice*, and *duty*. We need an adequate basis for affirming the equal inherent value of all human beings, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or any other contingent facts about them. We also need grounds for thinking that it is just to treat people accordingly and that we in fact have a duty to do so. Motivationally, it will be essential to provide an adequate *moral incentive* to work for the shared vision of a racially just society, an incentive so strong that people will see it as worth significant self-sacrifice, even to the point of suffering and potentially dying for the cause.

2.1. Utilitarianism

One major alternative to theological ethics is utilitarian ethics. As conceived by Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and their intellectual descendants, the utilitarian vision for society is one characterized

⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: Harper, 1986), 47.

by maximal human happiness. As Mill puts it, “actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain.”¹⁰ In aiming for such a state of affairs, the utilitarian wants to motivate individuals to use the principle of utility as a criterion for personal choices but also vies for social structures and institutions to be arranged according to this criterion. If such were achieved, then everyone would benefit, regardless of their race and ethnicity. Clearly, this is an attractive aim, which has the strength of universal appeal. Who doesn’t want a society that is maximally happy?

Rarely have scholars attempted a rigorous utilitarian defense of non-discriminatory social practices. A noteworthy exception is the American economist Gary S. Becker, who argues that there are significant economic costs incurred in any capitalist system where discrimination is prevalent.¹¹ Becker begins with the idea that some people exhibit a “taste for discrimination,” that is, a willingness to pay to avoid personal contact with people belonging to a particular social group. Such taste for discrimination is captured in Becker’s concept of a “discrimination coefficient” (DC). Where there is a high DC within a particular community’s population, this will raise the wage rate for labor services of the non-discriminated group, which in turn will increase overall costs for goods and services within that community. Becker goes on to argue that the overall effect of the DC is to reduce per capita income for members of all people groups within the community. Thus, it would appear that high levels of racial discrimination within any community are ultimately bad for everyone, not just those who are the direct targets of discriminatory practice.

While Becker’s analysis was groundbreaking and remains highly influential, it is not without its problems. Some have critiqued various aspects of his methodology (e.g., Becker’s use of fixed relative income weights and his ignoring of the effects of regional disequilibrium on African-American employment data).¹² Secondly, some complain that Becker’s notion of a “taste for discrimination” is far too broad and fails to distinguish between a variety of discrimination practices. Thus, Donald Dewey writes, “Most whites have not one but many tastes for discrimination which are not necessarily consistent.”¹³

More recently, Harel and Segal have shown that when it comes to arguing for or against segregation practices, utilitarian considerations are essentially inconclusive. Thus, regarding segregation in the sphere of higher education, they write:

If, as is usually the case, individual preferences are unobservable, then we cannot claim that utilitarian considerations support the establishment of black colleges or Hassidic-only neighborhoods while, at the same time, oppose exclusion of blacks or Jews from white or Christian neighborhoods. But ... the opposite is also false: in general, utilitarian considerations do not support the establishment of white colleges or the exclusion of Jews from Christian neighborhoods.¹⁴

¹⁰ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism and Other Writings*, ed. Mary Warnock (New York: William Collins and Sons, 1962), 257.

¹¹ Gary S. Becker, *The Economics of Discrimination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1957.

¹² M. W. Reder, Review of *The Economics of Discrimination* by Gary S. Becker, *The American Economic Review* 48 (1958): 495–500.

¹³ Donald Dewey, Review of *The Economics of Discrimination* by Gary S. Becker, *Southern Economic Journal* 24 (1958): 495.

¹⁴ Alon Harel and Uzi Segal, “Utilitarianism and Discrimination,” *Social Choice and Welfare* 42 (2014): 368.

Harel and Segal extend this point to any “asymmetric norms,” whether favoring or disfavoring minorities: from a purely principled standpoint, “one cannot reject or promote segregation-related policies based on utilitarian arguments.”¹⁵

However, supposing Becker’s analysis—or for that matter, any similarly utilitarian analysis—works in demonstrating that racial discrimination leads to unwanted economic and other social consequences, does this suffice as a foundation for achieving racial justice? Unfortunately, no. This is because, we will recall, what is needed is not merely a factual analysis of the likely or real social consequences of systemic racism but also an adequate grounding for deontological concepts, including notions of duty, justice, and personal rights.

The problem is that utilitarianism lacks an adequate deontology. While we all may desire pleasure and the diminution of pain and we may also be strongly motivated accordingly, the utilitarian focus on happiness fails to ground deontological concepts. From the fact that a certain act brings more pleasure than pain, we cannot infer that that act is just or that people have a right to it. From the fact that a given policy produces more pain than pleasure, it does not follow that we have a duty to avoid instituting that policy. Indeed, this point constitutes the Achilles heel of utilitarian moral theory, as critics have long pointed out that a utilitarian can coherently *defend* unjust practices, ranging from violations of privacy to the killing of innocent people (in order to, say, prevent a riot). The fact that defenders of Jim Crow laws often employed utilitarian arguments is historical testament to the fact that appeals to what will yield the greatest happiness for the greatest number can be plausibly made in defense of all sorts of injustices. Thus, it appears that the principle of utility cannot philosophically ground our conception of racial justice. If the utilitarian is to operate with a conception of justice at all, she must get it from somewhere else.

2.2. Kantian Ethics

Perhaps our prospects will be better with Kantian ethics. After all, this ethical theory is heralded for its strong emphasis on deontology, providing a sturdy foundation for concepts of duty, rights, and justice. According to Kant, the universal moral principle is the Categorical Imperative (CI), which he develops under a few different formulations. One of these is that you should only act in such a way that you could will that the maxim or principle behind your action be a universal law. Another version of the CI says you should always “treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only.”¹⁶ In other words, we must respect people’s inherent worth and avoid merely using them. Now these two formulations of the CI, appealing to universalizability and respect for persons, respectively, appear to provide a strong foundation for thinking about racial justice. Thus, we might say that it is wrong to discriminate against a person of color, because no one could will such discrimination universally, since no one wants to be discriminated against.

The problem here, however—traditionally, a nagging one for Kantians—is that so long as one specifies one’s maxim sufficiently, one can universalize certain injustices. Jonathan Harrison expresses the problem like this: “Is it the case that, if an action is wrong, no maxim which would enjoin it can be universalized? Against this there is a very formidable objection, which I am not sure can be answered. It is this: Given any wrong action, you can find a maxim for it which is so specific that it enjoins the action

¹⁵ Harel and Segal, “Utilitarianism and Discrimination,” 367.

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill), 47.

and no other.”¹⁷ Thus, while I cannot universally will the maxim to steal, I certainly can universalize the maxim to lie to steal in order to feed a starving child. To illustrate the problem as regards the issue of race, consider the matter of a Kantian landlord reviewing a rental application of some ethnic minorities. What might prevent her from reasoning that although she cannot universalize a general maxim to refuse rentals to people of color, she could nevertheless universalize a specific maxim that says, for example, *in this neighborhood* people of color should not be allowed to rent an apartment? Unjust as this is, a faithful Kantian could consistently take such an approach, which shows that this version of the CI won’t suffice when it comes to grounding our concept of racial justice.

But what about the other formulation of the CI? Racial discrimination appears to constitute disrespect for persons, since all such discrimination fails to treat people as ends in themselves. So, isn’t the Kantian on secure ground here? Not really, since it is not obvious that such discrimination really treats a racial minority as a *mere means*. After all, a Kantian could coherently insist that while unfair, the practice of racial discrimination can be done in a respectful way. A segregationist during the 1960s could coherently argue that Jim Crow laws do not treat black Americans as mere means. On the contrary, the fact that, say, drinking fountains are specially designated *for* them shows that they are being treated with respect.

This highlights a problem often cited by critics of Kantian ethics, specifically that the theory critically lacks a proper attention to and emphasis on moral *feelings*, which are of crucial importance when dealing with moral contexts calling for compassion and empathy. For all of Kant’s concern for respect of the moral law and abiding by abstract universal law, he diminished the importance of loving one’s neighbor *for* him or herself. Thus, Lewis Gordon goes so far as to claim that “Kant can ... have a moral misanthrope who can hate humanity to his heart’s content as long as he acts fundamentally from duty-in-itself.”¹⁸ This claim might seem to be borne out in the fact that Kant himself was a concerted racist, maintaining that “Humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of the whites. The yellow Indians do have a meager talent. The Negroes are far below them and at the lowest point are a part of the American peoples.”¹⁹ Clearly, Kant saw nothing in his own moral principles which mandated anything like racial equality. He did condemn the *slavery* of non-Europeans,²⁰ but this is consistent with segregation and other forms of racially discriminatory social structures. The problem with the CI, however formulated, then, is that it is too abstract; so, as a guide to concrete moral living, it is unreliable,

¹⁷ Jonathan Harrison, “Kant’s Examples of the First Formulation of the Categorical Imperative,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1957): 60. W. D. Ross alternatively analyzes the difficulty as a problem of ambiguous levels of abstraction when it comes to formulating the maxim to be tested. He writes, “The test of universalizability applied at one level of abstractness condemns the act; applied at another level of abstractness it justifies it. And since the principle itself does not indicate at what level of abstractness it is to be applied, it does not furnish us with a criterion of the correctness of maxims, and of the rightness of acts that conform to them” (W. D. Ross, *Kant’s Ethical Theory* [London: Oxford University Press, 1954]. 33). For an extensive discussion of this problem in Kant’s ethics, see Nelson Potter Jr.’s “How to Apply the Categorical Imperative,” *Philosophia* 5 (1975): 395–416.

¹⁸ Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1995), 68.

¹⁹ Immanuel Kant, “Physical Geography,” in *Race and Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 63.

²⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 118.

ambiguous at best. This is true as regards all aspects of the moral life, but glaringly so when it comes to this issue.²¹

Some have challenged this claim, insisting that Kant's CI, when properly construed, may actually preclude racist thinking and behavior. Thus, Arnold Farr has argued that the categorical imperative is serviceable as a "first principle of a philosophy of race."²² The problems noted above all arise from the Kantian "abstraction requirement," that we think of fellow human beings in abstract terms when applying the CI. Farr challenges the traditional approach to this requirement, noting that there are at least two other interpretations of the abstraction requirement which are congenial to a defensible philosophy of race. One of these interpretations understands the abstraction requirement "as a demand for intersubjectivity or recognition." So construed, says Farr, "the abstraction requirement simply demands that in the midst of our concrete differences we recognize ourselves in the other and the other in ourselves. That is, we recognize in others the humanity that we have in common."²³ Another interpretation of the abstraction requirement encouraged by Farr is to see this "as an attempt to avoid ethical egoism in determining maxims for our actions." He recommends this perspective because "to avoid ethical egoism one must abstract from (think beyond) one's own personal interest and subjective maxims. That is, the categorical imperative requires that I recognize that I am a member of the realm of rational beings."²⁴

In these ways, then, Farr concludes that the categorical imperative actually "contravenes racist ideology" and thus has merit for a philosophy of race. Farr's treatment of the Kantian abstraction requirement is innovative and might succeed in demonstrating that alternative interpretations of the CI are available which make it consistent with a racial equality and justice. However, this is far from showing that what he offers is *the only reasonable interpretation* of Kantian moral principles. It is not enough to show that some versions of Kantian ethics oppose racist ideology or have merit for developing a constructive philosophy of race. This is far too thin a foundation when it comes to the project of pursuing racial justice. What is needed is an unambiguous moral mandate, an unequivocal set of moral obligations to respect racial equality. Only this will provide an adequate philosophical grounding for racial justice and provide the necessary moral incentive to do the sacrificial work necessary for this end. The Kantian ethical approach appears to fall well short of providing this.

2.3. Virtue Ethics

Aristotelian virtue ethics offers a perspective very different from that of utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. Recent decades have seen a resurgence of interest in virtue ethics because of the promise it holds to overcome many of the limitations of these modern moral theories. Rather than thinking about the moral life just in terms of principles, the virtue ethicist focuses on character traits. Rather than asking how to assess the morality of particular *actions*, virtue ethicists ask what sort of *person* one should strive to be. Aristotle proposed that the ideal person, morally speaking, is someone who displays an array of

²¹ For a fuller discussion of Kant's racism, see Matthew C. Altman, *Kant and Applied Ethics: The Uses and Limits of Kant's Practical Philosophy* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

²² Arnold Farr, "Can a Philosophy of Race Afford to Abandon the Kantian Categorical Imperative?" *Journal of Social Philosophy* 33 (2002): 29.

²³ Farr, "Can a Philosophy of Race Afford to Abandon the Kantian Categorical Imperative?" 29.

²⁴ Farr, "Can a Philosophy of Race Afford to Abandon the Kantian Categorical Imperative?" 29.

excellent traits, or virtues, such as temperance, courage, generosity, and friendliness.²⁵ One advantage of this approach is that it is more sensitive to context and human relationships and thus avoids some of the pitfalls plaguing theories like utilitarianism and Kantian ethics, whose universal abstractions lead to moral absurdities. Virtue ethics also enjoins serious consideration of the role of feelings, motivations, and imagination in the moral life.

Recently, several moral philosophers have brought virtue theoretic resources to bear on race relations. So, it is worth considering whether this moral framework offers a potentially sufficient foundation for the cause of racial justice. Most virtue theorists have focused on the negative side of the issue, analyzing specific moral vices involved in racism. Thus, Kwame Appiah has distinguished between a variety of forms of racism based on propositional and dispositional factors. Most basically, there is what Appiah calls “racialism,” the belief that there are *innate differences* between races—“traits and tendencies” that constitute “a sort of racial essence,” such differences being constituted by moral and psychological *inequalities* and the belief that these apparent differences justify differential treatment of the various races.²⁶ Two other forms of racism presuppose this fundamental racialism, says Appiah, which he dubs “extrinsic” racism and “intrinsic” racism. Extrinsic racists “make moral distinctions between members of different races because they believe that the racial essence entails certain morally relevant qualities.”²⁷ In contrast, intrinsic racists “believe that each race has a different moral status, quite independent of the moral characteristics entailed by its racial essence.” On this view, “the bare fact of being of the same race is a reason for preferring one person to another.”²⁸ Appiah notes that all forms of racism involve a tendency to assent to false propositions about races, and this disposition is what constitutes the essence of racial prejudice.

Alternatively, Jorge Garcia has offered a more affective or attitudinal analysis of racism, describing it as a vice involving race-based ill-will or disregard of certain people. Racism, says Garcia,

in its central and most vicious form ... is a hatred, ill-will directed against a person or persons on account of their assigned race. In a derivative form, one is a racist when one either does not care at all or does not care enough (i.e., as much as morality requires) or does not care in the right ways about people assigned to a certain racial group, where this disregard is based on racial classification. Racism, then, is something that essentially involves not our beliefs and their rationality or irrationality, but our wants, intentions, likes, and dislikes and their distance from the moral virtues.²⁹

A strength of this account is its attention to feelings and attitudes as essentially involved in racism, whether or not those dispositions ever culminate in harmful or spiteful behavior toward members of the disliked racial group. This comports with ordinary usage of the term “racist,” as the term is often applied to people who do not engage in overt racist speech or conduct.

To date, the most complete application of virtue theory to race relations comes from Lawrence Blum. In addition to noting distinctive racial vices (racial antipathy, racial inferiorizing, and racial disregard),

²⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

²⁶ Kwame A. Appiah, “Racisms,” in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David T. Goldberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 5.

²⁷ Appiah, “Racisms,” 5.

²⁸ Appiah, “Racisms,” 5–6.

²⁹ Jorge L. Garcia, “The Heart of Racism,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 2 (1996): 6.

he identifies three distinctively racial virtues. These include recognition, civic racial egalitarianism, and treating persons as individuals. The racial virtue of recognition, as Blum explains it, is the trait of recognizing a person of another race “as a peer—as someone with, and already possessed of, standing equal to one’s own in the context in question—and behavior toward the recognizee expresses that peer regard.”³⁰ Civic racial egalitarianism involves “regarding the other as deserving of all the rights and privileges of a citizen of one’s polity,” such as in the form of political expression and participation.³¹ And the virtue of seeing others as individuals “means being vividly aware of particularities about the person in question not shared by other members of the group. It means not making unwarranted assumptions about the individual based on her group membership.”³²

These are rich accounts of both the negative and positive traits associated with race relations. More could be said in terms of the relevance of more traditional virtues in the context of race relations, including kindness, sympathy, generosity, and compassion. The virtue ethicist could also argue that our society will flourish if we demonstrate these traits toward people of all races, both in our individual actions and in the social policies we put in place. But virtue ethics has its limits and problems that extend well beyond its application to the issue of racial justice and which are at least as besetting as those plaguing utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. Despite its strengths in recognizing the importance—and even inspiring the development—of excellent character traits, virtue ethics is deontologically destitute, providing no basis for thinking in terms of duty and rights.

Aristotle did explore the deontological concept of justice, which he conceived simply in terms of proportionality (distinguishing between three different forms of justice—distributive, remedial, and commercial). But he identified no compelling rational *foundation* for justice, in the sense of showing why or how we are morally bound to pursue justice. The same goes for the deontological concepts of duties and rights. This might explain why, for all of his extraordinary moral insight, Aristotle so wildly missed the mark when it came to slavery, maintaining that “from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule.”³³ His justification of the practice goes so far as to fold the role of the slave into his conception of the family, noting that “a possession is an instrument for maintaining life. And so, in the arrangement of the family, a slave is a living possession, and property a number of such instruments; and the servant is himself an instrument which takes precedence of all other instruments.”³⁴

But returning to the accounts of Appiah, Garcia, and Blum, these are certainly insightful analyses of racial virtues and vices, and improvements on Kantian ethics (and perhaps utilitarianism) from a motivational standpoint. But their accounts *assume* rather than demonstrate the immorality of the vices they so carefully describe. Furthermore, virtue ethics theories generally, and these accounts specifically, being focused on personal character traits, say little to nothing regarding the rightness of particular

³⁰ Lawrence Blum, “Racial Virtues,” in *Working Virtue: Virtue Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems*, ed. Rebecca L. Walker and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Oxford: Clarendon, 2009), 232.

³¹ Blum, “Racial Virtues,” 239.

³² Blum, “Racial Virtues,” 242.

³³ Aristotle, *Politics* 1.5 (*The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon [New York: Random House, 1941], 1132).

³⁴ Aristotle, *Politics* 1.4 (*The Basic Works of Aristotle*, 1131).

actions, social policies, or civil statutes. Such assessments are absolutely crucial to the work of racial justice.³⁵

2.4. Social Contractarianism

Given the failure of these three major moral traditions to ground a concept of racial justice, one might consider the alternative of social contract ethics. This is roughly the approach that places the burden of substantiating political obligations on the shared values of members within a civil society. In many forms of contractarianism, our ultimate moral guidelines, including justice, are determined by the choices that perfectly rational individuals would make. Early modern contractarians, such as Hobbes and Locke, defended their choice of principles by appealing to natural law. More recent social contract theorists defend their choice of principles in other ways which are potentially compatible with the sort of fully secularized foundation for racial justice we are looking for. John Rawls's version of social contract theory is our best candidate. Rawls appeals to what a rational person would choose if positioned behind a "veil of ignorance," which temporarily blinds them to their particular personal characteristics, including their sex, age, physical traits, family relations, and socio-economic class, though they do know general truths about human nature and the various conditions in which human beings may find themselves. Rawls maintains that even fully self-interested persons would choose the following principles as guidelines for all aspects of society:

1. The Principle of Equal Liberty: "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others."³⁶
2. The Difference Principle: "social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity."³⁷

Arguably these principles are amenable to the cause for racial justice. The critical question, however, is whether, if followed faithfully, Rawls's principles would *guarantee* racial justice throughout society. David Wills has strenuously challenged this notion, insisting that although the principle of equality of opportunity properly attends to individual justice, it fails to effect true *group* justice in the economic sphere, as is evident in the fact that the liberal political system in the United States essentially observes the principle of equality of opportunity yet there are demonstrable persistent income differentials between races. Thus, says Wills, "the idea of equality of opportunity, conventionally understood, is of limited use in defining the meaning of racial justice—particularly economic justice between the races."³⁸ Wills goes on to claim that the only way to achieve just treatment of racial groups is to scuttle the American liberal tradition of defining economic justice in individualistic terms, and he believes the best

³⁵ An additional line of critique is developed by Maureen O'Connell, who argues that the deployment of virtue ethics in the cause of racial justice is inherently compromised by the fact that there are "personal and impersonal aspects of white supremacy in virtue ethics itself" (Maureen H. O'Connell, "After White Supremacy? The Viability of Virtue Ethics for Racial Justice," *Journal of Moral Theology* 3 [2014]: 84). She contends that failure to rigorously critique the virtue ethics tradition and also to develop an alternative set of virtues will "run the risk of perpetuating a culture of white supremacy in the very language and application of virtue ethics itself" (O'Connell, "After White Supremacy?," 86).

³⁶ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1971), 60.

³⁷ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 83.

³⁸ David Wills, "Racial Justice and the Limits of American Liberalism," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 6 (1978): 194.

alternative in this regard is to turn to some form of socialism. Now supposing this is a practical option to effect group economic justice for the races—an approach which would considerably diverge from a Rawlsian model—we might ask how the case for socialist reforms could be effectively made in a deeply capitalistic society such as our own. Wills’s answer to this question is telling, as he laments, “We cannot, of course, go back to [Martin Luther] King.... All we can do is hope for black leaders able to reconstitute a movement with a roughly similar orientation.”³⁹ Yet what was King’s “orientation” but a fundamentally theological one—both in its rationale and motivation? Yet, as with so many scholars, Wills appears virtually oblivious to this.

There is a more fundamental reason why a Rawlsian social contractarian approach is problematic when it comes to providing an adequate rational foundation for racial justice, and that is the fact that principles and values that are merely *agreed upon* by a majority of citizens or their representatives are not necessarily rationally compelling or personally motivating. Even if they would in fact be chosen by an ideally rational individual behind veil of ignorance, this fails to provide the *logos* such principles require as ultimate justifications of their truth if they are to be of any use in persuading large numbers of people to abide by them, much less to provide sufficient moral incentive to do the hard work for racial justice.⁴⁰

And so it goes for all social contract theories. Which specific principles ought to guide society? How do we prioritize them? In the case of conflicts of principles, which trump which? Rigorous answers to these questions bring us back to moral theories such as the ones we’ve already discussed, returning us to square one in the quest for an adequate philosophical foundation for thinking about racial justice. It is no wonder that so many contractarians have appealed to natural law ethics to ground their choice of socio-political guiding principles. Perhaps here lies the practical wisdom of the American founding fathers in preferring this approach.

3. *The Anti-Theory Option*

Throughout the foregoing discussion, I have restricted my attention to particular moral traditions that, for the most part, aim to reduce all moral guidance to certain moral principles. However, one might wonder about the prospects of pursuing a non-theoretical approach to this whole matter. What if we opted for an eclectic “anti-theory” approach which combines the best features of these unique

³⁹ Wills, “Racial Justice and the Limits of American Liberalism,” 215.

⁴⁰ The problems with the Rawlsian scheme run far deeper than what I have noted here. For a rigorously detailed critique, see David Lewis Schaefer’s *Illiberal Justice: John Rawls vs. the American Political Tradition* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007). Schaefer’s final assessment is that Rawls’s “theory and the approach to political life that it embodies, far from offering meaningful guidance on how to fortify liberal institutions, threatens to worsen our situation in numerous respects” (p. 315). Others have focused their critiques on Rawls’ conception of “public reason,” which stipulates his guidelines for a properly secularized public square. See, for example, Shaun P. Young’s “Rawlsian Reasonableness: A Problematic Assumption?” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 39 (2006): 159–80. And see especially, Justin Buckley Dyer and Kevin E. Stuart’s “Rawlsian Public Reason and the Theological Framework of Martin Luther King’s ‘Letter from a Birmingham Jail,’” *Politics and Religion* 6 (2013): 145–63, where they argue that Rawls’ ideal of public reason is fundamentally at odds with King’s “theologically rich” case for racial justice. Their argument demonstrates that far from securing an adequate foundation for the cause of racial justice, Rawlsian ideals would preclude serious public discussion of the very arguments that made the Civil Rights Movement a success in the United States.

moral traditions? Anti-theorists argue that systematic normative theories are ultimately impossible and, even if such were possible to achieve, they are unnecessary for moral living.⁴¹ For example, Bernard Williams, a major figure in this movement, insists that human life is too complex for all of our ethical mandates to be captured by a single theory or ultimate principle. In ordinary human life, we bring all sorts of considerations to bear on the issues that face us rather than appealing to a single ultimate standard or value. Thus, Williams argues that this “reductive enterprise ... has no justification and should disappear.”⁴² Rather, there is a plurality of norms, and our moral decision-making should reflect this, as it often actually does.

Suppose, then, we adopt an eclectic anti-theory approach to the issue of racial justice. We may back up the cause by appealing to considerations of utility, Kantian deontology, personal virtues, *and* Rawlsian equal liberty and fair equality of opportunity. All of these principles and values, in various ways, reinforce certain aspects of the cause for racial justice. Though each has its limitations and problems considered on its own, an eclectic approach benefits from their combined strength while compensating for their particular weaknesses. So why limit ourselves to just one moral tradition or foundational principle when we can use them all and deploy the best principles of all moral theoretic worlds?

For all of its attractiveness, the anti-theory option is deeply problematic and ultimately useless when it comes to the quest for racial justice.⁴³ For, to put it simply, if each of the moral norms recommended by the major philosophical ethical systems fails *individually* to provide an adequate grounding for the cause of racial justice, then why should we expect a *combination* of these same norms to do the trick? No adding or multiplying of zeroes will produce anything but more zeroes. And the fact that major moral principles often clash or point in different directions, only compounds the problem. As we have noted, with regard to the race issue, the principle of utility can be, and often has been, used to justify slavery and Jim Crow laws, and the Categorical Imperative and Rawlsian equality of opportunity can permit certain forms of racism. So, do we simply ignore this lack of conceptual integrity and toss out those principles that do not unequivocally rule out racial injustice (if any such principles are to be found)? But then, we may ask, what is our rational justification for *this* selection of principles? If there is no justification, then our choice is random and non-compelling. But if there is supposedly a justification then what must that be? Presumably, such would be some higher, ultimately prioritized moral principle. And this leads us right back to moral theory and the quest for an ultimate moral norm.

⁴¹ See David McNaughton, *Moral Vision: An Introduction to Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); Michael Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976): 453–66; and Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1985).

⁴² Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, 17.

⁴³ Aside from the problems I note here which are specifically related to the inadequacy of an anti-theory approach to the issue of racial justice, there are further problems related to the anti-theorists’ critique of major moral theories. As Robert Louden and Margaret Little have argued, anti-theorists’ arguments often caricature or otherwise poorly represent major moral theories and the project to identify or establish foundational moral principles. Yes, the abstractions of many moral theories are often far removed from ordinary human life, and most people might, at least implicitly, appeal to diverse moral norms as they make moral decisions. But this doesn’t mean that *all* moral theories are mistaken in their recommendations regarding which moral norm is ultimate or most foundational or that the ultimate norm isn’t sufficient for guidance regarding all practical affairs. See Robert B. Louden, *Morality and Moral Theory: A Reappraisal and Reaffirmation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) and Margaret O. Little, “On Knowing the ‘Why’: Particularism and Moral Theory,” *The Hastings Center Report* 31 (2001): 32–40.

A similar problem arises in the context of a need for moral incentive to work for racial justice. If the only norms driving us are those which we have randomly selected or only selected because they happen to cohere with or reinforce our predetermined preferences, then all that is really motivating our work is our shared personal desires and preferences for a certain kind of world. And desires and preferences, however strong they might be, are never enough to endure the long and sometimes excruciating work of racial justice.

4. Comparing Philosophical Foundations

I have provided here a relatively brief adumbration of the difficulties with major philosophical ethical perspectives when it comes to effectively grounding our concept of racial justice. Some will suggest that this could be achieved by somehow revising one of these theoretical traditions in such a way as to overcome its problems. I am confident all such attempts are doomed to failure because each theory, considered on its own or in concert with another theory or theories, lacks the requisite *philosophical* foundation for the conviction that all human beings, regardless of contingent facts about them, have equal and inestimable moral worth. Such is essential to make the case for racial justice. Utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, virtue ethics, and social contractarianism fail to provide this. In contrast, Martin Luther King's Christian theological ethics—natural law ethics combined with a biblical theology of *imago Dei* and *agape*—*does* provide this crucial philosophical foundation. Arguably, this is a major reason why the Civil Rights Movement was a success.

I have also argued that the philosophical ethical alternatives fail when it comes to the *motivational* component—the need for workers to have an adequate incentive, not just to labor tirelessly for the cause but also to be personally willing to suffer and sacrifice for it. Philosophical moral theories offer abstract ideals of general happiness, universal justice, liberty, fairness, equality, and flourishing communities, but these won't sustain a person's resolve to do the really hard work for racial justice. That kind of resolve requires unconditional love. And such love is best motivated by something transcendent—a sense of the reality of God, an awareness that even one's oppressors are God's children, a spiritual inspiration by a suffering but triumphant moral exemplar, such as the Christ of the New Testament, and a hope in the promise of eternal reward for those who love their enemies, even unto death. Such is the stuff of adequate incentive when it comes to non-violent civil disobedience. King knew this. And that's why he was uncompromising in making his case for racial justice distinctively Christian. As historian David Chappell has said, "It is hard to imagine masses of people lining up for years of excruciating risk against southern sheriffs, fire hoses, and attack dogs without some transcendent or millennial faith to sustain them."⁴⁴ The preceding discussion has been aimed at reinforcing this intuition.

Before concluding, it is critical that we dive a little deeper into the philosophical foundations of King's case for racial justice, since his arguments from natural law, *imago Dei* and *agape* were reinforced by a more complex matrix of ideas. Working out the precise character of those influences is a controversial and difficult—perhaps even impossible—task. David Garrow has observed that when it comes to the debate over King's influences "much of the literature can be characterized as a multi-party

⁴⁴ David Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 102.

tug of war, with different scholars seeking to claim King” for various schools of thought.⁴⁵ During his years studying at Crozer Theological Seminary and Boston University, King engaged a wide variety of thinkers. Among these were the philosophies of Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, Walter Rauschenbusch’s social gospel, Reinhold Niebuhr’s hamartiology, Mahatma Gandhi’s satyagraha brand of non-violence, and the personalist idealism of Edgar Brightman, Harold DeWolf, and Peter Betocchi.⁴⁶ Yet, for all of the appreciable influence these thinkers and ideas had on King, it cannot be emphasized enough that they essentially supplement and reinforce the theological framework King already had in place when he commenced his graduate studies. As Garrow persuasively argues, “the two traditions which actually exerted the greatest formative influences on King’s thought and action [were] the biblical inheritance of the story of Jesus Christ and the black southern Baptist church heritage into which King was born.”⁴⁷

Still, it is worth highlighting some of the more significant influences on King’s thought and how they likely served to fortify his theological case and personal resolve regarding racial justice. First, consider Walter Rauschenbusch’s social gospel, which aimed to alert Christians to the ways in which human sin is manifest in the form of systematic oppression of people through corrupt institutions and unjust social practices. The redemptive influence of the Christian gospel, he argued, is not properly limited to individual salvation but should also renew and reorder unjust social structures.⁴⁸ King frequently testified to the impact Rauschenbusch had on his own thinking. For example, in *Stride Toward Freedom* he notes, “It has been my conviction ever since reading Rauschenbusch that any religion which professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the social and economic conditions that scar the soul, is a moribund religion.”⁴⁹ Rauschenbusch’s social gospel did not supplant King’s basic Christian theological convictions but rather expanded his sense of their practical reach. The social gospel transformed and enlarged King’s concept of what Christian love *means* in a context of systematic injustice and oppression. And this expanded practical theology no doubt provided additional motivational support for King’s work and sense of calling in the struggle for racial justice.

Next, there is the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, which is well-known for its sober assessment of human nature, highlighting both how great and how wretched is our species. Regarding his hamartiological emphasis, Niebuhr traces the depths of human corruption at every level of society, from the individual to entire political regimes.⁵⁰ This “realism” deeply impacted King, who remarked that Niebuhr’s theology

⁴⁵ David J. Garrow, “The Intellectual Development of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Influences and Commentaries,” *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement: Controversies and Debates*, ed. John A. Kirk (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 39.

⁴⁶ While this is a fairly standard list of major influences on King, multiple other thinkers had a significant impact on his thinking as well, though they are typically unacknowledged or underappreciated by King and his biographers. Keith D. Miller highlights seven of these who were especially influential: Harry Emerson Fosdick, Robert McCracken, William Stuart Nelson, Harris Wofford, Richard Gregg, George Kelsey, and Paul Ramsey. See Miller’s “Composing Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *PMLA* 105.1 (1990): 70–82.

⁴⁷ David J. Garrow, “The Intellectual Development of Martin Luther King, Jr.,” 39–40.

⁴⁸ Among his most Rauschenbusch’s most influential works are *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), and *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1917).

⁴⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 91.

⁵⁰ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).

is a persistent reminder of the reality of sin on every level of man's existence. These elements in Niebuhr's thinking helped me to recognize the illusions of a superficial optimism concerning human nature and the dangers of a false idealism. While I still believed in man's potential for good, Niebuhr made me realize his potential for evil as well. Moreover, Niebuhr helped me to recognize the complexity of man's social involvement and the glaring reality of collective evil.⁵¹

Niebuhr's theology of human nature was likely attractive to King, among other reasons, because it so well accounted for the recalcitrance and pervasiveness of the injustices in American society that he was committed to addressing. Such dark realism about the depths of human evil can provide a helpful bulwark against demoralization in the long struggle for racial justice. Balancing belief in the possibility of divine redemption with the conviction that sin is an inveterate aspect of human nature is crucial for any Christian mission, as it preserves hope in the midst of despair over human resistance to change. This was likely helpful to King from a motivational standpoint during his many dark nights of the soul during the Civil Rights Movement.

Finally, consider the philosophy of personalism, which emphasizes the person as the ultimate metaphysical reality and ground of value. Personalists maintain that it is personhood (or personality) which is properly the first and final consideration in all reflection on moral, social, and political issues. The particular brand of personalism to which King was exposed at Boston—under the tutelage of Brightman and DeWolf—was “personal idealism,” which stresses consciousness as definitive of being itself. Like most forms of personalism, theirs was deeply theistic but was especially influenced by Hegelian idealism. Later King would assert,

This personal idealism remains today my basic philosophical position. Personalism's insistence that only personality—finite and infinite—is ultimately real strengthened me in two convictions: It gave me metaphysical and philosophical grounding for the idea of a personal God, and it gave me a metaphysical basis for the dignity and worth of all human personality.⁵²

To declare any doctrine to be one's “basic philosophical position” is quite significant. When one considers the implications of personalism regarding the value of human beings and how well it dovetails with King's theological convictions, it is easy to see why he would so deeply embrace this philosophical perspective.⁵³ There are several ways in which personalism reinforces King's theological case for civil rights. The personalist conviction that, as persons, human beings have supreme inherent worth synchs perfectly with natural law concepts of universal kinship and a higher, transcendent moral standard.

⁵¹ King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 99.

⁵² King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 100.

⁵³ For some helpful studies of the role of personalism in King's life and thought, see Warren E. Steinkraus, “Martin Luther King's Personalism and Non-violence,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34 (1973): 97–111; Rufus Burrow, Jr., “Martin Luther King, Jr., Personalism, and Moral Law,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 52 (1997): 27–42; Lawrence E. Carter, Sr., “The African American Personalist Perspective on Person as Embodied in the Life and Thought of Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 20 (2006): 219–23; and Lewis V. Baldwin, “The Unfolding of the Moral Order: Rufus Burrow, Jr., Personal Idealism, and the Life and Thought of Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *The Pluralist* 6.1 (2011): 1–13.

And when set in a broader theistic context as it was among King's mentors at Boston, personalism also provides an ideal philosophical footing for the biblical doctrines of *imago Dei* and *agape* love.⁵⁴

5. Conclusion

The philosophical and theological themes in Rauschenbusch's social gospel, Niebuhr's hamartiology, and personal idealism served as powerful reinforcements of the natural law ethics and New Testament theology, which constituted the primary rationale for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s case for racial justice and the motivational engine for his tireless devotion to the cause of racial justice in America.⁵⁵ Each of these doctrines, even if not thoroughly Christian, is at least deeply theistic. Therefore, the supplemental role of these concepts in King's work in no way detracts from my overarching point that only a theological ethics such as that deployed by King is adequate to sustain the moral case for racial justice. No purely philosophical ethics will do.

This raises an ominous question. If theological resources have effectively been banned from American political discourse when it comes to the forming of public policy and the arrangement of laws and institutions, then what are our prospects as a country for realizing King's dream? Assuming that *some* moral rationale for racial justice is needed for this, then our prospects would appear grim. The next pressing question, then, is what can be done to reestablish the force of King's arguments in our country's political discourse to ensure that his dream of lasting racial justice is eventually realized rather than finally betrayed? But this is essentially to ask how we might religiously reclothe our now virtually naked American public square—a daunting prospect indeed. In any case, this appears to be our current dilemma: either we must readmit theological considerations into the public square or surrender hope for the achievement of lasting racial justice in the United States. While the former option will surely be intolerable to many, the latter alternative should be unacceptable to all.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Another key inspiration for King's his appeal to *agape* love was Anders Nygren, whose work on the subject significantly influenced King's much emphasized notion of the "beloved community." For a helpful study of Nygren's work in this area, see Colin Grant, "For the Love of God: Agape," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 24 (1996): 3–21.

⁵⁵ For an in-depth analysis of the conceptual and motivational connections I summarize here, see John W. Rathbun, "Martin Luther King: The Theology of Social," *American Quarterly* 20 (1968): 38–53.

⁵⁶ I want to thank an anonymous referee for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Christ and the Concept of Person

— Lydia Jaeger —

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Abstract: The concept of personhood is crucial for our understanding of what it is to be human. This article considers the ways that Christological debates in the early Church contributed to the emergence of the concept of person. It then suggests that neglect of the theological roots of this concept is the reason why modern definitions of person are unsatisfactory. The latter typically refer to particular properties of the individual, whereas the Trinitarian concept of person is relational. Finally, some ethical implications are drawn from the Christological insight that the person is a fundamental ontological category. In particular, this perspective defends the personhood of those who do not meet the criteria of modern definitions of person.

Asking what it means to be human may be as old as humankind itself.¹ Many conflicting views of human nature are on offer. Philosophy of mind has occupied a significant place in the debates. Much of these debates have been shaped by the monism-dualism dichotomy and varieties of these two opposing conceptions. Although challenging arguments abound, and there is much fruitful discussion, the possibility of consensus appears remote, even among those who share the same religious worldview. The time may therefore be ripe for a change of paradigm, a hunt for new insights that could help us to move out of well-worn ruts of discussion. The present article seeks to meet this challenge, by bringing together two intellectual worlds that hardly ever meet: philosophy of mind, and patristic theology. The hope is that this endeavor might indicate fresh directions to explore in our understanding of ourselves, whilst also throwing new light on old debates.

The present article focuses on the concept of person, which is key to our understanding of ourselves as human beings. It also played a decisive role in the fierce controversies that arose concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation, early in Church history. The Council of Chalcedon's declaration is famous

¹ This article is based on a talk given at the Christian Doctrine Study Group of the Tyndale Fellowship Conference, 25 June 2019; I wish to thank the participants, and in particular Thomas A. Noble, for fruitful discussions. An earlier and fuller treatment of this subject exists in French: Lydia Jaeger, "Christ et l'identité de la personne humaine," in *L'identité humaine*, ed. Micaël Razzano (Charols: Excelsis, 2019), 105–39. Cf. Lydia Jaeger, "Comprendre la personne humaine à partir du mystère de l'Incarnation," *Les Cahiers de l'Institut Biblique de Nogent* 184 (June 2019), 3–8. My thanks to Rachel and Jonathan Vaughan and Janet Johnson for helping with the English translation. I am also deeply indebted to Henri Blocher for his teaching and our many discussions on Christology.

for stating that “Jesus Christ ... must be confessed to be in two natures, ... being united in one Person.”² What is less well known is the fact that the Church Fathers had to significantly advance the concept of person in order to achieve the fine balance of the Christological creed. If we consider this development carefully, and its thoroughly biblical basis, we may better understand what it means to be a person, which has repercussions for human self-awareness.

1. The Mystery of the God-Man

The New Testament witness to Jesus presents us with an enigma. On the one hand, Jesus is fully human. He grew from a baby to a man. He experienced fatigue, hunger and thirst. He suffered and died. His humanity was foundational for achieving salvation for humankind (1 Tim 2:5; see also John 8:40; Acts 2:22; 17:31). On the other hand, Jesus is given divine names: God, Son of God, Lord (the Greek equivalent of Yahweh). He has attributes that God alone possesses (eternity, omniscience, omnipotence). He does things that only God can do (creation, salvation, final judgement). And he is worshipped and prayed to. The assertion that Jesus is both true God and true man is therefore not an invention of the Church, but firmly rooted in biblical revelation. In response to the Bible’s teaching, the first ecumenical council held in Nicaea in AD 325 affirmed the following:

We believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance [ὁμοούσιος] with the Father. By whom all things were made, both which be in heaven and in earth. Who for us men and for our salvation came down [from heaven] and was incarnate and was made man.³

The New Testament’s teaching on the deity of Jesus the man leads to another mystery: if the Messiah is God, there must be plurality within the one God. Just as for the two natures of Christ, the Trinity is not a theological invention. On the contrary, the doctrine was formulated to do justice to the way God reveals himself in the Scriptures. Monotheism is massively affirmed in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments (Gen 1:1; Deut 6:4; Isa 45:21; 46:9; Acts 14:15; 17:24–26; 1 Cor 8:5–6; Jas 2:19). At the same time, there are several “I”s in the one God, as evidenced by Jesus’s prayer to his Father: “Father ... glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you ... And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (John 17:1, 5).⁴ Jesus even implies that he and the Father are two (John 8:16–18; compare with John 10:30, where Jesus stresses his unity with the Father). This plurality is not the result of the Incarnation. In fact, this relationship within the being of God is fundamental to the Son’s coming into the world (Heb 10:5–7, quoting Ps 40:7–9).

Without ambiguity, Scripture presents us with two mysteries concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation: God is both one and three; Christ is both true God and true man. For each of these basic beliefs of the Christian faith, the scriptural proof is beyond doubt. The difficulty lies not in the Bible’s lack of clarity on the subject—far from it!—but in conceiving how the pairs of affirmations forming these two mysteries can be true together: how can God be both one and three? How can Jesus be true God and true man?

² Philip Schaff, ed., *The Seven Ecumenical Councils* (NPNF² 14:264–65).

³ Schaff, *Seven Ecumenical Councils* (NPNF² 14:3).

⁴ Unless otherwise stated, Bible texts are quoted from the English Standard Version.

In seeking to illuminate the twin mysteries of the Incarnation and plurality within the one God, the theologians of the early Church advanced our understanding of personhood far beyond what any Greek philosopher could have imagined.

2. Greco-Roman Prehistory

“Person” translates the Greek word πρόσωπον and the Latin *persona*. Πρόσωπον designates the side, the face, by which an object (for example the moon, a ship) or an individual presents itself. It can therefore be used about a presence “in person.” This usage is also found in the Septuagint, which most often translates Hebrew פָּנִים (“face”) by πρόσωπον: “Your face, LORD, do I seek. Hide not your face from me,” exclaims the psalmist (Ps 27:8–9). The word also means mask in theater, and hence the role played, as well as the actor who plays this role. It can therefore refer to the individual in their acts and words, as well as the person in their social capacity.⁵

Persona also means mask in theater, and hence the role, the character that the actor plays. Latin authors saw a link between *persona* and *persono*, “I make a sound,” and therefore a reference to the voice that sounds through the mask. This etymology is unlikely; some have instead proposed a derivation from the name of the Etruscan goddess *Phersipnai* (the equivalent of the Greek goddess *Persephone*), whose rite involved masks, or the Etruscan word *phersu*, which means mask or actor who wears a mask. From the 3rd century BC, *persona* came to designate the first, second, and third persons in grammar. Later the legal meaning, which was absent from the Greek term, was added: the human being is distinguished from things (*res*), he is a *persona*: humans have a special dignity and moral responsibility. The term can also be used in a public sense: the people, the senate.⁶ In society, a human can have several *personae*, that is to say, several roles in the fabric of society.⁷ *Persona* also came to designate the human individual in their particularity. This is certainly not unrelated to the legal meaning of the term: it is as conscious and free subjects, because of their words and deeds, that humans are responsible before the law and possess a specific dignity.⁸

While the Greek πρόσωπον is older than the Latin *persona*, it is in Latin that one “passed more quickly from mask to character and from character to individual bearer of a word.”⁹ The evolution of the meaning in Latin then spilled over onto the meaning of the Greek word. Emmanuel Housset summarizes this pre-Christian history of the person:

⁵ Information in this paragraph is taken from Emmanuel Housset, *La vocation de la personne: L'histoire du concept de personne de sa naissance augustiniennne à sa redécouverte phénoménologique* (Paris: PUF, 2014), 36–37; and Paul McPartlan, “Personne,” in *Dictionnaire critique de théologie*, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (Paris: PUF, 2007), 895.

⁶ Information up to this point in the paragraph is taken from Housset, *Vocation de la personne*, 38–40.

⁷ McPartlan, “Personne,” 895.

⁸ Housset, *Vocation de la personne*, 40; Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, trans. J. S. Bowden, rev. ed. (London: Mowbray, 1975), 126 n. 65, based on M. Nédoncelle, “Prosopon et persona dans l’antiquité classique: essai de bilan linguistique,” *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 22 (1948): 297–98.

⁹ Housset, *Vocation de la personne*, 41. (All quotes from Housset are translated by Jonathan and Rachel Vaughan.)

Christian thought did not invent the term person: the whole theological reflection started with these everyday meanings of *prosôpon* and *persona*, but brought to light a radically new sense of the person, that is neither Greek nor Latin, even if it was prepared in Greek and transmitted in Latin.¹⁰

The New Testament uses πρόσωπον according to the semantical field covered by the Greek word at this time, with the exception of the meaning “theatrical mask,” which is absent. In most NT occurrences, the word means “face.” The human face is paradoxical: it is both part of a human being’s appearance, but also the part of the body that most expresses what they think and feel in their heart. It is therefore not surprising that πρόσωπον can express either meaning, depending on the context (both are found in 1 Thess 2:17).¹¹ In one passage, πρόσωπον probably means an individual: when Paul mentions the intercession of “several persons” (2 Cor 1:11), a meaning also attested in Greek extra-biblical literature.¹² In any case, one should not confuse the word and the concept. Depending on the context, the word “person” can be used with different meanings, some of which do not include the idea of the individuality of each human being. On the other hand, the concept of the special dignity of humankind can be present, without the word “person” being used. This observation, which should encourage caution, obviously applies as much to the New Testament as to Greco-Roman literature. It would require an in-depth study of biblical anthropology, in comparison with the non-Christian literature of the time, to establish with any certainty how original the biblical authors were in this regard. But this is not our main concern here, which is to focus on the contribution of Trinitarian and Christological theology to the modern concept of the person.

3. *The Union of Divinity and Humanity in the One Person of Christ*

As far as we know, Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–236) was the first to use the Greek word πρόσωπον, “person,” to express the plurality in God, more precisely for the persons of the Father and the Son. Tertullian (c. 160–230) borrows the term, translating it into Latin. He coins the expression that there is in God three persons and one substance (*Against Praxeas* II, 4).¹³ This way of expressing the interaction between plurality and unity in God would prevail in the West. Parallel to this, Tertullian says that in Christ, “we see plainly the twofold state, which is not confounded, but conjoined in One Person Jesus, God and Man.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Housset, *Vocation de la personne*, 41.

¹¹ Walter Bauer, Kurt Aland, and Barbara Aland, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch: zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, rev. ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 1443–45.

¹² Texts in Greek literature that use πρόσωπον in the sense of “person, individual” include works by Polybius (c. 206–124 BC), Diodorus of Sicily (1st century BC), Plutarch (c. 46–125 AD), Epictetus (c. 55–135 AD), according to Bauer, Aland, and Aland, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1445. In addition, the Greek πρόσωπον was influenced at the beginning of the Christian era by the Latin *persona*, so that the range of its senses was enriched (Housset, *Vocation de la personne*, 37).

¹³ Housset, *Vocation de la personne*, 42–44.

¹⁴ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 17 (ANF 3:624). This formulation anticipates the Christological formula of Chalcedon, although the latter does not derive historically from Tertullian. Tertullian does not develop much further the question of the nature of the one person of Christ.

After the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 had firmly grasped both the full divinity and full humanity of the Word incarnate, there still remained the task of better articulating the union between these two natures. At the beginning of the fifth century, two unsatisfactory answers highlighted the need for suitable description of the mystery of the Incarnation. The concept of person played a key role in this task and was itself refined in the process.

The first inadequate understanding of the Incarnation is called Nestorianism, named after the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius. In this view, Christ is the temple and instrument of deity. The union of the two natures is of a moral kind: a union of two wills, that of the man Jesus and that of God. The second flawed conception was adopted by Eutyches, a monk in Constantinople. He promoted monophysitism, from the Greek *μόνος*, “one,” and *φύσις*, “nature”: the human nature of Christ is deified by union with the divine to the point of no longer being consubstantial with our human nature.

The Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 rejected both ideas. In contrast to monophysitism, the two natures of Christ were clearly affirmed. Over against Nestorianism, their union is assured by the unique (pre-existing) person, the Word:

This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁵

With Chalcedon, the notion of person becomes the key to understanding how Jesus can be both true God and true man, without there being two Christs. As Augustine says: “In those things that have their origin in time, this is the highest grace, that man is joined with God in unity of person.”¹⁶

4. From Divine to Human Persons

In order to achieve the balance of the Chalcedonian formulations, its authors had to conceive the idea of the person in its distinctiveness, avoiding any definition via the nature, or essence, of a being. This was a major theological achievement, produced in response to the Bible’s teaching on divine unity and plurality, and the God-man Jesus Christ. What are the anthropological implications of this Christological insight?

The deduction from divine to human persons should not be made solely on the grounds that the same term, “person,” is used. To draw such a conclusion requires a more substantial analogy. The deduction is justified by the fact that the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, took on a human nature consubstantial to ours. Thus, although Christ is a unique being (no other human possesses two natures), his mode of existence teaches us something about humans in general. He is *the* man, the example of true humanity. Pilate spoke better than he knew when he brought Jesus out saying, “Behold the man!” (John 19:5).

Taking the person of Christ as our basis for a more complete understanding of what it means to be human results in a truly Christian account (rather than just a broadly theistic one). But it does

¹⁵ Schaff, *Seven Ecumenical Councils* (NPNF² 14:264–65).

¹⁶ Augustine, *On the Trinity* 13.19 (NPNF¹ 3:181).

not, at least not necessarily, commit what one could call the Barthian¹⁷ fallacy: trying to understand humanity solely and directly from the Incarnation. The creation accounts in Genesis 1–2 also teach us significant truths about humanity, and creation is historically (and, I would claim, ontologically) prior to the Incarnation. The prerequisite for the Incarnation is humanity's unique relationship with God. We see this in Luke's genealogy of Christ, where Adam's dependence on God is expressed using the same grammatical form (the genitive) as the parental links which are followed back from Jesus (literally: "Jesus ... being the son [as was supposed] of Joseph, of Heli, of Matthat, ... of Adam, of God," Luke 3:23–38). In certain contexts, human beings are called "sons of God," or even "gods." This analogous language implies the possibility of the Incarnation, as Jesus's argument in John 10:34–36 assumes, when he quotes from Psalm 82:6 ("I said, you are gods") in order to prove that his claim to be the Son of God is not blasphemous.

Jesus's referring to other human beings as "gods" does not mean that there is no more to the Incarnation than the particular status of humanity created in God's image. (The Jews who listened to Jesus understood this quite well, in contrast to the Arian misunderstanding of this passage.) But it shows that there are distinctives which distinguish humans from other creatures, and that these distinctives are linked to the Incarnation. It is therefore legitimate to look to the Incarnation to learn more about the nature that the Son of God took in this event.¹⁸ This in turn justifies applying the insight about Christ's person to all human beings. In fact, it should not surprise us that the Incarnation helps us to understand human identity better. Is not the "Word which comes into the world" also "the true light, which gives light to everyone" (John 1:9)?

5. *The Person: A Fundamental Ontological Category*

The Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément remarks, "In Christian anthropology, the fundamental distinction is not that of the soul and the body, nor of the soul and the spirit.... The true distinction is that of *the nature and of the person*."¹⁹ But it is quite striking to observe that anthropological discussions, both in theology and philosophy, continue to be dominated by arguments over monism and dualism, whilst paying little or no attention to the unique Christological distinction of nature and person.²⁰ It is high time we explored the consequences of this distinction for our understanding of humans beings.

¹⁷ The term "Barthian" is not meant to make a historical claim about Karl Barth's theology, although there is certainly some continuity between the construction of his anthropology and the fallacy (or what I take to be a fallacy) critiqued here.

¹⁸ Note that this is not abstract speculation on the basis of an event in salvation history, namely the Incarnation. We need Scripture in order to interpret everything rightly. This general truth is even more salient for any event in salvation history. We first learn from the Bible that Jesus Christ is both fully divine and fully human, and that he is such without there being two Christs, without any duplication of his personality. We then draw (cautious) conclusions from the Incarnation to general human nature.

¹⁹ Olivier Clément, *Questions sur l'homme* (Paris: Stock, 1972), 35–36 (translated by Jonathan and Rachel Vaughan).

²⁰ It is no coincidence that this observation comes from Olivier Clément, who is an Orthodox theologian. Other thinkers in the Eastern tradition have drawn attention to the anthropological contribution of the nature-person distinction, as for example Vladimir Lossky in his *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1944); English translation: *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: J. Clarke,

What might be gained from this consideration? The distinction between nature and person, which the Church Fathers were obliged to formulate in their efforts to understand what the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ, implies that the person is a fundamental ontological category that cannot be reduced to a description of the traits of an individual. “Thus every person is unique,”²¹ not only in the sense that he or she is a single specimen of the human species, but that the person is an “I,”²² with inalienable dignity and responsibility, endowed with an individuality that is “incommunicable.”²³ Emmanuel Levinas, in another context, expresses the specificity of the person thus: “The I is not unique like the Eiffel Tower or the Mona Lisa. The unicity of the I does not merely consist in being found in one sample only, but in existing without a genus, without being the individuation of a concept.”²⁴

Some additional explanations may help the reader to grasp the novelty of the distinction between nature and person. The notion of nature (or essence) refers to the set of characteristics that describe a being; it designates what a being is. The notion of nature answers the question: What is this? The person, on the other hand, is the one who bears the characteristics of a nature. The notion of person answers the question: Who is this? Prior to being confronted with the twin mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, it seemed adequate to define individuality by nature, by the features that distinguish one individual from another. Thus, when one wants to distinguish Peter from Paul, one may simply give a sufficiently detailed description of the two, to say how Peter is different from Paul. However similar two individuals are, we will always be able to find traits that make them different. On the other hand, this approach fails when one tries to identify what distinguishes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for they are but one God. If several beings have exactly the same nature, the only remaining possible distinction is that of the person, who is defined by relationships (between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). This is the understanding St. Augustine came to in his magisterial work *De Trinitate*, thus becoming “the first Latin theologian to use relationship in order to make the concept of the Trinity logically conceivable.”²⁵

Without providing an exhaustive understanding, the distinction of nature and person allows us to express clearly the twin mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation. In fact, they present us with two

1957), particularly ch. 6 (I am indebted to Thomas A. Noble for this reference); and John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

²¹ Henri Blocher, *La doctrine du Christ*, rev. ed. (Vaux-sur-Seine: Édifac, 2002), 160. (All quotes from Blocher are translated by Jonathan and Rachel Vaughan.)

²² This way of formulating the individual person as a subject that says “I” is probably more modern than patristic. But it is supported by the scriptural passages that show the divine persons in dialogue with each other.

²³ Term used first by Boethius (c. 480–524) in his commentary on the treatise of Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, to designate the specific property that makes the man Plato to be *Plato* (Philip A. Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 40–41). The term is then often included in discussions about what the person is, especially by Richard de Saint-Victor (Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, 51–57).

²⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 117–18.

²⁵ Note by Sophie Dupuy-Trudelle, in Saint Augustine, *Œuvres III, Philosophie, catéchèse, polémique*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 483 (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 1196 n. 2 (author’s translation). In private communication (27 June 2019) Thomas A. Noble pointed out to me that Gregory Nazianzen had already employed relationship to escape the Arian charge that the terms “Father” and “Son” must either refer to a difference of essence or to a difference of mere accident, both of which would annihilate the Trinitarian dogma (*Orat.* 31.9).

symmetrically opposite situations: in the Trinity, there are multiple persons, but one nature; in Christ, there are multiple natures, but one person.²⁶

6. *The Human Person without the Divine Persons*

The notion of person has a special place in contemporary thinking about human dignity. It seems so familiar that one can easily forget that it is a historically-situated concept, forged in the course of Trinitarian and Christological debates in the early Church, before becoming secularized in modern times. Western thought has integrated the anthropological contribution of Trinitarian and Christological theology, which affirms that every person is unique. But it “tends to secularize this asset, and at the same time to alter it by returning to natural (usually psychological) traits.”²⁷ To see how this has happened, let us look at some definitions of the person that have influenced the modern era.

For John Locke (1632–1704), the trio of rationality, self-awareness and memory constituted the person: this is “a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places.”²⁸ For Immanuel Kant, rationality and moral dignity (as a moral agent and object) are the key elements of interest: “Rational beings are called ‘persons,’ because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves.”²⁹ We can add the paradigmatic “I think, therefore I am” (although Descartes does not use the term “person” in his *Discourse on the Method*): the *Cogito* bases personal identity on the experience, considered indubitable, of being a thinking subject.³⁰ In recent times, the American philosopher Daniel Dennett (1942–) proposes, in dialogue with the cognitive sciences, the following criteria to define the person: intelligence and self-awareness, but also the capacity to attribute intentional mental states to others, language and the fact of being “conscious in some special way,” which is not to be found in animals.³¹

What is striking in these proposals is the return to a definition by the nature of the individual: persons are once again defined by their traits, most often by their intellectual capacities, or even their cerebral activity. Could this be linked to the fact that the theological context in which the notion of

²⁶ The symmetry should not be pressed too far. The distinction between person and nature is a conceptual distinction and does not imply distinct entities. In particular, when speaking of the *two* natures of Christ, we have to remember that the divine and the human are not commensurable; thus any crude understanding of the Incarnation as the “sum” of the divine and the human nature is excluded. Christ can be one person with two natures in so far as God is not the Wholly Other for his creation and as humanity is created in God’s image.

²⁷ Blocher, *Doctrine du Christ*, 160.

²⁸ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 335.

²⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals: A German-English edition*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 85.

³⁰ Such, in any case, is the canonical interpretation of the *Discours de la méthode*. Descartes’s concession that clear and distinct ideas are guaranteed true only if God exists could make this foundation less indubitable than it is often admitted (cf. my “What Place Is There for God in Cartesian Doubt?,” *Churchman* 125 (2011): 315–30).

³¹ Daniel Dennett, *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), 270, quoted in Martha J. Farah and Andrea S. Heberlein, “Personhood and Neuroscience: Naturalizing or Nihilating?,” *The American Journal of Bioethics* 7 (2007): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15265160601064199>.

person appeared (person as distinct from the *description* of a rational being³²), has been largely forgotten? Of course, the status of personhood is not unrelated to the properties of one's nature: an individual of an animal species, although capable of some relationships, is not a person. But the person cannot be reduced to the properties they possess. The British ethicist Oliver O'Donovan insists on this Christological insight according to which the person "does not point to a quality, or complex of qualities, but to a 'someone who' To a person in that sense these qualities may belong, but he is not one with them; he acquired them as events in his history."³³

Another noteworthy aspect of modern definitions is that they focus on the individual, whereas Trinitarian theology defines the person through relationships.³⁴ The person is a being-in-communion. Admittedly, we must be careful not to reinterpret the statements of the Church Fathers from the perspective of a keenly self-aware modern subject. Thus, for example, we must not simply equate Augustine's notion of relationship, which has strong ontological connotations, with the relationship promoted by personalist thinkers who focus on the encounter between "I" and "You."³⁵ Nevertheless, the person in Christian thought is not conceived of as existing in isolation. The Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the archetypal community. In particular, Augustine understands the Trinity in terms of love, and more precisely by the analogy of the triad of Lover, Beloved, and the Love that exists between them.³⁶ In turn, the created being is constituted by their relationship with the Creator. This foundational vertical relationship is echoed in the horizontal relationships that form the person's social world. In fact, it is illusory to try to base the status of person on who they are as an isolated individual. As we know from observing young children, nobody acquires personal traits if they are not first treated as a person by others. Language, reasoning, and self-awareness only emerge when another "I" calls me "You." This has long been understood for the start of human life, it appears equally true for its end: there is increasing evidence that an active social life is a factor that delays the decline of cognitive abilities in old age.³⁷

³² In the theological discussion of Antiquity, this term is not to be understood in the restricted modern sense of rationality. Without excluding the modern meaning, it "refers to the spirit as the finest point of the soul, the spiritual capacity where human nature opens itself to the Spirit" (Clément, *Questions sur l'homme*, 35 [author's translation]).

³³ Oliver O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 58–59. The title of the book is an allusion to the Nicene Creed which speaks of the Son as "begotten, not made." O'Donovan offers a very perspicuous treatment of IVE: when we imagine ourselves "making a baby," we do not respect its inalienable dignity as a person, which stems from the fact that it is of the same human nature as us.

³⁴ Both shortcomings of modern definitions of person (the return to defining characteristics and the accent on the individual) are already found in Boethius's classic definition, which dominated much of later Western thought about the person: *Persona est rationalis naturae individua substantis* ("A person is an individual substance of a rational nature"). See Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, 39–46.

³⁵ Johann Auer, *Person: Ein Schlüssel zum christlichen Mysterium* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1979), 21. On the different versions of personalistic philosophy, cf. Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, "Personalism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2018 Edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/personalism>. The best known version is Thomist personalism, defended by authors like Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson and Karol Wojtyła (who became John Paul II).

³⁶ *De Trinitate* 8.10; 9.1–4 (thanks to Thomas A. Noble for drawing my attention to this point at the study group). See also Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 191–206.

³⁷ Miia Kivipelto, Krister Håkansson, "A Rare Success against Alzheimer's," *Scientific American* 316 (April 2017), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-rare-success-against-alzheimer-s>, quoted in Bryan C.

7. Being a Person without the Defining Features of a Person?

When we revert to a substantive definition of the person, one that is based on an individual's traits, this raises the question of the status of human beings who do not meet these "personality" criteria. Why should we consider that all humans are "persons" when not all of them meet these criteria? Babies, patients with advanced Alzheimer's, and others with severely diminished cognitive abilities are not "rational" beings, endowed with reason and self-awareness; they are not able to consciously maintain relationships or make moral choices. If we relax the criterion and grant personhood to those who fulfil the personality criteria during a phase of their life, the question remains of how to consider profoundly mentally handicapped people who will never pass the test. One possible answer would be to broaden the definition even further, granting the status of person simply on the basis of belonging to a species of which a large number of individuals have personal traits. But would we not then be guilty of "speciesism," when we claim that members of our species have more rights than others? Would there be any more justification for such a "species-centric" perspective than for egoism or ethnocentrism? This is the accusation that the Australian philosopher Peter Singer has made against the idea of granting specific rights to humans *qua* humans.³⁸ After all, an adult chimpanzee has greater cognitive abilities than a newborn baby.

Such reasoning ignores the lesson learned in Trinitarian and Christological theology, which proves so valuable for our understanding of the human being: persons cannot be reduced to their properties. In a remarkable essay on the notion of person, the Catholic philosopher Robert Spaemann writes, "Human beings are a kind of creature whose nature it is to 'have,' not simply to 'be' its nature. The human being, the being that 'has' its mode of existence, is *ipso facto* a mystery, never merely the sum of its predicates."³⁹ This fact manifests itself particularly in love: "Love or recognition directed to a human being is not ... directed merely to personal properties."⁴⁰ Otherwise, the relationship would not merit the term "love." In the end, it would only be a utilitarian relationship.

Blaise Pascal understood this: "If one loves me for my judgment, memory, he does not love *me*, for I can lose these qualities without losing myself."⁴¹ We can see how far this is from the Greek concept when the *Symposium* states that love concerns the qualities of a person: "Noble in every case is the acceptance of another for the sake of virtue";⁴² and: "With deformity Love has no concern."⁴³

In bringing out the irreducible character of personhood, the severely disabled have a specific mission, says Spaemann. By the very fact that such persons lack physical and psychological capacities to act for the good of others but rather depend on their care, they offer us an opportunity to understand

Auday, "Loving God with All Your Mind, and Alzheimer's," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 69 (2017): 197 n. 33.

³⁸ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for our Treatment of Animals* (New York: Random House, 1975).

³⁹ Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between "Someone" and "Something,"* trans. Oliver O'Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 243.

⁴⁰ Spaemann, *Persons*, 244.

⁴¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. W. F. Trotter (New York: Dutton, 1958), 5.323 (p. 90).

⁴² Plato, *Symposium*, 185B, trans. B. Jowett, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html>.

⁴³ Plato, *Symposium*, 197B; cf. 201A.

what it is to be human. “Their existence is the acid test of our humanity.”⁴⁴ By entering into a relationship with them that treats them as fully human, we become more deeply aware that humankind’s *humanity* shows itself in the very fact that it cannot be reduced to any property human beings possess:

The disabled person may lack such properties [that allow us to grasp that a person is there], and it is by lacking them that they constitute the paradigm for a human community of recognizing *selves*, rather than simply valuing useful or attractive *properties*. They evoke the best in human beings; they evoke the true ground of human self-respect. So what they give to humanity in this way by the demands they make upon it is more than what they receive.⁴⁵

8. Love Is the Only Way to Discover a Person

Persons cannot be reduced to any of their qualities. They are not even the sum of their qualities. For this reason, no empirical test can decide whether an individual is a person. The scientific endeavour tries, as much as possible, to distance itself from personal aspects. As a result, it only detects what is measurable. “It looks for appearances and it finds appearances.”⁴⁶ But the person is the one who lies beneath appearances. That is why “we discern persons only by love, by discovering through interaction and commitment that this human being is irreplaceable.”⁴⁷ The truth that the other is a person is not observed, but discovered through personal commitment, by entering into a person-to-person relationship.

Moreover, it would be contradictory to grant an individual the status of a person on the basis of certain “personal” traits, because these only develop in a child if they are treated as a person. Note also that there is evidence of a disposition to personal relationships in very young children, although they do not yet have the faculties often associated with persons. John Macmurray, in his 1954 Gifford Lectures, drew attention to the fact that the mother-child relationship is, from the start, a personal relationship; not only on the mother’s side, but also on the child’s, since they are driven by the desire to communicate (one that is admittedly still implicit and unconscious).⁴⁸ Psychological and neuroscientific research provides additional evidence: less than thirty minutes after birth, newborns show more interest in the movement of face-like figures than in other objects of similar complexity. In addition, a region of the cortex appears to be specialized in facial recognition. Other regions of the brain do not seem to be able to perform this function when this facial-recognition area is damaged. The fact that some patients have difficulty recognizing human faces, whilst being able to recognize complex objects, or even sometimes animal faces (a disorder called prosopagnosia) provides further evidence that recognizing human faces

⁴⁴ Spaemann, *Persons*, 243.

⁴⁵ Spaemann, *Persons*, 244.

⁴⁶ O’Donovan, *Begotten or Made?*, 60.

⁴⁷ O’Donovan, *Begotten or Made?*, 59.

⁴⁸ John Macmurray, “The Form of the Personal,” in *Persons in Relation* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 2:28–29, quoted by John Aves, “Persons in Relation: John Macmurray,” in *Persons, Divine and Human: King’s College Essays in Theological Anthropology*, eds. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 124–25. (This collection of essays offers a range of stimulating essays on personhood in the context of trinitarian theology, for example on Augustine and John Owen and from an orthodox perspective by John D. Zizioulas.)

is a specialized task. All these signs show that humans are “wired” to enter into relationship with other persons.⁴⁹ It would therefore be wrong to consider that there is an animal phase, followed by a phase where the child acquires personhood. From the start, humans develop as *human*.

Of course, these scientific studies do not prove that the newborn is a person. The innate ability to distinguish between people and objects might just as easily be an adaptation inherited from our evolutionary past, advantageous to a species that is as social as humankind is, but which might not correspond to a difference that truly exists.⁵⁰ The fact that the scientific data is ambiguous should not come as a surprise. The person, as we have seen, cannot be defined by the nature of a being. For this reason, personhood cannot be determined by empirical examination. It cannot be detected by scientific experimentation, which seeks to distance itself as far as possible from subjective elements. As O'Donovan writes: “To know a person, I have first to accept him as such in personal interaction.”⁵¹

9. A Person from Beginning to End

The distinction between persons and their properties, which we owe to patristic theology, is particularly crucial at the beginning and the end of human life. For if personhood is not reduced to properties but lies beneath them, it is wrong to consider that the person emerges via a gradual process and later dissolves as cognitive faculties wane.

Concerning the beginning of life, the attitude of Jews and early Christians was in stark contrast with the habits of their Greco-Roman peers. Abortion and infanticide were widely practised, especially when the child was deformed or would be a financial burden. Jews and Christians, however, gladly received every child as created in the image of God. As the Roman historian Tacitus noted, among the strange customs of the Jews, “they regard it as a crime to kill any late-born child.”⁵² And from very early on, Christian sources unanimously echo the Jewish condemnation of abortion and infanticide. Thus, the *Didache* (2:2) explains that the prohibition of murder implies that “thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born.”⁵³

In contrast to the way children were unconditionally welcomed by Jewish and Christian families, fathers in ancient Rome had the right to grant or refuse the legal status of child, and therefore of “person,” to their newborn offspring. As Spaemann points out, this power of life and death exercised by the head

⁴⁹ Cf. studies cited in Farah and Heberlein, “Personhood and Neuroscience,” 40–44.

⁵⁰ This is the line taken by Farah and Heberlein in the article above. They consider this illusion to be very useful for daily life (it makes us talk to babies, for example, which is necessary in order for them to acquire the characteristics of a person), such that one should not try to get rid of the illusion (Farah and Heberlein, “Personhood and Neuroscience,” 46).

⁵¹ O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?*, 60.

⁵² Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.15 (trans. Clifford H. Moore).

⁵³ Translation J. B. Lightfoot. (The same double prohibition is found in *Epistle of Barnabas* 19:5. Cf. Erkki Koskeniemi, “Can a Mother Forget a Baby at Her Breast? Child Exposure Among Jews and Christians,” *Whitefield Briefing* 10 (April 2005); and John Wyatt, *Matters of Life and Death: Human Dilemmas in the Light of Christian Faith* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), ch. 6. A specialist on rabbinical sources linked with the NT, David Instone-Brewer considers that, in light of rabbinical sources, the third prohibition in Acts 15 given to Christians of pagan origin was aimed at infanticide (πνικτός, “what has been strangled,” Acts 15:29). For non-Jewish believers still had to grasp the repercussions of their new faith in this area, while this was obvious to every Jew (“Infanticide and the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15,” *JETS* 52 [2009]: 301–21).

of the family is proof that “the Romans had not discovered the community of persons, in which no one is obliged to anyone for his rights, but every one is *sui juris*. Which can only mean, a member from birth”⁵⁴—and one could add: from conception.

What is true for the person at life’s beginning is also true for its end: “The person cannot die before the human being, for the person *is* the human being.”⁵⁵ The long-standing consensus that “the dignity of man is inviolable” (in the words of the German constitution) has recently been challenged; a generation or so ago for the early stages of life, and today for its final stage. In the light of the concept of person’s Christian roots, these societal changes are an indication that the Christian view of humanity has been forgotten (or worse, rejected), and the most vulnerable in society will pay the highest price.

10. A Single Criterion for Being a Human Person: Filiation

Embracing the Incarnation’s perspective on the human condition leads us to accept all human beings as persons. If one does not need to obtain a certain score in any “personality” test to claim the dignity of personhood, what criterion can be used to discriminate between persons and non-persons? Only one remains: “biological membership of the human race.”⁵⁶ Are we not, however, guilty of speciesism when we claim that humans, inasmuch as they are humans, have rights (and responsibilities!) that other living beings do not? At this point, we have to grasp the nettle and accept the accusation. Yes, from a Christian perspective, humanity does have special status, owing as much to creation as to redemption. The first creation account grants image of God status to man and woman alone (Gen 1:26–27); the second emphasizes that no animal is fit to be man’s partner (Gen 2:18–24). In the economy of salvation, God chose to enter into his creation by taking human nature. Acknowledging humanity’s unique status in God’s plan in no way justifies the exploitation of the rest of creation. Indeed, the creation mandate given to humanity is to rule over the earth following the example of the Creator, who does not exploit creation but enables it to fulfil its potential. The goal of redemption is to reunite the whole of creation under Christ, and this includes the non-human elements of creation, both heavenly and earthly (Isa 11:6–8; Eph 1:10; Col 1:20).

It should be noted that the criterion we have arrived at is not qualitative, based on the individual’s capacities, but relational: it is the entering into humankind by filiation that confers on someone the status of person:

“Humanity”, unlike “animality”, is more than an abstract concept that identifies a category; it is the name of a concrete community of persons to which one belongs not on the basis of certain precise properties objectively verified, but by a genealogical connection with the “human family”.⁵⁷

The protohistory of Genesis highlights the fact that being created in the image of God gives humans the privilege of begetting other beings in God’s image. Immediately after the reminder of Adam’s creation “in the likeness of God” (Gen 5:1), we read that Adam “fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth” (v. 3). The mystery of procreation—a corporeal act that brings a new

⁵⁴ Spaemann, *Persons*, 240.

⁵⁵ Spaemann, *Persons*, 247.

⁵⁶ Spaemann, *Persons*, 247.

⁵⁷ Spaemann, *Persons*, 240.

ontological entity into existence, a *person* with an eternal destiny—may well be linked to the scriptural restriction that limits the legitimate use of sexuality to marriage. The incommunicable individuality,⁵⁸ the uniqueness of the “partner” as person is only recognized if the sexual act takes place inside a lifelong monogamous (heterosexual) relationship, which combines the different spheres of human existence (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and economic interaction and interdependence). It is thus the only setting in which the sexual act can fully live up to the Creator’s plan and provide the appropriate context for the coming-into-being of a new person, the child.

Human beings exist in two kinds of relationship. The first, which is constitutive, is our relationship to the Creator: we are not only created beings but also images of God, capable of communion with him. But this vertical relationship is echoed in horizontal relationships with other people, especially parents. The mystery of the Trinity is not far away. For the Father-Son relationship in God is the archetypal relationship of human filiation: it is from the heavenly Father that “all fatherhood⁵⁹ in heaven and on earth is named” (Eph 3:14–15).

Belonging to the community of persons is part of the biological order. Indeed, the constituent relationships of a person are objective relationships and not simply intersubjective ones. Since human dignity is a consequence of every human being created in the image of God, it does not depend on the parental intent. Parents are not creators, but pro-creators. Their action is secondary to God’s. Thus, the legal and spiritual status of the child does not depend on the plan the parents may or may not have had for them. Obviously, one hopes that the bodily act of begetting is guided by love—between the two partners and for the unborn child. But even when parents separate what God has joined together, God’s plan remains foremost. For this reason, the transmission of the status of person is part of biological and material reality, and does not depend on parental intent. In the words of Emmanuel Housset: “Being a person means demonstrating one’s filiation, and in particular the reality of being a son of God, open to relationship with others.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Cf. p. 7, n. 23 above.

⁵⁹ In Greek πατριά, “family.” I follow here the translation suggested by the ESV footnote to highlight the lexical link to πατήρ, “father.”

⁶⁰ Housset, *Vocation de la personne*, 141.

The “Epistle of Straw”: Reflections on Luther and the Epistle of James

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Abstract: Many believe that because Martin Luther called James an “epistle of straw” he wished to remove it from Scripture. And he has been accused of doing this according to his individual whim. This paper firstly seeks to show that Luther wished to keep James in the New Testament and his decision was not based on personal whim. Luther was able to call James an “epistle of straw” and retain its canonicity because he held to a two-level view of the New Testament: James was excluded from the top tier and consigned to the lower tier of New Testament books. However, secondly, this paper subjects Luther’s position to a theological critique. It is found that Luther’s two-level understanding of the New Testament, and his conclusions about James, are ultimately unconvincing because they are not faithful to Scripture itself.

Martin Luther famously called James an “epistle of straw.” This has led many to think he wanted James eliminated from the Bible.¹ In particular, Roman Catholics have accused Luther of excising Scriptural books according to his individual opinion.² However, both accusations are mistaken. Luther’s understanding of James’s status is more nuanced and cannot be understood apart from his theology of the NT canon. This article attempts firstly to clarify Luther’s understanding of the place of James in Scripture. Then, secondly, it provides a theological critique of Luther’s position.

1. Understanding “Epistle of Straw”

Martin Luther’s stance on James is clearly seen in his prefaces to the NT books from his German translation of the Bible, first published in 1522. Luther dubbed James an “epistle of straw” not in his preface to James but originally in his more general preface to the NT. However, Luther’s declaration

¹ Devin Rose, *The Protestant’s Dilemma: How the Reformation’s Shocking Consequences Point to the Truth of Catholicism* (San Diego: Catholic Answers, 2014), 67–68.

² Philip Blosser, “What Are the Philosophical and Practical Problems of *Sola Scriptura*,” in *Not by Scripture Alone: A Catholic Critique of the Protestant Doctrine of Sola Scriptura*, ed. Robert A. Sungen (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1998), 54.

was removed from this preface in all editions of his German Bible after 1537.³ It did not mean Luther dramatically changed his view about James. But it signals that care should be taken about extracting too much from the phrase “epistle of straw.”

Secondly, despite Luther’s early assertion that James was an “epistle of straw,” he did not wish to excise it from Scripture completely. In his German translation of the Bible Luther retained James among the NT books. If he believed James was not canonical it would have been absent. It is true, Luther ordered the NT books differently to the traditional list of the Latin Vulgate. He relegated James, as well as Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation, to the end of the NT canonical list. This indicated something about his understanding of the NT canon, to which we shall return.

Thirdly, it is misleading to say that Luther called James simply an “epistle of straw” as though the entire letter was useless. His statement in context designated James an “epistle of straw” *in comparison* to the central NT books:

In a word St. John’s Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul’s epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter’s first epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore St. James’ epistle is really an epistle of straw, *compared to these others*, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it.⁴

Hence, it is not as if James has no edifying content whatsoever. Luther could say:

Though this epistle of St. James was rejected by the ancients, I praise it and consider it a good book, because it sets up no doctrines of men but vigorously promulgates the law of God.⁵

Here Luther extols the book because it unpacks the law correctly; it does not teach commands contrary to the rest of Scripture. Indeed, Franz Graf-Stuhlhofer has shown that Luther quotes from James almost as much as the Synoptic Gospels throughout his works.⁶ Moreover, Luther preached five times on James during his career after expressing his first change of mind about the book in 1519.⁷

Fourthly, one must grasp what Luther meant by the word “straw.” It was not a term of abuse. Rather, Luther had in mind Paul’s use of the word in 1 Corinthians:

If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. (3:12–13 NIV)

“Straw” here simply means easily-burned fodder along with wood and hay that will not last. Luther also uses “straw” when speaking of Hebrews:

³ Martin Luther, *Word and Sacrament I*, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann, Luther’s Works 35 (St Louis: Concordia, 1960), 358 n. 5, 362.

⁴ Luther, *Word and Sacrament I*, 362 (emphasis added).

⁵ Luther, *Word and Sacrament I*, 395.

⁶ Graf-Stuhlhofer, Franz, “Martin Luthers Bibelgebrauch in quantitativer Betrachtung,” *Theologisches Gespräch: Freikirchliche Beiträge zur Theologie* 24 (2000): 119, cited in Jason D. Lane, *Luther’s Epistle of Straw: The Voice of St. James in Reformation Preaching*, Historia Hermeneutica Series Studia 16 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 6 n. 22.

⁷ See Lane, *Luther’s Epistle of Straw*, 54–89.

Therefore we should not be deterred if wood, straw, or hay are perhaps mixed with them, but accept this fine teaching with all honor; though, to be sure, we cannot put it [Hebrews] on the same level with the apostolic epistles.⁸

In other words, Hebrews contains some helpful material despite other less-edifying content, namely straw.⁹ When Luther uses the image “straw” from 1 Corinthians 3 elsewhere in his writings, it refers to an impure form of God’s word. Regarding the marks of God’s church throughout history he says this:

The holy Christian people are recognized by their possession of the holy word of God. To be sure, not all have it in equal measure, as St. Paul says. Some possess the word in its complete purity, others do not. Those who have the pure word are called those who “build on the foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones”; those who do not have it in its purity are the ones who “build on the foundation with wood, hay, and straw,” and yet will be saved through fire.¹⁰

When Luther speaks of James as an “epistle of straw” he simply means it does not possess God’s gospel word with the purity that other NT writings possess; not that the letter is useless. “Straw,” after all, does not destroy the foundation. It does not strengthen that foundation and ultimately will not last.

2. Luther’s Understanding of James

What then was Luther’s understanding of the status of James? This is only appreciated when we grasp Luther’s doctrine of the NT canon. He believed the NT contained two kinds of books: the “chief books” and those that were of less value.¹¹ The early church fathers Origen of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea also distinguished between two kinds of NT works: the recognized books (traditionally called the *homologomena*) and the disputed books (traditionally named the *antilegomena*).¹² The criterion Luther used to distinguish between the chief books and the others was apostolic authorship. For this reason, he judged four works to be outside of the chief books: Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation.¹³ Unlike the rest of the NT these four works contained “straw,” they were not as pure.

So why did Luther believe James was not a chief book? Firstly, he concluded that its author “James” was not an apostle. Luther noted that the epistle of James contains sayings found in Peter’s first letter and

⁸ Luther, *Word and Sacrament I*, 395.

⁹ Luther held that Hebrews 6:4–6 and 10:26–27 clearly taught that a baptized person who fell into serious sin could not repent, which he believed was “contrary to all the gospels and to St Paul’s epistles,” *Word and Sacrament I*, 394.

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *Church and Ministry III*, ed. Eric W. Gritsch, Luther’s Works 41 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1966), 148–49.

¹¹ Luther, *Word and Sacrament I*, 393, 398. Luther’s original phrase is “hewpt bucher” or in contemporary German “haupt” books. Martin Luther, *Deutsches Bibel*, ed. J. K. F. Knaake and G. Kawerau, D. Martin Luthers Werke 7 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1906), 344, 386.

¹² Origen’s NT list has been lost but is cited in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25. Eusebius twice discusses the NT canon in *Ecclesiastical History* 3.3.5–7 and 3.25.1–7.

¹³ Luther did not think that the apostle John wrote Revelation. Presumably Luther believed that Mark and Luke-Acts were written under the supervision of Peter and Paul respectively and hence could be judged as having apostolic authorship, as the early church maintained.

Paul's Galatians. Yet the apostle James (son of Zebedee) was martyred earlier than Peter and Paul (Acts 12:2). And thus, the "James" who wrote this letter must have done so after the death of James Zebedee. Luther concluded the "James" who authored the letter "came along after St. Peter and St. Paul."¹⁴

Secondly, Luther believed James could not be apostolic due to its content. In the first place James never once mentions the death or resurrection of Christ, the very heart of the gospel. Luther explains,

Now it is the office of a true apostle to preach of the Passion and resurrection and office of Christ, and to lay the foundation for faith in him, as Christ himself says in John 15[:27], "You shall bear witness to me." All the genuine sacred books agree in this, that all of them preach and inculcate Christ.... But James does nothing more than drive to the law and to its works.¹⁵

Rather in Luther's mind, James simply preaches law, and does so chaotically.

Luther judged that James failed the apostolic content test in a second way: it contradicted justification by faith alone. He stated that James is "flatly against St. Paul and the all the rest of Scripture in ascribing justification to works."¹⁶ Luther was aware that James's statements about justification could be harmonized with Paul's. But even if this was so, he argued that James interpreted Genesis 15:6 (Jas 2:23) in a manner contrary to Paul (Rom 4:3).

Concerning James's contradiction of Paul on justification, some have drawn attention to Luther's controversial statement later in his life: "I almost feel like throwing Jimmy [the book of James] into the stove" (1542).¹⁷ This assertion appears in a licentiate examination of one Heinrich Schmedenstede over which Luther presided. In the examination Schmedenstede was to respond to a series of theses, one of which concerned justification by faith alone (thesis 21). Schmedenstede was to defend it against the objection: "James [2:22] says that Abraham was justified by works. Therefore, justification is not by faith." Schmedenstede retorted, "James is speaking of works as the effect of justification, not as the cause."

Luther responded by expressing how much trouble James gave to evangelicals because the "papists" used it to prove their understanding of justification, ignoring the rest of Scripture. That is, Luther seems to be saying that the papists read the rest of Scripture on justification through the lens of James. Strikingly, Luther then claimed he did the opposite, he read James through the lens of the rest of Scripture:

Up to this point I have been accustomed just to deal with and interpret it [James] according to the sense of the rest of Scriptures. For you will judge that none of it must be set forth contrary to manifest Holy Scripture. Accordingly, if they [the papists] will not admit my interpretations, then I shall make rubble also of it.¹⁸

Here we see Luther's unwillingness to dispense entirely with James; he will use it to affirm what is found elsewhere in Scripture. And if the papists contradict him, he will contend against it. It is in this

¹⁴ Luther, *Word and Sacrament I*, 397.

¹⁵ Luther, *Word and Sacrament I*, 396–97.

¹⁶ Luther, *Word and Sacrament I*, 395.

¹⁷ Martin Luther, *Career of the Reformer IV*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann and Lewis W. Spitz, Luther's Works 34 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1960), 317.

¹⁸ Luther, *Career of the Reformer IV*, 317.

context, that Luther stops speaking in Latin, the language of the university, and in frustration exclaims in German:

I almost feel like throwing Jimmy into the stove, as the priest in Kalenberg did.¹⁹

This is a classic example of Luther’s inimitable hyperbole. But even here he does not go so far as to say he actually will throw James into the stove. The “priest in Kalenberg” refers to a person who was visited by a duchess. To make the room warm for the visitation he put wooden statues of the apostles into his stove. The last statue happened to be James, and the priest was believed to have said:

Now bend over, Jimmy, you must go into the stove; no matter if you were the pope or all the bishops, the room must become warm.²⁰

When context and hyperbole are taken into account, Luther is not saying anything substantially different about James than he has maintained since his first German translation of the NT in 1522.

Finally, and importantly, despite Luther’s placement of James outside the “chief books,” he explicitly said this was his own individual opinion. And Luther was happy if people thought differently: “Therefore I cannot include him [James] among the chief books, though I would not thereby prevent anyone from including or extolling him as he pleases, for there are otherwise many good sayings in him.”²¹ Here we see that Luther recognizes the limits of his personal judgement. It is erroneous to claim that Luther excised James from the NT according to his individual whim. He respected the church’s tradition about James.

3. Reflections of Luther’s Position

Was Luther correct about James and the NT canon? We now turn to a theological evaluation of Luther’s position on James; we move from historical theology to systematic theology. Luther is correct to see the pivotal role of the apostle in the NT canon. The NT corpus nowhere explicitly says there will one day be a written Scripture for the church. A written NT arises from the notion of apostolicity.

In the NT an apostle is one sent to deliver a message given by the sender (John 13:16). And so, Christ sent the apostles into the world to deliver a message he entrusted to them (John 20:21; Gal 1:1). Essential to this task was being a witness of the resurrected Christ (1 Cor 9:1; 15:5–8). In order to safeguard the accuracy of Christ’s message, he promised that the Spirit would lead the apostles into all truth (John 16:13; 1 Cor 2:13), which is tantamount to the doctrine of inspiration. Given this understanding of the place of the apostles, the only way their message could exist for all future believers (John 17:20) was to commit it to writing (John 20:31; 2 Pet 1:12–15). Hence, the criterion to include writings in the NT is apostolicity. And this includes the writings of apostolic co-workers in conjunction with an apostle. For example, Silas and Timothy co-author 1 and 2 Thessalonians with Paul (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). And the teaching these three propagate is the word of God (1 Thess 2:13), has the authority of Christ (1 Thess 4:2), is to be believed and obeyed (2 Thess 2:15), and when neglected leads to excommunication (2 Thess

¹⁹ Luther, *Career of the Reformer IV*, 317.

²⁰ Luther, *Career of the Reformer IV*, 317 n. 21.

²¹ Luther, *Word and Sacrament I*, 397.

3:6, 14). Not only is the criterion of apostles and their co-workers found in the NT itself, it is taught in early church fathers like Irenaeus and Tertullian.²² For example, Tertullian says,

We lay it down as our first position, that the evangelical Testament [i.e., the NT] has *apostles for its authors*, to whom was assigned by the Lord Himself this office of publishing the gospel. Since, however, there are *apostolic men* also, they are yet not alone, but appear with apostles and after apostles; because the preaching of disciples might be open to the suspicion of an affectation of glory, if there did not accompany it the authority of the masters, which means that of Christ, for it was that which made the apostles their masters.²³

However, Luther did not sufficiently recognize the evidence for the apostolic authorship of James. Two of the twelve apostles were named James: James the son of Zebedee and James the son of Alphaeus. Luther rightly concluded that James Zebedee was martyred too early to be the likely author of James (Acts 12:2). And little is known of James Alphaeus's role in the early church. The author of James must have had a recognized authority to be acknowledged by "the twelve tribes scattered among the nations" (Jas 1:1). There is one other James who best fits this position: James the brother of Jesus (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3).

Christ sent his twelve apostles. But over and above these he sent further apostles (1 Cor 15:7). The "last" apostle was Paul (1 Cor 15:8). And another was James the brother of Jesus. He was not one of the twelve but later become an apostle (Gal 1:19). It appears the resurrected Christ himself commissioned him (1 Cor 15:7). Moreover, this James was not any apostle but one of the three "pillar" apostles alongside Peter and John (Gal 2:9). Indeed, this James became the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 21:18; Gal 2:12). He seems to have had a special authority at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13). And given these credentials, scholars have concluded that James of Jerusalem, the brother of Jesus, who was an apostle, is the best candidate as the author of James.²⁴

But what of Luther's claim that James is not apostolic in content because it never mentions the death and resurrection of Jesus? Here Luther exposes an assumption about the content of apostolic preaching: apostles must always preach the death and resurrection of Christ for salvation. Luther cites Jesus's words in John 15:27 as proof: "And you [apostles] also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning." Luther's demand is related to his characteristic understanding of the gospel and his distinction between law and gospel:

For this I must consult the Gospel and listen to the Gospel, which does not teach me what I should do—for that is the proper function of the Law—but what someone else has done for me, namely, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has suffered and died to deliver me from sin and death. The Gospel commands me to accept and believe this, and this is what is called "the truth of the Gospel."²⁵

²² Irenaeus, *Against all Heresies* 3.1.1; 3.14.1; Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.2; *The Prescription against Heretics* 6; 22.

²³ Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.2 (ANF 3:347, emphasis added).

²⁴ For a good discussion of the debate see, Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 9–22.

²⁵ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535: Chapters 1–4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Luther's Works 26 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 91.

For Luther, the gospel preaches promise and a response of faith, whereas the law preaches command with a response of works. Hence, Luther believed that repentance was the call of the law, not the gospel.

It is true that the apostles were to preach the gospel. But they were to preach more than the gospel. The reformed tradition that arose in the reformation era differed with Luther over the demand of the gospel. It held that the gospel called for *both* faith *and* repentance (Acts 14:15).²⁶ Thus a crucial aspect of apostolic preaching was the repentant lifestyle that is worthy of the gospel. This matches Jesus’s teaching in the Gospels. He preached the gospel itself, but also the way of life befitting the gospel, seen in say the Sermon on the Mount. There is no reason in principle that an apostolic writing could not be largely instruction about the Christian standard of living. It was a necessary aspect of apostolic preaching. So, the books of Philemon, 2 John, and 3 John do not specifically mention the death or resurrection of Christ but focus on issues of practical living. Then why not James? As John Calvin put it,

If James seems rather more reluctant to preach the grace of Christ than an apostle should be, we must remember not to expect everyone to go over the same ground.²⁷

Furthermore, Luther failed to account for the occasional nature of the letter of James. It is not simply a timeless summary of the Christian lifestyle. The epistle was written to certain believers in a particular historical setting for a specific purpose. The Swiss reformer, Heinrich Bullinger made just this point: “St. James writes to converts of the Lord Christ, and therefore, he delivers nothing in this epistle about the first principles of the faith and doctrine of our religion”; rather, James “corrects certain sins which were appearing in God’s people.”²⁸

The reformed tradition at the reformation had no trouble reconciling James’s teaching on justification with Paul. The classic solution was to recognize that the word “justification” has several meanings in the NT, and that James and Paul used the word in a different sense.²⁹ For Paul justification was “to declare righteous” whereas for James it was “to prove righteous.” As William Tyndale aptly put it, “And as faith only justifieth before God, so do deeds only justify before the world.”³⁰

A final point needs to be made about dividing the NT into two tiers of books. This does not accord with the doctrine of Scripture’s inspiration (2 Tim 3:16). There are not levels of inspiration in Scripture. Some books are not more inspired than others. True, some books may be more central to the overall message of Scripture. But this does not make them more inspired. Romans may be more significant than Philemon, but both are just as inspired as each other. Thus, on this account of inspiration there can only be one class of books in Scripture. So, whilst Origen and Eusebius may have listed a two-tiered

²⁶ For more on how the Lutheran and Reformed tradition differed at the Reformation over this issue see Martin Foord, “A New Embassy’: John Calvin’s Gospel,” in *Aspects of Reforming: Theology and Practice in Sixteenth Century Europe*, ed. Michael Parsons (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2014), 138–49; Martin Foord, “Salvation Accomplished: Henrich Bullinger on the Gospel,” in *Celebrating The Reformation: Its Legacy And Continuing Relevance*, ed. Mark D. Thompson, Colin Bale, and Edward Loane (London: Apollos, 2017), 103–18.

²⁷ John Calvin, *The Epistle of James*, ed. and trans. D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, Calvin’s Commentaries 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 259.

²⁸ Heinrich Bullinger, *In Epistolam Divi Iacobi, Arg., In Epistolas Apostolorum Canonicas Septem Commentarii* (Tiguri: Christoffel Froschoverus, 1558), 109.

²⁹ For example, Calvin, *Institutes* 3.16.11–12.

³⁰ Tyndale, “The Prologue upon the Epistle of St James,” in *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Henry Walter, The Works of William Tyndale 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848), 526.

NT canon, many others in the early church simply listed one kind of book in the NT, that which was canonical. We find this in certain quasi-official canonical listings such as Athanasius's thirty-ninth festal letter,³¹ the Synod of Laodicea (c. 363),³² and the Third Council of Carthage (397).³³

4. Conclusion

We have seen firstly that accusations of Luther wishing to remove James from Scripture are simplistic and hence misleading. This is because Luther held to a two-tiered view of the NT, or what has been called a canon within the canon. So, whilst Luther wished to place James outside of the "chief" books, he did not wish to exclude it from the NT entirely.

Second, it has been shown that Luther proposed his conclusions about James not as absolute for all believers. He was happy if others disagreed with him because he recognized there was difference of opinion about James in the Christian tradition. Luther was aware that his own individual opinion needed regulation by tradition.

But third, we have also seen that Luther's position about a two-level NT and the exclusion of James from the chief books are ultimately unconvincing. The Bible's own teaching about its inspiration rules out any notion of a canon within a canon. Moreover, the evidence from the New Testament itself indicates that James was written by an apostle and contains apostolic content and hence is fully and truly inspired Scripture.

³¹ Athanasius, *Letter 39* (NPNF² 4:551–52).

³² Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 129–34.

³³ Canon XXIV (NPNF² 14:453–54).

Interpreting Faith in the Reformation: Catholic and Protestant Interpretations of Habakkuk 2:4b and Its New Testament Quotations

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Abstract: The sixteenth century Reformation debate primarily centered upon the interpretation of Scripture. The Reformers called into question Catholic understandings of justification. The result was a long period of theological writings concerning faith and justification. This study provides a historical survey of Habakkuk 2:4b's use in the Reformation. The accomplished research shows that Luther and Calvin pointed to Christ's faithfulness as the object of the Habakkuk 2:4b faith. For the Catholics, Erasmus began with an almost paralleled belief to the Protestants, but the Council of Trent concluded with a conviction that both the works of Christ and sacraments are necessary for salvation.

The Reformers proclaimed a doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) which they based on Habakkuk 2:4 as quoted in Romans 1:17. Alister McGrath noted that the Reformation debate centered upon the interpretation of Scripture.¹ The hypothesis of this paper is that Luther and Calvin pointed to Christ's faithfulness as the object of the Habakkuk 2:4b faith, while the Roman Catholics pointed to the faithful actions of a believer as the object of the Habakkuk 2:4b faith. The process of confirming this hypothesis will be to survey commentaries, and interpretations of the magisterial reformers and Catholic theologians. Though Habakkuk 2:4b is the verse under examination, research will primarily come from commentaries and interpretations of the Romans 1:17 quotation.

¹ Alister McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 177.

1. Luther and Calvin on Habakkuk 2:4

Luther and Calvin are well known for their arguments against the Catholic works-based salvation. Luther began this process with the publication of his “95 Theses,” and Calvin most notably articulates his beliefs in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Though it would be profitable to consider the contributions of various other reformers, this article focuses on the substantial and influential writings of Luther and Calvin. We aim to analyze the two reformers’ thought by considering three guiding questions: (1) How does the author understand faith? (2) How does the author understand human works? and (3) How does the author understand the relationship between the two?

1.1. Luther’s Interpretation of Habakkuk 2:4 and the Faithfulness of God

Many know Luther for his desire to reform the church, but this desire was birthed from his personal love of Scripture. Casper Mueller stated to Luther, “You are one of those rare birds who take the Word of God very seriously and are faithful to the Kingdom of Christ.”² Throughout Luther’s lifetime, he wrote numerous commentaries, reflection letters, lessons, and sermons. In his commentary of the Minor Prophets, Luther wrote this concerning Habakkuk 2:4b:

In summary form Habakkuk presents the following thought: The godly people are waiting for the Lord; therefore they live, therefore they are saved, therefore they receive what has been promised. They receive it by faith, because they give glory to the God of truth, because they hold the hand of the Lord. And so the prophet is looking not only to this promise but also to all the other promises about preaching the Gospel or revealing grace. And so this is the thought: “I cannot force it into your hearts. You have the clear written record (picture) and Word. If you believe it, you will live, because the righteous live by his faith as long as he waits for the Lord. If you will not believe, you will not live, etc.”³

Though Luther wrote an extensive commentary on the Minor Prophets, his Roman’s preface reveals deeper thoughts on the verse. Luther’s primary love was Romans, thus, there is more primary source material on the Romans 1:17 quotation of Habakkuk 2:4b than any of the other quotations.⁴ Luther wrote, “St. Paul honors Habakkuk greatly, quoting his statement ‘the righteous shall live by faith’ (Hab 2:4) more than once (Gal 3:11; Rom 1:17). He immediately makes this the theme of his finest letter, the Epistle to the Romans.”⁵ Luther’s deep love led him to write his preface to Romans, so that all who read

² Cited in Steven D. Paulson, *Luther for Armchair Theologians*, Armchair Series (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 40.

³ Martin Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets II: Jonah and Habakkuk*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, Luther’s Works 19 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), 123.

⁴ Luther comments upon Romans, “This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian’s while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.” Martin Luther, *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 1, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/luther/prefacetoromans.pdf>.

⁵ Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets II*, 151.

it may grasp the book he so dearly loved. Rather than a verse by verse commentary, as he did with many other biblical books, Luther gave a general understanding of major points therein.

The first question to ask of Luther is how he understood faith. According to his noted Romans commentary and preface to Romans, Luther explained that faith is confidence in God's grace, merited through Christ's sacrifice.⁶ When Catholics thought that only the New Testament alludes to faith based salvation, Luther rebutted that even the Mosaic Law was preceded by faith.⁷ Furthermore, if one were not to believe Luther's statement regarding the Law, he cited the story of Abraham as a clear faith-before-works formula.⁸

Luther commented that faith precedes works, but how does he understand these works? For Luther, there are two levels of works, God's wonderful accomplished works, which are difficult to grasp, and there are human works.⁹ Though Luther pointed to the actions of God in Romans, he did not ignore human actions as a response to God's action. "Faith doesn't ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them."¹⁰ Luther's famous struggle with the book of James leads one to further grasp that Luther did not discount holy actions of the believer, but he did discount their efficacy for salvation. By holding such a view, Luther remained at odds with his Catholic opponents. As will be shown later, Catholics tied faith with human works, whereas Luther tied faith with Christ's work.¹¹ In sum, Luther's commentary and preface note that faith is a gift from God, focused upon the works of God, for the purpose of purifying man.

When Luther read the Habakkuk passage he could not help but think of Christ.¹² Luther validated his beliefs, which his Catholic predecessors rejected, by a new interpretation called Scripture's Self-Interpretation. In essence, Luther used the Scripture's capacity to validate itself.¹³ But what does he say of the Catholic understanding of Scripture and Tradition?

No one, no matter who he may be, is allowed to be a master and judge of the Scripture, rather all must be its witnesses, disciples, and confessors. This means that no one is in a position to validate Scripture. Scripture validates itself. The church's witness to Scripture can never be anything more than the obedient recognition of the witness which Scripture bears to itself as God's word. The church's decision is never under any circumstances an authority standing above the word of God but only beneath it.¹⁴

Further aiding in his interpretation of Scripture, Luther pointed to the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding the reader. Thus, Scripture's self-interpretation and interpretation through the Holy Spirit are

⁶ Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets II*, 8.

⁷ Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets II*, 6.

⁸ Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets II*, 6.

⁹ Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets II*, 124.

¹⁰ Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets II*, 124.

¹¹ Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets II*, 124.

¹² Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets II*, 124. "Luther's interpretation of Scripture is at once Christocentric and Christological. It is Christocentric in that he regards Christ as the heart of the Bible," according to Arthur Wood, *The Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 81.

¹³ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 75.

¹⁴ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 75.

synonymous expressions throughout his works. At the same time, Luther stated that readers should prioritize the “simple literal sense” of a text and “may depart from this principle only when the text itself compels a metaphorical interpretation.”¹⁵ As Paul Althaus summarized, “Christocentric interpretation for Luther thus means gospel-centered interpretation, understood in terms of the gospel of justification by faith alone.”¹⁶ Alister McGrath explained, “For Luther, as for the reformers in general, one could rest assured of one’s salvation. Salvation was grounded upon the faithfulness of God to his promises of mercy; to fail to have confidence in salvation was, in effect, to doubt the reliability and trustworthiness of God.”¹⁷ Is McGrath right in understanding Luther to view faithfulness of God in this way?

In several of Luther’s sermons he reflects upon the “faith alone” phrase and the nature of it being a gift of God. He clearly stated in his reflection of Romans 1:17, “Only the gospel reveals the righteousness of God by that faith alone by which one believes the word of God.”¹⁸ By placing emphasis upon the “word of God,” Luther showed how God’s actions listed in the Gospel are the point of faith. “The righteousness of God must not be understood as that righteousness by which he is righteous in himself, but as that righteousness by which we are made righteous (justified) by Him, and this happens through faith in the gospel.”¹⁹ According to Althaus, Luther believed that faith is the human response to God’s word and this word is the word of “promise,” fulfilled in the gospel.²⁰ Thus without the promise of Christ’s sacrifice (the good news), one cannot have faith. For Luther, faith is “an act of the will with which a man holds to the word of promise.”²¹

Luther also stated that the linguistic structure of faith makes it difficult to understand in the vernacular. “Therefore, when he is declared righteous, he makes righteous, and when he makes righteous, he is declared righteous. The same idea is therefore expressed by an active word in Hebrew and by a passive word form in our translation.”²² This single statement fully encapsulates the struggle of the exegete, particularly concerning Habakkuk 2:4b. Luther’s interpretation of Habakkuk 2:4b centers upon Christ and his work in justification. This Christocentric interpretation aided Luther but did not lead him to abandon the advocacy of human faith within divine faithfulness. Therefore, Luther’s interpretation sees faith preceding the law, Christ’s fulfillment of promises as the focus of faith, and holy actions as a response to the grace of God.

¹⁵ Thompson, “Biblical Interpretation in the Works of Martin Luther,” 305.

¹⁶ Thompson, “Biblical Interpretation in the Works of Martin Luther,” 305.

¹⁷ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 194.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, ed. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 17–18.

¹⁹ Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, 18. McGrath explains, “*Iustitia fide* is: (1) A righteousness which is a gift from God, rather than a righteousness which belongs to God. (2) A righteousness which is valid *coram Deo*, although not *coram hominibus*. (3) A righteousness which is itself *fides Christi*.... *Iustitia fidei* must be recognized as (1) being a divine gift to man, and (2) originating from God.... In other words, for a man to become righteous *coram Deo*, ‘the righteousness of God’ demands that he possess ‘the righteousness of faith.’ The two concepts are not identical, but they are clearly closely related, in that their common denominator is the *pactum*. By virtue of that covenant, God accepts man’s faith as the righteousness required for his justification *coram deo*.” Alister McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 114–15, 119.

²⁰ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 43.

²¹ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 43.

²² Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 77.

1.2. Calvin's Interpretation of Habakkuk 2:4 as Faith in the Work of Christ

John Calvin was just a young student when Luther wrote his "95 Theses," but Calvin became a leading theological voice for the French Protestants. Though Calvin's theology is renowned, older scholarship largely ignored his commentaries and translation work, assuming that everything worth knowing about Calvin's thought could be found in his *Institutes*.²³ However, Steinmetz notes that "the bulk of Calvin's writings consists of biblical commentaries and sermons."²⁴

Here we consider Calvin's understanding of faith, works, and the relationship between the two. First, how does Calvin conceive of faith? Calvin offers this comment on Romans 1:17:

He proves the righteousness of faith by the authority of the prophet Habbakuk.... The faith of the righteous alone brings everlasting life. What is the source of that life but the faith which leads us to God, and makes our life depend on him? Paul's reference to this passage from Habbakuk would have been irrelevant, unless the prophet meant that we then stand firm only when we rest on God by faith. He ascribed the life of the ungodly to faith only in so far as they renounce the pride of the world and gather themselves together for the protection of God alone.²⁵

In this quotation one finds a view of faith which is similar to Luther's. In essence Calvin too believed that faith is a God dependent action, necessary for grace to abound. Does Calvin, like Luther, view that faith is a gift from God? He wrote, "Notice further how rare and valuable a treasure God bestows on us in His Gospel, viz. the communication of his own righteousness."²⁶ Thus, one should understand Calvin to have believed that faith is a gift from God.

Like Luther, faith and the gospel are inseparable, and at the core of the gospel is Christ's fulfillment of prophecies. "For since *the just* is said to *live by his faith*, he maintains that such a life is received by the Gospel."²⁷ From this quotation one can deduce that Calvin believes the "work" needed for salvation, is that of Christ's death upon the cross. As he states, "We see now the main or cardinal point of the first part of this Epistle: we are justified by faith through the mercy of God alone.... The righteousness which is based on faith depends wholly on the mercy of God."²⁸

Calvin's understanding of the text reveals clear consensus between Luther and Calvin. In fact, the three questions find greater answers within *Institutes*, than in Calvin's commentary. The first question, how does Calvin understand faith, finds a clear articulate answer. "Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts

²³ David C. Steinmetz, *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 1–2.

²⁴ Steinmetz, *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century*, 2.

²⁵ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Thessalonians*, trans. R. Mackenzie, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 28–29.

²⁶ Calvin, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 28.

²⁷ Calvin, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 29.

²⁸ Calvin, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 29.

through the Holy Spirit.”²⁹ Further defining faith, Calvin understood faith and gospel to correlate.³⁰ Thus, faith is placed upon the gospel and the gospel requires one to have faith. As Calvin noted, faith has no intrinsic virtue on its own, and if believed solely sufficient, then only a “fragment of salvation” would remain.³¹

What did Calvin say of works? The *Institutes* eloquently described the actions of the believer. However, when it comes to works related to justification, Calvin pointed to Christ: “if we ask how we have been justified, Paul answers, ‘By Christ’s obedience.’”³² Thus, one should understand the works needed for mankind’s salvation is Christ’s death and resurrection, not any human action.

The attribution of salvific works to Christ does not negate the works of response in the believer’s life. Calvin connect work with faith, but is careful to show that any reliance upon human works negates Christ’s gift of grace.³³ The truest understanding of Calvin’s interpretation of faith and works is that all of Scripture divorces the two within mankind, but not man’s faith and Christ’s work.

But Scripture, when it speaks of faith righteousness, leads us to something far different: namely, to turn aside from the contemplation of our own works and look solely upon God’s mercy and Christ’s perfection. Indeed, it presents this order of justification: to begin with, God deigns to embrace the sinner with his pure and freely given goodness, finding nothing in him except his miserable condition to prompt Him to mercy, since he sees man utterly void and bare of good works; and so he seeks in himself the reason to benefit man. Then God touches the sinner with a sense of his goodness in order that he, despairing of his own works, may ground the whole of his salvation in God’s mercy. This is the experience of faith through which the sinner comes into possession of his salvation when from the teaching of the gospel he acknowledges that he has been reconciled to God: that with Christ’s righteousness interceding and forgiveness of sins accomplished he is justified. And although regenerated by the Spirit of God, he ponders the everlasting righteousness laid up for him not in the good works to which he inclines but in the sole righteousness of Christ.³⁴

Much like Luther’s understanding of faith, Calvin held that faith precedes the law and is a gift of God to man. Faith being intrinsically connected with the gospel finds its object in Christ’s work at Calvary. Calvin wrote, “From this relation it is clear that those who are justified by faith are justified apart from the merit of works—in fact, without the merit of works. For faith receives that righteousness which the gospel bestows.”³⁵

Calvin’s *Institutes* summarized the trio of questions in four statements concerning Habakkuk 2:4b (or its quotations).

²⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.2.7, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1960).

³⁰ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.2.29.

³¹ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.7.

³² Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.9.

³³ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.9.

³⁴ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.16.

³⁵ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.18.

Now the reader sees how fairly the Sophists today cavil against our doctrine when we say that man is justified by faith alone [Rom. 3:28]. They dare not deny that man is justified by faith because it recurs so often in Scripture. But since the word “alone” is nowhere expressed, they do not allow this addition to be made. Is it so? But what will they reply to these words of Paul where he contends that righteousness cannot be of faith unless it be free [Rom. 4:2 ff.]? How will a free gift agree with works? With what chicaneries will they elude what he says in another passage, that God’s righteousness is revealed in the gospel [Rom. 1:17]?³⁶

Calvin is aware that the word “alone” cannot be found, but the theological implications resound cover to cover. “The law therefore has no place in it. Not only by a false but by an obviously ridiculous shift they insist upon excluding this adjective. Does not he who takes everything from works firmly enough ascribe everything to faith alone?”³⁷ In sum, a man who is incapable of perfect sinless life, must rely upon God alone and from there receive forgiveness of sins. All of this is based on one’s faith in God’s actions.

1.3. Synthesis

Though Luther and Calvin utilized somewhat different methods of interpretation, both understood faith to be a gift from God, intrinsically connected to the gospel. Neither Luther or Calvin abandoned the word “works” within justification, but rather tied the word directly with the actions of Christ. It is therefore permissible to say that Luther and Calvin understood Habakkuk 2:4b to point a believer’s faith toward the faithful actions of Christ as the savior.

2. Catholic Use of Habakkuk 2:4

Most of the writings concerning this passage, from the sixteenth century Catholic view, came after Luther and Calvin wrote.³⁸ As such, the Catholic writings are fewer and more responsive in nature. Thus, within this section the Catholic interpretation of Habakkuk 2:4b will be articulated from two primary sources: documents of Erasmus and documents of the Council of Trent.

2.1. Erasmus’s Interpretation of Hab 2:4 as a Pre-Trent View of Faith

Before delving into the pages of official response from Trent, a study of Erasmus will give a pre-Trent Catholic understanding of “faith” in Habakkuk 2:4b. Erasmus’s noted commentary on the Bible is contained within his paraphrases of the New Testament. Some passages contain Erasmus’s thoughts on the passage for he adds content, much like the modern *Amplified Bible*. However, Erasmus simply translated without commentary Paul’s citations of Habakkuk 2:4b: “My righteous man shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17), and “The righteous lives by faith” (Gal 3:11).³⁹ Due to the lack of commentary by Erasmus,

³⁶ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.19.

³⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.19.

³⁸ Erasmus wrote his Paraphrases from 1517 to 1524. The publications of Trent were released after 1563.

³⁹ Erasmus, *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, ed. Robert D. Sider, Collected Works of Erasmus 42 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). This work is organized like a Bible as such all versions do not follow page number, but rather Scripture reference.

the trio of questions posed of Luther and Calvin will be asked of Erasmus's theological writings, and not his commentary.

Erasmus wrote during the same era of Luther; in fact, many consider him to be the reformer who did not leave the Catholic church. Some even said that he was "the egg that Luther hatched."⁴⁰ Erasmus was trained from many of the same sources as Luther, and came to many similar theological conclusions. Beda frequently called passages of Erasmus's writings that put faith above works "Lutheran."⁴¹ Paul Althaus noted that Erasmus "also agreed with the principle that Scripture is to be interpreted christocentrically."⁴² That being said, Erasmus understood faith as such:

Sometimes [the Scriptures] speak of faith of God [*fides dei*] by which we trust [*fidimus*] in him rather than in man; it is said to be "of God" not only because it is directed towards him, but also because it is given by him; sometimes [the Scriptures speak of faith] of both [God and man] as in "the righteous" shall live by faith [*fides*]⁴³—of God who does not deceive in what he has promised, and also of man who trusts [*fidit*] in God.⁴³

Erasmus handled the topic of works in a tangential manner when discussing Habakkuk 2:4b. Critics accused him of Pelagianism, teaching that humans are basically good and therefore responsible for their own salvation, which could be achieved through asceticism and good works. Others, like Beda, charged him with Lutheranism and with denying that good works were related in any way to salvation.⁴⁴ Scheck noted Erasmus's paraphrase of Romans 2:6 shows his true belief of the works of a believer:

Erasmus supplies to his text "through faith." In the original paraphrase of 1517 Erasmus interprets Paul as meaning here in 2:6–13 that good works are necessary in order to receive the eternal reward. He sees no contradiction between this passage and 3:20. The addition of 1532 shows that Erasmus has adopted the exegesis of Origen and Chrysostom, which applies the verses to Christians who are judged on the basis of not only of faith but of works.⁴⁵

If indeed Erasmus adopted Origen and Chrysostom's interpretation, then how did he understand the relationship between faith and works? According to Albert Rabil,

Erasmus recognizes the limitations of ever fully doing the good or achieving its complete blessing in this life. An essential part of doing the good is knowing that what is striven for in a particular way in this life will be consummated only in the life to come. The Christian's life is never separated from this hope. His hope is based on the trustworthiness of God in fulfilling his promises of which Scripture gives evidence. Christ was foretold in the Old Testament, and the prophecy was true. Since we have

⁴⁰ Margaret King, *Reformation Thought: An Anthology of Sources* (Cambridge: Hackett, 2016), 23. This phrase was first noted in a letter from December 1524.

⁴¹ Erika Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1989), 2:34.

⁴² Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 79.

⁴³ Cited in Christine Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 147.

⁴⁴ Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 145.

⁴⁵ Thomas P. Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 143.

proofs of God's truthfulness toward us, we can trust that the promises made in the New Testament which are not yet fulfilled, e.g. our resurrection and ascension and our participation in the glory of God, will also be fulfilled. Our future hope keeps us on the proper path and limits the power of temptations of the present to deter us from the good to which we are constantly called.⁴⁶

In essence Erasmus's early writings show a very "Lutheran" interpretation, whereas later writings accord with the Council of Trent. Thus, Erasmus noted, "It is through pure faith that the good news is realized. The faith which comes from God is, as Erasmus points out in the *Explanation Symboli*, much more than just accepting God's promises as true"⁴⁷ This view of faith alone can also be found in Erasmus response to his opponent Beda: "Eternal blessedness is given not through works according to the law but gratis through faith," and "no human work is good enough to merit eternal salvation."⁴⁸ Though Erasmus's early thinking was more consistent with the Protestant reformers, he desired for differences to not divide the church, possibly explaining why he did not leave with Luther and Calvin.⁴⁹

In summary, Erasmus circa 1516 clearly taught that justification was awarded by God's grace through faith alone. As such, he interpreted Paul accordingly in his 1517 *Paraphrase on Romans*. In the *Argumentum*, he points out "that true righteousness and perfect salvation are conferred ... without the help of the law, through the Gospel and faith alone in Jesus Christ ... that true righteousness comes to no one through the Mosaic law but through faith."⁵⁰ This view of Erasmus only lasted till 1532, when he released his paraphrase of Romans 2:6 and began advocating for the need of human works in justification.

2.2. The Council of Trent's Counterinterpretation of Faith in Habakkuk 2:4

Erasmus may have been the most published Catholic theologian, but he did not speak on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church. When the church needed a formal response or stance on any topic, a council would be convened and an official edict or statement would be released. Due to the rarity of councils, many topics went long periods of time without being answered. Luther and the Protestant Reformation was no exception to this delay and rather short response.

Though short in focus concerning Luther, the Council of Trent still impacts Catholics today.

Trent rings a bell, but faint and muffled is the sound. A church council? Against Luther and the Protestants? For many the bell tolls ominously, intimating regression, repression, and the dreaded Counter Reformation. Even for Roman Catholics the bell rings with distant sound and indistinct tone: some stoutly maintain that Trent was the council that wrought all the bad things from which Vatican Council II saved them in the twentieth century, others that Trent created all the good things of which Vatican II then robbed them.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Albert Rabil, *Erasmus and the New Testament: The Mind of a Christian Humanist* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), 154–55.

⁴⁷ Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 145.

⁴⁸ Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 150.

⁴⁹ Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 151.

⁵⁰ Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 147.

⁵¹ John O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2013), 1.

To grasp Trent, one must first understand the impact that Luther had on the council. Some may say that Luther's teaching was the sole purpose for the council.⁵² Many texts concerning the Council of Trent highlight the success of Luther's reform but undermine the reason for the success. "Luther's success was surely due to in large part to his religious message. His doctrine of justification by faith alone, easily misunderstood though it was, struck a deep chord. People responded to a teaching that promised a more personal relationship with God and was based directly on the text of Scripture."⁵³ Interestingly, Trent seemed unaware of Calvin, thus the primary concerns listed in Trent documents revolve around Luther solely.

The official documents of Trent have been publicized in numerous forms and languages throughout the years. Within the Trent documents there are Decrees (Chapters) and Canons. Decrees related to doctrine, and Canons related to discipline. Canons follow methodology of concluding with a condemnation of dissenters, "anathema sit."⁵⁴ Sadly, the documents of Trent do not cite Scripture; thus, to survey Habakkuk 2:4b in Trent one must look to the topic of justification by faith. It should also be noted that the interpretation utilized at Trent tied Scripture and apostolic traditions and designated them under the encompassing term "the gospel."⁵⁵

Not only does the Council of Trent affirm that tradition and Scripture determine interpretation, but also denied the Protestant's right to interpret Scripture on 8 April 1546.⁵⁶ "No one, relying on his own prudence, [may] twist Holy Scripture in matters of faith and morals that pertain to the edifice of Christian doctrine, ... and no one [may] dare to interpret the Scripture in a way contrary to the unanimous consensus of the fathers."⁵⁷ With this statement settled the Council of Trent will judge the reformers.

The sixth session, which focused on the doctrine of justification, concluded in 1547. They discussed four topics: (1) the nature of justification, (2) the nature of justifying righteousness, (3) the nature of justifying faith, and (4) the assurance of salvation. This article presents Decrees and Canons from this section of Trent documents in totality followed by a short summary.

If indeed Trent's agenda was set by Luther, then what did they say regarding faith? Chapter 8, "How the Gratuitous Justification of the sinner by faith is to be understood," read as follows:

⁵² O'Malley, *Trent*, 12.

⁵³ O'Malley, *Trent*, 49.

⁵⁴ Philip Schaff and David S. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 94. "In an article written in 1953, Piet Fransen showed that to condemn something under anathema was not necessarily correlative with ex cathedra definition, as catholic theology in its listing of theological notes or qualifications had so long supposed. An anathema is rather like a curse on people who are disturbing the church because of what they are propounding, or because of what they are calling into question. They are seen to disrupt true piety and belief. The anathema defends a perspective and a system, to which both beliefs and practices are inherent, supporting and corroborating each other. It does not isolate one point from another, even when naming particular issues, but it is the interrelation of diverse factors that is the concern for a decree that enforces its viewpoint with anathemas." David Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer: The Tridentine Dogma and Its Reinterpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 127.

⁵⁵ Guy Bedouelle, "Biblical Interpretation in the Catholic Reformation," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation, Volume 2: The Medieval through the Reformation Periods*, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 431.

⁵⁶ Bedouelle, "Biblical Interpretation in the Catholic Reformation," 431.

⁵⁷ Bedouelle, "Biblical Interpretation in the Catholic Reformation," 431.

But when the Apostle says that man is justified by faith and freely, these words are to be understood in that sense in which the uninterrupted unanimity of the Catholic Church has held and expressed them, namely, that *we are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification*, without which it is impossible to please God and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification. for if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise as the apostles says, grace is no more grace.⁵⁸

In essence, Trent stated that faith has no part in salvation, but rather subjugating it to the beginning element of salvation. Though faith is listed as the beginning element of salvation, Trent later clarified that faith alone cannot save, for it requires the promises of God's mercy.

Chapter 9, "Against the Vain Confidence of Heretics," read as follows:

But though it is necessary to believe that sins neither are remitted nor ever have been remitted except gratuitously by divine mercy for Christ's sake, yet it must not be said that sins are forgiven or have been forgiven to anyone who boasts of his confidence and certainty of the remission of his sins, resting on that alone, though among heretics and schismatics this vain and ungodly confidence may be and in our troubled times indeed is found and preached with untiring fury against the Catholic Church. Moreover, it must not be maintained, that they who are truly justified must needs, without any doubt whatever, convince themselves that they are justified, and that *no one is absolved from sins and justified except he that believes with certainty that he is absolved and justified, and that absolution and justification are effected by this faith alone, as if he who does not believe this, doubts the promises of God and the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ. For as no pious person ought to doubt the mercy of God, the merit of Christ and the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments*, so each one, when he considers himself and his weakness and indisposition may have fear and apprehension concerning his own grace, since no one can know with the certainty of faith which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God.⁵⁹

Throughout the Trent documents one gains the sense that the word of contention is not *faith*, but rather *alone*. Chapter 9 gives a response very similar to the Protestant view point previously mentioned. A closer look will notice that not only is faith not sufficient, for it requires the work of Christ, but also the sacraments.⁶⁰ Thus, within this chapter the second question—what does Trent say regarding works?—

⁵⁸ J. Waterworth, ed., *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent* (London: Dolman, 1848), 36 (italics added for emphasis).

⁵⁹ Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees*, 36–37 (italics added for emphasis).

⁶⁰ "However, they also show the catholic emphasis on the act of the priest in applying satisfactions and merits, and on the importance of the rite itself as the means through which Christ works in the church. This could not dispel reformers' discomfort with the role of the priest and with the role of sacrament, as distinct from word." Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer*, 58. "The mass is also reconciliatory, because it is an offering of Christ to God, but it is at the same time satisfactory, because it applies to sinners the satisfaction made by Christ on the cross." Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer*, 64.

is answered clearly and articulately. There is a sense of both the works of Christ and observation of sacraments (humanly work) as the means of justification.

Trent's chapter 11 offered this decree:

The observance of the commandments and the necessity and possibility thereof, but no one, however much justified, should consider himself exempt from the observance of the commandments; no one should use that rash statement, once forbidden by the Fathers under anathema, that the observance of the commandments of God is impossible for one that is justified. *For God does not command impossibilities, but by commanding admonishes thee to do what thou canst and to pray for what thou canst not, and aids thee that thou mayest be able. His commandments are not heavy, and his yoke is sweet and burden light.* For they who are the sons of God love Christ, but they who live him, keep his commandments, as He Himself testifies.⁶¹

Where Luther and Calvin rightly note that no human can observe the law, thus earning salvation, Trent states that "God does not command an impossibility," i.e., it is possible to keep the commandments. These three noted Decrees (chapters) show a Catholic belief that is not a steadfast works-based salvation; in fact, some canons show more agreeable doctrine than the last noted chapter. Consider the first three Canons of Trent:

Canon 1. If any one saith, that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the teaching of human nature, or that of the law, without the grace of God through Jesus Christ: let him be anathema.

Canon 2. If any one saith, that the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, is given only for this, that man may be able more easily to live justly, and to merit eternal life, as if, by free-will without grace, he were able to do both, though hardly indeed and with difficulty: let him be anathema.

Canon 3. If any one saith, that without the prevenient inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and without his help, man can believe, hope, love, or be penitent as he ought, so that the grace of Justification may be bestowed upon him: let him be anathema.⁶²

These listed Canons are built upon Origen's interpretation of Romans 3:25–26, where he clearly states the necessity of Christ's work as the foundation for human salvation, since man cannot earn salvation by works. In fact, Origen's commentary was quoted in the session on justification:

A human being is justified through faith; the works of the law contribute nothing to his being justified. But where there is no faith which justifies the believer, even in one possesses works from the law, nevertheless because they have not been built upon the foundation of faith, although they might appear to be good things, nevertheless they are not able to justify the one doing them, because from them faith is absent, which is the sign of those who are justified by God ... therefore all posting which comes from the works of the law is excluded.⁶³

⁶¹ Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees*, 38 (italics added for emphasis).

⁶² Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees*, 44.

⁶³ Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification*, 40.

The fact that Trent quoted Origen is interesting especially since he stated that man's work gains us nothing, "because it does not embrace the humility of the cross of Christ."⁶⁴ Possibly Trent was comfortable quoting Origen because he said that faith is the beginning and foundation of justification. Though these Canons may seem encouraging to Protestants, many subsequent Canons reestablish the ambiguity of belief surrounding the topic of justification by faith.

Canon 9. If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will: let him be anathema.

Canon 10. If any one saith, that men are just without the justice of Christ, whereby he merited for us to be justified; or that it is by that justice itself that they are formally just: let him be anathema.

Canon 12. If any one saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified: let him be anathema.

Canon 14. If any one saith, that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified, because that he assuredly believed himself absolved and justified; or, that no one is truly justified but he who believes himself justified; and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected: let him be anathema.

Canon 18. If any one saith, that the commandments of God are, even for one that is justified and constituted in grace, impossible to keep: let him be anathema.

Canon 19. If any one saith, that nothing besides faith is commanded in the Gospel; that other things are indifferent, neither commanded nor prohibited, but free; or, that the ten commandments nowise appertain to Christians: let him be anathema.

Canon 24. If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof: let him be anathema.

Canon 32. If any one saith, that the good works of one that is justified are in such manner the gifts of God, that they are not also the good merits of him that is justified; or, that the said justified, by the good works which he performs through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, does not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life, and the attainment of that eternal life,-if so be, however, that he depart in grace,-and also an increase of glory: let him be anathema.

Canon 33. If any one saith, that, by the Catholic doctrine touching Justification, by this holy Synod set forth in this present decree, the glory of God, or the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ are in any way derogated from, and not rather that the truth of our faith,

⁶⁴ Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification*, 40.

and the glory in fine of God and of Jesus Christ are rendered [more] illustrious: let him be anathema.⁶⁵

The summary of Trent's understanding of the role of faith in justification may appear to combine both Protestant and Catholic positions in the same document. For Trent, faith is but the beginning of salvation, which finds its point of focus in the work of Christ. There are a few statements which amend this belief to being one in not only Christ's work, but also the holy commandments, and sacraments, for "God would not assign anything that is impossible to do." This noted changing theology leads one to wonder if Erasmus or the reformers slightly impacted the Catholic church. In sum, Trent does not directly note Habakkuk 2:4b in its writings, but the council did clearly articulate beliefs regarding the Protestant view of justification by faith alone that comes from this passage.

2.3. Understanding Trent

McGrath states, "Trent itself was perfectly prepared to concede that the Christian life was begun through faith, thus coming very close indeed to Luther's position."⁶⁶ Erasmus also held a close view of salvation, in his earlier writings. Yet, Trent concludes with the anathema of the Protestants and their doctrines. McGrath continues,

Trent's point is that the reformers seemed to be making human confidence or boldness the grounds of justification, so that justification rested upon a fallible human conviction, rather than upon the grace of God. The reformers, however, saw themselves as stressing that justification rested upon the promises of God; a failure to believe boldly in such promises was tantamount to calling the reliability of God into question.⁶⁷

Had the council of Trent actually been ecumenical, the attendees could have been corrected on what the Protestants actually believed; perhaps consensus might have been drawn and a unification of the divorced parties might have happened. However, Trent was a Roman Catholic only event. The Greeks (Orthodox Church) were never invited, and essentially Protestants were placed on trial without a hearing. Due to this historical fact, the Catholic view of Habakkuk 2:4b concerning the doctrine of justification by faith yields a belief that one is justified firstly by faith in Christ's work, but is conferred repeatedly through the works of the sacraments.

3. Conclusion

The sixteenth century Reformation debate primarily centered upon the interpretation of the Bible. Furthermore, the Reformers called into question Catholic understandings of justification, and forced a debate, which resulted in a divide.⁶⁸ The result was a long period of theological writings concerning faith and justification. At the center of this debate is the interpretation of Habakkuk 2:4b passage (and its NT quotations). For Luther and Calvin, one can't help but read that man is justified by faith in the work of Christ. Thus, the Protestant conclusion is that man is saved by faith in Christ's faithfulness. For the

⁶⁵ Waterworth, *Canons and Decrees of Trent*, 45–49.

⁶⁶ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 177.

⁶⁷ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 177.

⁶⁸ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 177.

Catholics, Erasmus began with an almost paralleled belief to the Protestants, but the Council of Trent concluded with a conviction that both the works of Christ and sacraments are necessary for salvation. Thus, the Catholic interpretation of Habakkuk 2:4b is that man is saved by faith in Christ, and his work, but then is preserved by observing the sacraments. The hypothesis concerning Luther and Calvin has been confirmed. Martin Luther and John Calvin understood Habakkuk 2:4b, and its quotations, to mean that a believer is reliant upon the Lord's actions. However, through the process of researching 16th century Catholic theology the hypothesis was only partially confirmed. The Roman Catholic church does point to the faithful actions of a believer as the object of faith in Habakkuk 2:4b, but they also to point to the actions of Christ as the beginning of justification.

As one from a denominationally mixed family and pastor of numerous Catholic-raised parishioners, I frequently have conversations concerning a believer's role in salvation. Understanding how key reformers and Catholics viewed Habakkuk 2:4 helps contemporary readers to articulate the historical belief and the closeness of current views of faith in Christendom. As a result, Protestant family and parishioners now have more respect for Catholic faith, and Catholic family and parishioners now have more respect for the Protestant view of *Sola Fide*. Hopefully this article will inspire more research of the original Catholic texts so as to correct partial understandings and develop meaningful conversations between modern Protestants and Catholics.

The Resurgence of Two Kingdoms Doctrine: A Survey of the Literature

— Michael N. Jacobs —

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Abstract: Two Kingdoms doctrine distinguishes between the common kingdom, the created order common to all life that will one day come to an end, and the redemptive kingdom, the church and those called to consummation into the world to come at the end of the current age. This article surveys the recent resurgence of scholarship on Two Kingdoms doctrine, focusing on work by David VanDrunen, Michael Horton, and D. G. Hart. The article concludes by reviewing neo-Calvinist criticisms of the doctrine and suggesting potential paths forward for future Two Kingdoms scholarship.

How should Christians participate in public life, either individually or collectively through the institutional church? The transformationalist perspective dominates the answer to this question, particularly in North America. The transformationalist end-goal is the same whether one sympathizes with the conservative right or the progressive left: Christians should play an active role in transforming all of society to better reflect Christ's sacrificial love and kingship over all creation. In this sense, Christians are not just co-heirs with Christ; they are co-redeemers. This paper explains an alternative framework for Christian cultural engagement—the Two Kingdoms doctrine, which rejects the transformationalist's mono-kingdom conception of Christ's reign and the notion of Christians as co-redeemers.

Two Kingdoms doctrine recognizes Jesus Christ's lordship over all, but contends that Christ reigns over different realms of creation in different ways. On the one hand, Jesus rules over the common kingdom—the created order common to all life that will one day come to an end—as creator and sustainer. On the other hand, Jesus rules over the redemptive kingdom—the church and those called to consummation into the world to come at the end of the current age—as redeemer and savior. Christ's varied lordship in these two kingdoms has implications for both the rightly ordered life of the church and individual Christians' engagement in public life and the common kingdom. This essay explores the Two Kingdoms perspective in these areas.

Two Kingdoms doctrine is nothing new. The perspective played an important role in rightly ordered Christian cultural engagement in the early church and through much of the reformed tradition.¹ The doctrine only fell out of fashion in reformed theological circles in the 20th Century with the rise of transformationalist thinkers like Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd, and other thinkers in the neo-Calvinist vein.²

This essay explores the works of three prominent authors driving the recovery and resurgence of Two Kingdoms thinking: David VanDrunen, Michael Horton, and D. G. Hart. This paper is not meant to re-hash theological arguments or provide exegetical support for the Two Kingdoms perspective, but rather to provide a summary explanation of the Two Kingdoms perspective, focusing on cultural engagement and political applications.

The paper proceeds as follows: the first section overviews Covenant Theology. Covenants are a foundational way through which God interacts with humanity. This section explores the Creation Covenant, the Noahic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the Abrahamic Covenant, highlighting grace-based and works-based elements. These covenants are key to discerning rightly ordered life in each of God's two kingdoms.

The second section explores the redemptive kingdom. Established through the grace woven through all of God's covenants, Christ rules over the redemptive kingdom as savior and redeemer. Two Kingdoms doctrine connects Christ's rule over this realm of life to the realm's purpose. D. G. Hart's and Michael Horton's scholarship addresses the life of the church and its relationship to the wider society (the common kingdom). Hart and Horton make arguments for a minimalist public role for the church, limiting it to Christ's witness rather than as redeemers of society. However, Hart and Horton do not suggest an alternative, positive program for proper Christian engagement in the common kingdom.

The third section explains the common kingdom, which is grounded in the creational order and God's works-based Creation Covenant and sustained through grace via the Noahic Covenant. David VanDrunen's research explores natural law as applied through the Noahic Covenant as the guiding standard by which Christians should engage public life. This section highlights VanDrunen's Two Kingdom and natural law perspective applied to the role of government.

The fourth section reviews critiques of Two Kingdoms doctrine, focusing on scholarship from neo-Calvinist authors. In particular, the section focuses on articles published in *Pro Rege*, a neo-Calvinist journal that has published numerous pieces critical of the Two Kingdoms approach, and the edited volume *Kingdoms Apart*, a neo-Calvinist rebuttal to the Two Kingdoms argument. The final section contrasts the Two Kingdoms and neo-Calvinist approaches through an illustrative example and concludes by recognizing the need for the further development of a Two Kingdoms and natural law approach to cultural engagement.

¹ David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought*, Emory University Studies in Law and Religion (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1–2.

² VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, 348–50.

1. Two Kingdoms Doctrine Overview Part I: Covenant Theology

Two Kingdoms doctrine utilizes the divine covenants recorded in scripture to make sense of the biblical story of creation, fall, preservation, redemption, and consummation.³ Viewing scripture through the covenants that God establishes with humanity is called covenant theology and is foundational to the Reformed tradition.⁴ These biblical covenants reflect the central way through which God interacts with his creation.⁵

Covenant theology recognizes two basic characteristics of covenants: conditional and unconditional.⁶ While conditional (works-based) covenantal elements require humanity to accomplish tasks pursuant to consequences and rewards administered by God, God fulfills unconditional (grace-based) covenantal aspects regardless of human efforts.

The Creation Covenant, Noahic Covenant, Mosaic Covenant, and Abrahamic Covenant are key to understanding Two Kingdoms doctrine's two kingdoms—the redemptive kingdom and the common kingdom—and how Christians should participate in each kingdom as citizens of both. This section first investigates each of the previously mentioned covenants, setting the stage for exploring the Two Kingdoms approach to life in the redemptive kingdom and the common kingdom in the following two sections, respectively.

1.1. Creation Covenant

In the Creation Covenant, God implicitly made a covenant of works with Adam.⁷ Genesis records God's creational work and then his judgements, declaring the goodness of his creation, and then entering into his well-earned rest. Being made in the image of God, Adam was created to follow a similar path.⁸ God tasked Adam with dominion over creation, a charge that included the cultural mandate (similar to God's creational work) and keeping the garden as a royal priest (similar to God's work in assessing the goodness of his creation). Even though he ultimately failed, Adam was capable of fulfilling his obligations as a being created in the image of God.⁹

God allowed Adam to be tempted by the serpent, testing Adam's willingness to judge right from wrong, either recognizing God's ways or rejecting them. Had Adam successfully passed the test, fulfilling his duties as the garden's guard and righteous judge by rejecting the serpent, humanity would have followed in God's footsteps and ascended into eschatological rest in the world to come, as Adam's work in the garden was never meant to be an indefinite task or an unending period of testing.¹⁰ However,

³ David VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law*, Emory University Studies in Law and Religion (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 1–2; Michael Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 11.

⁴ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 1–2.

⁵ As explained by Horton, “we are not related to God by virtue of a common aspect of our being, but by virtue of a pact that he himself makes with us to be our God” (*Introducing Covenant Theology*, 29).

⁶ Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology*, 36.

⁷ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 39–94.

⁸ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 39–94.

⁹ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 39–94.

¹⁰ David VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 40.

Adam failed, handing his dominion to the serpent in the process. Adam's failure earned him God's just wrath, eviction from the garden, and exclusion from God's holy rest. After the fall, humanity can no longer earn righteousness before God.

Adam's failure to comply with the works-based covenant during this probational period wrought deep repercussions, including the end of the so-called cultural mandate in Genesis 1:28. On the sixth day of the creation narrative, God created humans and commanded them to "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." Transformationalists argue that the cultural mandate was never rescinded. Thus, humanity's central task, transformationalists argue, remains the exploration and unfolding of creation through the arts and sciences and the development of human culture more broadly. Transformationalists further argue, to varying degrees, that Christians can contribute to the restoration of creation through their cultural practices. Two Kingdoms doctrine disagrees, arguing instead that the cultural mandate, as part of the works-based creation covenant, was failed and forfeited as part of the fall. Humanity can continue to develop culture, but cultural development is no longer capable of earning eschatological rest, and cultural engagement by Christians does not contribute to a fundamental transformation and restoration of creation. The Genesis account of creation and Adam's failure does contain a glimmer of hope, however, with Genesis 3:15 stating that the seed of Eve would crush the serpent and be bruised in the process, pointing to Christ's sacrificial victory over sin.

1.2. Noahic Covenant

The Noahic Covenant is God's re-establishment of the Creation Covenant but refracted through the reality of a fallen creation in order to preserve the entire created order.¹¹ It is God's promise to preserve the fallen creation, for a time, and delay his righteous final judgment.¹²

Like the Creation Covenant, the Noahic Covenant obligates humanity to certain cultural tasks, such as the re-establishment of the cultural mandate and the obligation to exercise retributive justice. Through this covenant, God also reaffirms humanity's ability to carry out these tasks as his image-bearers. However, while the Creation Covenant provides a path to earned eschatological rest through Adam's fulfillment of various works and trials, these tasks no longer carry eschatological significance under the Noahic Covenant because fallen humanity cannot earn its way into God's favor.¹³ Instead, God re-equips humanity to minimize the injustices prevalent in the fallen world and delays his final judgement to allow time for his redemptive plan to take place through Christ. Grace pervades the Noahic Covenant because through it God unilaterally preserves the fallen creation, regardless of human efforts and actions.¹⁴ The Noahic Covenant is an example of common grace because it is applied to all of humanity, not just the redeemed.

¹¹ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 95–132.

¹² Horton, *Introducing Covenantal Theology*, 114; VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 95–96.

¹³ Horton, *Introducing Covenantal Theology*, 114; VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 95–96.

¹⁴ Horton, *Introducing Covenantal Theology*, 113–17; VanDrunen considers the Noahic Covenant a covenant of grace in a certain sense but distinguishes it from the Abrahamic Covenant of grace because it does not include a promise of salvation (*Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 282–85).

1.3. Mosaic Covenant

The Mosaic Covenant (also called the Sinai Covenant) and Israel's historical experience represent a recapitulation of Adam's trials in the garden of Eden.¹⁵ Just like the creation story records how Adam was created, put under a works-based probation, failed, and was expelled from the garden, God placed Israel under a law-based system that if they followed, God would bless them and allow them to stay in the land. But like Adam, Israel was unable to keep God's holy commands and was eventually expelled. Thus, the Mosaic Covenant contains echoes of Eden.

However, the Mosaic Covenant is not exclusively a works-based covenant; it also displays elements of God's grace and points toward work God would do on humanity's behalf, regardless of humanity's merit.¹⁶ God delivered Israel, as his chosen nation, out of Egyptian bondage and to the promised land, foreshadowing God's deliverance of the church, as his elect, out of the fallen world and to the coming kingdom. Further, the law and the sacrificial system God established in the Mosaic Covenant make clear humanity's inability to achieve righteousness before God, and its need for a holy sacrifice and savior.

1.4. Abrahamic Covenant

God's covenant with Abraham formally establishes God's redemptive kingdom by promising to bring about the Messiah through Abraham's descendants.¹⁷ The Abrahamic Covenant bears important differences from previous covenants that are key for understanding Two Kingdoms doctrine. Foremost, the Abrahamic Covenant differs from the works-based Creation Covenant and the works-based aspects of the Mosaic Covenant as a covenant of promise. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God promises to succeed through Jesus Christ as the second Adam where the first Adam failed (the Creation Covenant), and where no system of laws could possibly succeed (the Mosaic Covenant). This is a work of grace to which humanity cannot add.

The Abrahamic Covenant differs from the Noahic Covenant in four important respects.¹⁸ First, the Noahic Covenant applies to ordinary cultural activities, while the Abrahamic Covenant's saving grace applies to religious faith and worship. Second, whereas the Noahic Covenant provides sustaining grace to all of humanity, the Abrahamic Covenant's redemptive grace applies only to God's elect. Third, the Noahic Covenant preserves the fallen creation's natural and social order, while the Abrahamic Covenant makes possible the world to come. And fourth, while the Noahic Covenant is a temporary preservation of the fallen creation, the Abrahamic Covenant ushers in a kingdom that will last forever.

2. Two Kingdoms Doctrine Overview Part II: The Redemptive Kingdom

Christ's church is the penultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant and the representative of the redemptive kingdom in the present age.¹⁹ Through his work on the cross, Christ's redemptive rule

¹⁵ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 282–83.

¹⁶ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 282–85.

¹⁷ VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 82–88; The Abrahamic Covenant is God's formal establishment of the redemptive kingdom. The redemptive kingdom was foreshadowed in Genesis 3:15, which points towards Christ's work on the cross (VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 82–88).

¹⁸ VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 82–83.

¹⁹ VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 101–3.

broke into the fallen creation, establishing the church as a beachhead for the coming kingdom. In due time, Jesus Christ will return again to usher in a new heaven and earth where Christ will rule over all as redeemer. In the meantime, Christ's redemptive rule is represented in the church, not the entirety of creation. The institutional church should reflect this reality in its internal activities and external cultural engagements.

The primary role of the church is to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and lead believers in the worship of God.²⁰ While these important roles are ends in and of themselves, this work also edifies the body of believers so they can pursue loving service for neighbors as they engage the world through their common kingdom vocations and everyday lives. The church is not called to be a redeeming agent of the broader creation;²¹ it is witness to the gospel—the good news of God's work through Christ to save fallen humanity from God's just wrath. Christ will bring about the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant through his own efforts at God's predetermined time.

Church members should interact with one another through the redemptive ethic explained in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount.²² In general, when wronged by another church member, Christians should realize justice already fulfilled through Christ's atoning sacrifice and not seek retributive justice against other believers. This redemptive ethic is primarily required within the church. Christians are not obligated to engage in their common kingdom activities with neighbors and community members, whether at work or through civil associations, with Christ's sacrificial ethic. However, some nuance and exceptions do exist, such as when Christians are persecuted for their faith.²³ Overall, common kingdom activities like the administration of justice through government should pursue retributive justice as established in the Noahic Covenant.

2.1. Hart and Horton on the Church in America

D. G. Hart and Michael Horton have written extensively on topics related to the role of the church from a Two Kingdoms perspective. Their scholarship is reviewed in this sub-section. Hart's work is primarily historical and focuses on Protestant American church history. Hart takes a hard line on the role of the church in politics, arguing that the two should stay completely separate. Horton's work looks more so at the contemporary church in America and offers guidance for the church's proper internal function, but with implications for wider societal engagement. Both authors argue that the church should be the church, which means maintaining a clear distinction between the church as the representative of the redemptive kingdom, and the broader public life of the common kingdom. In particular, Hart and

²⁰ VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 131–45. Additional important roles for the church are exercising church discipline and providing charity to its members.

²¹ Michael Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life: Being Good News People in a Bad News World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 164–86; VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 151–59.

²² VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 112–15.

²³ Persecuted Christians are discouraged from seeking retribution when their faith is the cause of their persecution. This does not mean that the Two Kingdoms perspective discourages a church from appealing to the magistrate to, for instance, maintain their freedom to assemble for worship. Likewise, it does not mean that the Two Kingdoms perspective discourages a Christian from seeking retribution for, for instance, suing over property damages caused by a drunk driver. It does mean, however, that a Christian should not seek to balance the scales of justice when their faith causes them to be the subject of another's wrongdoing.

Horton argue that the church is not mandated to redeem politics and other common kingdom activities and its core mandate suffers when it attempts such redemptive activities.

D. G. Hart's *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism* recognizes pietism and confessionalism as the key divide for explaining the history Protestantism in America.²⁴ Much of Hart's book recaps debates between pietists and confessionalists across multiple denominations and throughout U.S. history.

Most scholars frame U.S. religious history by comparing evangelicals (or conservative Christians) and mainline Protestants (or liberal Christians).²⁵ Hart argues that evangelicals and mainline Protestants actually share much in common: both groups tend to downplay doctrine and are motivated by their faith to transform American society.²⁶ The main difference, according to Hart, "is that each side has a different program for defining America, the evangelical one relying more on the efforts of individual, families, and churches (i.e., mediating structures), the mainline version stressing legislation and government programs. But neither side wants to limit religion to the private worlds of family devotions or worship services."²⁷

Hart argues that confessionalism represents a stark contrast to pietism and is a truer application of the Christian faith. Confessionalism focuses on doctrine and liturgy and is associated with a sense of otherworldliness.²⁸ This otherworldliness is the Christian realization, according to Hart, "that this life is not the highest reality, and that ultimately the sort of social transformation either by politicians or believers is trivial compared to the work of the church in establishing a holy society of believers and preparing them for the world to come."²⁹ Hart urges American Protestantism to return to confessionalism because the pietist desire to transform society trivializes and politicizes the Christian faith.³⁰

In *A Secular Faith: Why Christianity Favors the Separation of Church and State*, Hart continues his argument for keeping Christianity out of politics.³¹ According to Hart, bringing the Christian faith into the political sphere makes the secular sacred, elevating political tensions, and causes the church to lose focus on its core mission as witness to Christ's work on our behalf, and God's purpose for government.³² Hart states, "the Achilles heel of many Christian politicians, American or not, has been the failure to recognize the impermanence of secular politics, that it is a temporary arrangement to restrain evil and promote justice until the dawn of a new period in the history of salvation."³³

In this book, Hart employs numerous examples spanning American history to demonstrate how integrating Christianity into politics politicizes and misrepresents the faith. Hart covers topics such as John Winthrop's "City on a Hill" speech, Walter Rauschenbusch's Social Gospel, efforts to keep prayer in public schools, Woodrow Wilson's Christian argument for democracy, and the demand for candidates

²⁴ D. G. Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism* (Lanham: Roman and Littlefield, 2002).

²⁵ Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, xxii–xxiv.

²⁶ Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, xxiv–xxx.

²⁷ Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, 59.

²⁸ Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, 59–60, 172.

²⁹ Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, 59–60.

³⁰ Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, xxvii.

³¹ Darryl Hart, *A Secular Faith: Why Christianity Favors the Separation of Church and State* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006).

³² Hart, *A Secular Faith*, 12.

³³ Hart, *A Secular Faith*, 41.

to comment publicly on their faith in modern presidential politics.³⁴ With each example, Hart explains how this form of political engagement has misrepresented the role of the church and corrupted the faith.³⁵

Hart argues that Christianity is primarily an otherworldly faith that does not have much to say in terms of solving contemporary societal problems.³⁶ Whether the efforts to bring Christianity into the public square are coming from the right or the left, Hart claims, “appeals to religion in politics invariably solve little and function as a divine benediction to one’s own political ideals or preferences.”³⁷

Hart takes aim at contemporary evangelicalism’s leftward pull on U.S. politics in *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin: Evangelicals and the Betrayal of American Conservatism*.³⁸ Many have assumed a natural and enduring fit between evangelicals and conservatives. Hart disagrees, arguing that “evangelicalism has always espoused a form of religious and moral idealism that is profoundly at odds with political conservatism.”³⁹

Political conservatism rightly understood, which Hart identifies with traditionalists such as Richard Weaver and Russell Kirk as well as classical liberals like Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, leads to an appreciation of limited government, the separation of powers, federalism, constitutionalism, and a robust civil society with the family and churches being foundational mediating institutions between the individual and the government.⁴⁰ Evangelical political engagement in the post-WWII era, Hart explains, started with conservative aims such as free markets, anti-communism, a strong national defense, and family values, but it evolved towards progressive, social justice goals that require a large and powerful centralized state to provide an expanded view of individual rights and administer a wide-ranging welfare state.⁴¹

In Hart’s review of evangelical political engagement, compassionate conservatives like Michael Gerson and Marvin Olasky have more in common with social justice progressives like Ron Sider and Tony Campolo than they do with conservative icons such as Russel Kirk and Milton Friedman—Gerson, Olasky, Sider, and Campolo all recognize a biblical call for the promotion of justice that can only be accomplished with the aid of a powerful state.⁴² Hart notes that this progressive perspective is the dominant trend among evangelical thought leaders:

The evangelical intelligentsia is tracking toward the political Left and away from conservative politics and the Republican Party. These left-leaning Protestants are the ones writing books, teaching at Christian colleges, and training future evangelical pastors at seminaries. Their understanding of United States politics and biblical teaching on a good society (they will invariably speak of such goodness in terms of “doing

³⁴ Hart, *A Secular Faith*.

³⁵ Hart, *A Secular Faith*.

³⁶ Hart, *A Secular Faith*, 12.

³⁷ Hart, *A Secular Faith*, 122.

³⁸ D. G. Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin: Evangelicals and the Betrayal of American Conservatism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

³⁹ Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin*, 152.

⁴⁰ Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin*, 179–91.

⁴¹ Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin*, 176.

⁴² Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin*, 179–84.

justice”) is leading them farther and farther away from the arguments, assumptions, and dispositions of conservative writers and thinkers.⁴³

Hart concludes by briefly sketching-out a conservative path forward for American evangelicals.⁴⁴ His tips include looking toward conservative philosophical arguments for guiding frameworks for government instead of the Sermon on the Mount, since the bible is not meant to be a guide for modern political engagement. He brings the book to a close by encouraging evangelicals to approach political life as pilgrims, not crusaders.

In *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church*, Horton describes how American Christianity has become “Christless,” a faith that has lost its focus on the truly good news of the gospel—what Christ has done for us in making possible our eternal rest with God.⁴⁵ Instead, Horton characterizes American Christianity as a moralistic, therapeutic deism that improperly views the faith as a set of rules to be followed as a path to personal or societal advancement in the present age.⁴⁶ This brand of Christianity is Christless, Horton argues, because it loses “the uniqueness of Christ’s once-and-for-all work for us, apart from us, outside of us, in the past, and the work that only he can do when he returns in glory.”⁴⁷

In *The Gospel-Driven Life: Being Good News People in a Bad News World*, the follow-up to *Christless Christianity*, Horton explains how Christians should put Christ back into Christianity.⁴⁸ Foremost, Horton implores readers to re-focus on the gospel message as “an announcement of something that has already been fully, finally, and objectively accomplished for us by God in Jesus Christ.”⁴⁹ It is received, not earned. It is a completed work to which we cannot add.

A gospel focus makes the biblical drama rightly centered on Christ and not us, argues Horton.⁵⁰ Horton explains that as heirs of the Creation Covenant, humans are hardwired to prove themselves by works and susceptible to reading themselves into the biblical narrative as starring actors with important roles in completing the gospel’s work.⁵¹ However, as Horton points out, Jesus’ disciples “were not co-redeemers. They did not help Jesus to bring in the kingdom. Eventually, they would become witnesses to Christ’s triumph, but they could not point to any contribution of their own along the way for its fulfillment.”⁵²

⁴³ Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin*, 16.

⁴⁴ Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin*, 207–26.

⁴⁵ Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008).

⁴⁶ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 41–43; The term “moralistic, therapeutic deism” was coined and defined by sociologist Christian Smith. Moralistic, therapeutic deism has five characteristics: (1) God created the world; (2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other; (3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself; (4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when needed to resolve a problem; and (5) Good people go to heaven when they die (Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 43).

⁴⁷ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 114.

⁴⁸ Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*.

⁴⁹ Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, 73.

⁵⁰ Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, 17–23.

⁵¹ Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, 17–23.

⁵² Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, 88–89.

Here is the paradox that Horton points out: by focusing on Christ's accomplished work, Christians are sanctified and better equipped to love their neighbors.⁵³ He argues, "only when we know that we are condemned in ourselves but righteous in Christ are we free for the first time to love God and our neighbors."⁵⁴ Recognizing Christ's finished work frees us to love our neighbors, not as part of expanding Christ's kingdom, but as a proper response to what Christ has done for us, argues Horton.⁵⁵

2.2. What's Still Missing?

Hart and Horton see a distinct role for the church and its redemptive kingdom activities, and argue that the church—either as individual Christians or as an institution—should not seek to Christianize or redeem common kingdom activities such as economics and government.⁵⁶ Hart argues for a confessionalist church that is focused on doctrine and liturgy.⁵⁷ Horton promotes a gospel-centered church, arguing: "the central message of Christianity is not a worldview, a way of life, or a program for personal and society change; it is a gospel."⁵⁸

However, Two Kingdoms doctrine does not promote the Benedict option of Christian social withdrawal or social quietism on issues of justice, and neither Hart nor Horton encourage Christians to withdraw from their common kingdom responsibilities. Even though Hart argues that Christians should not bring Christian language into the public square, he does not discourage Christians from participating in politics.⁵⁹ And although Horton discourages Christians from attempting to find a Christian way of conducting common kingdom activities, he argues that Christians should serve neighbors through activities such as business and government.⁶⁰

What is missing from Hart and Horton's arguments is a positive explanation for how Christians should engage in common kingdom activities *as* Christians. Most certainly, the institutional church does not have the technical expertise to promote specific public policies and scripture does not provide guidance on complex technical issues. However, the Christian faith most likely does provide a degree of guidance, or at least framing, for Christian engagement in common kingdom activities. Furthermore, without some grounding in scripture, Christians will be unwittingly influenced by the cultural trends of the age, some of which might be antithetical to the Christian tradition. David VanDrunen's work on natural law provides a scriptural mooring for the Christian's work in the common kingdom and is covered in the next section.

⁵³ Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, 79.

⁵⁴ Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, 79.

⁵⁵ Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, 79.

⁵⁶ D. G. Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, xvii, 100–1; Darryl Hart, *A Secular Faith*, 12; Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin*, 8; Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 206–35; Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, 249.

⁵⁷ Hart, *A Secular Faith*, 242–57.

⁵⁸ Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, 105.

⁵⁹ Hart, *A Secular Faith*, 257.

⁶⁰ Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, 246–49.

3. Two Kingdoms Doctrine Overview Part III: The Common Kingdom

The common kingdom encompasses social life that is common to all people. Like God's call for the Jewish exiles in Babylon to seek the welfare of the city in Jeremiah 29, Christians are called to participate in common kingdom activities for the common good. However, even though Christians live as residents of the coming (redemptive) kingdom in the life of the church and pursue Christ's redemptive ethics within that context, God calls Christians—and all people—to participate in common life through the standard established in the Noahic Covenant.⁶¹ The Noahic Covenant standard is a part of the natural law and is written on the hearts of all people, and is therefore universally known. An explanation of the natural law and its relevance for the Christian's participation in common kingdom is explored in VanDrunen's work.

3.1. VanDrunen's Explanation of the Natural Law

VanDrunen's book *Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law* uses covenant theology to show that natural law is a key theme throughout scripture and of vital importance for understanding how Christians should engage the common kingdom. VanDrunen offers the following definition of natural law: "natural law consists of the obligations and consequences incumbent upon and known by human beings as image bearers of God and participants in the protological moral order."⁶² This definition requires unpacking.

Recall the Creation Covenant explained above. God created the heavens and earth, declared them good, and entered into his well-earned rest. Humans were made to follow God's example because we are created in God's image. As image-bearers, humanity's ontological nature cannot be separated from its telos. In other words, what humanity *is* cannot be separated from what it *does* or its *ultimate aim*. Humans were meant to reflect God by being generous and creative (mirroring God's work of creation), righteous judges (emulating God's righteous judgments of creation), and enter eschatological rest after successfully fulfilling these tasks (following in the father's footsteps). In a sense, humans are hard-wired with a desire to prove themselves before God.

Not only did God create humanity to fulfill these tasks, he created humanity with the capabilities to successfully complete them. These characteristics are inseparable from what it means to be created in God's image. God equipped humanity with the moral compass necessary to perfectly fulfill its task to be generous and judge righteously and achieve its destiny, eternal rest with God. For VanDrunen, this innate sense of morality, duty, and eschatological hope is the natural law.⁶³ Humans were created to work their way to eternal rest with God through the creation covenant.

Natural law is a comprehensive moral order rather than just a series of rules, but it is conveniently summarized in the decalogue (Ten Commandments) and summarized even further in Christ's command to love God and one another.⁶⁴ However, the entire natural law is not applicable to the common kingdom, since elements of the natural law include proper faith and worship, which are only suitable for the redemptive kingdom. The aspects of the natural law that are relevant for the common kingdom reflect the tasks that God gave all of humanity through the Noahic Covenant.

⁶¹ VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 118–19.

⁶² VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 15.

⁶³ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 86, 91–94.

⁶⁴ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 14–15.

After the great flood, God re-issued three obligations through the Noahic Covenant: to be fruitful and multiply, instructions for treating animals humanely, and to exercise proportionate, retributive justice.⁶⁵ As image-bearers, humanity is equipped with an innate understanding of how to carry-out these tasks. God imbued all of humanity with an innate understanding of life related to procreation and family life, the proper treatment of animals, and retributive justice, and humanity's proper exercise of these activities restrains evil behavior in the fallen age.

In particular, VanDrunen emphasizes the *lex talionis*, or the principle of proportionate, retributive justice, as a foundational natural law principle for the current era's moral order.⁶⁶ After Adam's failure, God expelled him from the garden, condemning him to death. This was proportionate since God required perfect obedience to enter his rest. The Noahic Covenant re-established the *lex talionis*, but included the notion of forbearance. God promised to preserve and sustain creation until Christ's second coming and the consummation of redeemed creation. Likewise, humans should prudently exercise forbearance in their application the *lex talionis*. It is through this basic standard that Christians should engage in public life, political life in particular.

3.2. VanDrunen on Government

VanDrunen's approach to government is rooted in the Noahic Covenant and runs through Romans 13:1–7. VanDrunen argues that the Apostle Paul, as an expert in the Jewish tradition, was intimately familiar with Genesis and wrote Romans 13:1–7 with the Noahic Covenant in mind.⁶⁷ Overall, VanDrunen argues for a limited government that focuses on retributive justice.

In "Power to the People: Revisiting Civil Resistance in Romans 13:1–7 in Light of the Noahic Covenant," VanDrunen addresses the issue of whether or not citizens are required to submit to unjust civil authorities and he concludes that Paul's command to obey magistrates is limited.⁶⁸ VanDrunen refers back to the Noahic Covenant to reach this conclusion.

Through the Noahic Covenant God re-tasked humanity to pursue justice in the fallen age: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image" (Genesis 9:6). The phrase "for God made man in his own image" applies to the human capability and moral requirement to administer justice: God is a just judge. God made man in his image. Therefore, humans are equipped and required to judge justly as beings created in God's image. The Noahic Covenant holds all of humanity responsible for retributive justice. This foundational requirement was never rescinded by God and Paul's exhortation to submit to civil authority did not seek to overturn it.⁶⁹ Consequently, VanDrunen argues that individuals may resist an unjust civil magistrate under the authority of the

⁶⁵ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 104–7.

⁶⁶ David VanDrunen, "Natural Law, the Lex Talionis, and the Power of the Sword" *Liberty University Law Review* 2 (2008), 945–67. VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, 116–17.

⁶⁷ David VanDrunen, "Power to the People: Revisiting Civil Resistance in Romans 13:1–7 in Light of the Noahic Covenant," *Journal of Law and Religion* 31 (2016): 4–18. VanDrunen notes seven similarities between the two passages: (1) God delegates judicial authority to human servants in both, (2) both authorize coercion in pursuit of justice, (3) both address justice in retributive terms, (4) both speak in terms of protectionist rather than protectionist ends, (5) neither provide much detail in terms of a moral structure that must be applied, (6) both are directed to all of humanity, and (7) neither contain a redemptive element ("Power to the People," 8–12).

⁶⁸ VanDrunen, "Power to the People."

⁶⁹ VanDrunen, "Power to the People," 16.

Noahic Covenant and the human responsibility to promote retributive justice.⁷⁰ However, the historical context of Paul's letter to the Romans with Rome's persecution of the first century church sets a high standard for the justification of civil resistance.⁷¹

In "The Protectionist Purpose of Law: A Moral Case from the Biblical Covenant with Noah," VanDrunen makes the case that government should pursue protectionist ends as opposed to perfectionist ones.⁷² Protectionists view protecting citizens from being wronged by others as the core function of law and government. The state primarily achieves this mandate coercively through the proportionate punishment of wrongdoing and the threat of punishment to discourage potential wrongdoing. Perfectionists add to this task the responsibility to promote virtue among the citizenry.

VanDrunen argues that The Noahic Covenant provides three reasons why government is not authorized to pursue Perfectionist ends: First, the Noahic Covenant recognizes the inherently corrupt nature of humans and thus does not allow them the power and authority to attempt Perfectionism.⁷³ Second, the Noahic Covenant promises to preserve all of creation, including fallen human society, not to perfect or redeem it, thus ruling out a Perfectionist mandate.⁷⁴ Third, the Noahic Covenant applies to all people (the common kingdom), not just those called to Christ (the redemptive kingdom), it promotes a pluralistic society.⁷⁵ Perfectionist goals to promote virtue would naturally elevate one perspective of virtue above others, coercing all citizens to acquiesce to a single vision. Finally, VanDrunen supplements his case for a Protectionist role of government by demonstrating the commonalities between the Noahic Covenant and Paul's view of civil authority in Romans 13, noting that both legitimize the role of civil authority to bring retributive justice through coercion and that neither promise salvation or a restoration of society.⁷⁶

In "The Market Economy and Christian Ethics: Refocusing Debate through the Two-Kingdoms Doctrine," VanDrunen argues that a market-based economy is an appropriate economic system for the current age.⁷⁷ VanDrunen begins by noting that Christian economic perspectives are often rooted in eschatology.⁷⁸ Christians holding an anti-market view often start from an eschatological perspective

⁷⁰ VanDrunen, "Power to the People," 15–17.

⁷¹ VanDrunen, "Power to the People," 17.

⁷² David VanDrunen, "The Protectionist Purpose of Law: A Moral Case from the Biblical Covenant with Noah," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 35 (2015): 101–17.

⁷³ VanDrunen argues: "for the Noahic covenant to constrain human violence effectively, its first concern had to be to limit political power. It is therefore compelling to read Genesis 9:6 not as illustrating one among many possible uses of political power but as prescribing boundaries for its exercise: that is, political power may be wielded to defend against those who violate others' rights, and for this purpose only" ("The Protectionist Purpose of Law," 108).

⁷⁴ VanDrunen, "The Protectionist Purpose of Law," 104–8.

⁷⁵ VanDrunen, "The Protectionist Purpose of Law," 104–8.

⁷⁶ According to VanDrunen, the Noahic Covenant and Romans 13 "both present their instruction as universally obligatory, neither associates civil authority with promises of salvation, both recognize authority to bring justice through coercion, both characterize justice in retributive terms, and both describe civil authority as delegated by God" ("The Protectionist Purpose of Law," 109).

⁷⁷ David VanDrunen, "The Market Economy and Christian Ethics: Refocusing Debate through the Two Kingdoms Doctrine," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 17 (2014): 11–45.

⁷⁸ VanDrunen, "The Market Economy and Christian Ethics," 12.

that is ultimate in focus.⁷⁹ They seek to “conform economic life to the eschatological standards of the kingdom” of God by basing economic life on grace and Christ’s sacrificial love.⁸⁰ From this perspective, the ethics envisioned in Christ’s sermon should be applied to modern economic life and by doing so Christ’s kingdom is realized in the current age.

VanDrunen starts with a protological focus and concludes with a penultimate assessment of the economy.⁸¹ VanDrunen agrees with various anti-market Christians that the norms and practices of a market-based economy do not meet the standards of the coming kingdom; however, from the Two Kingdoms perspective, this should not be the standard.⁸² Instead, VanDrunen assesses the market system by the needs of the current, fallen era and the standard of the Noahic Covenant.⁸³ Overall, VanDrunen concludes that a market-based economic system, while not mandated by scripture, is compatible with Christianity and the Two Kingdoms perspective in particular and is an economic system capable of creating economic prosperity in the current era.⁸⁴

3.3. Two Kingdoms and Natural Law Approach in the Reformed Tradition

In *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought*, VanDrunen dons the role of historian and traces conceptions of natural law and the two kingdoms across the history of Reformed theologians, starting with precursors of the Reformed tradition like Augustine and Martin Luther, continuing with John Calvin, and running through Abraham Kuyper and Neo-Calvinists such as Herman Dooyeweerd and Albert Wolters.⁸⁵ Overall, VanDrunen demonstrates that the doctrines of natural law and two kingdoms played a prominent role in reformed social thinking throughout the bulk of the tradition’s history.⁸⁶ With some variation, Reformed theologians rooted common kingdom activities in a creational, natural law ethic governed by Jesus as creator and sustainer and they viewed the church as rooted in an eschatological ethic governed by Christ as savior and redeemer. It was not until the 20th-century neo-Calvinists, Dooyeweerd in particular, did these doctrines fall out of fashion.⁸⁷

Neo-Calvinists perceive only one kingdom, where all of creation is ruled by Christ as savior and redeemer and within which Christians participate in Christ’s redemptive activities.⁸⁸ For Neo-Calvinists then, the Christian’s work is Adam’s cultural mandate reestablished.⁸⁹ VanDrunen concludes that neo-Calvinists, “in their grounding of culture in creation as it is being redeemed, have placed an

⁷⁹ VanDrunen, “The Market Economy and Christian Ethics,” 12.

⁸⁰ VanDrunen, “The Market Economy and Christian Ethics,” 12.

⁸¹ VanDrunen, “The Market Economy and Christian Ethics,” 22–29.

⁸² VanDrunen, “The Market Economy and Christian Ethics,” 22–29.

⁸³ VanDrunen, “The Market Economy and Christian Ethics,” 22–29.

⁸⁴ VanDrunen, “The Market Economy and Christian Ethics,” 33–35.

⁸⁵ VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*.

⁸⁶ VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*.

⁸⁷ VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, 348–50.

⁸⁸ VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, 3–5.

⁸⁹ VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, 3–5.

eschatological burden upon the cultural task that was not present in earlier Reformed thought and that further distinguishes their thought from earlier ideas of natural law and the two kingdoms.”⁹⁰

4. Criticisms of the Two Kingdoms Perspective

The overarching neo-Calvinist criticism of the Two Kingdoms doctrine is the mirror image of VanDrunen’s critique of the neo-Calvinists: while VanDrunen and company reject the neo-Calvinist mono-kingdom view of Christ’s lordship, neo-Calvinists reject the Two Kingdoms understanding of God’s varied lordship, calling it an unwarranted dualism.⁹¹ Neo-Calvinists employ a realized eschatology where Christ rules over the entirety of creation as savior and redeemer.⁹² Whereas Two Kingdoms authors apply Jesus’ “turn the other cheek” and Sermon the Mount ethic to life within the church as Christ’s representative of his *coming* kingdom, neo-Calvinist contend that this ethic should be realized now and applied to all of creation as Christ’s *current* kingdom, though “particularized for living within various spheres, such as family, state, and church.”⁹³

Swanson claims that the Two Kingdoms approach treats the common kingdom as a morally neutral realm.⁹⁴ Ouweneel echoes that criticism, labeling the Two Kingdoms doctrine a type of scholasticism, the approach that “placed only the spiritual (sacred) domain under the authority of Scripture and under the kingship of Christ, whereas the natural (secular) domain was placed under the authority of pagan thinking, especially Aristotle.”⁹⁵

The dualism charge is occasionally accompanied by slippery-slope rhetoric framing history’s vilest evils as permitted by the same Two Kingdoms mentality covered in this essay. In his forward to an address by S. G. de Graaf criticizing the European church’s silence on the Nazi movement, Kloosterman connects Graff’s criticism to the modern Two Kingdoms movement, claiming that Two Kingdoms proponents encourage the de-coupling of moral issues from political ones: “separating ‘x’ as a moral issue from ‘x’ as a concrete political policy issue constitutes precisely the kind of surreal religious secularizing dualism that permitted numerous German and Dutch citizens to cooperate with German National Socialism.”⁹⁶ Carl E. Zylstra uses a similar logic in his criticism of VanDrunen.⁹⁷ VanDrunen used Dordt College’s effort to develop a “Christian” football program to exemplify a vain attempt to

⁹⁰ VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, 349.

⁹¹ S. G. de Graaf, “‘Christ and the Magistrate’ and ‘Church and State’: Two Addresses by S G. de Graaf,” trans. Nelson Kloosterman, in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*, ed. Ryan C. McIlhenny (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 85–124, esp. 89–91. Scott A. Swanson, “How Does “Thy Kingdom Come” before the End? Theology of the Present and Future Kingdom in the Book of Revelation,” in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*, ed. Ryan C. McIlhenny (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 201–26, esp. 206–26.

⁹² Swanson, “How Does ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ before the End,” 206.

⁹³ Kloosterman, “Christ and the Magistrate,” 89.

⁹⁴ Swanson, “How Does ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ before the End,” 207–8.

⁹⁵ Willem J. Ouweneel, *The World is Christ’s: A Critique of Two Kingdoms Theology* (Toronto: Ezra Press, 2018), 5.

⁹⁶ Kloosterman, “Christ and the Magistrate,” 91.

⁹⁷ Carl E. Zylstra, “Serious Education for Serious Christians,” *Pro Rege* 39 (2011): 39–42; VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*.

squeeze what should be common kingdom principles from the redemptive kingdom's logic.⁹⁸ Zylstra, Dordt's former president, connected VanDrunen's position to the refusal of Christians to oppose slavery in Antebellum South.⁹⁹

Christian neglect of moral aspects of policy issues is a problem, but it is not a practice promoted by the Two Kingdoms scholars covered here, despite the charges of Ouweneel, Kloosterman, Swanson, Zylstra, and others.¹⁰⁰ Chattel slavery and European totalitarianism present clear violations of God's created moral order as established through natural law and re-established by God in the Noahic Covenant. Southern slave states and the Nazi government clearly failed the God-ordained task of punishing and deterring injustice. From the Two Kingdoms perspective, in both contexts, church officers should have preached about the value of all image bearers and the importance of retributive civil justice. Individual Christians should have applied those principles to their public life and opposed slavery and totalitarianism. Consequently, while it is true that Two Kingdoms scholars take a dual track approach to ethics, with, for instance, government activities under the *lex talionis* standard and intra-church relationships reflecting Christ's sacrificial love, it is simply inaccurate to claim that the Two Kingdoms scholars covered here conceive of the common kingdom as "morally neutral."

4.1. Natural Law Critique

The neo-Calvinist critics claiming that Two Kingdoms scholars view common kingdom activities as morally neutral are clearly wrong. Two Kingdoms scholars apply to common kingdom activities a natural law ethic grounded in God's created order and re-established through the Noahic Covenant. More nuanced neo-Calvinist criticisms question the Two Kingdom's use of natural law.

Scheuers and Parler claim that VanDrunen misinterprets Romans 2:14–16, causing his inaccurate understanding and application of natural law.¹⁰¹ Scheuers and Parler argue that, because of the fall, only God's redeemed people have his law written on their hearts.¹⁰² Thus, the natural law is not embedded in the conscience of every human and capable of being the foundation for ethical behavior in the common kingdom, as claimed by VanDrunen.¹⁰³

Lief connects VanDrunen's alleged misuse of natural law to the dualist critique described earlier and argues for interpreting Christian moral responsibility through a Christological moral order for all of creation instead of a natural law morality grounded in the creational order.¹⁰⁴ Lief explains, "this

⁹⁸ Zylstra, "Serious Education for Serious Christians," 39–42.

⁹⁹ Zylstra, "Serious Education for Serious Christians," 40.

¹⁰⁰ Ouweneel, *The World is Christ's*; Kloosterman, "Christ and the Magistrate;" Swanson, "How Does 'Thy Kingdom Come' before the End;" Zylstra, "Serious Education for Serious Christians."

¹⁰¹ Timothy R. Scheuers, "Dual Citizenship, Dual Ethic? Evaluating the Two Kingdoms Perspective on the Christian Culture," in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*, ed. Ryan C. McIlhenny (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 125–54; Branson Parler, "Two Cities or Two Kingdoms? The Importance of the Ultimate in Reformed Social Thought," in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*, ed. Ryan C. McIlhenny (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 173–97; VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*.

¹⁰² Schuers, "Dual Citizenship, Dual Ethic," 135–38; Parler, "Two Cities or Two Kingdoms," 175–76.

¹⁰³ VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*; VanDrunen, "The Market Economy and Christian Ethics."

¹⁰⁴ Jason Lief, "Eschatology, Creation, and Practical Reason: A Reformational Interpretation of the Two Kingdoms Perspective," in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*, ed. Ryan C. McIlhenny. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 227–50, 236.

Christological interpretation of creation, which provides the telos and direction of creation, then, is the ground from which the Christian community, as the body of Christ, participates in the broader cultural life of the temporal sphere.”¹⁰⁵ In other words, Lief argues, Christians should participate in cultural activities according to the logic of Christ’s sacrificial lordship over the entirety of creation, not an irrelevant creational order.¹⁰⁶ Lief adds that VanDrunen’s perspective starts with inaccurate precepts due to his literalistic interpretation of the creation account in Genesis, essentially disagreeing with VanDrunen’s use of Covenant Theology.¹⁰⁷

4.2. The Historical Critique

As explained above, VanDrunen claims the title of reformed orthodoxy for his approach, tracing a natural law and Two Kingdoms thread through Augustine, Luther and throughout the reformed tradition until it was snapped by Dooyeweerd and the neo-Calvinists.¹⁰⁸ Much ink has been spilt trying to properly interpret Calvin and other key reformed thinkers. It is no surprise then that the battle for Calvin continued with the Two-Kingdoms-neo-Calvinist debate. Neo-Calvinists refute VanDrunen’s claim to orthodoxy, particularly regarding Calvin’s thought.¹⁰⁹ Whereas VanDrunen claims that Luther and Calvin share many Two Kingdoms principles in common, Palmer disagrees, arguing that Calvin did not share Luther’s law-gospel dualism.¹¹⁰ Venema argues that VanDrunen inaccurately downplays Calvin’s prioritization of special revelation over natural law and general revelation.¹¹¹ And Haas notes that Calvin thought scripture could guide magistrates to a God-ordained functioning of the state.¹¹² However, other neo-Calvinist scholars admit that Calvin does indeed utilize a Two Kingdoms framework.¹¹³

One disappointing feature of the Two Kingdoms—neo-Calvinist debate is what has received less attention—VanDrunen’s primary exegetical defense of his argument in *Divine Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law*. This is partially the product of timing. *Divine*

¹⁰⁵ Lief, “Eschatology, Creation, and Practical Reason,” 236.

¹⁰⁶ Lief, “Eschatology, Creation, and Practical Reason,” 236.

¹⁰⁷ Jason Lief, “Two Kingdoms Perspective and Theological Method: Why I Still Disagree with David Van Drunen,” *Pro Rege* 41 (2012): 1–5.

¹⁰⁸ VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, 348–50.

¹⁰⁹ Nelson Kloosterman (“Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms in the Thought of Herman Bavinck,” in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*, ed. Ryan C. McIlhenny [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012], 65–81) disputes VanDrunen’s (*Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*) natural law and Two Kingdoms interpretation of Herman Bavinck. John Halsey Wood Jr. (“Theologian of the Revolution: Abraham Kuyper’s Radical Proposal for Church and State,” in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*, ed. Ryan C. McIlhenny [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012], 155–72) and Timothy Palmer (“Two-Kingdom Doctrine: A Comparative Study of Martin Luther and Abraham Kuyper,” *Pro Rege* 37 [2009]: 13–25) dispute VanDrunen’s (*Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*) Two Kingdoms interpretation of Abraham Kuyper.

¹¹⁰ VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, 67–118; Palmer, “Two-Kingdom Doctrine.”

¹¹¹ Cornel Venema, “The Restoration of All Things to Proper Order: An Assessment of the ‘Two Kingdoms/ Natural Law’ Interpretation of Calvin’s Public Theology,” in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*, ed. Ryan C. McIlhenny (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 3–32; VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, 67–118.

¹¹² Gene Haas, “Calvin, Natural Law, and the Two Kingdoms,” in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*, ed. Ryan C. McIlhenny (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 33–64.

¹¹³ For example, see Lief, “Two Kingdoms Perspective and Theological Method.”

Covenants and Moral Order was published in 2014, two years after *Kingdoms Apart*, the primary neo-Calvinist response to VanDrunen and company's perspective. The exegetical criticisms throughout *Kingdoms Apart* are largely directed at VanDrunen's *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, which is a lighter read designed for a wider audience. Understandably, neo-Calvinists are more comfortable confronting the Two Kingdoms and natural law approach from the strength of their philosophical tradition and employing their familiar terminology. That said, a robust neo-Calvinist exegetical engagement with *Divine Covenants and Moral Order* would further the conversation.¹¹⁴

5. Conclusion, Application, and Future Two Kingdoms Scholarship

This article presented the theological underpinnings and a few applications of the Two Kingdoms and natural law perspective as articulated by three prominent scholars with some connection to Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California—David VanDrunen, Michael Horton, and D. G. Hart. In an attempt to provide additional clarity on this perspective, the paper concludes with an application to illustrate the different processes through which Two Kingdoms and neo-Calvinist scholars would approach discerning God-honoring behavior in a common kingdom activity. As such, the paper will return to the college football example mentioned above and attempt to answer the question: how should a Christian participate in college football?

Neo-Calvinists would attempt to discern a distinctly Christian way of participating in college football by developing a Christian philosophy of football. The neo-Calvinists would argue that the Bible does not speak directly to football, its rules, or its strategy. Thus, there is no such thing as a Christian theology of football. However, starting with the creation, fall, redemption ground motive, neo-Calvinists would examine the core assumptions and operating principles of college football through the logic of Christ's redemptive (eschatological) ethic and lordship over this particular sphere of athletics, discerning appropriate Christian principles and applications. These principles and applications would be morally binding not just on Christians, but all those who participate in football because of Christ's lordship over every square-yard of the football field. Even more, Christians will testify to Christ's lordship by altering the rules and practices of college football to conform to those eschatological principles. And finally, for neo-Calvinists, college football will continue into the eschaton as a redeemed cultural product.¹¹⁵

Two Kingdoms proponents would agree that as a common kingdom activity, there is not a Christian way of, say, executing a run-pass-option play or 4-2-5 defense. The Bible clearly does not speak to a "Christian" football play or strategy. Yet they would go further than the neo-Calvinists, claiming that there is no such thing as a Christian (read "redeemed") version of college football. Therefore, Christians should not attempt to develop a "Christian standard" of playing football and then seek to bind the

¹¹⁴ Ouweneel (*The World is Christ's*) provides a step in this direction. However, Ouweneel (*The World is Christ's*) does not cite *Divine Covenants and Moral Order* in his criticism of natural law and instead relies on VanDrunen's *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*.

¹¹⁵ Neo-Calvinist scholars recognize potential problems associated with their transformationalist perspective. For instance, in *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), author James K. A. Smith writes, "under the banner of 'transforming' culture, we marched straight into our own assimilation" (xi). Smith attempts to develop a Christian posture for cultural engagement that faithfully works to bend society toward the heavenly kingdom and avoid triumphalism by recognizing the limits of human efforts and by understanding the extent to which our worldviews are shaped by cultural practices (17–18).

believer's conscience to that standard. College football is a common kingdom activity that will likely come to an end at the coming of Christ's kingdom.

This does not mean that Two Kingdoms proponents view college football as a secular activity devoid of moral implications. Two Kingdoms scholars would not consider college football, or any common kingdom activity, to be a "morally neutral" realm, as generally alleged by their neo-Calvinist critics. All people, whether Christians are not, should apply a basic natural law standard to the game. This appropriate standard is embedded in the created (protological) order and is discernable by all people. All people testify to God's protological moral order and his command to retributive justice by bringing this standard to bear in common kingdom activities. Furthermore, Christians can love and serve their neighbors by discerning and applying this standard to all common kingdom activities, whether in government and politics, economics and business, or even college football.

What does a Two Kingdoms approach to college football look like? Two Kingdoms scholars would promote basic understandings of fairness as an application of the protological order's justice, where both teams and all players would be treated equally as understood in the context of the game. Any changes to rules (like prohibitions on striking with the crown of one's helmet to avoid head injuries) or the creation or adherence to various norms (like celebrating after a touchdown) would be the realm of wisdom, not that of a Christian ethical mandate. Wisdom recognizes context, nuance, tradeoffs, and the possibility of unintended consequences. It is possible for two God-fearing Christians to come to different conclusions on wisdom issues, since wisdom also stems from experience and issue-specific knowledge.

However, while Christians would be held to the same standard as non-Christians on the football field, it should be noted that an individual Christian's motivation to honor God in all activities will color his approach to football and his interactions with coaches, teammates, officials, and opponents. This motivation, though, will not produce a standard or ethic above the natural law standard to which other people should be bound. A Christian football player may choose to shake hands with opponents after the game and invite them to a public prayer at the fifty-yard-line, as frequently occurs. However, Christians are not required by their faith to participate in these handshakes or prayers.

To conclude, the Two Kingdoms perspective is clear: Christians should not attempt to transform the broader culture into the redemptive kingdom. Christians receive Christ's kingdom; they do not build it. However, while the parameters outlined by D. G. Hart and Michael Horton highlight biblically unwarranted forms of cultural engagement, they do not provide much guidance for how appropriate Christian engagement with the common kingdom should occur. David VanDrunen's work begins to sketch-out a positive program for common kingdom engagement from the Two Kingdoms and natural law perspective. Two Kingdoms scholarship should continue to develop this line of thinking.

Why Not Grandchildren? An Argument against Reformed Paedobaptism

— Gavin Ortlund —

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Abstract: Reformed paedobaptism generally argues from continuity with the Abrahamic covenant, situating infant baptism as a continuation of infant circumcision. Credobaptist objections have typically challenged this premise, stressing points of discontinuity across the biblical covenants. This article suggests a different (though not incompatible) response, arguing that even if the paedobaptist vision of continuity between circumcision and baptism is accepted, current paedobaptist practice is not in line with it anyway, since circumcision was never at any time administered to “those who believe and their children.” The argument is buttressed by a historical survey of Reformed baptismal practices from John Calvin through the mid-17th century (often forgotten/unknown today) which, by the same appeal to continuity with circumcision, affirmed intergenerational baptism.

B. B. Warfield gave a helpfully succinct summary of the Reformed case for paedobaptism:¹ The argument in a nutshell is simply this: God established His Church in the days of Abraham and put children into it. They must remain there until he puts them out. He has nowhere put them out. They are still then members of His Church and as such entitled to its ordinances. Among these ordinances is baptism, which *standing in similar place* in the New Dispensation to circumcision in the Old, is like it to be given to children.²

This article probes these words *standing in a similar place*. How similar, precisely? Typically, Reformed paedobaptists describe this similarity as one of identity, or near identity. John Calvin, for example, asserted that “whatever belongs to circumcision pertains likewise to baptism ... baptism has taken

¹ For my purposes here I refer to “covenantal paedobaptism” and “Reformed paedobaptism” interchangeably to refer to that species of paedobaptism which emerged in Reformed, Presbyterian, and Congregational traditions and which is developed on the basis of covenant theology, in distinction from other (frequently more sacramentalist) expressions of paedobaptism in, e.g., Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, or Anglican traditions.

² B. B. Warfield, “The Polemics of Infant Baptism,” in *Studies in Theology*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 9:408, italics added.

the place of circumcision to fulfill the same office among us.”³ John Murray claimed that “there is an essential identity of meaning” between circumcision and baptism.⁴ Geoffrey Bromiley used the word “equation” to describe the relationship between the two rites.⁵

This view of the circumcision-baptism relationship is grounded in the larger historical interpretation that one rite has taken the place of the other: “circumcision ... was replaced in the New Testament by baptism” (the Heidelberg Catechism);⁶ “Christ established in [circumcision’s] place the sacrament of baptism” (the Belgic Confession).⁷ As a result, Reformed paedobaptists argue for the baptism of infants on the basis of the lack of any abrogation of this Old Testament practice. As Pierre Marcel reasoned, “if children ought to be debarred from the birthright which they enjoyed ever since there was a Church on earth, for thousands of years in fact, then there is need for a positive commandment which enjoins their exclusion.”⁸ Similarly, Louis Berkhof argued, “for twenty centuries children had been formally initiated into the Church, and the New Testament does not say that this must now cease.”⁹ Indeed, in typical Reformed paedobaptism argumentation, infant baptism has a sufficient “similarity” (Warfield’s term) to infant circumcision that the two institutions stand or fall together: “any argument against infant baptism is necessarily an argument against infant circumcision.”¹⁰

Much of the contemporary response to his argument among credobaptists¹¹ comes in a more dispensational vein, emphasizing discontinuity between circumcision and baptism. But it has not always been so. Older traditions of credobaptist argumentation, like that of Nehemiah Coxe in the 17th century, built their case on the basis of covenant theology.¹² Similarly, the best of more recent credobaptist argumentation affirms an overarching unity from the Abrahamic covenant up through the new covenant, but insist on certain points of development and crescendo within that unity, such that the meaning of circumcision cannot be wholesale carried over into the meaning of baptism. Thus Karl Barth put it: “recognition of the unity [between the old and new covenants] ... does not include an

³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.16.4, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

⁴ John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Philadelphia: The Committee on Christian Education, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1952), 75.

⁵ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Children of Promise: The Case for Baptizing Infants*, reprint ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 18.

⁶ The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 74.

⁷ The Belgic Confession, Article 34.

⁸ Pierre Marcel, *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism: Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2002), 122.

⁹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 636.

¹⁰ Robert R. Booth, *Children of the Promise: The Biblical Case for Infant Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995), 109.

¹¹ By “credobaptist” I simply mean those who affirm that the proper subjects of Christian baptism are those who make a credible profession of faith in Christ. I use this more generic theological term rather than the denominational term “Baptist” to avoid confusion, because many who affirm this view come from other traditions, such as Congregational, Quaker, Pentecostal, free church, non-denominational, etc.

¹² Nehemiah Coxe and John Owen, *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ*, ed. Ronald D. Miller, James M. Renihan, and Francisco Orozco (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic, 2005).

immediate transfer of what is said about Old Testament circumcision to what must be said about New Testament baptism, as though the definitions and meaning of the two were interchangeable.”¹³

Following on Barth’s heels, Paul Jewett affirmed an essential continuity throughout the biblical covenants, but objected that paedobaptism tends to over-stretch this continuity, flattening out developments across redemptive history. According to Jewett, there is unity between circumcision and baptism, but it is the kind of unity that one finds between the Old and New Testaments more generally: a unity that embraces movement and typological fulfillment.¹⁴ Thus, the meaning of baptism overlaps with but does not exhaust the meaning of circumcision: “circumcision is neither unlike baptism nor identical with it.”¹⁵ Other credobaptists have said similarly.¹⁶ Thus, a credobaptist can agree with Warfield that baptism is “similar” to circumcision, but will take this similarity as most paedobaptists take the relation of the Passover meal and the Lord’s Supper, in that one fulfills the other but not in so identical a manner as to justify paedocommunion.

In this article I offer a further objection to the Reformed paedobaptist argument. It is situated within the Barth-Jewett “similar but not identical” tradition of argumentation, agreeing with them that baptism and circumcision, while “standing in a similar place,” should nonetheless not be strictly equated.¹⁷ It seeks to go one step further, however, suggesting that the practice of baptizing the infant children of believers is not, in fact, identical with the practice of circumcision throughout the Old Testament. Thus, even if we *did* want to identify the meaning circumcision and baptism, the result would not be paedobaptism as practiced by the majority of Reformed paedobaptist churches today. In other words, the problem is not simply with the equation of baptism and circumcision, but with how circumcision has been construed in the first place.

In what follows are three steps: (1) a brief sketch of the argument, (2) an engagement with several possible responses, and (3) an exploration of historical antecedents in the Reformed tradition that anticipate the concerns reflected in the argument.

¹³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, study ed. (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), IV/4:173.

¹⁴ For Jewett, the Abrahamic covenant, of which circumcision functioned as a sign, is similar but not identical to the new covenant. On the one hand, God’s covenant with Abraham had trans-dispensational elements: for example, the promise “to be God to you and to your offspring after you” (Gen 17:7) is never abrogated in the New Testament but rather fulfilled in the church age (Gal 3:7) and ultimately in eternity (Rev 21:3). At the same time, aspects of this covenant were unique to its own dispensation—for example, the promise of the land of Canaan—and these were symbolized in circumcision as well. Thus, the meaning of the Abrahamic covenant cannot be strictly equated with the meaning of the new covenant.

¹⁵ Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 240.

¹⁶ E.g., David Kingdon, *Children of Abraham: A Reformed Baptist View of Baptism, the Covenant, and Children* (Haywards Heath: Carey Publications, 1973); Fred A. Malone, *The Baptism of Disciples Alone: A Covenantal Argument for Credobaptism Versus Paedobaptism* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2003); Stephen J. Wellum, “Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants,” in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 97–161.

¹⁷ Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*, 101–3, anticipates my argument a bit, though he does not make much of it. He also writes: “If God has children (believers) and grandchildren (believers’ children), why may he not have great grandchildren (believers’ children’s children)?” (p. 116).

1. Why Not Grandchildren? A Brief Statement of the Argument

The Reformed paedobaptist argument does not claim that all infants indiscriminately are proper subjects of Christian baptism. Certain infants are to be included. Others are not. Thus, when Warfield stipulates that “God established his Church in the days of Abraham and put children into it,” the question immediately arises, which children?

The proper subjects of circumcision are identified in Genesis 17:9 as “you (Abraham) and your seed after you, for the generations to come.”¹⁸ The “children” in view here (Hebrew זֵרַע, “seed,” [KJV], or “offspring” [ESV], or “descendants” [NIV, NASB, RSV]) are the inter-generational descendants of Abraham that would comprise the nation of Israel. Hence the words “for the generations to come” here, and “every male throughout your generations” a few verses later in Genesis 17:12. It is to this *national and intergenerational* body that God commands: “every male among you shall be circumcised” (Genesis 17:10).

Thus, the “children” to whom circumcision was pledged are something less than identical to the “children” envisioned by paedobaptism. The lines of covenant throughout the Old Testament were not drawn around particular believing households within Israel, but around the national family of Abraham that comprised an intergenerational people. It was not the spiritual or covenantal status of the mother and/or father of an infant Israelite boy, in itself, that established their right to circumcision, but rather their identification as the “offspring” (זֵרַע) of Abraham.

This raises the question: if the basis for infant baptism is infant circumcision, and infant circumcision was practiced intergenerationally, should not infant baptism be practiced intergenerationally as well? In other words, why should the grandchildren of believers not be considered eligible for baptism? Consider the following scenario: John Sr. is a devout believer in a particular paedobaptist church; John Jr. attends the church semi-regularly but has never personally professed faith in Christ or become a member, though he attends church nominally; John III is one week old. Should John III be considered a member of the church and a proper candidate for baptism? Most contemporary paedobaptists say no to this question, while historically, more have said yes (more in that a bit later).

But if the argument for baptizing infants arises from continuity with circumcision, why *not* baptize grandchildren (and great grandchildren, etc.) of believers? On what basis do we differentiate the covenantal status of John Jr. and John III?

To get from “you and your seed after you for the generations to come” to “those who believe and their children” is not the continuation of an established practice. It is a movement, a development, a change. There is a sense in which credobaptists can affirm a stricter continuity between the old and new covenants than paedobaptists insofar as they designate the church as the “children of Abraham”—defined in the Genesis 17:9 sense during the old covenant, and defined in the new covenant in the sense of Galatians 3:7: “it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham” (cf. Philippians 3:3, Romans 2:29). This is a continuity that also embraces typological movement and fulfillment. In such a schema, the children of believers are in a position of enormous blessing, but they are not necessarily the “children of Abraham” in the sense of either Genesis 17:9 or Galatians 3:7.¹⁹

¹⁸ All translations ESV unless otherwise noted.

¹⁹ Some of the concerns reflected here I have articulated earlier: “Why I Changed My Mind About Baptism,” *The Gospel Coalition*, 8 March 2013, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-i-changed-my-mind-about-baptism/>. There I point out that such questions can be applied to various other paedobaptist claims. For example,

2. A Rejoinder to Possible Replies

To unpack the argument further we will consider three possible replies. In what follows, “children of Abraham” refers to the intergenerational offspring of Abraham that comprised the nation of Israel, while “children of believers” refers to the sons and daughters of professing believers.

2.1. Response #1: The “Children of Abraham” and the “Children of Believers” Are Identical Because Unfaithful Israelites Were Excommunicated

First, and most simply, some might simply deny any discontinuity between the “children of Abraham” and the “children of believers” by affirming that all unbelieving Israelites were (or should have been) excommunicated from the believing community and considered of non-covenantal status. Each generation, in this view, had to profess faith in order to perpetuate their inclusion in the covenant. If an Israelite person failed to personally embrace the covenant promises and evidence a saving relationship to the God of Israel, their children lost (or should have lost) the right to circumcision.²⁰

But it is difficult to regard eligibility for circumcision as conditional on the faithfulness of one’s parents. It may be worth noting, first of all, that such a view is out of alignment with traditional Reformed thought on the nature of the Abrahamic covenant. Calvin, for example, in his commentary on Genesis 17:7–14, drawing from the repeated phrase “throughout their generations” and the description of circumcision as “everlasting,” emphasized that while the outward rite signified in the inward reality, it was not conditional on how the inward reality had been received. Rather, the sign of circumcision was a perpetual ordinance for *all* the offspring of Abraham, from generation to generation.²¹ Calvin maintained this view because the text specifies the intended recipients of circumcision to be the seed of Abraham, not the seed of Abraham *whose parents believe*.

Calvin’s view lines up with what we read throughout the Old Testament. It is difficult to imagine, for example, the parents in Israel being lined up at Gilgal in Joshua 5:2–8 to be examined concerning whether they professed faith, in order to determine whether their children were eligible for circumcision. No, Joshua 5:8 records that the entire nation was circumcised because—as specified by Genesis 17—circumcision was for the entire nation, not just for believers and their children *within* the nation. Thus, throughout the Old Testament, apostate, unbelieving Israelites still fall under the appellation “my people.” The rite continues generation after generation, at times so far apart from inward appropriation that the prophet laments, “all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart” (Jeremiah 9:27).²²

paedobaptists often query whether the blessings associated with the new covenant are, for credobaptists, less generous than those of the old. The question may be put just the same to paedobaptists, however: if the grandchildren of believers are not included “in the covenant,” then is a paedobaptist ecclesiology not less generous than its Abrahamic precursor?

²⁰ Drew Trammel raised this concern in response to an earlier articulation of my argument, and some of my response to it here draws from our subsequent interaction. See Drew Trammell, “Reformed Paedobaptist Response to Gavin Ortlund’s Article—‘Why I Changed My Mind About Baptism,’” *Draw Up for Battle*, 22 April 2013, <https://tinyurl.com/y8ylaryp>.

²¹ John Calvin, *Genesis*, Crossway Classics Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 163–69.

²² This statement illumines the difference between God’s people as a mixed community under the terms of the old covenant and God’s people as the continuation of the remnant of Israel under the terms of new covenant. Where Jeremiah could lament that all the house of Israel is “circumcised in flesh only” (Jer 9:25), Paul can assert to a new covenant community, “as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). Of

As the Baptist Nehemiah Coxe put it back in the 17th century:

The right of the remotest generation was as much derived from Abraham and the covenant made with him, as was that of his immediate seed, and did not at all depend on the faithfulness of their immediate parents. Thus, the immediate seed of those Israelites that fell in the wilderness under the displeasure of God were made to inherit the land of Canaan by virtue of this covenant with Abraham.²³

This is not to say that exclusion from the covenant community was impossible, or that Gentiles could not be grafted in. Unfaithful Israelites could be killed or banished from the land of Israel for a variety of sins. Similarly, non-Israelites sojourning among the people could enter into the covenant community, partaking of the nation's laws and ordinances, eating the Passover meal, etc.—and in such cases they and their offspring were circumcised (e.g., Exod 12:48). Thus, it is not exactly right to say the offspring of Abraham *simpliciter* received circumcision—it was the nation that this offspring comprised, into which people enter, and from which people could be excluded.

But excommunication or extermination from Israel occurred in response to specific and high-handed acts of rebellion like witchcraft, sorcery, blasphemy, particularly egregious forms of idolatry, etc. (e.g., Lev 20:27, 24:16, Deut 17:2–5). It is unwarranted to infer the necessity of personal faith simply because someone has avoided the specific sins for which one will be stoned or banished. Membership in the nation of Israel had cultural, national, economic, and social dimensions, and huge numbers of Israelites remained Israelites without any evidence of personal faith in the God of Israel (think how many wicked kings throughout Samuel–Kings, for example, remained kings over God's people despite their rejection of God's laws).

Thus, the conditions of excommunication introduced by the Mosaic law hundreds of years after the institution of circumcision did not redefine the Abrahamic covenant as “those who believe and their children,” as would be necessary to establish continuity with contemporary paedobaptist practice. Rather, God's people were a national and inter-generational body, in line with Genesis 17:9–15; *this* was the entity from which one was excommunicated, or into which one was grafted. “Stone the sorcerer among you” is a far cry from “examine the credibility of their profession.” With regard to membership and excommunication among the people of God in the old and new covenants, we must say as we have said with circumcision and baptism: *similar but not identical*.

course, as paedobaptists frequently point out, churches which practice credobaptism are also mixed communities, for not all professions of faith are sincere, and no one but God can discern the heart infallibly. But there is a difference between an error of discernment and an error of practice. Imperfections in a church's pursuit of regenerate church membership do not in themselves constitute an argument against that ideal.

²³ Coxe, *Covenant Theology*, 97. Coxe is one of the earlier Baptists that I have been able to identify who (briefly) anticipates my “why not grandchildren?” argument. At one point later he wrote: “if I may conclude my concern in this covenant is such that by one of its promises I am assured that God has taken my immediate seed into covenant with himself, I must on the same ground conclude also that my seed in remote generations will be no less in covenant with him, since the promise extends to the seed in their generations” (p. 107). I am grateful to Brandon Adams for directing me to this quote.

2.2. Response #2: The “Children of Abraham” Entails the “Children of Believers” Even If It Is Not Identical with It

Others, however, could respond by admitting that having parents who did not possess faith did not disqualify an Israelite from covenant status, but argue that there is still enough overlap of meaning between “children of Abraham” and “children of believers” to establish precedent for paedobaptism. In other words, perhaps “those who believe and their children” is not the same thing as “you and your seed after you for the generations to come,” but is still *entailed* by it.

But it is not easy to construe how “children of Abraham” might entail “children of believers.” Such an argument would seem to amount to a deviation from the stronger and more standard paedobaptist claim that paedobaptism is a continuation (not merely an implication) of Old Testament practice, as represented by the assertions of Warfield, Calvin, and the like quoted at the beginning of this article. Moreover, we might once again ask how such an implication would not justify the baptism of grandchildren. If “children of Abraham” entails “children of believers,” on what grounds does it not simultaneously also entail “grandchildren of believers”?

It could be argued, perhaps, that the “children of believers” and “children of Abraham” are sufficiently similar to be *practically* the same. For instance, one might suggest that although circumcision was given intergenerationally, the parents were responsible to bring the child to circumcision, and therefore the spiritual body envisioned in Genesis 17 is inclusive of “those who believe and their children.”

But we must distinguish between *circumstantial* questions concerning what role an Israelites’ parents played in the circumcision of their child, on the one hand, and the *theological basis* for the child’s rite to circumcision, on the other. Godly Israelite parents doubtless played an important role in their child’s spiritual development, including their circumcision, but it does not follow that a child with ungodly parents was excluded from the right to circumcision. If an Israelite’s parents declined to present the child for circumcision, and an uncle or neighbor instead should bring them on the 8th day, the presiding priest would have no grounds on the basis of Genesis 17:7–14 to reject the child’s legitimacy for the rite. Regarding the role of parents with respect to circumcision and baptism, we again say *similar but not identical*.

Pointing out these differences is not nitpicky. The Reformed paedobaptist case rests upon the claim of continuity with circumcision, so discovering a breach in the alleged continuity presents a vital challenge, not a trivial one. The argument wants to affirm practice B on the grounds that it is the continuation of practice A, and practice A has not been explicitly abrogated. If it turns out that practices A and B are not the same, then it must be clearly demonstrated why one should entail the other. This is not easy to see, because “those who believe and their children” is not just a slightly different ecclesiology from “you and your seed after you, for the generations to come.” It is not as though as though the two were thought to be brothers, but turned out on closer inspection to be merely cousins. These two formulae are utterly distinct. Their similarity lies in the fact that they both involve infants. But the infants involved in each system are fundamentally different: in one it is the inter-generational lineage of one man which comprised a nation, while in the other it is families in the modern sense of that term (no slaves, one generation). It is not clear why the former should entail the latter.

2.3. Response #3: New Testament Texts Delimit the “Children of Abraham” So As to Constitute the “Children of Believers”

A final response could be to concede that the argument from continuity with circumcision may not, in itself, meet the required burden of proof for paedobaptism—but that it nonetheless establishes a more general principle of God’s intergenerational ways of working through families in some broader sense, which is then further specified by New Testament texts so as to constitute a proof of paedobaptism. Thus, Genesis 17 might not teach a paedobaptist ecclesiology, but it establishes a framework of thought within which texts like Acts 2:39, 1 Corinthians 7:14, etc. give a more precise and explicit delimitation of baptism to families.

Once again we note that such a concession would amount to a different kind of argument than the typical Reformed paedobaptist claim (though, in my judgment, a more plausible one). To provide a full response to this distinct kind of paedobaptist argumentation is beyond the scope of this article, but it may be useful to briefly engage a few relevant texts.

A passage likely to be involved in this context is Peter’s assertion to his Jewish contemporaries in Acts 2:39 that God’s promise is “for you and your children.”²⁴ To be sure, the word “children” here is more in line with the target of paedobaptist practice (the first generation offspring of believers). There are three difficulties, however, with taking Peter’s language as a warrant to delimit the recipients of the Abrahamic covenant to families. First, in context, the “promise” in view here is not covenant membership *per se*, but the Holy Spirit who has just been poured out, as identified in the immediately preceding clause: “you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38; cf. Luke 24:49). Second, the recipients of this promise are not just “you and your children,” but also “all who are far off” (v. 39). Syntactically, both these classes of people are in the same position. It is not clear how we might regard children as recipients of the promised Holy Spirit in a different sense than those far off are recipients of this promise.

Third, Peter indicates that the conditions of receiving this promise are repentance (v. 38) and calling (v. 39). He enjoins them in verse 38, “repent ... and you will receive,” and in verse 39 further qualifies the recipients of this promise with the phrase, “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” The overall import of Peter’s claim is that anyone—from those under your very roof to those in distant lands—can receive the Holy Spirit upon repentance, in response to God’s calling. This passage thus falls short of establishing the covenant membership of the children of believers exclusively (but not for those “far off”), apart from and prior to repentance.

Another relevant passage is Jesus’s blessing of children in Mark 10:13–16 (// Matt 19:13–15; Luke 18:15–17), and in particular Jesus’s statement, “to such belongs the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). Once again, however, there are several difficulties with seeing this assertion as a sufficient warrant to delimit Genesis 17 to a one-generation ecclesiology. First, Jesus says that the kingdom of God belongs to *such as* these, not to children *per se*. He is commending *childlikeness*, with all it entails, as a prerequisite to entering the kingdom. That is why he immediately follows by saying, “Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God *like* a little child shall not enter it” (Mark 10:15 // Luke 18:17, italics added). So with Matthew 18:3–4, where anyone (of any age) can enter, if they become childlike: “Truly,

²⁴ It is difficult to imagine a more frequently utilized New Testament text among proponents of paedobaptism. For one example, see Joel R. Beeke and Ray B. Lanning, “Unto You, and to Your Children,” in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 49–69.

I say to you, unless you turn and *become like* little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself *like* this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (italics added).

Second, Jesus’s statement is not made with respect to the “children of believers,” but children in general. Thus, if the blessing Jesus pronounces upon children here is to be correlated with covenant membership, it is difficult to know why it would constitute grounds for the baptism specifically of “those who believe and their children.” Third, Jesus refers to children entering *the kingdom*, which is not precisely what covenantal paedobaptists believe is happening at the baptism of an infant. The point of Jesus’s teaching can be summarized as: *kingdom entrance requires childlikeness*. Such a teaching can enrich our theology of children in many ways, but it falls short of meeting the paedobaptist need at this point.

A final passage worth engaging here is 1 Corinthians 7:14, and particularly Paul’s claim that the children of one or more believing parents are “holy.” In context, Paul is addressing questions of marriage and divorce in the Corinthian church. In verses 12–16, his particular burden is with the circumstance of a Christian who is married to an unbeliever. Verse 14 functions as the rationale supporting his appeal to remain married in the preceding verses: “for the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.”

What is noteworthy for our purposes is that the unbelieving spouse is said to be in the same position as the child—the children are “holy” (ἅγιος) precisely because the unbelieving spouse is “made holy” (ἁγιάζω). This suggests that “holiness” here may refer to something other than covenant membership. Throughout the Bible the term *holy* is used in a wide variety of ways—for the sabbath (Exod 20:11), priestly garments (Exod 28:2), objects in the Tabernacle (Exod 30:25–29), materials involved in various offerings (Lev 6:25; 14:13), those under a Nazirite vow (Num 6:5), times of covenant renewal (Neh 8:9–12), angels (Acts 10:22), the law (Rom 7:12), and on and on we might go. The term has no intrinsic association with covenant membership, and that would not be the first or most natural association in Paul’s context here, where he is concerned that believers not feel they must divorce their unbelieving spouse when they have become a Christian (see especially verses 12–13). It would seem more plausible and more relevant to interpret the “holiness” of the unbelieving family members in this passage in relation to the sanctity and legitimacy of the marriage (and consequently, the resulting offspring), such that, as Paul stipulates, divorce is not required. After all, if “holy” means “in the covenant” here, then presumably the unbelieving spouse must also be considered a covenant member.

This passage may, however, draw attention to the complexity of the different relationships that those outside the church might have to those inside it. It is unnecessary and rather cumbersome to require that every person outside the church *membership* is equally distant from the church in every other way: as though one is either baptized or a pagan. One can be blessed by the church in a variety of ways without yet being a member of it (as is, for example, the non-Christian spouse of a Christian). Similarly, it is possible to regard the children of believers in a position of spiritual privilege in relation to those children born without any contact with the gospel, even if they are not covenant members automatically and from birth.

3. Historical Antecedents

There is, of course, yet another way that advocates for paedobaptism could respond. They could say, yes, the blessing of circumcision was intergenerational and so should baptism be as well. Therefore, we should baptize inter-generationally (including, for instance, the grandchildren of believers).

Strikingly, this was the dominant practice of the early Reformed tradition. For example, in a letter dated 27 August 1559, the Scottish Reformer John Knox wrote to John Calvin to ask him several questions concerning the administration of baptism and ecclesiastical property.²⁵ In his reply of 7 November of the same year, Calvin referenced Knox's question as to "whether it be lawful to admit to the sacrament of baptism the children of idolaters and excommunicated persons before their parents have testified their repentance."²⁶ Calvin indicated that he had brought this question before his Genevan colleagues, and that the answer he is supplying to Knox is their unanimous verdict.²⁷

Calvin began his response by noting the sanctity of baptism depends upon it being administered to the proper recipients:

We ought always to be carefully on our guard that the sanctity of this mystery be not profaned, which it certainly should be if it were promiscuously administered to aliens, or if any one received it without having such sponsors as may be counted among the legitimate members of the church. But as in the proper use of baptism the authority of God is to be considered, and his institution ought to derive its authority from certain conditions, one of the first things to be considered is who are the persons that God by his own voice invites to be baptized.²⁸

We will return to Calvin's reference to "sponsors" in a moment. For now, we note Calvin's interest in "who are the persons that God by his own voice invites to be baptized." This is the question animating this article: who are the proper subject of Christian baptism?

In answer this question, Calvin stipulated that the proper recipients of baptism are the *intergenerational* offspring of believers, extending to "thousands of generations." He then used this claim to maintain the legitimacy of the sacrament during the corruptions of the Roman Catholic church:

Now God's promise comprehends not only the offspring of every believer in the first line of descent, but extends to thousands of generations. Whence it has happened that the interruption of piety which has prevailed in Popery has not taken away from baptism its force and efficacy. For we must look to its origin, and the very reason and nature of baptism is to be esteemed as arising from the promise of God.²⁹

Because God's promise in baptism extends intergenerationally, Calvin concluded that "it is by no means doubtful that an offspring descended from holy and pious ancestors, belong to the body of the

²⁵ John Calvin, "Letter 549," in *Letters of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. Jules Bonnet, trans. Marcus Robert Gilchrist (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858), 4:73. I was directed to this letter by David and Tim Bayly, "Godfathers, Calvin, and Knox..." *BaylyBlog*, 19 September 2006, <http://baylyblog.com/blog/2006/09/godfathers-calvin-and-knox>.

²⁶ Calvin, "Letter 549," 4:74.

²⁷ Calvin, "Letter 549," 4:74.

²⁸ Calvin, "Letter 549," 4:74.

²⁹ Calvin, "Letter 549," 4:74.

church, though their fathers and grandfathers may have been apostates.”³⁰ Calvin went so far as to claim that to withhold the sacrament from children in such a circumstance is to unjustly defraud them of their rights:

Wherever the profession of Christianity has not been altogether interrupted or destroyed, children are defrauded of their privileges if they are excluded from the common symbol; because it is unjust when God, three hundred years ago or more, has thought them worthy of his adoption, that the subsequent impiety of some of their progenitors should interrupt the course of heavenly grace. In fine, as each person is not admitted to baptism from respect or regard to one of his parents alone, but on account of the perpetual covenant of God; so in like manner, no just reason suffers children to be debarred from their initiation into the church in consequence of the bad conduct of only one parent.³¹

Nonetheless, Calvin maintains that such children must have a “sponsor,” by which he evidently has in mind some member of the child’s extended family who is a legitimate member of the church and willing to instruct the child in the meaning of their baptism:

In the mean time we confess that it is indispensable for them to have sponsors. For nothing is more preposterous than that persons should be incorporated with Christ, of whom we have no hopes of their ever becoming his disciples. Wherefore if none of its relations present himself to pledge his faith to the church that he will undertake the task of instructing the infant, the rite is a mockery and baptism is prostituted. But we see no reason for rejecting any child for whom a due pledge has been given.³²

Calvin also makes a distinction between a church that is in the midst of reform and a healthy church that has been established for some time, evidently seeing a greater need to involve parents in the latter situation.³³

The Genevan view commended here by Calvin to the Reformed effort in Scotland came to dominate in the early Reformed tradition. The Italian Reformer Girolamo Zanchi (1516–1590), for example, argued that it is the piety of a child’s church and ancestors, not their immediate parents, that establishes their right to baptism:

The children of those that are indeed in the church, but, because of their unclean way of living, declare that they are not indeed of the church; if they be offered to baptism, they cannot be debarred therefrom, nor ought they. The reason is, because though the parents be wicked, yet their impiety ought not to prejudice their children which are born within the church. But if you say, only the children of the faithful are to be baptized, because those infants only are judged to be within the covenant, and they only holy; I answer, the impiety of their nearest parents is not to be considered here, but the piety

³⁰ Calvin, “Letter 549,” 4:74.

³¹ Calvin, “Letter 549,” 4:74–75.

³² Calvin, “Letter 549,” 4:75.

³³ Calvin, “Letter 549,” 4:75.

of the church in which they are born;—as also their ancestors who have lived godly and holily.³⁴

William Bucanus, the Swiss-French Reformed professor of theology at Lausanne from 1591 to 1603, made a similar appeal:

Are the children of those which are in the Church, but by the uncleanness of their life declare themselves indeed not to be of the Church, to be baptized? They are, because
1. the iniquity of the parents ought not to defraud the children born in the Church.... 2. Neither is the impiety of the next parents to be considered so much as the piety of the Church in which they are born.³⁵

In the Church of England as well, Richard Hooker approved of “the answer of the ecclesiastical college of Geneva unto Knox,” referencing that Knox himself “did not think it lawful to baptize bastards or the children of idolaters (he meaneth Papists) or of persons excommunicate, till either the parents had by repentance submitted themselves unto the Church, or else their children being grown unto the years of understanding should come and sue for their own baptism.”³⁶ Hooker then quoted the Genevan response to Knox and affirmed its conclusion as “sound,” indicating that by their letter “Knox’s oversight herein they controlled.”³⁷ He did, however, question the manner in which Calvin had arrived on this conclusion, since it could imply that “all the world may be baptized, inasmuch as no man living is a thousand descents removed from Adam himself.”³⁸

In the development of the Reformed tradition, Calvin’s affirmation of intergenerational baptism was broadly taken up by those who affirmed the national organization of the church, while Congregationalists frequently challenged this practice as insufficiently reformed.³⁹ Discussion came to be centered around the baptism of the children of “adherents”—i.e., those who had been baptized but who were not, for one reason or another, participants of the Lord’s Supper. Adherents might have grown up in the church but never have professed personal faith; or they might be under church discipline; or they might be in a spiritually precarious position that called into question their fitness for the Lord’s Supper. Whether the children of such individuals were to be baptized was one of the issues debated among Presbyterians

³⁴ As cited by Thomas Boston, “Miscellaneous Questions,” in *The Whole Works of Thomas Boston, Vol. 6: Sermons and Discourses on Several Important Subjects in Divinity* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1682), 139–40 (Question 6). I am grateful to Brandon Adams for initially drawing my attention to several of these early Reformed views.

³⁵ William Bucanus, *Theological Institutes* (Geneva, 1602), 713–14. Further summary of this argument can be found in “The Baptism of the Children of Adherents,” *Reformed Books Online*, <https://reformedbooksonline.com/topics/topics-by-subject/baptism/the-baptism-of-the-children-of-adherents>.

³⁶ Richard Hooker, *The Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. John Keble, 7th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1888), 1:349 (3.1.13). I am grateful to Sam Ashton for directing me to Hooker’s view.

³⁷ Hooker, *The Works of Richard Hooker*, 1:349 (3.1.13).

³⁸ Hooker, *The Works of Richard Hooker*, 1:350 (3.1.13).

³⁹ John Macpherson, *The Doctrine of the Church in Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: MacNivin & Wallace, 1903), 82–90, provides an overview of the different positions, using Rutherford and Thomas Boston as representative examples of each side.

and Independents in Great Britain in the period leading up to and during the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s.⁴⁰

Samuel Rutherford, responding to such Congregationalist criticisms and representing the mainstream Reformed view, developed nine arguments to establish the thesis that “all the infants born within the visible church, whatever be the wickedness of their nearest parents are to be received within the church by baptism.”⁴¹ Rutherford based this argument on an appeal to continuity with circumcision, in the same manner that the whole argument for Reformed paedobaptism is made: “if the children of wicked parents were circumcised, all without exception, notwithstanding the wickedness of their parents, then the children of these who are born in the visible church of Christians, are to receive that same seal in nature and substance of that same covenant of grace, which is baptism.”⁴² And again later: “there was no more required of the circumcised but that they were Abraham’s seed according to the flesh, and by that same reason, there is no more required of infants that they may be baptized but that they be born in the Christian church.”⁴³ These appeals from Rutherford have the same thrust as the paedobaptist quotes at the start of this article: as circumcision was administered, so should baptism likewise be.

Rutherford appealed to a range of Old Testament passages to establish his intergenerational view of the covenant, many of which we have drawn attention to in this article. At one point, having referenced texts like Joshua 5 and Genesis 17, he reasoned:

I prove that the proposition “I will be thy God and the God of thy seed” extends the covenant to the seed of the faithful to many generations downward until it please the Lord to translate his Son’s Kingdom and remove the candlestick from a people. Neither can the meaning be: ‘I will be thy God and the God of thy seed, except the nearest parents of thy seed be unbelievers,’ for that is contrary to the Scriptures above cited.⁴⁴

This last sentence accords with how we have interpreted Genesis 17 (and Joshua 5) above.

Congregational churches in Puritan New England faced a similar debate to this one among the Westminster divines. The solution adopted at the 1662 Synod of Boston, the so-called “halfway covenant,” embraced as eligible for baptism the children of those who were baptized but had not had a conversion experience themselves. This view, like its predecessors among European Reformed traditions, was grounded in the same appeal to continuity with circumcision that drove the whole paedobaptist framework. For instance, Cotton Mather’s reference to the distinction between a “visible expression” of the covenant and an “explicit personal expression” of engagement with the covenant, which was used to support intergenerational baptism, drew from Old Testament precedent:

an implicit covenant preserves the being of a true church, and so of true church-membership. We also say, the second generation, continuing in a visible profession of the covenant, faith and religion of their fathers, are a true church of Christ, though

⁴⁰ For further reading, see Chris Coldwell, ed., *The Grand Debate* (Dallas: Naphtali, 2014).

⁴¹ Samuel Rutherford, “On the Baptism of the Children of Adherents,” in *A Peaceable and Temperate Plea for Paul’s Presbytery in Scotland* (Austin’s Gate, London: 1642), 4, <https://tinyurl.com/y7srx5z8>.

⁴² Rutherford, “On the Baptism of the Children of Adherents,” 4.

⁴³ Rutherford, “On the Baptism of the Children of Adherents,” 5.

⁴⁴ Rutherford, “On The Baptism of the Children of Adherents,” 8.

they have not yet made any explicit personal expression of their engagement, as their fathers did. Even, as the Israelites, that were numbered in the plains of Moab, were a true church.⁴⁵

Eventually this view fell out of favor, and today it is so scarce that there seems to be very little awareness of it, even among Reformed paedobaptists who otherwise identify their understanding of paedobaptism with the likes of Calvin, Knox, and Rutherford.

4. Conclusion

This historical survey, brief as it has been, furthers the legitimacy of our question: “why not grandchildren?” This question is not bizarre or unwarranted. It springs naturally from the logic of Reformed paedobaptism. Indeed, it follows the same intuition as that of the early Reformed paedobaptists, which can be summarized by Calvin’s claim that in baptism, “God’s promise comprehends not only the offspring of every believer in the first line of descent, but extends to thousands of generations.”

Now, to be clear, I am not advocating for this older Reformed view of covenant transmission. It is not clear to me that intergenerational baptism is in continuity with the administration of circumcision any more than contemporary paedobaptist practice, because circumcision was administered along *national* lines as well as intergenerationally—it was for the “descendants of Abraham,” not the “descendants of every believer.” In the practice advocated by Calvin, Rutherford, etc., the originator of the covenant line has simply switched from Abraham to any believer.

Nonetheless, the prevalence of this intergenerational view of baptism in the early generations of the Reformed tradition draws attention to a problem embedded in traditional covenantal paedobaptist argumentation. If the rationale for infant baptism lies in its continuity with infant circumcision, what is the justification for its limitation to the first-generation children of believers? If children, why not grandchildren?⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*; or, *The Ecclesiastical History of New England* (Hartford: Silas Andrus & Son, 1858), 2:305.

⁴⁶ I received helpful feedback to earlier versions of this article from the St. Anselm Fellowship of the Center for Pastor Theologians during our October 2019 symposium, as well as during the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in San Diego in November 2019. Nathan Chambers sent me thoughtful feedback via email. I have benefitted from countless conversations with paedobaptist friends over the last 12 years during which this argument has crystalized in my mind.

Is “Online Church” Really Church? The Church as God’s Temple

— Ronald L. Giese, Jr. —

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Abstract: Many churches switched to streaming or recording their services during the COVID-19 crisis. This brought a question to the forefront: Can church be done online, not just in part but fully? This can’t be settled by the meaning of the Greek word ἐκκλησία. This article proposes that, though we should use technology in many ministry areas, “online church” is an expression that should not be used. First, one of Paul’s main metaphors for the church is the temple of God. And, in keeping with the literal temple of the Old Testament, and the eschatological temple of the future, this is a *place*, in the usual meaning of the word. That place now is the local church, gathered physically. Second, God did not create humans as disembodied souls. The soul *and* body are both critical in Christian anthropology, redemption, and ministry.

Can “church” be done by video? By distance? Or, since some would say this already started on a broad scale in March 2020, perhaps a better question is, “Is this church, or is it something different?” To the question, “Can there be an online or digital church?” some say no, not at all. Others say yes, but it’s not the same as “in-person” church, it’s only a “plan B,” and the norm is always physical gatherings. And a third group would say, “Oh yes, virtual church is just as much a church, but a different form of being and doing church—each has its pros and cons.”¹

A brief review of “church” is in order. There is the “universal church” (all believers of all time) and “local churches.” First Peter 5 is one place where both are seen, since there is one “chief shepherd”—Christ (v. 4)—over the whole flock (see also 1 Pet 2:25). Peter also reminds his audience that they have brothers in Christ in all the world (v. 9). Yet Peter encourages elders to “shepherd the flock of God among you” (v. 2; similarly Acts 20:28). Two unhealthy tendencies in evangelicalism are the rise of individualism, and indifference to the doctrine of the universal church. Giles noted this over twenty-five years ago, and if anything it is more true today, when he spoke of authors who have

imagined Jesus and Paul to be evangelists like Billy Graham, calling on people to make a personal and individual response of faith, and suggested that the church is where they

¹ For example, Jay Kranda writes, “Just because you don’t meet in person doesn’t mean discipleship has to decrease—it just may look different” (*State of the Online Church* [Houston: Vanderbloemen, 2019], 29).

will get help in living out their Christian life. The church is, of course, the local church as a voluntary association. The wider church is of no interest, because it in no way helps the individual.²

The local church has officers (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor 12:28), baptism as a sign of entry into the church, and formal gatherings. Therefore, the local church is more than a “house” or “household,” even though the New Testament uses familial terms for believers.³ The local church is people, not a building. And the people are the church both as they gather, and in-between the gatherings: “*Ekklesia* is both *the act of coming together* (to fellowship/to community) and the *group that comes together* (the fellowship/the community). The church is not only present in the worship service, but continues to be the church beyond the formal gathering.”⁴

It’s also worthwhile to look at the documents that emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in part from the resurgence of belief in Scripture as the one, true authoritative source. Although church governance varied among the Reformers and Puritans, definitions of the nature of church are quite consistent. In the Augsburg Confession (1530), “The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly” (article VII). Brief as it is, the Augsburg Confession also recognizes the need for a pure church, that the church monitors doctrinal aberration (article VIII, and scattered throughout the Confession). In the Westminster Confession (1646) the church is, similarly, where “the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed” (article XXV). In addition to preaching, and the administration of sacraments, a third area of accountability, or “purity,” is evident (Westminster Confession, article XXX). As Clowney summarizes when talking of these two centuries, “Three marks were defined in distinguishing a true church of Christ: true preaching of the Word; proper observance of the sacraments; and faithful exercise of church discipline.”⁵ The presence of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, constitutes the church. One result of that presence is instruction, and this is accomplished through the preaching and teaching of the words of God, the Scriptures.

The “online church” in our day, which existed even well before March 2020, claims to meet all these definitions and descriptions. Until now, churches in our day (physical churches, not online) didn’t think much about defining church, or consider online church as a substitute for regular church. The vast majority of believers, even where internet is accessible, reliable, and fast, still wanted to meet in person. The coronavirus pandemic of 2020, however, forced churches worldwide to temporarily close their (physical) doors. Questions that were, up to March 2020, just in the distant background (is Life Church online really a church?) are now front and center. We now have expressions like “online campus” and “online church.” Are these oxymorons that are true contradictions, like “paid volunteer” or “exact estimate”? Or are they, as most oxymorons are, literary devices that at first sounded odd, like “friendly fire” or “alone in a crowd,” but in time become so commonplace that we don’t think of them as oxymorons

² Kevin Giles, *What on Earth is the Church? An Exploration in New Testament Theology* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 1995), 19.

³ Young-Ho Park, *Paul’s Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly*, WUNT 2/393 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 101–2.

⁴ Harald Hegstad, *The Real Church: An Ecclesiology of the Visible* (Eugene OR: Pickwick, 2013), 16.

⁵ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 101. This was not only true of Lutheran and Presbyterian, but Baptists, historically, as well. See Stephen J. Wellum and Kirk Wellum, “The Biblical and Theological Case for Congregationalism,” in *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*, ed. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015), 64.

on any level? Like how years ago we thought that “telecommuting” or “telehealth” didn’t make sense. But now they do. Many would say our culture has already reached that level for “online church,” and only stuck-in-the-muds take pause at wording like video, virtual, or online church.

Most Bible-believing churches will not lose people to Life.Church’s online church. Our church has a church plant that did not offer video recordings of its services before March 2020. Later that month they started streaming services. When restrictions were lifted months later and the church resumed physical services, they discontinued the online services. As far as we can tell membership remained intact. And this makes sense. It would take a lot for members to leave the relationships forged in church, all for the convenience of doing church at home on Sundays.

But many churches, throughout the pandemic, did not define terms for their people. And words have meaning. Words not only reflect assumptions and theologies, they result in actions and behaviors. One result of the pandemic, with the concurrent closing of physical doors and opening of internet doors, should be that pastors now answer the questions of what “church” is, and how it is done. Simple answers like, “church is a gathering,” will not do (more on this below). Furthermore, what do we communicate to visitors? Even visitors on our websites, or to our recorded (video or audio) messages? How many churches, in their first streamed service (or any streamed service), took a few minutes to define what church is, and in what sense streamed services were or were not church?

Think of the old worship services of Jerry Falwell or Jimmy Swaggart 40–50 years ago. They were complete services, with songs, announcements, and sermons. Yet here and there were reminders that these services were for those homebound, or those traveling who could not find a Bible-believing church nearby. Or for those who were already in a church on Sundays, yet wished to experience even more teaching, throughout the week. This is not unlike what Matt Chandler, lead pastor of The Village Church, does in many video services or teachings in our day. He starts by stating something along these lines: “Pray that this sermon, this resource, be used by God in conjunction with you belonging to a local church,” or “This is never meant to substitute God’s good plan for you to be in a community of faith where the Word of God is preached and proclaimed.”

If Life.Church, VR (Virtual Reality) Church, The Robloxian Christians (TRC, which claims to be a church at almost 20,000 members online), and others can be seen as a disruptor (in the field of disruption theory⁶) to the traditional manner—and delivery—of church, then what they are doing is communicating a different message: “our online church can *be* your church, in every sense of the word.” Some are even offering communion and baptisms with digital avatars. The thought is that these are symbolic anyway, so why do they need to be done physically? We should have a theologically-based answer for these emerging practices.

1. Two Approaches to Avoid

There are two approaches to avoid in this debate. This first is to make assumptions. Both sides, those who say that online church can be fully church, and those who say it cannot, operate under assumptions. Let’s start with Old School Ollie. Here is his main line of argument:

⁶ Clayton M. Christensen, Michael Raynor, and Rory McDonald, “What is Disruptive Innovation?” *Harvard Business Review* (December 2015): 45–53.

The Greek word ἐκκλησία means an “assembly,” a “gathering.” It means “called out,” related to a group of people, which certainly entails “called in.” The New Testament expects the church to “come together” (1 Cor 11:18; 14:26), warns against neglecting such meetings (Heb 10:25), and pictures believers physically gathering to receive teaching, pray, break bread, and enjoy fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7). Therefore, what we’re doing with streaming services in this time of Coronavirus restrictions is a plan B, and we hope to discontinue it as soon as possible.

But there’s a counter to this argument. In the first century there was no such thing as video conferencing. To “gather” clearly was physical, because there was no other way to gather. Since there was only one way to gather in the first century, does this necessarily mean that, as time and technology progress, no other ways of gathering can be allowed? This may be true, but it can’t be assumed.

To give an example in another arena, when biblical authors talk about the written word, such as 2 Timothy 3:15, they are clearly referring to objects: usually a scroll of parchment (the skin of an animal). However, in our time and day, God’s Word can be electronic. What at first bothered pastors greatly—people looking at verses on their phones or tablets—is now commonplace. Very few pastors would say, “Paul was only thinking of what we call hard copies of God’s Word. You need to keep your phone in your pocket or purse and bring a real Bible.” In sum, just because Paul only envisioned people gathering physically, does not necessarily mean that is the only way of being and doing church. Again, it may indeed be. But we must demonstrate that, whether theologically, practically, or both—not assume it.

What about the other camp? New School Ned might respond to the above statement with this:

You can pray, encourage, confess, forgive, love, serve, and preach, all online. And you can have community online. It’s different than face-to-face, but not inferior. Bottom line is, we can *gather* online. And I do participate, not just observe. Sometimes more than I used to participate in Sunday morning services when sitting in a church.

The assumption here is twofold. First, the “one anothers” of the New Testament (like “serve one another,” “love one another,” “forgive each other,” and “encourage one another”) can be done online, and done online as fully or deeply as in person. The second assumption is that we can solve the debate by dealing solely with the word “gathering” or “assembly” (Greek ἐκκλησία). In fact, both sides can make the mistake of reducing the debate to the semantics of one word. Part of what prevents healthy dialogue at this point is that both sides think they’ve grounded their arguments in theology by engaging in a brief word study.

A second thing to avoid in this discussion is the “pros and cons” debate. For instance, Old School Ollie presents what he sees as a practical “pro” to his position: “You have to be physically present to do communion. And part of communion is being one church, together, seeing each other and encouraging each other.” New School Ned can offer two kinds of responses. First, he can simply counter: “Plenty of churches do just what you’re talking about, online. Someone leads, and each person or couple partakes in their home. Using Zoom, I see the faces of dozens of people in their homes.”

Or Ned can grant, for the time being, the practical point made by Ollie, and counter with what he sees as a “pro” in his own position: “Yes, I agree that communion is better in person. If we weren’t in this crisis and I had a choice, I would choose to do communion in our church building, with the whole church there in person. To change the topic though, there’s a real advantage to online church services on Sundays, in that we can offer comments, in a sidebar, to one another as we watch and respond to the

preacher. Listening is more active, not passive. In my old church, in physical services, it would have been rude to talk to the person next to me about the sermon, during the sermon.”

The way to move the discussion forward, and not in circles, is through biblical, historical, and systematic theology. Defining and describing what the church is and does involves more than a cursory word study. Much has been written on what the church is, but very little has been applied to the issue of online interaction. For example, Allison’s book, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, mentions the phenomenon of online church, but does not measure it against the New Testament’s metaphors and descriptors for the church. In this robust work of almost 500 pages, Allison addresses online church in less than two pages and considers “virtual church” a “trend toward noninvolvement in a church.”⁷ But proponents of online church would say they are very much involved in a church. Allison, in his defense of (physical) church, talks about an “actual, visible procedure of meeting together,” and quotes others who talk of Christians being “bound together.” But again, a proponent of online church would affirm all these things.

Another recent work attempting to apply theology to online church is Stephen and Mary Lowe’s *Ecologies of Faith in a Digital Age* (though the book deals more with education, and spiritual formation, than church per se). Instead of pros and cons, this book presents an extreme. *Ecologies of Faith* presents a dozen examples of where online education, fellowship, or discipleship is as good as, or better than, the same done in physical presence. Yet there are no real examples of physical presence being a preferred method of interaction. In fact, the authors quote an unpublished paper claiming that there is nothing inherently engaging about physical space.⁸

It seems that a middle ground is more objective and fair. There are things inherently engaging about physical space, and touch. A man and woman cannot conceive a child by purely digital means. Additionally, the New Testament expresses a longing for the second coming of Christ (2 Tim 4:8; Titus 2:13; Heb 9:28; Rev 22:17).⁹ And this is not just a longing to leave this world of sin, but a longing to be with Christ, physically. On the other hand, there are things inherently engaging, even superior, about digital interaction. I video conference with a believer in a closed country, thousands of miles away. This can only be done through digital tools.

A recent book at the other extreme is Jay Kim’s *Analog Church*. Throughout the book, in an opposite approach from Lowe and Lowe, he criticizes digital communication. There are a dozen examples of how digital interaction is too quick, too individual, too isolating, and too shallow. Occasionally there is a token nod to an advantage of digital tools: “digital technology affords us brand new opportunities to share the gospel, as well as encourage and challenge one another” (p. 97), but these are few and far between. And some statements are fairly emphatic, such as, “Transformation in the life of a church is always an analog experience, as we journey shoulder to shoulder with other people, gathering in real ways as real people,

⁷ Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 156.

⁸ Stephen D. Lowe and Mary E. Lowe, *Ecologies of Faith in a Digital Age: Spiritual Growth Through Online Education* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018), 107.

⁹ Lowe and Lowe state that, since *koinonia* can be had with Christ now, there is no advantage in physical presence versus mediated presence: “There appears to be no indication in the New Testament that the fellowship the church enjoys with Christ now is somehow inferior to the fellowship the church enjoyed with him previously or will experience with him in the eschaton when we will be in his presence forever” (*Ecologies of Faith in a Digital Age*, 75). But just because *koinonia* can be experienced now does not mean that there is not a deeper level that awaits us.

to invite God to change us individually and collectively. We experience this transformation in a variety of ways ... but all of these ways are in some form or fashion, tangible and physical.¹⁰

Can transformation never take place as one person seeks to disciple another through video conferencing and other digital interactions? What if a single person becomes a believer in a closed country, with no other believers in the area, yet access to internet? Perhaps *church* doesn't occur digitally, but is any substantive discipleship out of the question as well?

In this debate, assumptions about word meanings are too simplistic. The sorting of practical pros and cons does not seem to advance the discussion, especially when some of these may change over time. What online ministry cannot replicate today may indeed be possible tomorrow. And what seems like a "pro" to online ministry may turn out to be a "con" in years to come. Finally, looking at only the "pros" of one's position, and the "cons" of the opposing viewpoint, seems to only polarize the two positions more.

Rather than what has been happening in the literature for the past decade, the richness of biblical and systematic theology should be explored: issues like temple, presence, and anthropology.

2. *The Temple and God's Presence*

Putting aside the present church age for the moment, and looking at the "before" and "after," does God meet with His people in a *placeless* manner? No. The location for that in the Old Testament was the tabernacle, and later Temple. It is only a small exaggeration to say that the temple was everything, in the worship of God's people: "In short, the Temple is a visible, tangible token of the act of creation, the point of origin of the world, the 'focus' of the universe."¹¹ N. T. Wright proposes,

The Temple, and before it the wilderness tabernacle, were thus heirs, within the biblical narrative, to moments like Jacob's vision, the discovery that a particular spot on earth could intersect with, and be the gateway into, heaven itself. In the later period, even synagogues could sometimes be thought of as meeting places between heaven and earth; how much more the actual Temple. The Temple was not simply a convenient place to meet for worship. It was not even just the "single sanctuary," the one and only place where sacrifice was to be offered in worship to the one God. It was the place above all where the twin halves of the good creation intersected. When you went up to the Temple, it was not as though you were "in heaven." You were actually there. That was the point. Israel's God did not have to leave heaven in order to come down and dwell in the wilderness tabernacle or the Jerusalem Temple.¹²

In the Old Testament God does not visit the Temple. He lives or dwells there (1 Kgs 8:13; the Hebrew **יָשַׁב** is used here for dwelling or living in the Temple just as it is for heaven later in the same chapter, vv. 39, 43, and 49).

This concept of the Temple as God's dwelling place continued even to the days of Jesus. Jagger qualifies this with the observation:

¹⁰ Jay Y. Kim, *Analog Church: Why We Need Real People, Places, and Things in the Digital Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 96.

¹¹ Jon D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64 (1984): 283.

¹² N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1:96–97.

It is true that no Second-Temple Jew thought they might ever perceive an enrobed deity personally sitting in the Holy of Holies. But the belief that God’s presence, though often unseen, actually dwelt in the temple, and that upon God’s entry to this temple he had produced smoke and thick cloud, was rooted in the conviction that God’s presence had intensified here, on Zion, the actual geographical intersection between heaven and earth.”¹³

That God chooses to locate in a place, even though of course no place can contain God, is true just as much *after* the church age, in the new heavens and the new earth. This is all the more interesting since, once the world as we know it ends, if God wanted to, he could jettison the concept of place completely. Is there a “temple” in the new heavens and new earth, more properly in the new Jerusalem (or is the new Jerusalem *itself* the temple)? The answer has to be both “yes” and “no.” Revelation 21:3 says that God will “tent/tabernacle” among men, and this certainly calls to mind the dwelling of God in the bodies of believers, and in the local church. Yet verse 3 also says that God himself is present among his people, as if he does not need a physical tabernacle. And of course, Revelation 21:22 says that the new city does not need a temple, since the Lamb is its temple.

At the same time, the new Jerusalem is laid out, with a river flowing from it, in ways intentionally linked with the temple in Ezekiel’s vision of Ezekiel 40–48. Why is the city-temple of pure gold? Because key parts of the Temple of Solomon were gold. Why are the dimensions of the city-temple the same (length and width and height)? Because the Holy of Holies, in the Temple, had that three-fold (cubic) equality. There are a dozen more parallels with Old Testament “temple” images or dimensions. G. K. Beale’s view, shared by others, that the new heavens and new earth, and the new Jerusalem, are one and the same,¹⁴ makes sense both in the genre of the book of Revelation (where it is clear that, at least in parts, we have the same event but looked at from a different perspective and with parallel imagery), while also removing contradictions. The main contradiction, in this case, is how the ungodly could exist outside the city (Revelation 22:15), yet still be in the new heavens and new earth. In sum, in Beale’s view, “new creation” = “new Jerusalem” = “God’s tabernacle,” and this “tabernacle” is the true temple of God’s special presence portrayed throughout chapter 21.¹⁵ As Kistemaker states, “If the entire city is the dwelling place of God, then there is no need for a special section reserved for the saints to meet God. The city itself has become the holy of holies.”¹⁶ It is interesting that some studies of the word ἐκκλησία, as used of the church, see strong links with the concept of *polis*, “city.”¹⁷

In fact, many theologians see a continuum between the church as God’s temple, and the eschatological temple. Wellum and Wellum summarize this well:

Those who place their faith in Christ are now citizens of the new, heavenly Jerusalem and have already begun to gather there. This is the point of Hebrews 12:18–29. In

¹³ Keith Jagger, “God’s Presence on Earth and Christian Holiness: A Reading of Luke’s Temple Theology in Luke 3.1–4.13,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 51.1 (2016): 122.

¹⁴ Gregory K. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *JETS* 48 (2005): 7.

¹⁵ Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” 25.

¹⁶ Simon J. Kistemaker, “The Temple in the Apocalypse,” *JETS* 43 (2000): 440.

¹⁷ “*Polis* and *ekklēsia* are intimately connected.... The assembled Christian *ekklēsia* is a manifestation of the heavenly city,” according to Korinna Zamfir, “Is the *ekklēsia* a Household (of God)? Reassessing the Notion of οἶκος θεοῦ in 1 Tim 3.15,” *NTS* 60 (2014): 515.

contrast with the Israelites who gathered at Mount Sinai under the old covenant (vv. 18–21), new covenant believers have already gathered to meet God at the “heavenly” Jerusalem (vv. 22–24). This heavenly Jerusalem is still future but in a profound sense is already here. As the church, we are already beginning to enjoy, by faith, the privileges of that city.¹⁸

What about the present age? I’ve heard proponents of online church say, “The Holy Spirit is not constrained by time and distance.” Very true. However, the real question is not whether God is constrained, as if he is not omnipotent, but whether he *chooses* to focus his presence and blessing in one place, or in one place during one time period. The Bible teaches that he does: past, future, and present. In the New Testament, Paul uses the word picture of a “temple” to talk both about the individual bodies of believers (1 Corinthians 6:19) and about the local body of believers, the church (1 Corinthians 3:16—Paul is speaking *to* a plurality here, and *about* the plurality, the “brothers”; 2 Corinthians 6:16—“we” are “the” temple; and also Ephesians 2:21–22). The idea of a figurative “temple” is not just in a handful of verses in Paul. Jesus and Paul use temple imagery (Jesus of his own body) throughout the New Testament, where we may easily miss the reference. Here are just a few examples:

- In Romans 12:1–2, verses very familiar to many evangelical Christians, the idea in verse 1 is that Christians are priests, doing a service of worship in a (figurative) temple. Many Christians grasp that the word “sacrifice” is figurative yet miss the larger picture.¹⁹
- In Romans 14:19, Paul writes, “So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.” The phrase “building up” in English certainly does not make us think of architecture or construction; it’s one of those figures of speech that has truly shed its original word picture. However, the Greek is οἰκοδομή, based on οἶκος, “house.” The context in this part of Romans 14 is “clean” and “unclean,” clear references back to the Temple system and the laws of Leviticus. Further, the very next verse calls upon believers to not “tear down” what God has worked on. The verb καταλύω, “to destroy, demolish, throw down,” is used in the Gospels for the destruction of the Temple (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6).²⁰
- John 14:2 is another well-known verse for Christians: “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.” This is usually taken as a general promise: Our Father’s house is big, and Jesus will go and make a place just for me.” But the only other reference in John to a “Father’s House” is the Temple in Jerusalem (John 2:16). This is more likely a reference to the eschatological temple, the “place” where believers will worship God forever. God “preparing a place,” calls to mind back numerous references in the Old Testament, where this referred to the literal

¹⁸ Wellum and Wellum, “The Biblical and Theological Case for Congregationalism,” 56–57.

¹⁹ For temple imagery and connotations woven into the book of Romans, see Albert L. A. Hogeterp, *Paul and God’s Temple: A Historical Interpretation of Cultic Imagery in the Corinthian Correspondence*, BTS 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 278–89.

²⁰ Most commentators don’t go into this depth for Greek οἰκοδομή. However, see Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996), 859 nn. 61–62. Also, οἰκοδομή calls to mind the Temple, according to Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Temple* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 69.

tabernacle, and later Temple before it was built (1 Chron 15:1, 3, 12; 2 Chron 1:4; see also God choosing a “place” for His name, multiple times, in the book of Deuteronomy).²¹

- Although below I will look at one passage in 1 Corinthians and one in 2 Corinthians in which Paul mentions the word “temple,” a good case has been made that concepts associated with the temple occur throughout multiple chapters in both the Corinthian letters.²²

Also, by way of introduction, theologians have always recognized that God is present in different ways in different places (or in different kinds of people).²³ Most recognize at least three levels of God’s presence:

- Level 1: God is present everywhere. He is “omnipresent.” So even where there are no human beings, God’s presence is there (Psalm 139:7–12).
- Level 2: God takes up dwelling in a believer, by His Holy Spirit, once the person is a new creation, born again (1 Corinthians 6:19; John 14:16–18).
- Level 3: God takes up dwelling among His people, the local church, when they gather (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16; and Ephesians 2:21–22).

This means that God is present in the life of a believer in a *different* way than God is present, say, with the stars. And it also means that God is present in the corporate worship (by this I mean the physical gathering) of a local church in yet another *different* way, different than God being just present as each single person worships in the group. And we can add a fourth level to the three above: that when we see Jesus face to face, our corporate worship of him, as described at the close of the book of Revelation, will be on yet another level. Frame states that God is present in every place, and in holy places in a different sense:

This language does not mean that God’s power, knowledge, and freedom to act are greater in the holy places than elsewhere on earth. But we might say that in these places his presence is more intense and more intimate, and the penalties for disobedience are more severe. When God makes his dwelling in a place, that place becomes his throne. We show special deference to him there, and we come more aware of his power to bless or curse.²⁴

In terms of the “church as temple” metaphors in the New Testament, one missing differentiation in the discussion to date is the universal church versus the local church. As an example, some would say that since God’s people enjoy fellowship, and communion, by God’s Spirit, with all other Christians, and indeed with Christ himself, there is no necessity for a physical gathering.²⁵ It might be preferred, but not

²¹ Perrin, *Jesus the Temple*, 54 (he cites several commentators as well who hold this view).

²² Yulin Liu, *Temple Purity in 1–2 Corinthians*, WUNT 2/343 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); see also Brian S. Rosner, “Temple and Holiness in 1 Corinthians 5,” *TynB* 42 (1991): 137–45, and J. Ayodeji Adewuya, *Holiness and Community in 1 Cor 6:14–7:1* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003).

²³ “*God is present in different ways in different places, ... God acts differently in different places in his creation,*” according to Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 175 (italics his).

²⁴ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002), 581.

²⁵ Lowe and Lowe, *Ecologies of Faith in a Digital Age*, 72–75, 219.

necessary. But this takes verses related to the universal church and applies them to the local church as well. A second missing differentiation is level 2 of God's presence (in the list above) from level 3. Similar to the lack of differentiation above, proponents of online church say or imply that since God's presence already exists with all Christians, it doesn't matter how they interact with one another.

Two mistakes are being made by blurring these two areas, one flowing from the other. First, commentators lump together all verses about the church as the "temple" or "house" of God. Corinthian believers as the "temple" in 2 Cor 6:16, believers in Asia Minor as the "spiritual house" in 1 Peter 2:5, and the "house of God" in Hebrews 3:6 and 10:21 are all seen as synonymous: the church is the new "temple" of God, and "house of God" always means temple.²⁶

This in turn leads to a second mistake. If believers individually are the "temple" of God, then just like Peter wrote to believers all over Asia Minor, current-day video can certainly function as church to Christians either scattered by choice or by necessity ("shelter in place" due to a contagious coronavirus). And God's presence in His people, collectively, can exist in a church gathered by video.

I propose that the term "house/household," spoken of the church, functions in a fluid manner: it usually applies to both the universal and the local church. Jesus is Lord, the son of inheritance, and high priest over this house. This is not so much a house that God dwells in, but a house that Jesus is over. And it may or may not refer to the Temple. Two letters teach us this sense: the letter to the Hebrews, and the book of 1 Peter.

2.1. Hebrews and 1 Peter

In Hebrews 3:6 we as believers are a "house" (οἶκος). Jesus is the "son" over the house. The parallel is drawn with Moses, who was not a "son" but God's "servant," and who didn't have a literal house, but certainly had a people that God entrusted to his care. In Hebrews 10:21 Christ himself is the great priest over the "house" (οἶκος) of God. In keeping with the more general and homiletical genre of this book (a sermon meant to be heard by many churches), the "house" in both places is not clearly defined: it can be taken as a local church, or the universal church. This is affirmed by the context of each passage. In 3:6 believers are the "house" of Christ himself, not part of a house of undershepherds or overseers who serve under the authority of Christ. F. F. Bruce says, "If the household of God in which Moses served him so loyally was the people of Israel, what is the household of God today, over which the Son of God bears rule? That household comprises all believers."²⁷ Similarly in 10:21 there is one high priest, Jesus, over the whole "house" of God. Attridge brings both passages together. Starting with Hebrews 3:6:

The author now exploits a different metaphorical sense of the term "house," taking it not as the universe, but as that sacral community over which Christ presides as the "great High Priest" (10:21). Moses can meaningfully be said to be "in" that community because it extends to the faithful of old who were evangelized (4:2), who exemplified faith (chap. 11), and who are "perfected" with the members of the new covenant (11:40).²⁸

²⁶ See, for example, Wellum and Wellum, "The Biblical and Theological Case for Congregationalism," 59–60; Clowney, who says that 1 Peter 4:4–6 is a temple just like 1 Corinthians 3:16 (*The Church*, 46); and John S. Hammett, who says that "house" in 1 Peter 2:5 is a synonym for temple (*Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005]: 45).

²⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, revised ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 94.

²⁸ Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Herm (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 111.

We also find the term “house” used for the church in 1 Peter 2:5. 1 Peter was written to churches in Asia Minor, with particular struggles, such as persevering in the faith, in mind. But what Peter says to his audience can often be applied to any believer, regardless of geography or time. A major aim of 1 Peter is to teach Christians (both congregations and individuals) in Asia Minor about their identity. Identity both in general (believers in Christ, who are both Jewish and Gentile), and in particular, that is, what it means to have an identity as one who suffers. There is more about identity in this letter, by far, than in many of Paul’s epistles. Karen Jobes opens her commentary by stressing the letter’s “universal relevance,” and she later specifies, “There is probably no more sweeping concept for a new identity than the concept of rebirth that Peter introduced in 1:3.”²⁹ A well-known example of identity, which is not just for Peter’s audience but for all believers, is 1 Peter 2:9, where the believers are called “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” (citing Exodus 19:6 and Isaiah 43:20–21). Clearly, terms that once referred to Israel, an ethnic people, are now used of a spiritual people of God, those part of the new covenant inaugurated through the atonement of Christ, now composed of Jew and Gentile.

Within this context is the metaphor of God’s people as a “spiritual house” (οἶκος πνευματικός) in 1 Peter 2:4–5:

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

This is not something the believers in Asia Minor are becoming. It is what they are; it is part of their identity: “the phrase οἶκος πνευματικός is the nominative and thus should be translated not as the result of being built up but in apposition to the subject: ‘You, who are a spiritual house, are being built up to be.’”³⁰ In other words this is a word picture for the identity of these believers just like “chosen race, royal priesthood, and holy nation” in 2:9.

In sum, we cannot assume that “house” in these passages is synonymous with “temple” in Paul’s letters. It may be one of several metaphors for the universal church, all of which can apply to local churches, and indeed individual Christians: each believer is part of a house, a “son” or “daughter,” and indeed works together with others in the house. And of course, in 1 Peter this is not just a house, but a spiritual house. But we should not go so far as to say that the “spiritual house” in 1 Peter 2:5 is the temple, one in which the Lord dwells.³¹ The spiritual house is “for a holy priesthood.”³² The “house” here is analogous to saying, “The house of MacLaren is here.” Meaning the *people*, the clan, of MacLaren has arrived, not the castle or manor in which the chieftain dwells. The emphasis is on believers as priests, what they offer to the Lord. In contrast to this will be verses in Paul’s letters, where the “temple” is the location where God “dwells.”

²⁹ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 1, 142.

³⁰ Lewis R. Donalson, *I & II Peter and Jude*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 60.

³¹ John H. Elliott makes a good case for the οἶκος πνευματικός not being the temple in *The Elect and the Holy: An Exegetical Examination of 1 Peter 2:4–10 and the Phrase Basileion Hierateuma* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1966), 157–59.

³² Similarly in 1 Tim 3:15: “Paul never uses οἶκος θεοῦ for the *ekklēsia* ... commentators of 1 Tim 3.15 agree that οἶκος θεοῦ is first of all the *household* of God.” Zamfir, “Is the *ekklēsia* a *Household* (of God)?,” 518.

2.2. 1 Corinthians

Turning to Paul's letters, we encounter a different term. Instead of "house" (οἶκος), he uses "temple" (ναός). This refers to the actual sanctuary itself, where God dwells (for instance, it would not have included the Court of the Gentiles in Herod's Temple complex). The Greek ναός is used for the church in 1 Cor 3:16, 2 Cor 6:16, and Ephesians 2:21. The apostle writes in 1 Corinthians 3:16–17,

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?
If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is
holy, and that is what you are.

In 1 Corinthians 3:16 this is the local congregation. It is not a fluid concept of universal and local church. The context immediately previous is the "foundation" and "work" (1 Cor 3:5–15) of church planters like Paul and Apollos, at Corinth. The "building" (οἰκοδομή) in verse 9 is the church at Corinth. The broader context argues for the local church as well. In chapters 2–4 Paul addresses the "brothers" (1:10, 11, 26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6), and in each instance these are clearly believers at Corinth. Anecdotes and conflicts are brought up such as divisions, Paul's history with the church, and the maturity (or lack thereof) of the believers at Corinth.

The teaching of 1 Corinthians 3:17 is a key factor as well in determining whether this is the local or universal church: "If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are." The "house" of Hebrews 3 and 10, and 1 Peter 2 (see above) cannot be destroyed. The "priesthood" of believers cannot be destroyed. To do so would almost be paramount to destroying God himself, since this is the people whom he chose, bought with the blood of Christ, and keeps. Certainly, individuals can fail to persevere, and thus show themselves to be of a faulty seed to begin with (the argument of Heb 6:7–8). But the "house of God" in this sense (the fluid sense that can be applied to both local and universal church) cannot be destroyed. A local church, on the other hand, *can* be destroyed. It can be scattered, divided, and embroiled in conflict, and some of this comes up in the letters to the Corinthians. Indeed, it seems in both these letters, that church is not far from destroying itself:

As God's temple in Corinth, the church was to be his alternative to Corinth, both its religions and vices. But the Corinthians, by their worldly wisdom, boasting, and divisions, were in effect banishing the Spirit and thus about to destroy the only alternative God had in their city.³³

2.3. 2 Corinthians

In 2 Corinthians 6:16, it may be less clear that the "temple" (ναός) is the local church. After all, the previous verse teaches that a believer (one person) should not be bound with an unbeliever, reminding us of the end of 1 Corinthians 6.³⁴ The apostle writes this in 2 Corinthians 6:14–18:

³³ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 148.

³⁴ "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" (1 Cor 6:19). Though some have attempted to interpret this (1 Cor 6:19) as a corporate "body," i.e., the congregation, these arguments fall flat. Gupta is on the right track here when he argues that though in Paul's mind the individual and community were much more linked than in our minds and culture, the primary meaning here is the human body. Nijay K. Gupta, "Which 'Body' Is a Temple (1 Corinthians 6:19)? Paul beyond the Individual/Corporate Divide," *CBQ* 72 (2010): 525–27.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” says the Lord Almighty.

Paul’s argument proceeds like this: You all (believers in the church at Corinth), do not be bound with unbelievers (v. 14). For “we” (plural) are the “temple” (singular), v. 16.³⁵ Furthermore, the illustration of that corporate identity, in the verses that immediately follow, is the people of Israel: God dwelt in them (v. 16), and they (plural) were to separate themselves from what was unclean (v. 17). As Martin notes, “It appears that the ναὸς θεοῦ, “temple of God,” is meant in a corporate (1 Corinthians 3:16), not individualistic sense (1 Corinthians 6:19). This can be seen in the OT verses that follow.”³⁶ Again, we have very strong terms linked with the temple of the Old Testament: God “dwells in them,” the local church (instead of “dwelling in it,” the temple).

Is Paul saying that the church is *like* a temple or that it *is* a temple? Is this a soft metaphor, in a list of many, for the church? Or is it a significant metaphor used for the church, one of the more core, defining ones? Beale argues convincingly for the latter, that here, in large part based on the intertextuality of Leviticus 26:11–12 and Ezekiel 37:26–27 (and other passages), cited by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:16–18, the local church as God’s temple is the start of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies of an eschatological temple.³⁷ Fee states that “temple” is one of Paul’s three most important metaphors for the church: “The centrality of the Spirit to Paul’s view of the believing community emerges especially in his three major images for the church (family, temple, body); the first two of these also reflect continuity with the Old Testament.”³⁸

2.4. Ephesians

Paul’s third and final use of “temple” (ναός) for the church is in Ephesians 2:19–22:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building,

³⁵ As I. Howard Marshall says, “Here the group of Christians is regarded as a shrine inhabited by the Spirit,” in “Church and Temple in the New Testament,” *TB* 40 (1989): 213.

³⁶ Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 2nd ed., WBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 367.

³⁷ Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” 23–24. See, in more detail, G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 253–56.

³⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 873. In agreement that these three are Paul’s three central images for the church are J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *God’s Relational Presence: The Cohesive Center of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 242; and Hammett, though he words the three as “people of God, body of Christ, and temple of the Spirit” (*Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 31).

being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

The “you” of v. 19 is the Gentiles mentioned in v. 11, and this is the same “you” of v. 22. The term “household” in v. 19 is not exactly the same as the “house/household” in Hebrews and 1 Peter 2:5 mentioned above. The term used here in Ephesians 2 is not οἶκος but οἰκεῖος, a much less used word than οἶκος (οἰκεῖος only occurs three times in the New Testament). There is no overlap with a temple sense here. The idea in this last part of verse 19 continues the beginning thought. The verse started with an illustration of citizenship in a city or state. Gentiles who believe in Jesus are fellow citizens. Not foreigners, and not even resident aliens. The verse ends with an illustration of a larger house, where one can envision children, extended family, household managers, and servants, paid and unpaid. Bruce notes,

If the community is viewed as a house or household, the Gentile believers are full members of the family—not household servants but sons and daughters, with all the rights of inheritance that sons and daughters enjoy. The Father to whom they have access is the same Father as he to whom their brothers and sisters of Jewish origin have access—it is by the same Spirit that his Gentile and Jewish children alike acknowledge him as their Father.³⁹

These metaphors, unrelated to the temple, are added to another metaphor unrelated to the temple, that of a new humanity in v. 15. In fact, these metaphors go hand-in-hand with others in the book, such as “fellow heirs” in 3:6, and one “body” where the parts are fitted together in 4:16. The topics of unity is, of course, a major point woven throughout the book of Ephesians. There is “one” body and one hope of their calling (4:4), just like there is one Spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father over all (4:4–5). It is well recognized that nouns and verbs with the Greek prefix *sun*, “with,” figure prominently in the book of Ephesians. These contribute further to the concept of unity: in English, verbs that are translated with phrases like, “being built together,” “fitted together,” and “held together,” and nouns like “fellow citizens,” “fellow members,” and “fellow participants.”⁴⁰

Following this is God’s “temple” (v. 21), his “dwelling place” (v. 22). The imagery of the temple is much stronger than the “house” imagery in Hebrews or 1 Peter. These are simply two different images, for two different purposes, even if 1 Peter 2 has some overlap with temple imagery. In 1 Peter 2, the focus is on Christ, as a particular “stone,” and also on Christians, as “stones” and also “priests.” Peter is out to teach how believers and their God relate to each other, using temple imagery. The reason is that he wants them to “grow in respect to salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). This continues Peter’s teaching on the gospel and how it transforms believers, which started in the first chapter (verse 3). Peter is not out primarily to teach ecclesiology, but rather Christology and the effects of salvation, and the identity that believers have from, in, and through Christ. And one of many metaphors is the temple (for Christ) and the priesthood (for believers). Speaking of 1 Peter 2, Elliott says,

This Spirit transfigures the βασιλείαν and ἱεράτευμα of the Old Disposition into a House-(hold) in which He resides, into a Body of Priests which He sanctifies.... The

³⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 303.

⁴⁰ A great summary of the topics of unity in the book of Ephesians is found in Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 102–4.

reality of what this community is (living stones, house-(hold), body of priests, chosen race, holy nation, people of God’s possession) and what she does (the leading of a God-pleasing life of witness and the proclamation of His might deeds) is grounded in the reality concerning Him to Whom this community commits herself: Jesus as the Christ, the eschatological Bringer of the Spirit.⁴¹

Paul, on the other hand, in these three passages above, *is* out to teach ecclesiology.

3. Reflections on Place

Part of the biblical theology of “temple” is that in all three periods—the time before Christ, the new covenant, and new Jerusalem—God’s presence, even though everywhere, dwells in a different, deeper, special sense in a *place*. In these “last days” (taking this expression as the days from the first coming to the second coming), that place is the local church. And in these passages in Paul God’s new “temple” is the local church and not the universal church.

The idea of place prompts a question regarding online church. Granted, online church *uses* the same terms that the physical church uses. As a striking example, VR Church (Virtual Reality), pastored by DJ Soto, is entirely digital. He talks about “their current church building” or the ribbon cutting for “their new church building.” But if Lord’s presence is in a place, then in a digital church where is that *place*? Is God’s presence within the monitor or screen, or between the screen and each believer? And if so, then with 800 screens, if there are 800 separate places of God’s presence, spread out possibly over the whole world? Yet this is little different than saying God’s presence is in every believer (the second of the three levels mentioned above, but not the third, which is his presence in the church as it gathers). By more than one definition, a physical service is in one place. It is categorically different than a new definition of “place” in cyberspace, where the “place” is actually spread out over 800 locations.

4. Humans Are Embodied Souls

A second area of theology can be introduced with this question: To what extent can a disembodied soul (a digital presence) engage in the interactions between believers that Jesus and the apostles like Paul and Peter commanded and envisioned? To start with, the concept of God dwelling in a human body, an individual believer (1 Corinthians 6:19; John 14:16–18), and the concept of God dwelling in a local church, are likely more connected than we at first imagine. Granted, if a church is scattered and not communicating, God is present in the first sense and not the second. However, the New Testament teaches that when God is present in his temple, the local church, then people interact with one another. And they interact even in ways that they would not if they simply met one-on-one in a coffee shop or home.

One place where this concept is seen is Ephesians 4–5. That the local church is in mind throughout these chapters is seen in illustrations like the “body” (where Paul means the assembly, not the human body of one person) in Ephesians 4:4, 12, and 16. In this sense Ephesians 4 is similar to Romans 12, another chapter that is about the local church (“body” in this sense is found in Rom 12:4–5). In Ephesians 4 Paul mentions the “head” of the church, Christ (4:15). Ephesians has several “one another”

⁴¹ Elliott, *The Elect and the Holy*, 222.

statements, one of the strongest indications that a local church is in mind (4:2, 15, 25, and 32). And of course we have the gifts to the church in Ephesians 4:11. Although some commentators see a change of topic starting in 5:22—away from the church to the topic of husbands and wives, followed by two other specific relationships: children and parents, and slaves and owners—this is really a continuation of the discussion of the church. The church is still in Paul’s mind right up to this point (see the “one another” statements of 5:19 and 21). And the husband-wife relationship is discussed using the illustration of the church! Children, and slaves, likewise are said to have a parallel with the spiritual “head” of the body of Christ: how they treat those in authority above them is a direct reflection on how they treat the Lord. Marriage counseling, therefore, should not start with Ephesians 5:22, but rather with the teaching of the local church in ch. 4 (or better yet, Ephesians 1).

All this is to question the extent to which the “one anothers” are done in an online church. Can the vast majority of them be done? We would have to say yes, other than a couple “one anothers” like “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” But the real question is, again, to what extent? We are not disembodied souls.⁴² We were not created that way, as humans, in the garden of Eden. And we will not be disembodied souls in the New Jerusalem. Even though Paul used letter-writing as a supplement to in-person church planting and leadership development, he himself admitted this was no substitute. In over a dozen places Paul expressed his longing to minister in person.⁴³ Christ and the apostles taught that God created both body and soul, and will redeem the body after death (see especially 1 Cor 15). In no small part, as we minister one to another, we minister to both body and soul. And even this is not to say that these are mutually exclusive targets, that we offer food or medicine when needed, and then at other times we offer the gospel and Word-based counsel and teaching to the soul.

The book of Psalms is one of many places to witness the interrelation of body and soul. The psalmists constantly saw the interrelation between these two. An arrow piercing the body, or words used to insult, did not just do violence to the body, or mind. There was always, necessarily, a spiritual component. Is Psalm 31 about physical, emotional, or spiritual attack and hurt? The answer has to be yes, all of them:

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;
My eye is wasted away from grief,
my soul and my body *also*.
For my life is spent with sorrow
And my years with sighing;
My strength has failed because of my iniquity,
And my body has wasted away. (vv. 9–10)

⁴² Lowe and Loew claim that we should not refer to online communication as disembodied (*Ecologies of Faith in a Digital Age*, 79, 107). Of course we do not leave our bodies behind when we engage in online learning or church. But functionally, our physical bodies have no part in that communication.

⁴³ See, for instance, Romans 1:9–15, 1 Timothy 3:14; 2 Timothy 1:4; 4:9, 21; Philippians 2:24. Also Paul not only sends letters, but wants messengers to, in person, convey his love and care (Eph 6:21–22; Phil 2:19, 26; Col 4:7–9). In Philemon Paul talks specifically about the important of face-to-face presence (Phlm 10–16). Paul says that in sending Onesimus back to Philemon, Paul is sending his own heart. Paul longed for Onesimus to stay with him, since Onesimus ministered to Paul’s needs. And Paul ends (v. 16) by actually stating the primacy of the fellowship of Onesimus, as both “in the flesh and in the Lord.” And as with other letters, Paul longs to see Onesimus himself, in time (v. 22).

Similarly, Psalm 32:3–5 describes David’s harm as self-inflicted—it starts with sin, but spreads holistically to every part and parcel of his being:

When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was drained away *as* with the fever heat of summer. *Selah*.
I acknowledged my sin to You.

As Sayles reminds us,

Humans *are* souls, more than we *have* souls; it is not so much that we *have* bodies as that we *are* bodies. All of our experiences, whether we call them intellectual, emotional, or spiritual, are also and always, *physical*. They travel across through our skeletal, chemical, vascular, muscular, glandular, respiratory, neural, electrical, and digestive systems; they fire across the synapses of our brain, and they register and store themselves somewhere in our bodies.⁴⁴

This all has practical implications. When people listened to Jesus, was it truly two-dimensional only? That is, was it only hearing and seeing? I’m talking about people that were still thirty feet away, so I’m not thinking of touch as an added sense. When nurses and counselors write about presence, they admit to aspects that occur in physical presence that are absent in distance communication. And educators talk about the chemistry of a class, in residence, that is different than that of a distance class, even if the distance class has tools for students to digitally interact with each other. In gospel accounts we read about Jesus doing much more than speaking. And again, I’m not talking about the sense of touch, or healing by touch. Rather he went through experiences with people, experiences that cannot be replicated by video and messaging interactions on a screen.

Although this is certainly anecdotal, I’ve heard stories from church and family of the failures of matchmaking by media. Pay for a service, fill out an inventory, and then request, or grant permission for, an online dialogue to begin. Weeks and even months go by in the dimension of messaging or chatting, and possibly video. But then the two meet face-to-face. They go through experiences together in person. New dynamics are introduced into the relationship. Sometimes these shatter the relationship, sometimes physical experiences strengthen the digital relationship. Either way, invariably those involved admit the limitations of online communication. Journalists who examine such interactions often note that, consciously or unconsciously, the internet allows us to how, when, and what constitutes the face that we present:

Scholars have gone so far as to suggest that individuals engaged in interactions on the Internet gain the ability to become “disembodied,” i.e., they can create alternative identities unbounded by physical constraints or social boundaries (e.g., race, social class). To put it another way, online identities are oftentimes not authentic, but performative.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Guy Sayles, “Preaching Incarnation, Incarnational Preaching: The Witness of Limitation,” *RevExp* 114 (2017): 221.

⁴⁵ Felipe G. Massa, “Guardians of the Internet: Building and Sustaining the Anonymous Online Community,” *Organization Studies* 38 (2017): 962.

DJ Soto (and his Virtual Reality Church) would say that his experience is the opposite, that people are *more* authentic and vulnerable when they are in his digital church. But this alone is an odd dynamic to contemplate. People without bodies, and more to the point people with an avatar, which looks smooth, clean, and attractive (whether made to look like a robot, or a human), are still all about their souls. “Church,” if we can call it that, has become disembodied. In virtual reality (avatars), church now has *different* kinds of bodies, ones created by us, not God.

True, sometimes people who are physically at church on Sunday are often not “real,” “authentic,” or “vulnerable.” They can put on nice clothes, a smile, and a performance. The point is simply this: even for those who try their best to be authentic online, or even for those who try their best to hide their real self on Sunday in a church building, we learn so much more, on different levels, when we enter a person’s home, or serve the poor with them, in person. As the early church father Chrysostom pointed out,

Those who lead a retired and inactive life have their solitude as a cloak for their private faults; but when they are brought into public life, they are compelled to strip off their retirement like a garment and to show everyone their naked souls by their outward movements.⁴⁶

Most of the “one anothers” simply cannot be done, to their fullest extent, in a digitized format. It’s interesting that Christian colleges and seminaries are looking, anew, at their educational goals. For the past twenty years, schools have hopped on the bandwagon of distance education, even offering entire degrees online. Yet now discussions are taking place on whether we’ve gone too far: whether mentoring students in some of the upper levels of Bloom’s taxonomy (levels such as creating, evaluating, or applying) should be pulled back, at least in part, to in-person dialogues. Rachael Starke, a longtime advocate of using online tools, notes,

The Christian life, in other words, can never be fully digitized. This reality is ... prompting some seminaries to adjust their programs accordingly—not by embracing the brave new world of digitally driven collaboration and education, but by resisting it.⁴⁷

The only reason such a dialogue exists in our time and day is that, after over twenty years of claims that distance education can, across-the-board, be comparable in achieving learning outcomes, we are only now realizing that this is not true.

Finally, we have the example of Jesus himself. God the Son came to earth bodily. The atonement required it. Jesus remains as the example par excellence of the importance of both body and soul. And this is true not just in atonement—receiving the wrath of God in a holistic sense (not one part of his humanity at the exclusion of others)—but in his ministry. To give just one example of how Jesus related to people as being with them, where they lived and worked, notes Perrin’s word choice of “enmesh”: “Jesus neither taught about the poor as an abstraction nor gave to them as from a distance: he was socially enmeshed with them as a class.”⁴⁸ Now we could debate the last part of that sentence. And for us as believers, certainly there has been a valid critique of “incarnational ministry” in the last twenty

⁴⁶ John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood* 3, cited in Matthew Levering, ed., *On the Priesthood: Classic and Contemporary Texts* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 31.

⁴⁷ Rachael Horner Starke, “Internet or Incarnation? Bridging the Digital Divide,” *Christianity Today* 64 (May 2018): 83.

⁴⁸ Perrin, *Jesus the Temple*, 120. Similarly, on p. 134, “As far as Jesus was concerned, it was not enough to give to the poor: *being* ‘with the poor’ seems to have been the group’s standard practice.”

years.⁴⁹ The point is that, with many of the “one another’s” of the New Testament, we only fully, as well as holistically, serve or love a person or group in person. If we are forced into a limitation, such as serving fellow believers in China, then of course we have to settle for whatever it is we can do. And perhaps “settle” is far too weak a term. We can do immense good for people through digital tools and media. We can teach, encourage, warn, and yes, disciple. But not as robust as in an in-person relationship. We might even say that in many cases a hybrid method, both physical and online, is best. But not a purely digital one.

Let me offer a personal story. Many years ago, when our church started partnering with the Mayan Achi, in the highlands of Guatemala, we started serving a remote village called Chichalom. Later in our relationship, one way in which we served the village was to construct a pipeline and purification system, so that they could have pure water. This led to a significant reduction in water-borne illnesses, many of which were painful, and recurring. In one of our earliest medical clinics, one of the leaders from our church suggested that we stay overnight, on the edge of the village. The location was where we could hold the clinic the next day, in an adobe hut, with a dirt floor, and open to the outdoor air. Usually our team would stay overnight in a hotel over the mountain in a small town with all the amenities of heat, electricity, and hot water. This was January, and in the mountains, and even in down sleeping bags it was cold!

This was not being “enmeshed” with the Achi. Nor was it incarnational ministry. But what was then a young boy, just observing us, told me ten years later that this act of physical presence—and presence more than a few minutes or even hours—was extremely meaningful to him and his family.

5. Open to Learning

Most of this article has been a critique of the term, and concept, of online church. However, Old School Ollie has much to learn. Up to this point his church has been entirely physical, with a service audio posted online each week as a supplement to, not a part of, the church. That audio is meant for those who missed church that Sunday, or who attend other churches but want to supplement their intake with other Bible-based teaching.

What started for Ollie’s church in March 2020 was a tectonic shift. Though no one was looking to replace physical church with online church, pastors across the country, and world, now sought to do go online with many of the things that a church does. As one example, in terms of home groups, community groups, and Bible studies, it was extremely rare that any church took these online before March 2020.⁵⁰ There was no need. And when restrictions started to ease in summer 2020, many churches dropped Zoom as quick as they picked it up. However, in the minds of especially younger generations, in the absence of theological mooring, “church” no longer has to be tethered to a physical place, and set times. What occurred to tens of thousands in our country before March 2020—that church could be done fully online—is now occurring to millions. Ollie can return to the way it was before COVID-19. But some of his people may question why he abandons the tools of online communication, outreach, and fellowship

⁴⁹ One of many examples would be J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), ch. 5.

⁵⁰ Jeff Reed, of Stadia Church Planting, estimated that before March 2020, ten thousand churches in the U.S. in some way recorded their services and offered them on their webpage, but only a few hundred had experimented with things like zoom meetings for small groups.

that he embraced during the restrictions. And visitors to his streamed service, who have little or no history with the church, may now consider just continuing the experience of online church (just with a different preacher, since Ollie will close down his streaming).

Culture is driving us to re-examine what the New Testament teaches about church. We must avoid the assumptions of the past, and present: phrases like “of course church is a physical assembly” on the one side, and “of course we can gather, online” on the other. The old standard ecclesiology textbooks will not suffice: both sides look to their own definitions of things like ἐκκλησία, then look at these textbooks and say, “Yes, that’s me, that’s exactly what we’re doing.”

We can learn much by observing what needs and desires are being met by online ministry. Rarely does something radical happen with digital technology, and then that technology alone drives change, in the sense of both creating a need, and meeting it. Rather some desire for change is already there. As Campbell notes, “the online world is consciously and unconsciously imprinted by its users with the values, structures, and expectations of the offline world.”⁵¹ Perhaps digital ministry does help people, in some contexts, to become more authentic and open. We should both embrace that, and ask questions like, “What in the offline (physical) world drove that?” or, “What are we missing in physical ministry?” Have too many churches rejected Richard Baxter’s idea of getting into people’s homes?⁵² Is church too much a platform presentation⁵³ and not a marriage of preaching (platform, personality) with the actions of the congregation as a whole (people)? As churches move back into physical ministry, they need to ask these questions. They need to be more open to digital ministry as a tool—a tool that is not just for missions and evangelism, but one that could help the church, not hurt it. Old School Ollie should not think of technology only as either (a) a way to put his sermon online, or (b) a way to spread the gospel to closed countries.

New School Ned, on the other hand, should resist the temptation to let the pendulum swing to other extreme. He should ponder why a purely “online church” may not be a church. And that some evangelists of online ministry may be blurring the lines between church and parachurch. And he should give credit to the embodied soul that God created us to be.

Certainly, more research needs to be done. More needs to be done in exegeting the concept of temple and presence, as it relates to online versus physical church. More needs to be done in biblical anthropology, and its implications for evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. And more needs to be done in the comparison of physical versus online learning, and outcomes—not just with Christian ministry, but areas outside of the sacred such as education and health.

6. Conclusion

Online church is not church. This is a contradiction, not an oxymoron. Some of the things a church does can certainly be taken online. Perhaps some parts can be done better online, in certain contexts, than in person. Perhaps others are best done in a hybrid model. The reason that online church is not

⁵¹ Heidi A. Campbell, “Understanding the Relationship Between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society,” *JAAR* 80 (2012): 80.

⁵² Baxter, a Puritan pastor in England, spent two days of each week in pastoral visitation, that is, in the homes of his people.

⁵³ Jonathan Leeman makes a good point of this (church is not a performance) in his book, *One Assembly: Rethinking the Multisite and Multiservice Church Models* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 26–27.

church is at least two-fold. First, all the indicators, both historical (the past and future temples), and in imagery (the ramifications of the church as temple now), are that God’s dwelling in the church is in a *place*. And the indicators are that this place is in *one* place, the local church. So yes, this third level of God’s presence could exist in thousands of places at one given time, since there are thousands of (physical) churches that meet in a given time zone on a given Sunday. But the third level of God’s presence does not occur in one “church” that is really 800 physical locations. That is rather the second level of God’s presence, his indwelling of each believer. Similarly, even though the digital world has been redefining terms for decades—such as a digital “presence” or “place”—we can’t just throw a term into a new context and assume that the New Testament allows for that in its theology.

The second reason that online church is not church is that it minimizes biblical anthropology. It is not only assumed, but often stated, that online church can do discipleship, fellowship, the “one another’s,” even the sacraments, just as well as physical church. But the Bible nowhere teaches that we can commune, fully, with God in our “soul” only, without our body. In fact, the Bible teaches the opposite, that physical bodies are an integral part of God’s sanctification and redemption. As Duvall and Hays say in the closing paragraph to their book on God’s presence,

The fall of humanity is best seen as a loss of presence. Presence incarnate in Jesus Christ and made real by the empowering Spirit makes possible the people of God as his new temple. Presence describes the end result of God’s kingdom: eternal communion with the King (“I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom”). Presence supplies the goal of the gospel: salvation for relationship, for fellowship, and for worship. Presence stands as the final chapter of God’s salvation story: a long-anticipated return to the garden. The story moves from walking in the garden to worship in the garden. And the garden is the whole of the new creation, in the shape of the holy of holies, a temple now indwelt by God’s presence. He will wipe away our tears and we will see his face (Rev 21:4; 22:4).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Duvall and Hays, *God’s Relational Presence*, 335.

PASTORAL PENSÉES

Text-Criticism and the Pulpit: Should One Preach about the Woman Caught in Adultery?

— Timothy E. Miller —

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Abstract: This article considers whether “The Woman Caught in Adultery” (John 7:53–8:11) should be preached. After indicating why the issue is significant, the article details eleven approaches to the question. Throughout, an analysis of each position on the basis of textual evidence and an evangelical definition of canon is provided. The article concludes by suggesting practical ways of handling the text as it comes up in an expositional series.

A faithful pulpit ministry is characterized by at least two virtues: (1) proclaiming the whole counsel of God,¹ and (2) speaking authoritatively only to the degree that the preacher can confidently say “thus saith the Lord.” These virtues require pastors to reflect on how text-critical issues should be handled in the pulpit. While there are many ways to consider this topic, this study will look at the issue through the lens of one highly debated passage, the *pericope adulterae* (John 7:53–8:11). This passage, popularly known as “The Woman Caught in Adultery” has been chosen not only because it is one of the longest text-critical passages in the New Testament, but also because its beloved status presents peculiar challenges.²

¹ Acts 20:27 uses this language, though in a sense different than the sense popularly understood. Paul had only two and a half years with the Ephesians, and it is quite likely he did not exposit all of the Old Testament verse by verse. Nevertheless, Paul did communicate the fulness of the Scripture, and in order to do that he had to know what that Scripture indicated.

² In regard to the NT, two passages immediately come to mind when thinking about difficult text-critical passages in the pulpit: The *pericope adulterae* (John 7:53–8:11) and the ending of Mark’s Gospel (16:9–20). The ending of Mark would make for a good case study, for it has been used to justify peculiar worship habits (i.e., handling snakes), and the lack of an expected ending leaves the reader unsatisfied (which actually might be the

Thus, this study will look at the broad intersection of text-criticism and preaching through the narrow question, “Should a pastor preach on ‘The Woman Caught in Adultery’?” Such a question is not merely academic. A now retired professor, who is presently aiding in local church ministry, mentioned in conversation that this topic may be interesting to debate in an academic context, but is of grave concern to those who must enter the pulpit.

Why such grave concern? In addition to the desire to be a faithful steward of the pulpit ministry, pastors should also be concerned about the potential of leading their people to doubt. If handled poorly, the pastor may lead his people to doubt that the Bible they hold is actually Scripture. On the other hand, he may lead people to doubt his pastoral ability, since he casts doubt on the text included in their Bible. Spurgeon noted this double problem as he spoke of the intersection of the pulpit and text-criticism: “It is unwise to be making every old lady distrust the only Bible she can get at, or what is more likely, mistrust you for falling out with her cherished treasure.”³ Carefully navigating in the pulpit without falling into one of these two ditches is difficult and requires much wisdom.

This article is the fruit of research into both the academic works on the topic as well as the pastoral treatments of the passage. In regard to the former, numerous commentaries were surveyed in an attempt to discern patterns of how interpreters handled the passage. In regard to the latter, sermon series on the Gospel of John were examined concerning how pastors handled the text as it arose within a preaching series. In light of this research, a survey of positions will be provided along with a theological and logical analysis of those positions. The conclusion will offer suggestions on how the passage should be handled in the pulpit.

1. Can the Issue Be Ignored?

Before addressing how theologians and pastors have handled the topic, it should be recognized that some ignore the topic altogether, acting as though there is no text-critical problem. Consequently, they preach the text as though it is like any other passage in the Bible. While many pastoral examples of this abound (often in churches dedicated to the Authorized Version), there are some surprising examples in published literature as well. For example, in *Exalting Jesus in John*, Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg present a sermon on the passage without any discussion of the difficulty.⁴ Likewise, Walter Lüthi’s published sermons through John never address the issue, though he does present a sermon on the passage.⁵

Ignoring the issue, however, is damaging both to the pastor and the congregants. In regard to the pastor, it is necessary that he has confidence that what he preaches is actually God’s Word. Accordingly,

point!). But the passage under consideration here is “The Woman Caught in Adultery,” for it is a well-known and well-beloved narrative.

³ He said this in relation to the Authorized Version, which he noted was “faulty in many places” yet still “a grand work.” Spurgeon was not against text-criticism, but he warned that a preacher must “correct where correction must be for truth’s sake, but never for the vainglorious display of [one’s] critical ability.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Commenting & Commentaries* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), 31. See also Elijah Hixson, “New Testament Textual Criticism in the Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon,” *JETS* 57 (2014): 555–70.

⁴ Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg, *Exalting Jesus in John*, Christ-Centered Exposition (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017).

⁵ Walter Lüthi, *St. John’s Gospel: An Exposition* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960).

to ignore the issue is to abandon one's pastoral duty. It may be that the pastor is untrained in the discipline of text-criticism, yet surely he is able to read the work of those who are so trained. Thus, to the extent of his ability, he should determine the truth of the matter and proceed accordingly. Of course, there is always the danger that such study will lead in a direction the pastor would rather not go. But Broadus is as correct today as he was over a century ago when he stated this regarding the spurious ending of the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:13):

We may give up the pleasing and familiar words with regret, but surely it is more important to know what the Bible really contains and really means, than to cling to something not really in the Bible, merely because it gratifies our taste, or even because it has for us some precious associations.⁶

Ignoring the issue is also damaging to the congregation. Nearly every modern version of the Bible brackets this section off with a statement that reads something like, "The earliest manuscripts do not include 7:53–8:11." Even if the pastor decides to ignore the issue, congregants are hard pressed to ignore the marks in their Bible. They at least need to know that the pastor knows about the issue. Michael Milton suggests that ignoring an obvious issue like this is comparable to ignoring a bird that flew in during the sermon:

If a sparrow flies into the sanctuary on a Sunday morning, at around the second point of the sermon, the preacher who continues his message without addressing the obvious flutter of little wings above the congregation, will not enjoy a congregation who hears his third point.⁷

In the same way, when a pastor avoids discussing an issue that the printed text highlights, they are at a risk of losing their audience. Perhaps they simply lose their attention, but just as likely they will lose the congregants' confidence.

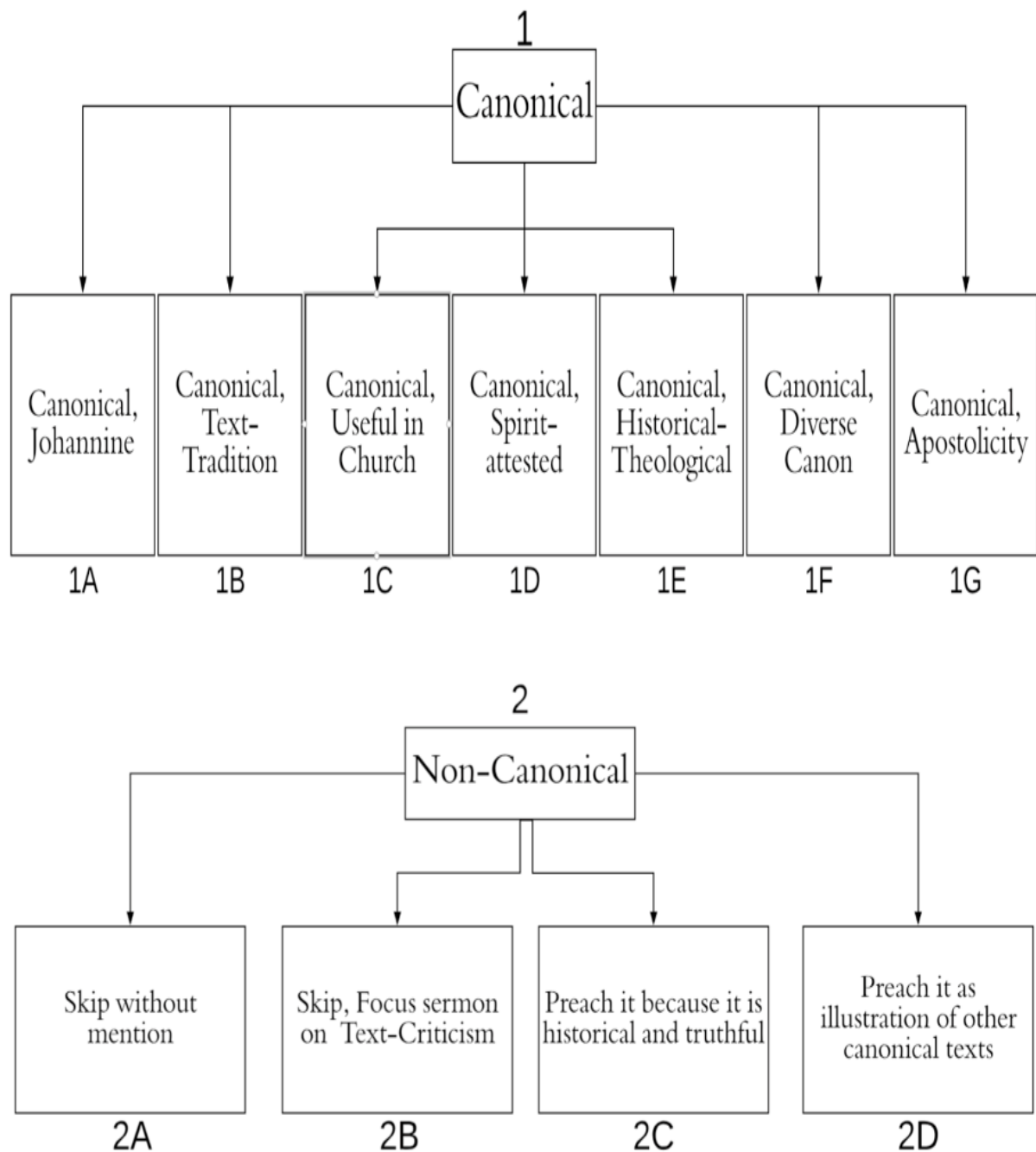
2. Charting the Options

A simplistic view of the matter is as follows: If the text is canonical, then preach it. If it is not canonical, then do not preach it. But things are not so simple. First, there is significant debate concerning the meaning of canonicity. Second, there are many who believe the text is not canonical, and yet they still believe it should be preached. Finally, even those who agree it is non-canonical and should not be preached disagree concerning what should be done in a preaching cycle when the text comes up.

The following charts show the differing positions on how to handle this passage. They differ in that the first group believes the text is canonical, while the second does not. Each position is labeled with a number and letter (e.g., 1A, 2C) for ease of reference.

⁶ John Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886), 139.

⁷ Michael A. Milton, "Preaching from the Footnotes: The Challenge of Textual Criticism in Expository Preaching," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 9.2 (2009): 61.



3. The Text Is Canonical

The following positions argue that the *pericope adulterae* is canonical. The basis for such a belief is quite diverse. Each will be examined in turn, sometimes with a focus on how they define the canon, and sometimes assessing whether their evidential claims are accurate.

3.1. It Is Canonical Because the Text Is Original to John's Gospel

Throughout the history of scholarship there has been a minor undercurrent of scholars who argue that the narrative of the woman caught in adultery is genuine to John's Gospel. The most detailed defense is given by Maurice Robinson, a Majority Text advocate who has collated all of the manuscripts of John that include the pericope.⁸ But since the case against the authenticity of the passage is so strong, few have followed Robinson.⁹ In fact, Metzger has noted, "The evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming."¹⁰ While the case cannot be developed at length here, it will be worthwhile to overview some of the data.

In regard to manuscript evidence, quite early and diverse manuscripts do not contain the reading (e.g., Ɑ66, Ɑ B L N T W X Y Δ Θ Ψ 0141 0211 etc.), and many early versions (Syriac and some Coptic) do not contain it. No extant manuscript before the fifth century contains the reading. Even in manuscripts that contain the text, it is often accompanied by a mark identifying the debatable nature of the passage. The literature of the early church fathers provides little additional confidence, for with the exception of Didymus the Blind, none of the Greek fathers (e.g., Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, etc.) mention the passage for the first millennium of the church's existence.

If the story is original, one would expect to find a reason for its exclusion from the text. Augustine thought it was original to the Gospel but was excluded because some men were afraid that their wives would see in it a license to sin.¹¹ Kenneth Bailey, on a similar note, imagines a man asking for a copy of John without the narrative so that one could give the copy to his daughter. Such reasoning would be, "I don't want my daughters committing adultery and telling me, 'Jesus forgave this woman and therefore you should forgive me!'"¹² It must be admitted that such positions are highly speculative, and there is no other example of a text that was modified due to moral prudence.¹³ Recently Jennifer Knust and Tommy Wasserman dedicated two lengthy chapters of their monograph on this pericope to examining whether this story was suppressed. They concluded that not only are there no persuasive reasons given for why the text would have been removed, but they also show that such a removal would have been nearly impossible.¹⁴ On the other hand, there is good reason to believe the narrative would have been

⁸ Maurice Robinson, "Preliminary Observations Regarding the Pericopae Adulterae Based upon Fresh Collations of Nearly All Continuous-Text Manuscripts and All Lectionary Manuscripts Containing the Passage," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 13 (2000): 35–59. See also Maurice Robinson, "The Pericope Adulterae: A Johannine Tapestry with Double Interlock," in *The Pericope of the Adulteress in Contemporary Research*, ed. David Alan Black and Jacob N. Cerone, LNTS 551 (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 115–46.

⁹ Few commentaries argue for its inclusion. See, however, John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 449 n. 1; Carl L. Laney, *John*, Moody Gospel Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 151–54.

¹⁰ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1994), 187.

¹¹ Augustine, "Adulterous Marriages," in *Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects*, trans. Charles T. Wilcox, The Fathers of the Church 27 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 2.7 (pp. 107–8).

¹² Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 230.

¹³ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 189.

¹⁴ Jennifer Knust and Tommy Wasserman, *To Cast the First Stone: The Transmission of a Gospel Story* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 96–172.

added. The story portrays the forgiveness of Jesus in a powerful way, and it may have served early on to distinguish Christianity from Judaism.

As for the internal evidence, the passage “seriously interrupts the flow of thought in John’s narrative.”¹⁵ Such disruption may partially explain why the passage appears in five different places in various manuscripts: (1) after 7:52 (D E [F] G H K M U Γ Π 28 700 892); (2) after 7:36 (225); (3) after 7:44 (several Georgian manuscripts); (4) after 21:25 (1 565 1076 1570 1582 arm^{mss}); and (5) after Luke 21:38 (f).¹⁶ Further, the style and vocabulary appear to be distinct from the rest of John’s Gospel.

When added together, the external and internal evidence strongly indicate the inauthenticity of the passage. Accordingly, few have found 1A to be an attractive position.

3.2. It Is Canonical Because It Is in a Text Tradition

Some interpreters include the *pericope adulterae* in the canon because of an adherence to an authoritative tradition. There are diverse groups who hold to positions under this broad umbrella.

The most prominent group holding to this perspective is the Roman Catholic Church. The Council of Trent settled the issue, for it stated “If anyone does not accept as sacred and canonical the aforesaid books in their entirety and *with all their parts*, as they have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church and *as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate Edition*, and knowingly and deliberately rejects the aforesaid traditions, let him be anathema.”¹⁷ While many Roman Catholic scholars argue against the authenticity of the passage on the grounds established above, they nevertheless accept the text as canonical Scripture due to the decision of the Council of Trent.

Four Roman Catholic examples may be given.¹⁸ First, the New American Bible editors clearly believe the text is an intrusion; nevertheless they indicate that “the Catholic Church accepts this passage as canonical scripture.”¹⁹ Schnackenberg also makes this same point, though more explicitly: “Since it is included in the *Vulgate*, and the Council of Trent did not make any further comment about it, it

¹⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 1:736.

¹⁶ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 188–89.

¹⁷ Italics added for emphasis. After two months of debate, there were twenty-four yes votes, fifteen no votes, and sixteen abstentions. Council of Trent, Session 4, “Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures” in *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Trans. Henry Joseph Schroeder (St. Louis: Herder, 1941), 18.

¹⁸ Not all Roman Catholic Commentators have cited the Council in their academic consideration of this passage. For example, Francis Moloney, a Catholic critical commentator, argues against the authenticity of the text and suggest the text is an intrusion on John’s Gospel (Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, SP 4 [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998], 259).

¹⁹ Here is the full statement, showing their reasoning and then simple assertion of submission to authority: “The story of the woman caught in adultery is a later insertion here, missing from all early Greek manuscripts. A Western text-type insertion, attested mainly in Old Latin translations, it is found in different places in different manuscripts: here, or after Jn 7:36 or at the end of this gospel, or after Lk 21:38, or at the end of that gospel. There are many non-Johannine features in the language, and there are also many doubtful readings within the passage. The style and motifs are similar to those of Luke, and it fits better with the general situation at the end of Lk 21: but it was probably inserted here because of the allusion to Jer 17:13 (cf. note on Jn 8:6) and the statement, ‘I do not judge anyone,’ in Jn 8:15. The Catholic Church accepts this passage as canonical scripture.” *The New American Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1816.

forms part of the canon, though this does not involve any decision about its literary origin.”²⁰ Third, the Catholic Commentary on Scripture argues against the texts authenticity, yet states “the Church receives this text as inspired Scripture.”²¹ Finally, Raymond Brown notes that in “Roman Catholic Church the criterion of canonicity is acceptance into the Vulgate ... so Catholics regard [the *pericope adulterae*] as canonical.”²²

Outside the Roman Catholic Church other groups hold to a canon that includes the pericope based on text traditions. While the King James Version Only (KJVO) and *Textus Receptus* (TR) advocates do not believe in a council’s determination of the canon, they effectively embrace Erasmus’s work in a similar manner.²³ Coming alongside these are Majority Text (MT) proponents who argue that readings found in the majority of Greek manuscripts should be accepted as canonical.²⁴ These movements are similar in that they all believe the text is canonical because it is found in a particular text tradition. Of course, there are some differences. In the Roman Catholic Church there is much agreement that the text is an intrusion within John’s original Gospel. The KJV/TR/MT proponents generally argue that the text is original to John’s Gospel. In all cases, however, an authoritative text-tradition plays a central role in determining the canonicity of the passage. For those who find no authority in these sources, 1B is not an option.

3.3. It Is Canonical Because of Spirit-Guided Ecclesiastical Use

Like the text-tradition examples above, this position finds an authority outside the textual evidence for the canonicity of the text. In this case, ecclesiastical use determines the canon. Edward Klink III is an explicit proponent of this position. While he recognizes the text is inauthentic, he nevertheless believes it is canonical: “The thirteen-hundred-year use and application of this text in the church becomes a kind of ecclesial argument, trusting in some limited capacity in the Spirit-guided decisions of the church and, behind the scenes, the providence of God.”²⁵ Milton agrees, though he takes the argument in a slightly different direction:

²⁰ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, trans. Kevin Smyth, HThKNT (New York: Herder, 1968), 2:162.

²¹ Francis Martin and William M. Wright IV, *The Gospel of John*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 151.

²² Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, AB 29–29A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966–1970) 1:336.

²³ The reasons for this are diverse, but generally these proponents indicate that God providentially led so that the text would be precisely what it is. For a defense of the passage from this perspective, see Peter S. Ruckman, *The “Errors” in the King James Bible* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1999), 335–36.

²⁴ Zane Clark Hodges, Arthur L. Farstad, and William C. Dunkin, eds., *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 1985). Byzantine Priority advocates, like Maurice Robinson, should be considered separately from the MT position. Byzantine Priority advocates do not simply count manuscripts; instead, they give primary attention to the transmission history of a textual reading (finding greater value in the Byzantine tradition than most eclectic critics) and subsequently follow this with an analysis of internal textual considerations. See Robinson’s defense of the canonicity of this passage as an example (“The Pericope Adulterae: A Johannine Tapestry with Double Interlock,” 115–46).

²⁵ Edward W. Klink III, *John*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 389.

No matter the controversies, the text is there. It may be disputed, but for some reason or another, the Church collectively through the centuries decided it should be there. It is more destructive to the work of the Church to gloss over the treasured contents of this repository than to decide to get rid of what has held the attention of the Church since the early centuries after the ascension of Jesus.... I am not arguing for the majority text. I am arguing for the *majority time*.²⁶

On this view, canonicity is, at least partly, determined by the usefulness of a text among God's people. Such usefulness, these proponents stress, is providentially guided by the Holy Spirit. Burge clarifies the connection between the question of ecclesiastical use and canonicity as he speaks of the *pericope adulterae*: "The story edifies the Church and has often become a vehicle through which the Holy Spirit works. *Are these the grounds of the Protestant canon?* If so, the passage should remain firmly anchored in the NT."²⁷

The position of Milton and Klink is attractive in that it recognizes the role of the Spirit in the canonical process. Nevertheless, one wonders why text-criticism is necessary if this is the standard of canonicity.²⁸ Further, what is the role of apostolicity and inspiration in canonicity? These are questions that will be returned to. For now, it is enough to say that 1C offers a truncated view of canonicity, one which lacks the necessary depth for the concept.

3.4. It Is Canonical Because the Spirit Attests to Its Canonicity

Michael Kruger, following Calvin and others, has argued that the role of the Spirit is crucial in the historical process by which the church recognized the canon. Accordingly, it is possible that someone would argue that the Spirit testifies to the inclusion of this narrative. To be clear, neither Kruger nor Calvin argues this way. Nevertheless, one could logically make the argument, and so we should consider it.

While some might suggest this position is the same as 1C, there is a major difference. When Kruger speaks of the Spirit's role in attesting to canonicity, he is not talking about the usefulness of the text in the church. Instead, he refers to the process whereby "the Holy Spirit works to overcome the noetic effects of sin and produces belief that these books are from God."²⁹ This work of the Spirit is often not direct, but is usually mediated through external evidences, including the positive case for the apostolicity of a text, its acceptance by the church, and a recognition of the divine qualities of a text.³⁰ Therefore, while the usefulness of the text throughout church history may be one of the evidences for canonicity, it is not

²⁶ Milton's quote indicates the closeness between this position and the last. Indeed, many people argue for the Majority Text on the basis of its historicity. Milton, "Preaching from the Footnotes," 58–59.

²⁷ Gary M. Burge, "A Specific Problem in the New Testament Text and Canon: The Woman Caught in Adultery," *JETS* 27 (1984): 148. Burge refrains from explicitly taking this view in either his article or in his commentary (John, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000], 244–45); nevertheless, both works appear to speak positively concerning the view.

²⁸ More disturbingly, an abuse of this perspective could be used to eliminate sections of Scripture from canonicity, for some passages may be judged not to be used by the Spirit.

²⁹ Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 94.

³⁰ Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 112.

decisive. Further, it is only a part of a larger process whereby the Spirit indicates to God's people what is canonical.

It is critical to note that Kruger does not think spirit-attestation can settle text-critical matters. He explains,

The canon is the result of the church's corporate response; the individual textual variations are not. Thus, there is no reason to think that the final shape of the text is necessarily connected to the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit or that the majority reading is necessarily the original one.³¹

In other words, the testimony of the Spirit is applicable at the book level, but not the individual text level. In Kruger's words, since "[divine] qualities are bound up with the broader meaning, teaching, and doctrine communicated by a book, they are not as applicable to individual textual variations (which, on the whole, tend to be quite small and change very little of the overall meaning)."³²

A potential weakness in Kruger's view of the canon can be seen in his parenthetical statement. What he says certainly applies to small textual matters, but what about the *pericope adulterae* or the ending of Mark's Gospel? He does not explicitly address these. Likely he would note that though these disputed texts are of significant size, they pale in comparison to the size of the book they appear in. Accordingly, the text is not seriously altered. John's Gospel, for instance, has the same message with or without the *pericope adulterae*. Thus, the Spirit witnesses to the canonicity of the Gospel of John, but such witness does not indicate anything about the inclusion of the debated passage.

3.5. It Is Canonical Because It Is Both Historical and Orthodox

In a journal article articulating an interconfessional approach to the problem of the *pericope adulterae*, Armin Baum states that "If the [*pericope adulterae*] is considered to be orthodox and historical, nothing speaks against crediting it with canonical authority."³³ Two standards are highlighted as necessary for canonicity: orthodoxy and historicity. As for the former, few argue that the text includes heterodoxy. Indeed, that is what makes the text so difficult. If the text had included false doctrine, then it would surely have been rejected many years ago (or would never have been included in the first place).

That the narrative is historical is less clear, though often assumed. The case for the historicity of the episode will be treated thoroughly below (see 2C). For now, it is enough to recognize that some believe its claims for historicity along with its orthodox nature combine to form a solid case for the text's canonicity. F. F. Bruce appears to affirm the same perspective on the text, suggesting that such a "genuine remembrance of Jesus' ministry" as that recorded in the *pericope adulterae* "is eminently worthy of being treated as canonical."³⁴ And this is true even if, as Bruce believes, the text is not original to the Gospel of John.

Granted its historicity—a point challenged below—Baum asks, "What can be more authoritative than the authentic words and deeds of Jesus? Did not the first Christians develop the whole concept of

³¹ Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 101 n. 37.

³² Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 101 n. 37.

³³ Armin D. Baum, "Does the Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11) Have Canonical Authority? An Interconfessional Approach," *BBR* 24 (2014): 175.

³⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 289.

canonicity on the basis of Jesus' (and his apostles') authority? Did not they regard every authentic word and deed of Jesus as normative for their Christian faith?"³⁵

Baum's comments get to the heart of this position. If this is a true historical remembrance, and if much of the Gospels are retellings of true historical remembrances of Jesus' life, then why shouldn't this be parallel with the rest of Scripture? In answer, it must be admitted that *it is not clear that it is true*. In fact, even Baum concludes his article saying "the historicity of the event it relates has not been disproved. It is by all means plausible that the incident the *Pericope Adulterae* narrates is just as authentic as the words and deeds of Jesus that are in the original Gospel of John."³⁶ Notice that Baum's case rests on the "plausible" and that which "has not been disproved." These are unstable foundations which cannot bear the weight Baum places on them.

Even if Baum could prove that the narrative is historical, there is still the matter concerning how the narrative is communicated. The doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration (a doctrine to which Baum may not subscribe) indicates that it is not only the historical narratives but the very wording of those narratives that are inspired.³⁷ Further, Baum is correct to highlight, "One of the main objections against the historical-theological approach and against a historical and a theological testing of the canonicity [of the *pericope adulterae*] is that it presupposes an open canon and therefore deprives the church of the normative basis for its theological judgments."³⁸

In sum, this perspective is correct to investigate the historicity and orthodoxy of the narrative. If either definitively proves faulty, the case for canonicity also falls. Nevertheless, historicity and orthodoxy are not sufficient criteria for canonicity. As with 1C, this position offers a truncated and insufficient view of canonicity.

3.6. It Is Canonical Because Authoritative Text-Forms Are Canonical

Another perspective on the canonicity of the *pericope adulterae* derives from a particular view of text-criticism. In light of the variances between manuscripts, scholars cannot know with certainty the exact form of the original text. In light of this fact, some have suggested that canonicity applies to any reading that has held authority within the church. For instance, Eldon Epp, after noting that the original text is unattainable, says that "the canonicity of readings has virtually the same degree of multiformity as do the meaningful competing variants."³⁹ Such a position necessitates more than one canon. The reason

³⁵ Baum, "Does the Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11) Have Canonical Authority?," 175.

³⁶ Baum, "Does the Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11) Have Canonical Authority?," 177.

³⁷ Second Timothy 3:16 indicates that the Scriptures are "breathed out by God," investing the very words with authority. In regard to narratives, the truth is not just the historical situation they convey, but it also includes the way that narrative is told. For example, the statement "Jesus was angry so he flipped over tables and threw people out of the temple" is historically accurate and orthodox. Nevertheless, the way it is told is less than ideal. It could mislead, and it does not capture what Scripture captures as it speaks of Jesus' cleansing of the temple. This simple illustration is meant to highlight that the words one uses matter just as much as the historical truths being communicated.

³⁸ Baum, "Does the Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11) Have Canonical Authority?," 177. He does not consider this a problem, noting that certain segments of the church have held a different canon in history. Further, he notes that churches who hold to the *pericope adulterae* and those that do not would not differ in any significant way.

³⁹ Eldon Jay Epp, "Interrelation of New Testament Textual Criticism and Canon," in *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism* (Boston: Brill, 2005), 638.

for this is stated plainly by Epp as he questions the meaning of “canonical”: “what can ‘canonical’ mean when each of our 5,300 Greek New Testament manuscripts and perhaps 9,000 versional manuscripts, as well as every one now lost, was considered authoritative—and therefore canonical—in worship and instruction in one or more of the thousands upon thousands of individuals churches *when no two manuscripts are alike?*”⁴⁰ For Epp, then, the *pericope adulterae* may or may not be canonical, depending on whether the group in question considers the text authoritative.

Bruce Metzger also recognizes the challenge of text-criticism in relation to canonicity, but he seeks to solve the problem in a different way. For Metzger, it is best to view canonicity as pertaining “to the document *qua* document, and not to one particular form or version of that document.”⁴¹ For this reason, Mark’s Gospel was canonical and the question of the end of the text was not a consideration in regard to its canonicity. For Metzger, such a position explains why the delineation of canonicity did not result in an attempt to specify which specific readings were “canonical.”⁴² Metzger provides a modern analogy: “Churches today accept a wide variety of contemporary versions as canonical New Testament, though the versions differ not only as to rendering but also with respect to the presence or absence of certain verses.”⁴³

Metzger does limit the variants that would be allowed in a canonical text by whether they appear very early. In his words, “The category of ‘canonical’ appears to have been broad enough to include all variant readings (as well as variant renderings in early versions) that emerged during the course of the transmission of the New Testament documents *while apostolic tradition was still a living entity*, with an intermingling of written and oral forms of that tradition.”⁴⁴ By the “apostolic tradition” as a “living entity,” Metzger does not mean traditions that derive from the life of the apostles. He provides an example with the long ending of Mark, which was known to the church fathers Justin Martyr and Tatian. Apparently, these second century men lived during the “living testimony of the apostles,” for in light of their knowledge of the text, Metzger concludes, “There seems to be good reason ... to conclude that, though external and internal evidence is conclusive against the authenticity of the last twelve verses as coming from the same pen as the rest of the Gospel, the passage ought to be accepted as part of the canonical text of Mark.”⁴⁵

While Metzger and Epp have differing views on the relation between canonicity and text-criticism, they are both seeking to answer the same question: How can one attribute canonicity to a text that is as variable as the NT documents have proved to be? Epp, by seeing canonicity primarily as a social construction, simplifies the process by noting that all texts deemed authoritative for a group are canonical. Metzger, who wants to maintain some connection between canonicity and apostolic tradition, argues that any form of the text that can be traced back to the second century or earlier may be considered canonical. What is lost in all of this, however, is the role of the Spirit and inspiration. Does “canonical” merely mean that a text has authority, or that it was penned before a certain period? These

⁴⁰ Epp, “Interrelation of New Testament Textual Criticism and Canon,” 636.

⁴¹ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 269.

⁴² Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 269.

⁴³ Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 270.

⁴⁴ Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 269, emphasis added.

⁴⁵ Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 270.

are the fruits of canonicity, not their root. Accordingly, no matter how much authority is placed in a text by a religious group, that text is not canonical if not from the Spirit. Further, no matter how early a variant enters the stream of manuscripts, it is not canonical if not from the Spirit. In sum, 1F fails just as 1C and 1E by offering an insufficient definition of canonicity.

3.7. It Is Canonical Because It Is Apostolic

For those who believe a text must have apostolic authority (whether direct or indirect) in order to be canonical, the inauthenticity of the *pericope adulterae* in John's Gospel appears to rule it out of the canon. There is a hybrid view, however, that suggests the passage is apostolic even if not penned by John for the Gospel. This perspective was explored at length by Scott Kaczorowski, who suggests that the text is an "inspired text inserted into an inspired text."⁴⁶ He argues that the passage gives evidence of antiquity, apostolicity, historicity, and orthodoxy, while also showing itself useful in the church.

Others have argued from a similar perspective. In a sermon on the passage, R. C. Sproul opened by defending his preaching of the passage on the following grounds:

The overwhelming consensus of text critics is that it was not part of the original Gospel of John, at least not at this portion of John. At the same time, the overwhelming consensus is this account is authentic, *apostolic* and it should be contained in any edition of the NT. I believe it is nothing less than the Word of God. Whether it belongs here in John's Gospel or at the end of the 21st chapter of Luke, or somewhere else in John's Gospel, I leave to the ages. But I am treating it as nothing less than the very Word of God.⁴⁷

Along the same lines, Russell Smith, in a printed sermon, said, "Most conservative scholars agree that this passage depicts a genuine incident in Jesus' life and that it *bears the marks of authorship by one of the apostles*. Therefore, I believe it is safe to assume that this passage is genuinely inspired Scripture, though it may not have been authored by John."⁴⁸

This position is attractive in that it gives full weight to the evidence that the story does not belong in John's Gospel. Nevertheless, the nearly insurmountable problem is that the text is not attested until long after the apostolic period. The most Kaczorowski is able to say is this: "We feel it is unlikely that the story only reached written form as late as the third century."⁴⁹ Further, that early church fathers did not make use of this powerful story also speaks against its apostolic origin.

3.8. Conclusion to the Canonical Views

Despite their diversity, each of the prior positions agree that the *pericope adulterae* is canonical. But each falls short for one of three reasons. First, some fail in regard to evidence. For instance, the claim that the text is original to the Gospel (1A) appears to go against the manuscript and historical evidence, while the claims that the text is apostolic (1G) or is factually historical (1E) lack sufficient

⁴⁶ Scott J. Kaczorowski, "The Pericope of the Woman Caught in Adultery: An Inspired Text Inserted into an Inspired Text?" *JETS* 61 (2018): 321–37.

⁴⁷ R. C. Sproul, "The Woman Caught in Adultery," *Ligonier Ministries*, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/sermons/woman-caught-adultery/>, emphasis added.

⁴⁸ Russell B. Smith, "False Judges: A Sermon on John 8:1–11," *Reformed Perspectives Magazine* 3.43 (October 2001), <https://tinyurl.com/r9t5puy>, emphasis added.

⁴⁹ Kaczorowski, "The Pericope of the Woman Caught in Adultery," 334.

evidence. Second, some of the canonical arguments fail to convince because they are based on spurious claims of authority—whether from a church council or from a revered text-tradition (1B).

Third, some arguments fail to convince because they are based on truncated definitions of canonicity. Brevard Childs once said that “much of the present confusion over the problem of canon turns on the failure to reach an agreement regarding the terminology.”⁵⁰ This is still true today, as is evident by the differing definitions of canonicity offered above. Following Kruger, a robust definition of canonicity takes into account the character of the text (its divine qualities), the corporate reception of the church, and its apostolic origins.⁵¹ These are confirmed to God’s people through the attestation of the Spirit. Many of the definitions used above, however, isolate one or two of these factors. For instance, that the text is canonical because it is useful in the church (1C) maximizes one of the characteristics of the text and makes it sufficient for canonicity. Additionally, the position that the text is Spirit-attested (1E) separates the Spirit’s attestation from the evidences the Spirit uses to attest to canonical Scripture. Finally, that the canon is diverse because the text-critical problems are early and abundant (1F) fails either because the proponent overemphasizes the role of corporate reception in canonicity (e.g., Epp) or the author extends apostolicity beyond the lifetime of the apostles (e.g., Metzger).

On the basis of the manuscript evidence and a robust definition of canon, the case for the canonicity of the text falls short. If it is not canonical, how should the text be handled in the pulpit? This question is considered next.

4. The Text Is Not Canonical

Though it is a necessary first step, rejecting the canonicity of the text does not solve the problem of what a pastor should do when the *pericope adulterae* comes up in a preaching series. The following are four positions a pastor may take.

4.1. It Is Non-Canonical, So Skip the Text without Consideration

This is the opposite problem of the person who preaches the text without mentioning the text-critical problems. In the former case, people wonder what the brackets in their Bible mean. In this case, people may wonder why their Pastor does not believe the Bible. Though he speaks in reference to Bible translations, the comments of Ben Witherington III are appropriate here: “If you leave it out without any comments, there are bound to be thousands of Bible readers asking, ‘Is this Thomas Jefferson’s Bible?’”⁵²

If modern versions of the Bible relegated the entire pericope to the footnotes, a pastor may be able to make minor comment and move along, continuing John’s narrative. As it stands, however, few versions are willing to do this.⁵³ The RSV initially did so, but placed the passage back in the main text

⁵⁰ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 179.

⁵¹ Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 118.

⁵² As quoted in an interview: Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, “Is ‘Go and Sin No More’ Biblical?,” *Christianity Today* 52 (June 2008): 46.

⁵³ Even some scholarly editions of the Greek New Testament keep the passage in brackets (e.g., NA²⁸ and UBS⁵). On the other hand, other editions have properly relegated the text to the footnotes (e.g., *The Tyndale House Greek New Testament* and SBLGNT).

in the second edition.⁵⁴ Comfort asks a legitimate question in this regard: “Isn’t it the task of translators to remove those obstacles that keep the reader from comprehending the meaning of the original text? If so, this ‘fixture’ should be relegated to the margin, so that the reader can see the continuity of John’s narrative.”⁵⁵ Dan Wallace indicates that modern versions continue to print the text because of a continued “tradition of timidity.”⁵⁶ Regardless of the reason, however, modern versions have kept the passage in the body of the text, and therefore it cannot be safely ignored.

Just as the brackets force those who think the text is genuine to talk about the text-critical issues at hand, so the inclusion of the text in the main body of modern versions also requires those who believe the text is non-canonical to address it. To ignore the passage altogether is to neglect the needs of the congregants. While passing over the text has the benefit of not interrupting John’s narrative, the pastor risks leaving the distracted listener behind. Therefore, the next position addresses the issue head on.

4.2. It Is Non-Canonical, So Speak about Text-Criticism

While there are many small textual issues throughout the NT, there are only a few that are of significant size. When these arrive in a preaching schedule, they provide the pastor the opportunity to address text-criticism from the pulpit. While some might refrain from doing this, believing the topic too controversial, esoteric, or difficult for the congregants, there are good reasons to consider it.

First, faithful Bible readers often meet text-criticism in their Bible reading. Of course, it is not direct, but whenever they read an alternative version and discover it says something different from their beloved version, or when they see a footnote offering a different reading, they are facing text-criticism. Do they know how to handle these footnotes and differences? Second, there is only one New York Times Best Seller that discusses text-criticism, and it is written by someone who opposes an Evangelical definition of Scripture.⁵⁷ While a pastor’s congregants might not read Bart Erhman’s work, they very well may have conversations with relatives or friends at work who have done so. Textual matters can be unsettling for the unaware, and it is less than ideal that they first meet the challenge from a skeptic.

Of course, the teaching on text-criticism need not take up the majority of the sermon, though it could. The pastor could either combine the teaching of text-criticism with one of the options mentioned below (2C or 2D), or he could explain why he is passing over the material and move on to the next section of John’s Gospel. In either case, it does seem wise to address the topic.

4.3. It Is Non-Canonical, But It Is True and Historical, So Preach It

Though a pastor may decide that the text is not canonical, he may believe the text communicates a true story concerning Jesus. This is a very common view. For example, D. A. Carson says, “There is little reason for doubting that the event here described occurred, even if in its written form it did not in the

⁵⁴ Philip Wesley Comfort, “The Pericope of the Adulteress,” *The Bible Translator* 40 (1989): 145. See also, Philip Wesley Comfort, *Early Manuscripts and Modern Translations of the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1990), 116.

⁵⁵ Comfort, “The Pericope of the Adulteress,” 145. See also, Comfort, *Early Manuscripts and Modern Translations of the New Testament*, 116. It should be mentioned that the New World Translation places it in a footnote.

⁵⁶ Daniel B. Wallace, “The Gospel According to Bart,” *JETS* 49 (2006): 336.

⁵⁷ Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperOne, 2007).

beginning belong to the canonical books.”⁵⁸ Leon Morris adds, “But if we cannot feel that this is part of John’s Gospel, we can feel that the story is true to the character of Jesus. Throughout the history of the church it has been held that, whoever wrote it, this little story is authentic. It rings true.”⁵⁹ J. Ramsey Michaels is more bold: “It is undoubtedly a true incident in Jesus’ life.”⁶⁰ Merrill Tenney draws a similar conclusion: “It doubtless constitutes a genuine account of an episode of His career.”⁶¹

John’s Gospel indicates that there are many more things Jesus said than could be written down (21:25). There are even *agrapha* (teaching of Jesus not recorded in the Gospels) expressed elsewhere in the NT (e.g., “It is more blessed to give than to receive” [Acts 20:35]). Accordingly, it is possible that this narrative truly occurred. The literary and historical evidence, however, is not convincing.

As for the literary evidence, the criterion that this episode “sounds like Jesus” fails to convince. The danger of casting Jesus in our own image must always be guarded against, and a criterion of “sounds like Jesus” can too easily devolve into that error. For instance, some might claim that Jesus being angry (Mark 3:5) or his speaking negatively to a Gentile woman (Matt 15:26) does not “sound like Jesus.” On the other hand, statements like “God accepts everyone just as they are” are touted by many to “sound like Jesus.” Indeed, Carl Bridges is correct to warn, “One should use the ‘sounds like Jesus’ criterion sparingly, if only because it ‘sounds like’ the Jesus Seminar.”⁶²

Other literary evidence is a bit more supportive. There are many similarities between the *pericope adulterae* and other Gospel narratives. For instance, the narrative presents Jesus answering a question designed to trick him in a way that turns the tables on the questioners (cf. Matt 21:25). Further, Jesus is merciful to the sinful and offers forgiveness to those who recognize their sin. Finally, there is an apparent subversion of the law, which is actually a deeper confirmation of it.⁶³ Added to these are the claims that the *pericope adulterae* shows similarity to Johannine and Lukan style.⁶⁴

On the historical side, there is a statement made by Papias, a second century church father, about “a woman who was accused before the Lord of many sins, which the Gospel according to the Hebrews contains.”⁶⁵ Even if there were no questions concerning the testimony of Papias,⁶⁶ it is uncertain that this episode is the same as the *pericope adulterae*. The woman in that story has many sins, while in the

⁵⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 333.

⁵⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 779.

⁶⁰ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 146.

⁶¹ Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 138.

⁶² Carl B. Bridges, “The Canonical Status of the Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11),” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 11 (2008): 216 n. 17.

⁶³ See the excellent treatment of this in Kaczorowski, “The Pericope of the Woman Caught in Adultery,” 332.

⁶⁴ Kaczorowski’s article argues for a similarity with Luke, while Baum argues for similarity to John. Whitacre argues for it being a mix between synoptic and Johannine presentations, and that though it is clearly foreign to the document, it is a “patch sewn onto John’s Gospel” which has the “same pattern as the whole, even if the colors are somewhat different.” Kaczorowski, “The Pericope of the Woman Caught in Adultery,” 325–27; Baum, “Does the Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11) Have Canonical Authority?” 335; Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 210.

⁶⁵ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, Books 1–5, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, *The Fathers of the Church* 19 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 206.

⁶⁶ The testimony from Papias has been doubted in relation to the following factors. First, Papias only knew the disciples of the apostles. Second, the knowledge of what Papias says comes only through the quotations of a later

pericope adulterae it appears to be one sin. Thus, Kaczorowski appears overly optimistic when he says, “The fact that this story (or one very much like it) came down to Papias through his conversations with those who had known the apostles points not just to the antiquity of the account but also suggests its apostolicity.”⁶⁷

The only other historical evidence occurs in the third century and later.⁶⁸ Some have argued that though the textual evidence begins in the third century, the narrative must have originated prior to that point because the ascetic, moralistic nature of the church at the time would not have created such a scandalous narrative. In the words of Metzger, “No ascetically minded monk would have invented a narrative that closes with what seems to be only a mild rebuke on Jesus’ part.”⁶⁹

In sum, the limited historical and literary reasons to believe the account is factual seem not to support the confidence of some interpreters. Indeed, it appears that the burden of proof has not been met. Accordingly, the preacher is on unstable ground if he preaches the text on the grounds that it is historically accurate.

4.4. It Is Non-Canonical, But It Is a “Benign Expansion,” So It Can Be Used Illustratively⁷⁰

The final position under consideration argues that the text is non-canonical, but since its contents are taught in other places in Scripture, the material can be used illustratively. John Piper handles the passage this way. After noting that many commentators believe the *pericope adulterae* to be historical, he says,

Perhaps. I would like to think so. Who doesn’t love this story? But that does not give it the authority of Scripture. So what I will do is take its most remarkable point and show that it is true on the basis of other parts of Scripture, and so let this story not be the basis of our authority, but an echo and a pointer to our authority, namely, the Scriptures, that teach what it says.

Later he clarifies, “I am not going to say what I am about to preach to you is because of this text [the *pericope adulterae*]. I don’t think I have the warrant to do that. I preach the word of God, and I don’t think this is part of it. Even if [the narrative truly] happened.”⁷¹

David Doran offers a similar perspective, noting that even though many argue the narrative to be historically factual, “I can’t bring myself in good conscience to [preach it]. I don’t have any reason to

writer, Eusebius. For a general defense of Papias’s testimony, see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 12–38.

⁶⁷ Kaczorowski, “The Pericope of the Woman Caught in Adultery,” 332.

⁶⁸ Didymus the Blind, who wrote in the fourth century, certainly knew the story as is evidenced by his account in *Ecclesiastes Commentary*, 223.6b–13a, which was translated in Bart D. Ehrman, “Jesus and the Adulteress,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 25. The third century *Didascalia Apostolorum* in Syrian also contains the narrative.

⁶⁹ Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 319.

⁷⁰ Bridges defines the *pericope adulterae* as a “benign expansion” by which he means that its truth-claims are consistent with the message of the NT. Bridges, “The Canonical Status of the Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11),” 220–21. Cf. Steven J. Cole, “Caught in the Act (John 7:53–8:11),” 23 February 2014, <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-45-caught-act-john-753-811>.

⁷¹ John Piper, “Neither Do I Condemn You,” *Desiring God*, 6 March 2011, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/neither-do-i-condemn-you--3>.

think it didn't happen. But I also don't have a reason to believe God intended for us to have this as an inspired record, so I can't see preaching a message from it." He then offers an analogy: "It would be like if I opened a church history book and said, this event happened, so let me preach a sermon to you about it. I would actually be taking a stance on the authority that is outside the Bible."⁷² Despite this, Doran argues that the passage can still be useful, for "It rings with an illustrious power of what we know to be true. There is nothing contrary to the Scripture taught in this story." On this basis Doran offers a helpful way of preaching the text: instead of going through the story to biblical truths, a pastor should *go through biblical truths to the story*.⁷³

These pastors do not deny the historical truthfulness of the narrative, but since they cannot prove it, they are unwilling to preach it. Nevertheless, they also see that the truths presented in the narrative are consistent with other passages of Scripture, and thus they are willing to preach the truths of the narrative but only on the authority of other biblical texts.

5. Conclusion

The question of whether one should preach about the "Woman Caught in Adultery" is a theological question at heart. Its answer depends on one's view of canonicity, inspiration, preservation, and the role of the ecclesiastical office.

The conclusion of this paper is that the *pericope adulterae* is not canonical. This assessment is based on the textual and historical evidence, as well as on a robust, Evangelical definition of canon. Having concluded it is not canonical, four options were presented concerning how to handle the passage as it comes up in an expository series on John's Gospel. Since nearly all modern versions include the passage in the main text, it is not safe to avoid the passage. Further, since there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the non-canonical narrative is historically accurate, one should not simply preach the passage. Two options remain, and they are not exclusive. First, one may teach on why the passage will be skipped and thus teach the basics of text-criticism. Second, one may preach the truths of the narrative sourced in other, clearly canonical texts. It is possible, and perhaps best, to do both.⁷⁴ One may start the message talking about the text-critical issues and then transition to preaching the text on the basis of other passages. In this way, the preacher is able to confidently say "thus saith the Lord."

⁷² David Doran, "The Woman Caught in Adultery" (sermon at Inter-City Baptist Church, Allen Park, MI, 20 October 2013).

⁷³ Doran, "The Woman Caught in Adultery."

⁷⁴ Significantly, both Piper and Doran began their messages by over-viewing text-criticism, helping their people understand the issues. The second half of their sermon was an analysis of the text which focused on the shared truths with other Scripture. In this way, Piper and Doran combined views 2B and 2D.

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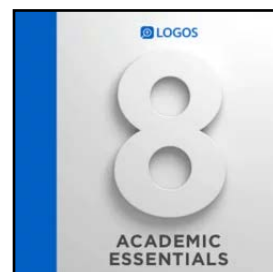
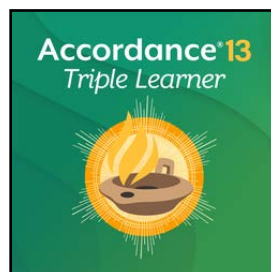
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— OLD TESTAMENT —

Accordance 13 Triple Learner Collection. Altamonte Springs, FL: Oak Tree Software, Inc., 2020. \$399.00

Logos 8 Academic Essentials. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2020. \$499.99.

My goal for this review is to understand the package that will best suit a seminary student's needs and beyond. Primarily, I am thinking of first-year masters students who study at least one biblical language. While this review is not targeted at specialists or scholars, those who are currently using BibleWorks and considering transitioning to either one of these packages may find this helpful.



Logos 8 has twelve different base packages organized by “traditions.” This means that Logos first differentiates by the *kinds* of resources (books) that packages include. Within each tradition, packages are further differentiated by four to eight different categories (e.g., Silver, Gold, Platinum) based on the *amount* of resources. Finally, Logos differentiates by *features*, which are the types of tools and functions available in the software program. These features may be purchased as separate add-ons or bundled together with more expensive packages. Packages can be categorized along three lines: *kinds* of resources, *amount* of resources, and the *number* of features. Accordance’s organization is similar. At least thirteen “collections” are divided along three *kinds* of language tracks (English, Greek, and Hebrew) with seven levels of complexity/competency across them (Starter, Learner, Discoverer, etc.). In this way, Accordance organizes the *kind* of resources by languages (as opposed to traditions), and the *amount* of resources by the user’s competency. Accordance allows a combination of language tracks at the Learner and Discoverer collections, suggesting that these levels are targeted at students learning both Greek and Hebrew. Accordance also includes add-ons where graphical *features* (e.g., images and photos) can be upgraded. If the above is not confusing enough, both systems also offer customizable bundles and add-ons.

To compare between the two systems and select one package, one must first choose a package with the required features and resources then match a similar package in the other system. It is helpful to begin with students in mind. They will need to read, search, and compare biblical texts. They will learn grammars and dictionaries of Greek and Hebrew to help them translate the original texts. Students will undertake exegesis, interpretation, and sermon preparation. Features and tools in the packages should aid and enhance these tasks.

For Logos, I have shortlisted three packages of the Academic tradition (Essentials [\$499.99], Standard [\$749.99], Premium [\$999.99]) as the most relevant packages. I have excluded the Academic Professional package for this review. For Accordance, I will review the Triple Learner (\$399) and Discoverer (\$899) Combinations, and the Accordance XII BW10 Crossover with add-on packages (\$448; hereafter Crossover+).

Bibles and Texts. The Logos Academic Essentials package includes the Greek and Hebrew critical editions most commonly used by students: Nestle-Aland 28th edition (Greek NT with apparatus and tagged morphology), Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Hebrew OT with apparatus and tagged morphology),

and the Septuagint (tagged morphology). Essentials also includes thirteen major English translations (e.g., ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV, NLT, NRSV). The Academic Standard package includes everything in the Essentials along with more Greek texts of the NT (e.g., Scrivener, Wescott and Hort) and more English Bibles (e.g., ASV, YLT). This package also includes the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The Academic Premium package includes a few more English versions, as well as a number of texts from the earliest Greek manuscripts. If a student is not required to study the Pseudepigrapha, Apocryphal, or the earliest Greek texts of the NT, Logos 8 Academic Essentials is sufficient.

Accordance 13's Triple Learner package includes the Nestle-Aland 28th edition (with tagged morphology) and the Textus Receptus Greek NT. The Crossover+ package also includes the Greek UBS5 Greek NT and several major Greek codices (e.g., Alexandrinus, Sinaiticus). Only Crossover+ includes the Greek apparatus (for NA28). All three Accordance packages include the Biblia Hebraica text with tagged morphology, but none of these packages includes any apparatus. For English Bibles, the packages include at least 15 (Learner), 26 (Crossover+), and 32 (Discoverer) versions. The Learner package does *not* include many common versions, such as NIV, NASB, NLT, and RSV. Notably, the Accordance packages contain a number of international modern Bibles (e.g., German, French, and Chinese).

Greek and Hebrew Helps. Where lexicons and grammars are concerned, Logos Essentials carries resources such as Liddell and Scott, Louw and Nida, Thayer, and the abridged *Theological Dictionary of New Testament* for Greek. Hebrew helps include the BDB, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, Wonneberger's *Understanding BHS*, and Lexham's *Learning Biblical Hebrew* by Kutz and Josberger. Logos Academic Standard offers similar helps to the Premium, including grammars and lexicons by Waltke and O'Connor, Joüon and Muraoka, and Futato. Impressively, it also includes D. J. Clines's 8-volume *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. For Accordance, the Learner package includes Mounce's Greek Dictionary, Thayer's Lexicon and Robertson's Greek grammar. For Hebrew, the Learner package includes the Concise Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary (Kohlenberger-Mounce) and the abridged BDB lexicon. Accordance Discoverer includes the abridged *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, *Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, and notably, the *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Jenni-Westermann). While the Crossover+ lacks these in the Discoverer, it includes others such as Wallace's Greek grammar, Joüon-Muraoka Hebrew Grammar and Waltke-O'Connor.

Other Resources. Maps, atlases, and timelines are included in all three Logos Academic packages. An English audio Bible (Lexham) is also included in these packages, but only the Premium includes audio Greek NT. Finally, where subject-specific references are concerned, books related to hermeneutics, interpretation, Bible introductions, theology, and missions are minimal in all three basic packages, though several good helps are available with paid add-ons. All three packages in Accordance include maps and timelines. Only the Crossover+ package includes audio for Greek (NT) and Hebrew (OT and NT). Compared to Logos Academic base packages, the Accordance Learner and Discover carry more resources on commentaries, preaching, theology, history, and devotional readings. As a whole, the Crossover+ contains more Bibles than the Learner and Discoverer but a narrower spread of commentaries than the Discoverer package.

The search function is perhaps the most important feature in Bible software packages. In general, both systems have excellent and powerful search functions. Both have the ability to do complex (combination of multiple criteria) and morphological searches (e.g., masculine singular nominal forms or the Hebrew *wayyiqtol* verbal forms). Both systems search with incredible speed and can display

results in beautiful graphical formats. Both allow the user to enter text commands directly into the search bar or aided through search templates and drop-down selection lists.

Logos's search capabilities are organized under one tab with several kinds of searches (e.g., clauses, morphology and syntax; Bible and/or commentaries/books). Logos distinguishes itself with helpful *templates*, which are pre-set search functions in layman terms (e.g., "search for two people mentioned together"). Accordance's search function requires a steeper learning curve. Instead of templates, Accordance offers lists of commands, functions, and symbols to use in a search. Without doubt, both Logos and Accordance have all the search features needed by a seminary student.

With greater emphasis on intertextuality studies in biblical studies, I have found Accordance's INFER function (ability to compare two different texts of the same language and find common words) significant. This exact function is lacking in Logos but it has a template function that allows a user to find not only citations, but also allusions and echoes of the Old Testament texts in the New. Logos also has the ability to search for a Bible person, say, "Adam" in the Hebrew Bible that will even return verses consisting of pronouns and verbal forms referring to "Adam." This feature is unique to Logos. Unfortunately, the actual criteria set for this search may not be clear to the Logos user.

Besides the search function, a notable feature in Logos is the Workflow feature. This tool is a step-by-step guide for the entire sermon process, from preparing one's heart to studying the text to consulting commentaries to writing the sermon. With each step, all needed functions and resources are consolidated for the user. In other words, Logos has incorporated the tasks of research and ministry with the system's functionality. Sometimes it takes quite a while for Logos to load or return results on my system (perhaps due to background indexing of files), but Accordance is consistently fast. The distinctiveness of Accordance may be contrasted with Logos's polished organization. While Logos provides well-organized search templates and helps you to search *what* you want to search, Accordance helps you to define *how* you want to search, and it gives the user a host of basic commands to manipulate (yet there are still functions such as FUZZY in Accordance with criteria that may also not be clear to the user). Logos's pre-set templates may be easier for the beginner, but it is harder to understand what sort of criteria lies behind the function—this could be a problem for specialists who need to know the specifics.

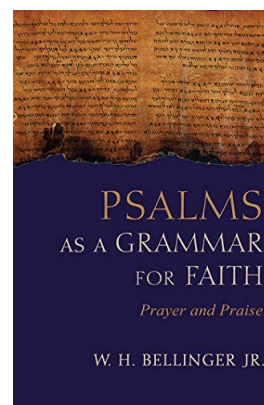
Given the breadth and depth of both systems, this comparative review can only be impressionistic. I think both have come a long way and have shaped each other. Where they now stand, they are very comparable in terms of features, speed, and resources. Either is sufficient for seminary students. On the compared packages, Logos has an edge for masters-level students, especially those aiming to enter ministry work. Resource-wise, Logos 8 Academic Standard package has the best mix of resources relative to price. These resources are more recent and useful than the spread offered by Accordance's Learner or Crossover+ packages. In the longer term, Logos's connection to Lexham publishing and Faithlife is really hard to overlook. This means that Logos is generating new research and resources (beyond books) in-house that can be easily incorporated into their Bible software system. I was disappointed that none of the Accordance packages above include the Hebrew Bible apparatus. Feature-wise, I think that Logos's organized pre-set search functions and their Workflow feature will appeal to many users. However, Accordance will appeal to biblical scholars and PhD students, who want to manipulate searches at fundamental levels, knowing exactly what knobs are turned, and what buttons are pressed. There are certain search functions in Accordance that are superior but are harder to learn; yet, users will learn to trust the tool more. For this reason, I would recommend Accordance for those who plan to specialize in

biblical languages and research beyond the seminary. Accordance is also easier on the coffer—a crucial deciding factor for poor seminarians. Finally, a grouse I have with the above packages is that there is little to no help on the subjects of hermeneutics, preaching, theology, history, and missions. Perhaps both systems can consider including one textbook resource in these areas in these packages. Audio Hebrew and Greek Bibles should also be made available.

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W. H. Bellinger, Jr. *Psalms as a Grammar for Faith: Prayer and Praise*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019. x + 142 pp. £28.99/\$29.95.

William H. Bellinger Jr. is a Psalms scholar through and through. He has worked on the Psalms for four decades, written more than a dozen books (mostly on the Psalms), and several of his students have become leading Psalms scholars. While this volume is a consolidation of years of scholarship on the Psalms, it incorporates the offerings of Psalms scholarship in recent times, namely, interests in the shape and shaping of the Hebrew Psalter. Bellinger's goal in this short volume is "to help students and clergy interpret the Psalms with deep meaning and to appropriate deeply these profound poetic texts" (p. x). This book is divided into five chapters. The first provides an overview of the reception and approaches to the Psalms in history. The second and third chapters focus on two kinds of psalms, lament and praise, respectively. In the fourth and fifth chapters, Bellinger analyzes the shape of the five books of the Psalter synchronically and then offers a reflection of the last two books of the Psalms.



Bellinger begins by explaining why the Psalms is a "grammar for faith." Just as grammar "structures language so that it communicates" (p. 6), Bellinger sees that the texts and shape of psalms structure the Psalter so that it expresses the psalmist's (and his community's) life of faith in God. Bellinger then explains four main approaches to reading the psalms: (a) form critical (genre), (b) historical, (c) literary, and (d) poetic. He closes the chapter by exegeting two psalms (Pss 6, 8).

The focus in the second chapter is lament/plea psalms. Bellinger first rehearses Claus Westermann's critical theories on the genre of plea, which consists of a call to God, description of the distress, petition to God, and vow of faith in God. Bellinger then proceeds to discuss features of the lament in more than a dozen psalms to illustrate features of the plea. For Bellinger, pleas of the Psalms are the expressions of a "covenant theology of prayer" (p. 47). His point is that such prayers reflect a faith in the vicissitudes of life and genuinely articulate a theology of faith in God who will ultimately deliver.

In chapter 3 Bellinger again follows Westermann categories on the genre of praises. He identifies two subcategories of praises: declarative (e.g., Pss 30, 117) and descriptive praises (e.g., Pss 96, 105). While declarative praises often express how the psalmist experiences personal deliverance in dire situations, descriptive praises recount God's mighty acts and address how God deals with his people. Bellinger makes an important observation: although plea and praise psalms are two primary expressions of grammar of faith, the former does not give way to the latter in a one-dimensional manner. The book

of Psalms is a pilgrimage of a “mix of intellect and emotion, celebration and questioning, instruction and protest” (p. 66) even to the end of the Psalter.

Bellinger shifts a methodological gear in chapter four. He seeks to understand the Psalter as a whole, and in an integrative way. This means that the semantic contours traced over a group of consecutive psalms provide the contextual basis for interpretation (p. 75). Following the pioneering work of Brevard Childs, Gerald Wilson, and others from the 1980s, Bellinger sees a metanarrative across the Psalter. The first three books of the Psalms (Pss 1–89) characterize the story of ancient Israel through to the fall of the Davidic kingdom and Jerusalem. Book 4 of the Psalms (Pss 90–106) depicts God’s reign in the exile, and book 5 (Pss 107–150) expresses the life and faith of the community in the postexilic period.

In the final chapter, Bellinger develops this understanding by deepening his exploration in the last two books of the Psalter, which he believes is different from the first three books. The climactic confessions of faith in God’s reign in the darkest of times under the context of book 4 and the persistence of communal protests in book 5 (esp. Pss 138–145), suggest that “the Psalter as a whole deals with theodicy issues forged by the experience and aftermath of exile” (p. 96). In other words, the psalms are *the* grammar for faith; the rules of the language the community uses as she expresses her covenantal faith in God.

This book succeeds in a few ways. First, it incorporates the older approach of form criticism with the more recent “shape and shaping” (or canonical) approach to the Psalter, bringing them in conversation with each other as somewhat “equal partners.” Though Bellinger was trained in the former, he now leans towards the latter in his interpretive framework. In this volume, he explains what a synchronic reading would mean to the earliest receivers of the Psalter. Moreover, the angle of *theodicy*, and the metaphor of *grammar of faith* that Bellinger brings to the table of Psalms interpretation, are novel. Commendably, all these reflect Bellinger’s willingness to finetune his scholarship even after working on the Psalms for decades.

Second, this book addresses an important gap in the church and seminary. Although the canonical approach has been around since the late 1980s, much of the discussion remains in the academic guild. Compared to form critical approaches, there are fewer monographs at the introductory level that explain and put forth the shape and shaping of the Psalter as a legitimate interpretive avenue to the Psalms. This volume is highly readable and includes updated scholarship. In my view, this volume is suitable as a textbook for students (who do not read Hebrew) enrolled in a short course (4–6 weeks) covering the Psalms, or a longer course covering both the Psalms and Wisdom literature. It is more substantial than single-volume surveys such as Ernest C. Lucas’s *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Psalms and Wisdom Literature* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016) and yet more digestible than the C. Hassell Bullock’s *Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018) or Daniel J. Estes’s *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

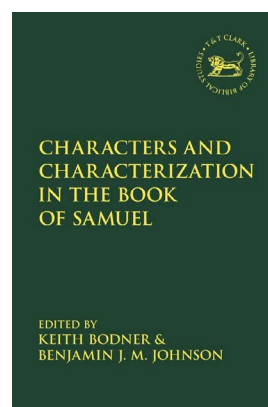
Perhaps Bellinger might want to sharpen chapter two a little. I found the various psalms Bellinger uses to discuss the genre of lament a little sporadic to be helpful. He toggles from psalm to psalm, latching onto certain features of lament, but moves on before some sense can be made of the entire psalm. It would be more useful for Bellinger to illustrate his interpretation with several whole psalms in greater detail, rehearsing the methods he described in that chapter.

In conclusion, this volume succeeds in what it seeks to achieve—introducing the most important and most recent Psalms scholarship to students and clergy in a readable and engaging format.

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Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson, eds. *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel*. The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 669. London: T&T Clark, 2020. xvi + 323 pp. £85.00/\$115.00.

This book is a collection of recent studies on characters and characterization in the book of Samuel. Seventeen biblical scholars delve into mechanisms deployed by the biblical narrator to provide literary, theological, or sociological perspectives. Contributors cast light on individual characters in a variety of ways. Some read with the grain of the text and others against it, some intentionally narrow their focus on a particular episode or on a particular aspect relating to their character(s), while others try to incorporate every aspect and episode. Some survey various scholarly opinions while others present their analysis with minimum scholarly debate. All this confirms the experimental and heuristic atmosphere encouraged by the editors, who say in the preface that this book not only collates recent studies but also suggests “other ways that the study of character might move forward” (p. xii).



Benjamin J. M. Johnson sets the tone of the book by emphasizing the complexity and ambiguity of the characters in the book of Samuel (Chapter 1). His thesis that the assessment of a character is contingent on that of other characters is well argued through his exposition of two pericopes involving two-character triangles (David, Nabal, and Abigail in 1 Sam 25, and David, Joab, and Abner in 2 Sam 3). J. P. Fokkelman, also by way of general introduction, demonstrates the structural coherence of the Samuel composition in which all the characters live, move, and have their being (ch. 2). The first character dealt with in this book is God (ch. 3). It is understandable considering God's unique place in the discussion of characters in the book of Samuel. According to Stephen B. Chapman, God is both like and unlike human characters. Although he functions as one character among others, he also shows himself in the narrator and through other human characters (double causality). Against Steussy's characterization of God as “inscrutable and dangerous” (p. 30), Chapman sees God characterized as worthy of thanks and praise, because he is presented in Samuel as a deliverer of Israel, even willing to contradict himself in order “to adopt the best course of action for Israel's well-being” (p. 40).

Subsequent articles discuss human characters in the order of their appearance in the book of Samuel. Jenni Williams warns of reading Hannah as merely a type, whether literary, theological, or sociological, and encourages paying close attention to the language of the text and reading “Hannah simply for Hannah” (ch. 4, p. 53). What emerges out of Williams's discussion is a deeply troubled Hannah, victimized but refusing to remain so, and acting decisively with faith in the Lord. Eli, according to Marvin A. Sweeney, is characterized negatively as an incompetent father and priest as a way of justifying the removal of his family from the high priesthood at the time of Solomon (ch. 5). J. Richard Middleton discusses how Samuel is portrayed in his farewell speech in 1 Samuel 12. Samuel's speech

is couched in standard covenantal categories and has, Middleton argues, an illocutionary effect of warning about monarchy. His speech also guarantees his continuing influence over the people (ch. 6). Paul S. Evans identifies one psychological factor that may account for both positive and negative aspects of Saul's characterization—his low self-esteem. It initially makes him a humble and likable character but eventually leads to his insecurity and addiction to superstitious rituals, which results in his defiance of God's word delivered through prophet Samuel (ch. 7). Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson survey various scholarly approaches to David's characterization (ch. 8). They compare the biblical portrayal of David to a kaleidoscope that changes meaning depending on how the reader holds the hermeneutical lens. David means many things to different readers, from a wicked human being (modern historical critics) to an exemplar of repentance (post-exilic Jews). Diana Abernethy discerns in the positive characterization of Jonathan in 1 Samuel 13–14 the theology of divine election (ch. 9). David, not Jonathan, ends up succeeding Saul, she argues, because the Lord has rejected Saul and chosen David, not because David is a better person.

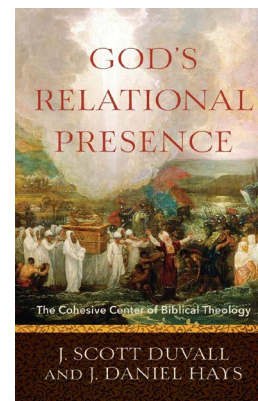
Jonathan Jacobs compares Jonathan and Michal in order to discern how they define each other, beyond just casting light on the main character, David (ch. 10). For all the similarities between the two character's attitudes to endangered David, Jacobs argues, Michal's undivided loyalty to David is distinguished from Jonathan's double loyalty to David and to Saul. Philip F. Esler uses the ancient convention of "challenge and response" to describe Abigail as a wise and courageous woman who replaces her husband in the traditionally male role of meeting an outsider's challenge (ch. 11). Barbara Green attempts to make sense of Joab's inconsistent actions toward David (ch. 12). If one assumes that Joab had ambitions for the throne, the following pattern emerges: Joab works with David as a competent fighter and talker but whenever his own future is at stake, he jeopardizes and even abandons his obligations to David. David Shepherd narrows his focus on one aspect of Abner's characterization: his knowledge (ch. 13). Whenever Abner claims his ignorance, Shepherd argues, he fakes it for a purpose. For instance, when he pretends not to know David's identity (1 Sam 17:55), he intends to get Saul to engage with David directly. Michael Avioz uses the name of Ishbosheth "a man of shame" as an interpretive lens through which to analyze the king's characterization as a worthless, ridiculed king (ch. 14). David G. Firth applies techniques of characterization deployed in classical sources to his analysis of three foreigners in David's court (ch. 15). David's interactions with Uriah, Ittai, and Hushai enable the reader to reach a deeper understanding of Israel's king. While Uriah the Hittite is a reminder of the depth of David's sin, the possibilities of his restoration are made clear through Ittai the Philistine and Hushai the Canaanite. Yairah Amit reads against the grain of the text and portrays Absalom not as someone who acts out of greed for power, but as someone who acts out of a passion for justice (ch. 16). James E. Patrick rearranges the episodes relating to Nathan in 2 Samuel 7–24 and 1 Kings 1–2 according to historical chronology before examining Nathan's character (ch. 17).

One need not agree on every point made in this collection of articles to appreciate the depth and variety of the literary studies on characters and characterization in the book of Samuel. It is not only a feast for those readers interested in the literary artifice of the book of Samuel but also a substantial contribution to character studies in biblical literature.

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J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays. *God's Relational Presence: The Cohesive Center of Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. xxiv + 392 pp. £19.99/\$34.99.

Biblical theology has long faced a dilemma in the quest to find a unifying center. On the one hand, the center must be broad enough to include every part of the Bible. On the other hand, it must be specific enough to be of substance (e.g., to say that God is the center of the Bible does not contribute much to the conversation). In *God's Relational Presence*, two well-respected scholars, one of the Old Testament (Hays), the other of the New Testament (Duvall), combine their efforts to present an excellent pan-biblical theology arguing that "God's relational presence" is the cohesive center of Scripture and makes the best sense of all the biblical material. Duvall and Hays present this theme as a "spider web" rather than the center of a wheel (pp. 4–5). The latter image requires that all parts of the Bible directly connect to the main theme, while the former more helpfully implies that, in some way or another, different parts of the Bible ultimately connect to the main theme. Thus, the authors claim that the theme of God's relational presence best explains other themes such as covenant, kingdom, justification, and the many other proposed "centers" of the Bible. "God's relational presence" is both specific enough to be of substance and broad enough to include most of the biblical material.



A tremendous benefit of this work is its method of proceeding exegetically through each book of the Bible (in the order of the Protestant canon). Biblical theology, after all, should be rooted in exegesis of the texts. Duvall and Hays touch on nearly every one of the sixty-six books (excluding Obadiah and Philemon), and spend significant amounts of time in each. Some books, of course, have more to say about the theme of God's presence than others and the authors do not try to force a book into their theme. For example, the authors admit that Song of Songs is not about the relational presence of God (p. 110) and give only one paragraph to Esther (p. 90). Ezekiel is an example of a book with much to say about God's relational presence and the authors provide a substantive treatment of the text, highlighting the importance of God's departure from the temple (Ezek 8–11) and the ultimate promise of his presence in the city "YHWH Shammah" (Ezek 48:35). Unfortunately, although they write of YHWH's glory returning (Ezek 43:1–7), they do not explain how this vision will be fulfilled.

The authors make a convincing exegetical case that the relational presence of God is a major theme through the Bible, expressed in the OT in phrases like "before the face/presence of YHWH," and in the NT by language of union with Christ, for example. The work offers many new insights into how God's presence provides an important theme in many books. For example, the authors demonstrate that Jesus as the fulfillment of God's presence is a major theme in Matthew, as indicated by the inclusio, "God with us" (Matt 1:23) and "I am with you always" (28:20). Additionally, Ephesians speaks of the church as the "fullness" of God's presence (Eph 1:23).

The exegetical method, however, also has a downside. Sometimes the book appears to belabor certain points while not giving enough attention to major points of the Bible's storyline. In the discussion of Mark's Gospel, for example, the authors examine Jesus's conflict with religious leaders (pp. 185–88). They write about accounts which do not appear to say much about God's relational presence, like plucking grain on the Sabbath. On the other hand, they could have spent more time developing major themes such as the temple. While the temple is discussed extensively, it is not always clear how the

different biblical perspectives fit together. How do the tabernacle and first temple fit with Ezekiel's temple? The second temple never saw God's presence return, but was that specifically pointing towards Jesus? If so, why the encouragement by post-exilic authors to rebuild a temple? What exactly does Jeremiah 3:16–17 mean when it says Jerusalem will be the throne of YHWH (pp. 130–32)? How does Jesus as the new temple fit with the church as the new temple? The final vision (Rev 21:1–22:5) receives only five pages (pp. 318–22), yet surely this is the culmination of God's relational presence and should influence how we understand the theme throughout Scripture. Similarly, "covenant" is mentioned in the books which speak of it, but the book-by-book method makes it appear that covenant is just one of many themes rather than an explicitly major one. While a book-by-book exegesis is important, it could also have been helpful to present the material thematically, examining concepts such as tabernacle/temple, covenant, kingdom, and Spirit/church across the canon, noting how they show God's relational presence developing. In other words, Duvall and Hays's work focuses more on exegesis than synthesis.

God's Relational Presence provides a valuable contribution to biblical theology and the question of the Bible's center. The analogy of a spider web shows promise in thinking of the Bible's unity and diversity. Duvall and Hays make an excellent case that the theme of God's relational presence can be that spider web. The work also presents a wonderful example of uniting the two testaments and of a biblical theology rooted in exegesis. While scholarly, this book is not overly technical and can be enjoyed by both academic scholars and church leaders. A pastor would be helped when beginning to teach a book to consult this work to see how the theme of God's presence flows throughout each particular book. For Bible college or seminary students, this book provides a stellar example of responsible biblical theology.

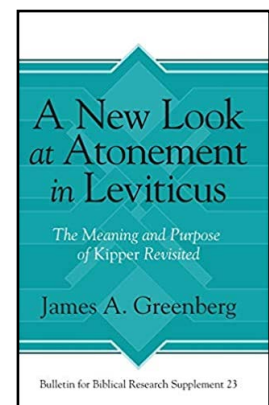
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James A. Greenberg. *A New Look at Atonement in Leviticus: The Meaning and Purpose of Kipper Revisited*. Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement Series 23. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2019. xii + 212 pp. £43.95/\$99.95.

Sacrifice is a crucial biblical theme. Yet, what sacrifice accomplishes and how it does so remain debated, particularly in Old Testament studies. *A New Look at Atonement* addresses one of the key issues in the current discussion: the meaning of the verb כפר (*piel*), usually translated "to make atonement." The volume has two broad goals: (1) to evaluate previously espoused understandings of כפר against the data of the Priestly Torah, and (2) to propose a novel reading of both כפר and sacrifice.

The introduction positions the study within the wider field and outlines starting presuppositions. A survey of how sacrifice has been interpreted helpfully articulates the key positions and the problems faced by each (pp. 1–8). Greenberg rightly notes the overemphasis on both comparative studies and New Testament theology for determining the meaning and function of כפר. Accordingly, his study attempts an inductive analysis of Priestly Torah texts (following Israel Knohl's delimitations in *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995]) (p. 9). Comparative data and non-Priestly Torah texts are considered, but only secondarily.



Chapter 1 explores **כפר** in Exodus 30:11–16 and Leviticus 1–7. Exodus 30:11–16 is important because it uses **כפר** with the noun **כֶּפֶר** (“ransom,” NIV). The relationship between these terms is debated but forms a key component of other proposals. Contra construing **כֶּפֶר** and **כפר** as (making) ransom, Greenberg contends that **כֶּפֶר** is not a payment for wrongdoing but instead establishes a protective relationship with YHWH (pp. 15–16). He develops the idea with respect to the **חַטָּאת** (“sin offering”) and the **חַטָּאת** (“guilt offering”) in Leviticus 4:1–6:7. Greenberg’s analysis leads to a sustained critique of Jacob Milgrom’s pollution-and-purge view which regards the **חַטָּאת** as a means of cleansing the sanctuary (pp. 26–32). Instead, Greenberg finds that **כפר** repairs or creates a relationship with YHWH broken by sin in order to prevent future punishment (pp. 33–34, 45).

The vital question regarding the relationship between the sanctuary and the twin evils of sin and impurity is the focus of chapter 2. Greenberg critiques views which maintain that holiness and impurity can co-exist, a foundational assumption for those who posit sanctuary defilement and purging (pp. 53–63). Instead, he argues that “the sanctuary is holy and not polluted by sin and bodily impurity” (p. 51). An examination of key verbs (**חָלַל** [“profane”], **טָמֵא** [“unclean”], and **חָטָא** [“sin”]) concludes that the **חַטָּאת** does not purge sancta but deals instead with the relational disruption caused by sin and uncleanness (p. 91).

Chapter 3 considers the effects of uncleanness on the sanctuary and persons in Leviticus 11–15. Once more, Milgrom’s position is evaluated at length (pp. 93–103). Greenberg disagrees with the idea that impurity affects the sacred from a distance, by air (as per Milgrom), thus requiring a **חַטָּאת** offering for purgative reasons (p. 100). Rather, Greenberg posits it is the length of separation from YHWH necessitated by major uncleanness that requires a **חַטָּאת**. The sacrifice repairs relational disruption between offerer and YHWH (p. 103). This explains why **חַטָּאת** offerings are prescribed for unintentional sin *and* major uncleanness: “to be made clean before YHWH produces the same outcomes as forgiveness. Relationship is restored, and the person has free access to the sanctuary and YHWH’s presence” (pp. 108–9).

Priestly mediation is a crucial component of performing **כפר**, as ordinary people cannot interact directly with YHWH’s presence (p. 113). Hence, in evaluating Leviticus 8–10, Greenberg employs the term *homeostasis* to describe the interrelationship between YHWH, people, and priests inaugurated by the cult (p. 116). Such *homeostasis* is established in Leviticus 8–9, maintained by the procedures of Leviticus 1–7 and 12–15 (p. 117), endangered in Leviticus 10 (Nadab and Abihu) (pp. 140–50), and reinstated by Yom Kippur (Lev 16).

Chapter 5 returns to Yom Kippur to consider what **כפר** achieves in that context. Greenberg holds that Leviticus 16 deals with rebellious sins or deliberately unremedied impurity not covered by the provisions of chapters 1–7, 12–15. Therefore, he argues, “*Kipper* for the most holy place is *not* implemented for the benefit of the rebellious people. Rather, it is implemented for the benefit of YHWH, the sanctuary, and the people who have not committed rebellious acts” (p. 160). The so-called “scapegoat” represents rebels who are symbolically dispatched to Azazel (p. 174). In this way, the rite restores *homeostasis*.

Greenberg concludes that the precise meaning of **כפר** in the Priestly Torah is dependent on ritual variables. In some texts, **כפר** achieves “forgiveness” and could be glossed “reconciliation” (e.g., Lev 4:1–6:7). However, in other instances (e.g., Lev 14) **כפר** signifies “removal” and brings about a clean status. The common denominator is the ability of evils to disrupt relationship and cause separation (p. 192). The remedy is **כפר**.

A New Look at Atonement is a technical volume. Nevertheless, it should be required reading for students and researchers working in the area. Moreover, while the total sample set of OT sacrificial texts is wider, Greenberg provides a probing and suggestive exploration of what is arguably ground zero for understanding כִּפּוּר. Throughout, evaluation of Milgrom's epoch-defining contribution is judicious yet penetrating. Gaps are convincingly exposed, inviting further reflection. In that sense, Leviticus scholarship is well served.

At the same time, there are points where Greenberg's analysis is less compelling. First, much hangs on the textual data considered admissible. Greenberg follows Knohl's delimitation of Priestly Torah. However, if that breakdown is challenged, other data become available. Moreover, the underlying hermeneutical issues are not addressed. Regardless of the merits of Knohl's reconstruction, we do not have an independent Priestly Torah. On what basis then do we privilege (hypothesised) Priestly Torah over non-Priestly Torah in determining theology? Second, Greenberg does not discuss questions of genre and rhetoric. Again, these are crucial issues that impact the derivation of theology from Leviticus. The text (never mind the interpreter) is not dispassionate. Yet the degree to which rhetorical function has shaped (biased?) presentation of sacrificial material in Leviticus is not considered.

These issues notwithstanding, Greenberg's volume is thought-provoking and deserves a considered reading.

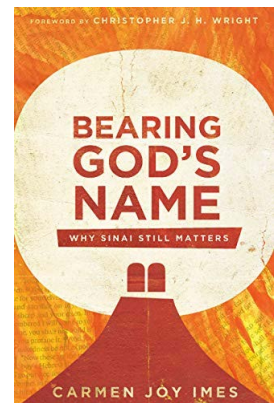
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Carmen Joy Imes. *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. 225 pp. £12.49/\$14.95.

Bearing God's Name, Why Sinai Still Matters is Carmen Joy Imes's Wheaton PhD dissertation made accessible for popular use. The more technical presentation is *Bearing YHWH's Name at Sinai: A Reexamination of the Name Command of the Decalogue*, Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 19 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018).

In this book Imes explains the importance and ongoing relevance of Sinai in a two-part format. Her goal is to demonstrate the Christian's need of the Old Testament by examining the name command in Exodus 20:7 (p. 5). Her approach includes a visit to Mount Sinai for a guided tour of the law strategically placed in the larger context of fifty-seven chapters between the wilderness stories in Exodus and Numbers (pp. 13–15). The law is for Israel after deliverance from Egypt, who now has a new identity and vocation as the people of God (pp. 5, 16–18). The wilderness journey from Egypt to Canaan, according to Imes, is a liminal space for growth and transformation (pp. 16–18). In chapters 6–10, Imes traces the responsibility of name bearing in the history of Israel's covenant relationship, through the life and ministry of Christ, and then into the life of the church. Imes's tour incorporates a number of Sidebar Notes to clarify and demystify key Old Testament themes.

Imes's working thesis is that the name command of Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:11 is not limited to some type of blasphemous, unholy speech act. Rather, it involves carrying the divine name in



a representational and ethical manner. God's people, who are branded or tattooed with his name, must bear it obediently and faithfully in every area of life (pp. 48–52).

Chapter 3 is where Imes presents the essence of the name command. Based on grammar and a chiasmic structure, Imes includes the preamble (Exod 20:1–2) and the prohibitions against other gods and idol making as the first command (pp. 47–48). The second is the name command in Exodus 20:7. The ten commands embedded in a narrative function as authoritative guidance, law as wisdom instead of civil legislation (pp. 37–38, 44–45).

Imes challenges popular approaches to Exodus 20:7 with intertextual work that yields a different metric. She translates the command, “You must not *bear* (or carry) the name of Yahweh, your God, in vain, for Yahweh will not hold guiltless one who *bears* (or *carries*) his name in vain” (p. 49). Imes then looks to the High Priestly garments described in Exodus 28 for a representational and ethical understanding of the command's intent (pp. 49–51). The High Priestly garments, the *Holy, belonging to Yahweh*, inscription on the front of the priest's turban, and his work of bearing or carrying the names of the sons of Israel as he moves around the tabernacle illuminates the name command. In Exodus 19 the LORD bestowed on his people the titles of *treasured possession, kingdom of priests, and holy nation* (p. 31). Their vocation was to represent God to the rest of humanity. They were to function in priestly ways by mediating between Yahweh and everyone else. As such, they carry forward, bear the name of Yahweh (Exod 6:7). Thus, the first two commands are the weightiest and set the stage for the rest of the commands that address every area of life (work, family, conflict, marriage, property, reputation). God's glory is diminished when Yahweh's name is carried forward by worshipping other gods or by disobeying God's law. Misusing the name of the Lord, therefore, involves more than not swearing.

A crucial part of Imes's argument for the relevance of Sinai today is the interpretation of Jeremiah 31 as a renewed, refreshed covenant instead of something completely new (pp. 129–31). After focusing on the similarities between Sinai and Jeremiah 31, she concludes that the difference between the two is the mode of delivery. God offers Israel a new forgiveness opportunity that is more permanent, transformative, and internalized. Imes views the new covenant as similar to the new mercies of Lamentations 3:23. When interpreting Hebrews 8:13, she posits that the administration of the covenant (temple, priests, and sacrifices) is temporary and passing (pp. 130–31, 160–61). Although Imes comments on the Sermon on the Mount, more balanced attention to Christ's fulfillment of the law would enhance the argument (pp. 142–43).

Imes expositis the name command very persuasively. Her writing style and appropriate use of personal illustrations solidify rather than distract. The appendices along with the list of Bible Project resources, QR codes, and discussion questions encourage more study.

Imes's work is a positive contribution to the field of biblical theology that aligns with the missional drama approach, similar to the works of Bartholomew and Goheen (pp. ix–xiii). Her development of the name command further elucidates the themes of mission and ethics in both testaments (p. 30). Imes's methodology is good example of a literary, historical, theological investigation along with excellent intertextual study.

Imes's hermeneutical presuppositions will stimulate debate. The goal to show the relevance of Sinai for the church is framed within a Reformed view of gospel-law continuity (p. 161, 180–82). Her approach emphasizes Christ's work to clarify rather than to fulfill the law. For Imes, the Ten Commandments continue to have relevance today, while the laws that separate Israel as an ethnic group have been “set aside” (p. 182). The weighty topics of covenants (pp. 61, 131), law (pp. 36–37), and Israel-Church

relationship (p. 182) are presented in a summative manner and with uneven supporting reference. Class notes, for example, are cited for the meaning of Passover (p. 13). The book would benefit from footnotes and sidebars that acknowledge presuppositions and offer alternative views. Something like the “How Many Hebrews?” sidebar (pp. 90–91). Tracing a theme often runs the risk of flattening contexts and ignoring others. In this study, little attention is given to the book of Judges (pp. 109–11), in which significant name command violation is documented.

In all fairness, the nature of the publication and the intended audience influence Imes’s approach. Regardless, the main thesis of the name command to worship the Lord exclusively and to represent him well can tolerate differences of opinion related to each topic. The weight of the command is not diminished for the New Testament believer nor is the vital relationship between mission and ethics.

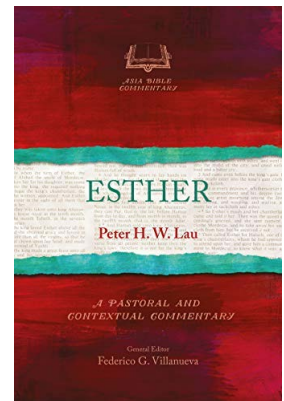
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Peter H. W. Lau. *Esther: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary*. Asia Bible Commentary. Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2018. xi +131 pp. £10.99/\$16.99.

The Asia Bible Commentary series (ABC) responds to “one of the greatest shifts in the history of world Christianity,” from a concentration of Christians in the West to the global distribution of Christians (p. xi). The series addresses the need for believers “to interpret the Bible for their particular contexts” (p. xi) by honoring the historical-critical aspect of biblical interpretation as well as the particular social locations of the commentators and readers. Every commentary in the series reads a specific biblical book from an Asian context, and then applies its messages in that context. Peter Lau’s book on Esther follows this broad vision.

As the book’s subtitle states, this commentary is written from a pastoral and contextual perspective. Its interpretation therefore follows the evangelical tradition by acknowledging the authority of both the Old Testament and the New Testament as well as reading and applying Esther in the author’s cultural context, namely the Chinese-Malaysian context, mixed with a Chinese-Australian context.

As Lau says in the book’s ten-page introduction, the commentary functions as a “tour guide” (p. 1). It first introduces the context of Persia and then moves on to Esther’s place in the canon, followed by reading Esther through an Asian lens. Lau highlights three primary intersections between Esther and Asia: the literary absence of God in Esther, the feasting motif, and faithful living in the diaspora. In accord with the evangelical reading, Lau perceives the literary absence of God in Esther as God working behind the scenes. He thinks that this hiddenness parallels the phenomenon in most Asian countries where superstitions and belief in providence seep into all areas of life. The feasting motif parallels the importance of feasting and eating in Asian cultures. There is also the parallel between Jewish people living in Persia and Christians living in Asia. Issues of non-Christian leaders and anti-Christian government and democracy are all part of the political climate in Asia.



Lau then exegetes Esther chapter-by-chapter and paragraph-by-paragraph, elucidating the meaning of each scene in its original Persian context, while interweaving this with the Chinese-Malaysian-Australian contexts. For example, Lau connects the king's feast in Esther 1 to Malaysians' love for and focus on food. He points out that for Malaysians, eating up to six times a day is not unusual (p. 12). He describes Haman's proposal to exterminate the Jewish race as comparable to "the Nine kinship Exterminations" in ancient China (p. 37). Sometimes, Lau uses Chinese proverbs or Malaysian expressions to illustrate a point he makes about Esther (pp. 42, 81), and this certainly resonates with those who come from or understand the Chinese context. Other times, he associates the Australian context with Esther, for instance, comparing Remembrance Day in Australia to the Festival of Purim in Esther (p. 115).

Throughout the commentary, Lau employs vivid images and accessible language. Sometimes, he also uses humor to describe the characters, which befits the writing style of Esther. For example, he describes Haman's downfall in Esther 6 by saying that "it was the size of his head that toppled him" (p. 72). He also draws attention to the many word plays in Hebrew, such as the word "fall" (נפל) in Esther 3:7, 6:10 and 6:13 (pp. 76, 84) and "rest" (נוח) in Esther 3:8 and 9:22 (p. 117), and this is helpful to show the literary artistry of the author of Esther.

Another distinction of Lau's commentary is that he always relates the scenes in Esther to the New Testament and to Jesus, which reflects the "pastoral" side of the book. Such commentary preachers and pastors are likely to find particularly helpful for their preaching.

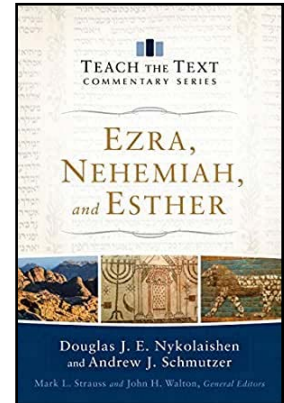
While the literary, historical, and theological insights in this book align with other commentaries such as commentaries by Frederick Bush, Adele Berlin, Karen Jobes, and Debra Reid, it is the Chinese-Malaysian-Australian contexts Lau brings to the text and their interaction with Esther that define and set this book apart from others. As far as the vision of the ABC series goes, the book accomplishes what it intends to do. Although more could be done in regard to the wisdom element in Esther and to interact with scholars who do not see the hidden hand of God at work in Esther, this book contributes insightfully to the literature on Esther with its pastoral as well as contextual reading.

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Douglas J. E. Nykolaishen and Andrew J. Schmutzer. *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*. Teach the Text Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018. vii + 315 pp. £17.99/\$27.00.

The Teach the Text Commentary Series, edited by Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, aims to be accessible for all readers while maintaining rigorous scholarship. Readers will not find extensive footnotes nor discussions on source or redactional criticism, but instead a commentary geared to plainly expositing the text and communicating its ideas to a modern audience.

Each exposition of a passage begins with a brief summary of the “Big Idea” and “Key Themes.” Then follows a literary-contextual, historical, and cultural analysis. After these the actual commentary on the verse(s) begins. The most helpful and creative segment of this commentary comes at the end of each passage. After some “Theological Insights” concerning the passage, the commentary focuses upon “Teaching the Text” and “Illustrating the Text.” Both of these segments make applying the passage much easier. The “Illustrating the Text” section, in particular, is creative and informative. Here readers will find helpful illustrations from literature, historical characters, and even sports.



The commentary begins with Nykolaishen’s section on Ezra-Nehemiah. Like most commentaries, the introduction starts with an evaluation of issues including authorship, dating, and historical setting (pp. 3–8). Nykolaishen concisely argues that Ezra and Nehemiah should be read as a single story (p. 3). Some readers may find Nykolaishen’s short assessment of the “Method of Composition” dissatisfying, but Nykolaishen seems to only be following the aim of the commentary series: “it is far more important to follow his [the author’s] didactic intention than to seek the solution to every historical question” (p. 5). So, questions regarding the odd chronology, the switching of language, and the shifting of narrators are glossed over as the biblical author’s use of various sources (pp. 4–5).

For general readers and preachers of Ezra-Nehemiah, the intermarriage crises in Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13:23–31 may prove to be difficult to understand, apply, and preach. The reader, however, will find that these “tricky” bits of Ezra-Nehemiah are surprisingly well argued in such a small space. Nykolaishen does not identify the problem to be the intermarrying between ethnic groups because the listed nations in Ezra 9:1 no longer existed in the post-exilic period (p. 90). He concludes that “the major concern was not race or ethnicity but religious practices contrary to faith in Yahweh” (p. 90). Not all readers will agree with these conclusions, but these issues are reasonably dealt with.

The commentary of the book of Esther is written by Schmutzer. Similar to the introduction for Ezra-Nehemiah, the commentary begins with issues relating to authorship, dating, purpose, and themes. Here one can find answers to common questions, such as the absence of God (pp. 205–6) and even how Esther fits within the Megilloth (pp. 203–04). The introduction, however, lacks a discussion of the Alpha Text, which may be of interest to some academic readers.

Another welcome addition would be a section on the literary techniques within Esther. For instance, irony is frequently found throughout Esther to show a reversal of fortune. Esther 9:1–25 is usually understood as a prime example of irony where Haman and his sons are hanged instead of Mordecai (e.g., Sandra B. Berg, *The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes, and Structure*, SBLDS 44 [Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979], 104–6). This would help the reader to appreciate the subtle contours within the narrative. Although Schmutzer does not emphasise the technique of irony in Esther 9:1–25, he does

focus upon God's intricate work behind the scenes: "God is able to upend any deceitful person, evil policy, or sinister scheme in order to further his own plan" (p. 283). Readers will also appreciate the extended explanations sporadically placed throughout the commentary (e.g., pp. 216, 228, 246, 291). These notes further illuminate the book of Esther and its context. For example, Schmutzer adds an extended note on "shame" in the context of the book (p. 246). This is a helpful clarification for a modern audience who may now know the concept of shame in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Overall, this commentary achieves its aims. There is no doubt that the layperson, student, and pastor would benefit from reading this commentary. However, the main beneficiary would be the pastor who wishes to preach through Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Students and scholars who wish to research the more technical aspects of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther would need to consult the references within the "Select Bibliography" at the end of the commentary (pp. 306–8).

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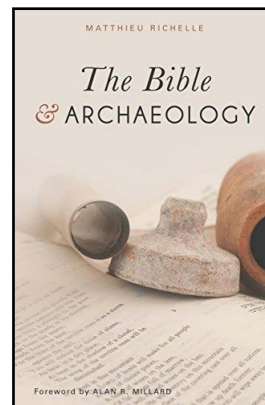
Matthieu Richelle. *The Bible and Archaeology*. Translated by Sarah E. Richelle. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2018. xvi + 152 pp. £11.99/\$14.95.

Richelle's simple and uncomplicated volume will not disappoint the reader who is seeking "to develop a balanced conception of the links between ... the study of the Bible and the study of archaeological discoveries" (p. 2). This readable introduction is neither sensationalist in its claims nor dismissive in its assertions. Although written by an authority in the fields of archaeology and epigraphy and a professor of Old Testament at the Faculté Libre de Théologie Évangélique in France, this book is accessible for a wide audience.

Richelle takes a studied approach highlighting the limitations of the partial witness to history in both the Bible and archaeological evidence. He delineates his purpose: "to help the reader discover successively the riches of information that archaeology provides, the limits inherent to this knowledge, and the manner in which we should compare it to the Bible" (p. 107). This objective is supported by the first three chapters and is realized in the fourth chapter. Chapters 5 and 6 then apply Richelle's conclusions to the ongoing debate surrounding the time period of the United Monarchy of David and Solomon.

Chapters 1–2 explain the process of uncovering the artefacts that, when rightly interpreted, provide clues to the nature of life in ancient Israel. This material witness is elucidated greatly when inscriptions are found at an excavation site. Chapter 3 outlines limits that should constrain attempts to draw dogmatic conclusions from the material witness. Consequently, Richelle poses the question as to the nature of the relationship between the Bible and archaeology in chapter 4. This is the heart of the book.

Richelle explains six different perspectives on this relationship and identifies advocates of each (pp. 61–71). His evaluation of the relative strengths and weaknesses of these methodologies leads him to propose a "balanced approach" (p. 71) which should be employed with "intellectual honesty"



resulting in a “high standard of work” (p. 72). He maintains that the Bible should not unduly influence archaeologists during the excavation but that it could help guide the interpretation during the historical reflection (p. 71). He provides an excerpt of a portion of the final report from the Beersheba excavations to demonstrate this approach (see Ze’ev Herzog and Lily Singer-Avitz, eds., *Beer-Sheba III* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016], 1478).

Richelle follows with a discussion of the credibility of the biblical accounts as historical sources. He cautiously affirms that if the “archaeologist’s analyses [are] subject to the judgment and verification of ... professional peers,” then the Bible can be a useful tool (p. 74). The chapter closes with a discussion of the types of correlations (or lack thereof) between the biblical witness and archaeological discoveries. He maintains that these two disciplines should be employed with a degree of humility, recognizing that both are dependent upon interpretation of their respective evidence and that their data remain incomplete.

Chapters 5 and 6 then apply Richelle’s proposal to the lack of consensus on the existence and extent of the kingdoms of David and Solomon. Chapter 5 considers the various claims made from the archaeological (material) evidence discovered in Jerusalem, Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo. Chapter 6 addresses the debate surrounding the development of literary activity in tenth and ninth century BC Jerusalem and Judah. While recognizing the paucity of epigraphic discoveries from this time period, Richelle prudently builds an argument for significant literary activity in this time period (pp. 101–4).

After the brief conclusion, Richelle provides bibliographic resources to the interested non-specialist for further exploration (pp. 109–11). The following twenty pages of endnotes document the sources used and demonstrate the author’s familiarity with the issues raised. Thirty-one full-color figures, referenced in the first two chapters, conclude this book.

Richelle’s book is neither polemical nor positivistic. The conversation is informative and reasoned. The book presents an invitation for the extreme elements in the sometimes-opposing camps to reconsider the tone of the debates and to begin a more productive dialogue that humbly recognizes the limits of knowledge in the respective disciplines (p. 71). At times the reader may sense that Richelle prioritizes the biblical record over the archaeological evidence (see his discussion of the Tel Dan Stela in light of 2 Kings 8, pp. 31–32). At other times he cautions against “invasive” biblical exegesis (p. 72; cf. the danger of creating circular arguments [p. 64] and the exhortation against letting the “reading of the Bible interfere” during the period of excavation and interpretation of the material evidence [p. 71]).

Richelle’s book fills a unique niche in the market. This is not a handbook on archaeology or an introduction to the discipline. Nor does it follow David Graves’s methodology of offering a selection of archaeological *prooftexts* that “demonstrate the historical reliability of the people and events of the Bible” (*Biblical Archaeology: An Introduction* [Toronto: Electronic Christian Media, 2017], xxx; see also Kenneth Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003]). The tone of the book does not provide an apologetic against the historical minimalists as is the case with William Dever’s *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). Additionally, it makes no attempt to serve as an illustrated archaeological guide to the history of the OT like J. Randall Price and H. Wayne House’s *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology: A Book by Book Guide to Archaeological Discoveries Related to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).

This book would serve the interested layperson or pastor who desires to understand the relationship between the Bible and archaeology, especially when sensational claims are made that call into question the reliability of the biblical witness to ancient history. Moreover, it provides wise counsel to the unduly

positivist Christian who needs to recognize that the Bible's theologically-focused purpose may have determined its selective use of history. The resulting "gaps" in the historical record may very well be supplemented by the archaeological evidence discovered. This book would also benefit students at Bible colleges and seminaries, where it could serve as a supplementary text for classes on Old Testament introduction and biblical archaeology.

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

Robert J. Banks. *Paul's Idea of Community: Spirit and Culture in Early House Churches*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020. 222 pp. £17.99/\$26.99.

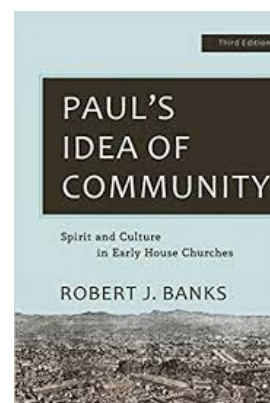
The post-WWII era saw a world-wide explosion of interest in ecclesiology. Conciliar bodies such as Vatican II and the World Council of Churches gave their attention to the doctrine of the church, while the ecumenical movement longed for institutional church unity, putting time and energy into bringing denominational leaders together. From the 1960s, groups such as the Jesus People embarked on experiments in Christian community, forming communes, intentional communities, and house church movements.

In Australia, key post-war figures embarked on an ambitious venture into the biblical theology of church. The theological construction now referred to as the "Knox-Robinson view of church" was its fruit. This view emphasized the intermittent nature of "church" as gathering. Church, as Barth said, was an event, a moment in which the people of God gathered in time and space (*God Here and Now* [New York: Routledge, 2003], 75–104). It is not the institution, nor even the collective noun for all Christians everywhere, but rather a specific activity of God's people.

Robert Banks's classic 1979 study, *Paul's Idea of Community: Spirit and Culture in Early House Churches*, is a product of this ecosystem: the post-war interest in ecclesiology, the practical experimentations in community of the 1960s and 1970s, and the work of Sydney Anglicans on the biblical theology of church. This year it has been released in a third edition. This is a welcome development. It continues to deserve a wide readership.

Paul's idea of church has been long studied. The innovation of Banks's book was to ask a wider question, what was Paul's idea of *community*? After all, communities are what Paul helped to create. He began them, maintained them, and thought deeply and practically about how they should function. His writings, according to Banks, have left behind the "most clearly developed and profound understanding of community in all the early Christian writings" (p. 1). Indeed, Paul's writings represent the most profound understanding of community with which antiquity has gifted us.

By framing him as a theologian of community, Banks is able to bring Paul's ideas into conversation with contemporary concepts and institutions: whether the Greco-Roman πολιτεία ("public life of the



city”) and οἰκονομία (“household order”), the various voluntary associations (*collegia*), or the Jewish community expression of synagogue or sect. This leads to a rich vein of comparative work throughout the study. Banks, himself an ancient historian, is a sure-footed guide to the primary sources.

On the idea of church itself, Bank’s argues vigorously that the semantic range of the word ἐκκλησία refers to an actual gathering or assembly of believers rather than to any wider body. Christians in a region cannot be referred to collectively as “Church,” nor can a fellowship of churches refer to itself as *the Church*. A region may have within it *churches*; it does not have a *Church* (page 28).

Having established gathering as a *function* of the community, Banks goes on to explore Paul’s vision for the local community in terms in wider terms—as a household of familial love, a learning community, and as a site of shared meals, mutual ministry, and local leadership.

For Banks, the authorship of the Pastorals is an open question. Final judgement on the matter is a “close call” (p. 172). The discussion of the issue is brief, insightful, and illuminating. However, the decision to discuss the Pastorals separately at the end of the book has its inevitable effect. For many scholars the Pastorals are the point at which, allegedly, emerging order and formally recognized leadership begin to emerge, whereas Paul’s undisputed letters seem to evince a more organic, house-based, and informal form of community. There is something of a Catch 22 here. If the Pastorals are the products of a different author than the apostle, then two different and somewhat competing visions of Christian community are in play. If, however, Paul is responsible for the Pastorals, then the invitation is to ponder how these different emphases might be part of a wider, coherent vision. Banks’s own discussion is judicious and balanced. But the structural decision to place the discussion at the end inevitably pushes the discussion in one way and not another.

For me, it would be interesting to see a discussion on whether Paul’s communities reflected communities as a particular stage in their life. Given Paul’s main writing all emerged within the decade of the 50s, the communities he addresses are by necessity young. Could it be that some of their features, to which we import theological significance, are simply features of any comparably human community of a similar age and provenance?

This edition includes the magnificent appendix, “Going to Church in the First Century.” This narrative, which was originally written as a separate accompaniment to the first edition, has had a life of its own, being widely read in a range of contexts—mission teams, churches, church planting networks—contexts in which people have had reason to grapple with the actual experience of church in time of the New Testament. It is a fictionalised, first-person, account of a non-Christian man, called Publius, attending church in first century Rome. This chapter alone justifies the price of entry.

I began by framing this book as a product of the renewed interest in ecclesiology and community which sprung, mid-century, from various quarters, and more particularly within a scholarly and practical conversation emerging from Sydney in the 1960s and 1970s. Banks himself has been not merely a scholar, but himself a practitioner of experiments in Christian community and public theology. What was it about the 1960s and 1970s that made for such a propitious season of theological reflection on ecclesiology and Christian community? And why, in the period (roughly) 2000–2010 was there a revival of interest in these ideas under the banner of the emerging church movement? These are, to me at least, interesting historical questions.

This is not to suggest the book's value is as an historical artefact. On the contrary, its careful and up-to-day scholarship, and the creativity of its questions make it an abiding and authoritative study of the topic. I am glad it is available to the next generation of students.

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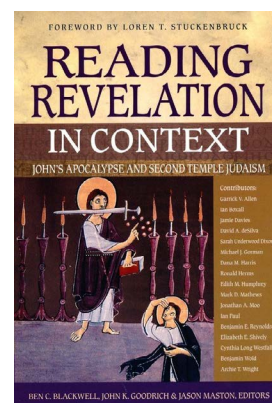
Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds. *Reading Revelation in Context: John's Apocalypse and Second Temple Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. 204 pp. £14.99/\$21.99.

Reading Revelation in Context is the third book in a series by Zondervan Academic that has thus far included *Reading Romans in Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2015) and *Reading Mark in Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2018). The editors of each volume in the series have been the same, though the array of contributors has varied from volume to volume. Each volume compares a particular biblical author/book with one or more thematically related Jewish texts, introducing and exploring the similarities and differences between them. In sum, the essays ultimately seek to show how comparative texts illuminate our understanding of the particular biblical author/book.

This volume contains twenty essays, each around seven pages long. Each essay begins with a few themes from a Jewish text, followed by a comparative look at a passage from Revelation, and concludes with further reading for those interested in a deeper look at critical texts and secondary literature.

The first essay, by Benjamin E. Reynolds, compares the Parables of Enoch and Revelation 1:1–20, noting the ways both texts interpret Daniel's Son of Man figure differently. The second essay, by Mark D. Mathews, compares the Epistle of Enoch and Revelation 2:1–3:22, keenly identifying both texts' shared theme of rejecting worldly economic systems. David A. deSilva wrote the third essay, highlighting the differences between The Testament of Levi and Revelation 4:1–11, most notably "the emergence of Christ as the focal figure of God's redemptive and judging activity" in Revelation (p. 57). The fourth essay comes from Dana M. Harris, who compares 4 Ezra and Revelation 5:1–14 and shows that Christ (the Lamb) is worthy to be worshiped on the throne alongside God, whereas Ezra was only worthy to receive secrets from God.

The fifth essay, by Ian Paul, compares 2 Maccabees and Revelation 6:1–17, deftly showing that Revelation's emphasis is on God as the eschatological judge over and against the focus on military victory in 2 Maccabees. Ronald Herms then compares the Psalms of Solomon and Revelation 7:1–17, arguing that both texts show positive "marks" or "seals" given to God's people, though the identity of those who will receive the seal of God (contrasted with the "mark of the beast" in Rev 13) is not established as early as in Psalms of Solomon for various reasons. The seventh essay, by Jason Maston, compares the Testament of Adam to Revelation 8:1–13, showing how "the silence in heaven" in both texts as the martyrs cry out for vindication ultimately "tells us that God hears our prayers and will act



to vindicate his people” (p. 85). Ian Boxall follows Maston with a comparison of the Animal Apocalypse and Revelation 9:1–21, illustrating how God in Revelation is in full control of evil forces, whereas the Animal Apocalypse shows a creation in disarray.

John K. Goodrich compares Jubilees and Revelation 10:1–11 in the ninth essay, highlighting how both texts reveal the seer’s “remarkable authority, causing the message and its messenger to become barely distinguishable” (p. 100). Garrick V. Allen then explores the loose connection between 4 Ezra and Revelation 11:1–19, skillfully emphasizing Jesus’s exaltation over the “two witnesses” in Revelation, whereas 4 Ezra treats the “man from the sea” as a messianic figure. The eleventh essay, by Archie T. Wright, compares the pictures of Satan in the Life of Adam and Eve and Revelation 12:1–17, noting that Revelation does not give as much detail about the fall of Satan in comparison to the Life of Adam and Eve. Jamie Davies tackles the difficult “blasphemous beasts” passages in 4 Ezra and Revelation 13:1–18, concluding that these passages help us remember that the primary reference for the beast figure is in the first century, rather than “endless decodings and wild speculation” about which current political figure might be the beast (p. 121).

Ben C. Blackwell wrote the thirteenth essay, comparing the Damascus Document (CD) and Revelation 14:1–20, rightly noting the Lamb’s role in Revelation in “how humans experience heavenly realities here on earth” (p. 129). Benjamin Wold follows Blackwell by engaging the plagues/exile motifs in the Words of the Luminaries (4Q504) and Revelation 15:1–16:21, observing Revelation’s emphasis on the future exodus, whereas Words of the Luminaries focuses more on the past. The fifteenth essay, by Edith M. Humphrey, explores the portrayal of women in Joseph and Aseneth and Revelation 17:1–18, comparing how their portrayals urge readers toward wisdom. Cynthia Long Westfall then surveys the anti-imperial themes in the Epistle of Enoch and Revelation 18:1–24, concluding that both offer a strong critique of the nations’ wealth and power, however, Revelation does not ultimately give readers power over Rome.

In the seventeenth essay, Michael J. Gorman compares the Psalms of Solomon and Revelation 19:1–21, emphasizing the significance of Jesus in the Revelation’s conquest narrative. Elizabeth E. Shively follows Gorman with an essay comparing the role of fallen angels in 1 Enoch’s Book of Watchers and Revelation 20:1–15, concluding that Revelation allows Satan a longer leash than the angels in the Book of Watchers to emphasize that “out of the obliteration of Satan’s pseudo-reign emerges the new heaven and earth” (p. 166). Jonathan A. Moo compares 4 Ezra and Revelation 21:1–22:5 in the penultimate essay, reiterating the point made by other contributors in this volume: the Lamb as the centering figure of John’s apocalypse gives a unique conception of life now and in the age to come. Sarah Underwood Dixon closes the volume with her essay on the Apocalypse of Zephaniah and Revelation 22:6–21, expertly presenting one of the most important themes of Revelation: “The angel asserts that John must worship God alone, and the context makes clear that the worship of the exalted Christ is an appropriate and indeed required expression of his monotheistic devotion” (p. 180).

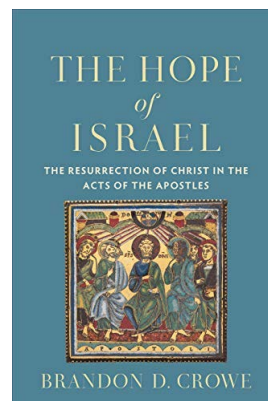
Reviewing multi-contributor volumes is always a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is difficult to both summarize and engage a volume with twenty introductory essays about complex textual and theological issues. On the other hand, when a multi-contributor volume is organized well and the contributors have a clear vision, it provides the reader with the ability to easily absorb the volume’s topic. This volume falls into the latter category. The editors successfully presented a massive subject—a comparative analysis of John’s apocalypse with second temple Jewish literature—in a digestible and thoughtful volume.

Further, this reviewer is thankful for the underlying commitment laid out in the Introduction: “comparative studies are (or should be) just as interested in exposing the theological *differences* between texts as observing their *similarities*” (p. 27, emphasis original). Indeed, oftentimes comparative studies in this field assume that one can learn more about John, for instance, from the assumed influence of extrabiblical texts rather than from his own writing. This volume helpfully demonstrates the importance of historical backgrounds and comparative studies, while not sacrificing the truth that Revelation is divine Scripture and is a distinct apocalypse that centers on Christ. Pastors, students, and scholars would do well to read this volume and follow with further research as an essay piques their interest.

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Brandon D. Crowe. *The Hope of Israel: The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020. xvi + 239 pp. £19.99/\$29.99.

The Hope of Israel is a masterful work that explores the centrality and significance of Christ’s resurrection in the book of Acts. Brandon Crowe, associate professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, has already contributed significantly to biblical scholarship with several earlier books, including *The Last Adam: A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017). In both *The Last Adam* and *The Hope of Israel*, Crowe takes a biblical-theological approach to his subject matter, in the tradition of Geerhardus Vos and G. K. Beale. In his most recent book, Crowe calls Jesus’s resurrection “a major artery” connecting the stories and sermons of Acts, “a powerful theological adhesive” unifying the book’s overall message, and “the logical key” to the apostles’ preaching (p. 5).



Crowe presents his well-crafted argument in two parts, each with four chapters. Part 1 features a useful introduction (ch. 1) and careful exegesis of key texts in Acts related to the resurrection, focusing on the preaching of Peter (ch. 2), Paul (ch. 3), and other voices such as James, Stephen, and Philip (ch. 4). Part 2 then considers the resurrection’s theological ramifications for the accomplishment and application of salvation (chs. 5–6), the defense and demonstration of Scripture’s truthfulness (ch. 7), and the coherence of the New Testament canon (ch. 8).

Crowe opens his book by appealing to Acts 17, where Paul consistently proclaims Christ’s resurrection to Jews and gentiles in very different contexts, demonstrating that “the resurrection is firmly rooted in the Jewish Scriptures, yet is also a message with universal relevance” (p. 4). His survey of scholarship demonstrates that while many have noted how important the resurrection is in Acts, there are surprisingly few extended treatments of this major biblical theme. Crowe asserts that his project offers “a new synthesis” and suggests “new possibilities” for how Christ’s resurrection functions in Acts and early Christian teaching; in my view, *The Hope of Israel* delivers on these promises.

Chapters 2–4 offer careful exegesis of key passages in Acts, demonstrating that the resurrection is “a sustained emphasis” in the preaching of Peter, Paul, James, Stephen, and other early Christians. Throughout, Crowe’s exegesis is sensible, he is conversant with the scholarly guild and the Reformed

theological tradition, and he appreciates the nitty-gritty details of the Greek text while maintaining a focus on the book's larger narrative and theological aims. For example, Crowe explains that the Spirit's outpouring on Pentecost "indicates that Jesus is the living, ascended king who reigns over the nations" (p. 28). According to Acts 3, the cosmic restoration of creation "is indissolubly tied to the resurrection of Christ" (p. 35). Crowe also connects the promises to "raise up" a prophet like Moses (Acts 3:22; cf. Deut 18:15) and David (Acts 13:22) to Christ's resurrection (pp. 37–38, 51). Crowe's handling of the use of Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:23 illustrates his exegetical rigor and theological sensitivity, as he explains that "the resurrection marks a new era of the eternal Son's messianic sonship—for 'today' the preexistent Son is enthroned as the resurrected, victorious king of glory" (p. 61).

Crowe's exegetical chapters give "extended, though not exclusive, attention to *speeches* in Acts" (p. 15), which explains his decision to organize chapters 2–4 around major "voices" in Acts. He acknowledges that "the narrative contours and narrator's comments" are essential for understanding the theology of Acts (p. 15), but I would have liked to see Crowe explain his rationale for prioritizing the speeches and give more space to key narrative portions in Acts (and Luke). For example, Crowe paraphrases Acts 1:3 on page 21 but does not elaborate on Luke's foundational claim that Jesus "presented himself alive to them ... by many proofs." Similarly, he offers extended analysis of Peter's speech in Acts 3 but treats the lame man's healing more briefly; a fuller discussion of Luke's allusion to Isaiah 35:6 in Acts 3:8 might have further supported Crowe's claim that "the resurrection of Jesus marks the inauguration of new creation" (p. 35).

In Part 2, Crowe explains that Christ's resurrection is "the great turning point in the history of salvation" that marks "the transition from the age of anticipation to the age of fulfillment" (pp. 105, 111). He attempts a balanced presentation of the resurrection's theological significance by considering Christ's accomplishment of salvation (*historia salutis*) alongside believers' experience of salvation (*ordo salutis*), reasoning that "continuity and discontinuity are complementary" in Luke's narrative (p. 128). For example, Crowe writes that the resurrection is both "an impetus for mission" and also a crucial part of "the content of the message" (p. 124). He also stresses that believers are united with "the *resurrected Christ*" and receive all his benefits as "a unified, package deal" (p. 129, emphasis original). Crowe relates his focus on Christ's resurrection to long-standing debates about the purpose of Acts, arguing that the book offers "a thoroughgoing defense of Scripture" by showing the necessity of Christ's resurrection (p. 149). Chapter 7 briefly reviews Jesus's biblical exposition in Luke 24 and the use of the OT in Acts and suggests possible resurrection texts from the Law, Prophets, and Writings. The book's final chapter situates Acts in its canonical context. Crowe notes that Acts "was remarkably flexible" in its placement alongside the Gospels and the Pauline and Catholic Epistles, and that the book—and its resurrection focus—serves as "glue" that binds together the NT's theological message (pp. 176–77). He concludes that Acts challenges present-day Christians to "feature the resurrection as a prominent emphasis" in the gospel message (p. 193).

The Hope of Israel is the definitive treatment of the resurrection in Acts. Crowe's study models a rare blend of careful biblical exegesis and faithful theological synthesis, leading readers to "a renewed appreciation" of the integral role of Acts in the NT canon and the resurrection's centrality for Christian theology and proclamation (p. 193). This is one of the most significant monographs on the book of Acts

published in recent years and should be required reading for all theological students, scholars, and pastors who study and teach Acts.

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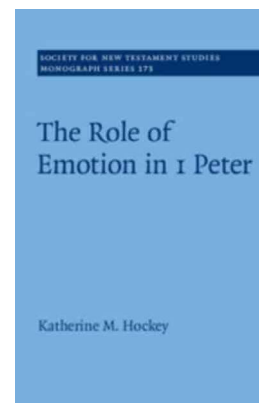
Katherine M. Hockey. *The Role of Emotion in 1 Peter*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 173. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xiv + 297 pp. £75.00/\$99.99.

This book is a revised version of the Durham PhD thesis of Katherine M. Hockey, the inaugural Kirby Laing Postdoctoral Fellow in New Testament Studies at the University of Aberdeen. In this book, Hockey describes how various emotions function in 1 Peter. She divides her book into four parts. Parts 1–2 are the methodological and historical foundation for her particular argument that 1 Peter reinforces Christian identity in the face of persecution by encouraging its readers to have joy in God even as they suffer (part 3) and to have fearful hope in God to vindicate them at the final judgment (part 4).

In Parts 1–2, Hockey argues that investigating how 1 Peter seeks to shape its audience's emotions is an important enterprise in light of both modern emotion theory and ancient understandings of emotion. Hockey follows contemporary emotion theorists who have shown emotions to be “evaluative judgments ... about [an] object's impact upon personal goals,” which then “influence behavior” (p. 39). She argues that in the ancient Roman empire, Stoics in particular understood emotions similarly (p. 75). Furthermore, Greco-Roman writers agreed that to change an audience's “evaluation of the world,” one needed to appeal to emotions (p. 93). As a letter of exhortation from this social context (1 Pet 5:12), 1 Peter may be expected to address its audience's emotions.

In Parts 3–4, Hockey contends that 1 Peter presents God as the proper object of Christians' joy, fear, and hope, which frees Christians from fear of others and from feeling shame at non-Christians' persecution of them. In contrast to Stoics, who found joy in detachment, Christians are to find joy in God, even as they suffer as his people, because they “prefer their new life in God over their old social bonds” (p. 135). Though Stoics considered fear always to be a negative emotion, 1 Peter commands Christians to fear God because that fear frees them from fearing any other person (p. 201). Because God is both impartial Judge and Father of Christians (1 Pet 1:17), Christians should not only fear God as the One who has the power both to give and withhold good but should also hope in God as the One who has already shown himself to be disposed to bless them (1 Pet 1:3–5, 18–21; pp. 222–4). Therefore, Christians should not feel ashamed of non-Christians' persecution of them but should realize that those non-Christians are themselves shameful for being opposed to God and his people (1 Pet 2:6–8; 4:14–16; pp. 243–6).

Hockey's arguments concerning how joy, fear, hope, and shame function in 1 Peter cannot be overturned easily and are helpful for properly interpreting 1 Peter. Her contention that 1 Peter commends God as the object of Christians' present joy is particularly necessary, given how some scholars claim that suffering itself should be the object of Christians' joy (e.g., Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary*



on *1 Peter*, Herm [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 102). Similarly, Hockey's repeated refrain that *1 Peter* reframes future-oriented emotions like fear and shame to be directed toward God rather than toward other people convincingly reinforces the commands in *1 Peter* that Christians fear God rather than other people (1 Pet 2:13–3:7). Hockey's arguments on this point are especially prevalent against feminist scholars who construe early Christian wives "as hopeless, isolated, silent victims" (p. 224 n. 180, citing Jennifer G. Bird, *Abuse, Power, and Fearful Obedience: Reconsidering 1 Peter's Commands to Wives*, LNTS 442 [London: T&T Clark, 2011], 121–3). Hockey's exegesis of *1 Peter* 3:5, based on insights from emotion theory, shows that "hope reminds the believers," who "have agency over their present orientation and action," that "they are utterly dependent on God" (p. 224). In these instances and more, this book shows that investigating emotions in *1 Peter* "opens up new avenues for discussion, and can even provide corrective tools" (p. 268).

In this book, Hockey makes an invaluable contribution not only to scholarship on *1 Peter* in particular but also to scholarship on the New Testament in general. First, *The Role of Emotion in 1 Peter* lays the foundation for other scholars to investigate how "love and the absence of anger" function *1 Peter*, which Hockey does not treat in this book (p. 268). This book also presents a vigorous methodology for determining how emotions work (chs. 2–4) that may be equally applied to other New Testament epistles.

Although much of Hockey's scholarship in this book is commendable, evangelical readers in particular should beware of a few of her assumptions. In her excursus on "the location of the letter" at the end of Part 1, for example, Hockey agrees with the critical scholarly consensus that *1 Peter* is pseudonymous and was written after the death of the apostle Peter (pp. 46–47). These assumptions are not vital to her exegetical work in Parts 3–4.

Scholars and students of *1 Peter* will find Hockey's book especially insightful, and scholars who do future work on how emotions function in other New Testament epistles need to engage this book. Nevertheless, even pastors and biblical counselors may profit from Hockey's thorough discussion of emotions and find in it helpful suggestions for how to lead people to conform their worldviews to that of God's revealed will in Scripture.

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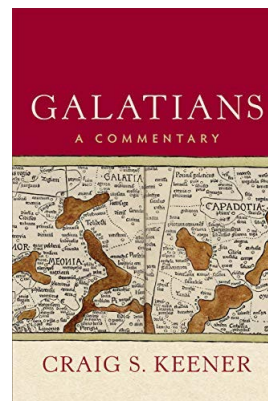
Craig S. Keener. *Galatians: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. xlviii + 848 pp. \$59.99.

Craig Keener has gifted us with an engaging, cogent account of Paul's letter to the Galatians with a remarkably strong description of its historical-cultural background. Physically, at 848 pages, it is a substantial hardback, with generous font sizes, and equally generous line spacing and margins, which make for a comfortable reading experience. This Baker Academic commentary is a fuller version of Keener's briefer account of Galatians in the *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)—more on this later.

Keener opens his commentary by offering us a fresh rendering of Galatians into English, and reading his translation with the Greek open beside me alerted me to issues in the text I'd overlooked previously. His introduction covers familiar territory well, especially issues of date and destination, and the relationship of the letter to Acts. Keener opts for a date after the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) but in the early 50s AD. In defending a southern destination Keener does indulge in quite a bit of description of the Celts of the northern part of provincial Galatia and hardly anything on the nature of the southern towns to which he ultimately thinks the letter is addressed. As a Celt myself I don't begrudge this attention, but I think the Phrygians get short-changed. Given the importance of Galatians for the late twentieth century resurgence of interest in Pauline rhetoric and epistolary theory, Keener's measured hesitancy about both is notable. To call the footnoting of ancient sources and modern interlocutors extensive is to underplay the sheer volume of referencing both in the introduction and throughout the commentary proper. A fully hyperlinked digital edition would be a treasure trove!

As for the commentary itself, Keener's pellucid prose guides the reader to his evaluations. Shaded backgrounds highlight the portion of text under discussion. His comments largely avoid detailed interactions with other commentators, but his footnotes extensively document the opinions pro and con from the early church, through the Reformation, to contemporary scholarship. While not a work focused on reception-history, this commentary makes (largely) judicious use of the ongoing work of others in that field. From time to time he offers "Bridging Horizons" in shaded text boxes that reflect on the contemporary application of Paul's message in the letter, but they do not cover every section of the letter. And like a good many other commentators on Galatians, Keener has given us a set of excursuses. There's a PhD out there on the excursuses on Galatians ranging from Martin Luther's classic work to J. Louis Martyn's extensive "comments" and now Keener's formidable contribution! His thirty-three excursuses range over historical-cultural, theological and interpretive issues including the Πίστις Χριστοῦ debate, justification, and "the New Perspective on Paul." Keener's own reading falls within the Protestant mainstream, mediating between typical evangelical views and the New Perspective, an approach Michael Bird has broadly characterized elsewhere as a "chastened Old Perspective." Without giving too much away, I was however gratified to see that Keener, along with a number of other recent commentators on Galatians, decided on the objective genitive interpretation of "Christ-faith."

Despite this commentary's apparent size there are a few things that it will not do for you. First of all, there is precious little by way of textual criticism. The NA-UBS text is virtually uniformly taken as read. One will have to go to the older commentators or the more recent monographs for consideration of the



alternatives. Second, Keener has chosen not to dwell significantly on matters of grammar and syntax. His isolated discussions here and there demonstrate his competence, for instance in the excursus on “Christ-faith,” but he has opted to focus more on the historical-cultural backgrounds and in articulating his understanding of the intent of Paul’s letter. Third, Keener’s *Galatians* does not catalogue and analyze the interpretive options in the manner of Cranfield’s celebrated *Romans*. Clearly, Keener is well read, and his choices are eminently sane. His extensive footnotes are an entry point to the scholarly discussion, but he relatively rarely tears apart and puts back together again some of the finer points of interpretive difference. These are not so much criticisms but rather observations as to where Keener has chosen to focus his energies.

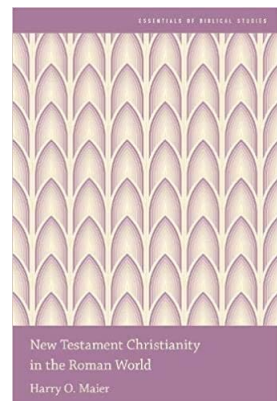
Finally, what about the relationship of this work to his briefer commentary? From my limited sampling I would estimate that about 70% of the text of the longer work is found in the shorter. The Baker Academic commentary includes Keener’s own translation, more excursuses, and much more extensive documentation in the notes (see pp. xi–xii). For those keener on the interpretation alone the Cambridge edition will suffice; those seeking the cornucopia of data and discussion will want this edition.

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Harry O. Maier. *New Testament Christianity in the Roman World*. Essentials of Biblical Studies. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. xvii + 238 pp. £16.99/\$24.95.

The relatively new Essentials of Biblical Studies series “comprises freestanding, relatively brief, accessibly written books that provide an orientation to the Bible’s contents, its ancient contexts, its interpretive methods and history, and its themes and figures” (p. xvi). In this volume, Harry O. Maier of Vancouver School of Theology aims to “make the familiar strange by locating the New Testament and its audience in a variety of overlapping but distinct ancient contexts” (p. 4). Maier ably considers the social dynamics and developing practices of early Christianity.

Maier begins the process of “making the familiar strange” in his Introduction (ch. 1) by challenging monolithic perceptions of both “the” New Testament and “the” Roman World. Both phenomena, he rightly argues, are more diverse and dynamic than common perceptions, and the use of the definite article, suggest. Following the Introduction, the book consists of five chapters in which Maier discusses the five key “contexts” of the ancient world which shaped the experiences of the early Christians. Chapter 2, “The Gods and the Cosmos,” discusses the pervading presence of religion in public life, the relationship with the divine being one of “asymmetrical gift exchange” (p. 35), and conceptions of the gods, epiphanies, temples and idols, festival, daily rituals, magic, demons, and how eucharist and baptism may be understood in light of this religious landscape. Chapter 3, “The Emperor and the Empire,” spends some time identifying how popular representations of the Roman world can be misleading, before discussing the Roman Empire’s networks and the resulting religious traffic, provincial administration and the function of benefaction



and patronage, and a comparatively lengthy treatment on the prevalence of imperial language in the New Testament.

Chapter 4, “The City and Its Residents,” was the highlight of the book for me. Maier’s discussion of the political relevance of the term ἐκκλησία (“church”) led to his observation of the social significance of the use of political language in the New Testament—e.g., ἐκκλησία (1 Cor 1:2), συμπολίται (“citizens,” Eph 2:19), and πολίτευμα (“citizenship,” Phil 3:20). Maier writes, “All of these passages ... express the idea not so much of a place as a new identity. Such language conferred upon women, slaves, and permanent and short-term residents a status otherwise denied to them” (pp. 104–5). By describing the density Roman cities and various residential arrangements in chapter 5 (“The Household and Its Members”), Maier offers a vivid picture of the types of domestic and social spaces in which New Testament Christians lived out their faith.

Chapter 5 also treats issues of male and female gender roles; the status of children, slaves and freedpersons; and the function of “fictive kinship”—the adoption of familial language in Christian communities not strictly limited to blood relatives (p. 171)—in the New Testament. Chapter 6, “The Self and Others,” delves into ancient conceptions of the body, such as those of Hippocrates and Galen (pp. 181–91), and how they showed a valuing of masculinity over femininity. Maier further notes how these values are expressed in the New Testament and early Christian literature. This chapter also discusses Paul’s view of the self in relation to Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic conceptions. Maier’s explanation of the various aspects of the Roman world covered in these chapters is clear and helpful, but these chapters also contain the most noticeable element of Maier’s own ideological reflection on the content.

Maier’s nuanced and careful treatment of the Roman world is the strength of this book. For example, when dealing with varying “social contexts”—such as the imperial cult—Maier often notes the differences between the Greek East and the Latin West. He succeeds in giving his readers a clear introduction to this multifaceted world, helping them to gain a better understanding of the challenges and contexts facing the first Christians. Another positive element of the book is the inclusion of sections treating the experiences of the Jews in these contexts in chapters 3–5.

His treatment of Christian diversity, on the other hand, is a touch heavy-handed. He rightly identifies the diversity of the early Christian movement—a diversity that is crucial to acknowledge—but in doing so underplays the unified elements of early Christian belief.

Furthermore, there is a curious element in his discussion of the Church’s relationship with the emperor and empire. Maier makes the argument that state sponsored persecution was less prevalent than is popularly presumed. This is a fair observation, but when he cites Pliny’s correspondence with Trajan, he highlights the Roman governor’s uncertainty in how to treat the Christians but fails to acknowledge that Pliny was quite confident in his decision to execute Christians (especially those who were non-citizens). In this instance, it seems that Maier has mishandled the primary source to downplay the persecution that early Christians faced.

All in all, *New Testament Christianity in the Roman World* is an excellent introduction to the contexts in which the first Christians lived. The information it provides will no doubt enrich the reader’s study of the New Testament.

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Eckhard J. Schnabel. *Jesus, Paul, and the Early Church: Missionary Realities in Historical Contexts: Collected Essays*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 406. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018. xvi + 609 pp. €159.00/\$223.00.

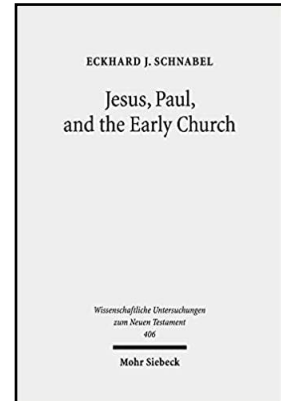
Jesus, Paul, and the Early Church is a collection of essays written over the past 25 years by Eckhard J. Schnabel, who serves as Mary F. Rockefeller Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. It includes seventeen essays, divided into three sections: “Jesus—Messianic Teacher” (chs. 1–2), “Paul—Missionary Theologian,” (chs. 3–7), and “The Early Church—Missionary Realities in Historical Contexts” (chs. 8–17).

The first chapter explores the degree to which the Gentile mission can be seen to be evident in Jesus’s ministry as recorded in the Gospels, and the second examines the purpose of Jesus’s silence in the trial narratives. The five essays in section 2 cover such topics as the introduction of foreign deities in Athens, repentance in Paul’s letters, the mission of the Church, ἡ λογικὴ λατρεία in Romans 12:1, and Pauline ethics. The third section includes a pair of chapters treating βαπτίζω/βαπτίζειν in the New Testament and in Greek, Jewish, and Patristic literature; one on Jewish opposition to Christians in Asia Minor; three dealing with various themes in Revelation; one on singing and music in the early Church; and two treating issues in Graeco-Roman religion (public confession in inscriptions in Lydia and Phrygia, and the knowledge of the divine). The final chapter discusses the missionary nature of the theology of the New Testament.

The range of topics covered in this collection is broad. Of course, this is not an edited volume of essays dealing with a narrow topic. Rather, it is a representative collection from Schnabel’s career. He notes in his preface that it is a common aspiration among European New Testament scholars “to engage in research and writing across all major areas of New Testament research, from Jesus to Paul and to the early church” (p. vii). So, while this volume is not one to turn to for a focused treatment of a particular theme, it is a fine demonstration of the valuable contribution that a scholar with varied interests can bring to the field of New Testament studies. In a context where specialization within sub-disciplines and critical approaches is increasingly common, Schnabel’s broad scholarship stands as a refreshing model.

Above all else, Schnabel’s scholarship can be described as careful, focused on the primary sources, and sensible. By “sensible” I mean that he rarely, if ever, will accept overstatements that are not supported by the text. In chapter 5, “Evangelism and the Mission of the Church” (which first appeared in *God and the Faithfulness of Paul: A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N. T. Wright*, WUNT 2/413 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016], 683–707), Schnabel notes Wright’s assertion that Paul sought to establish “messianic communities in the very places where Caesar’s power was the strongest” (p. 156, referencing *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress], 1502). This, Schnabel responds, “does not explain Paul’s actual travels hinted at in his letters and explicitly mentioned in the book of Acts,” which he proceeds to demonstrate with an overview of the relevant texts (pp. 156–57).

Similarly, Schnabel’s careful and methodical approach is demonstrated in chapter 2, “The Silence of Jesus,” in which he spends 45 pages conducting a close study of the four Gospels’ presentation of Jesus’s response to questions from disciples, opponents, and others, his response to questions in his trial, and his moments of silence in his trial, in order to establish a clear picture of the significance of this silence.



Schnabel's close examination of Jesus's characteristic willingness to speak is effective in shedding light on his moments of willful silence.

Three essays of this volume are primarily focused on Greco-Roman texts and inscriptions: chapter 3, "Introducing Foreign Deities: The Documentary Evidence"; chapter 15, "Divine Tyranny and Public Humiliation: A Suggestion for the Interpretation of the Lydian and Phrygian Confession Inscriptions"; and chapter 16, "Knowing the Divine and Divine Knowledge in Greco-Roman Religion." Each of these provides a helpful orientation to an aspect of the context with which the early Christian movement was engaged. "Introducing Foreign Deities" offers a survey of literary and documentary (i.e., epigraphic) texts that demonstrate the seriousness with which the Athenian city council would consider the introduction of new deities, and the potential risks of promoting unsanctioned gods. I was a little surprised that he did not refer to Bruce Winter's work on this issue ("On Introducing Gods to Athens: An Alternative Reading of Acts 17:18–20," *TynB* 47 [1996]: 71–90), but his conclusions are much the same: "The permission of the Council included, at least in some cases, detailed stipulations concerning sacrifices, processions, and financial matters relating to the cult, which would make matters difficult for the new community of worshippers of Jesus Messiah. Thus Paul argued before the Areopagus Council that he was not introducing "new gods" (pp. 115–16).

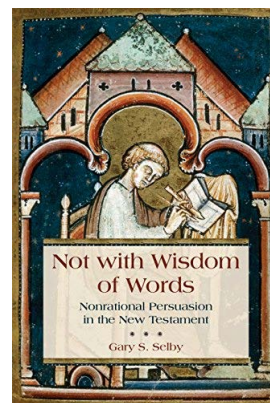
As a final note, Schnabel holds a valuable place as one who naturally straddles both German and Anglophone scholarship. While all the chapters of this volume are written in English, the footnotes are a treasure trove of German scholarship. Anyone wishing to find German scholarship on these topics will find the book to be a welcome resource. In all, this is an excellent volume on a range of topics that will be a valuable addition to any library.

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Gary S. Selby. *Not with Wisdom of Words: Nonrational Persuasion in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. vii +187pp. \$22.00.

Is propositional truth, offered in unadorned simplicity, enough to secure acquiescence to its claims and instruction? Is appeal to the rational mind enough to persuade an audience of your desires for them? In his book *Not with Wisdom of Words: Nonrational Persuasion in the New Testament*, Gary S. Selby, currently the professor of ministerial formation at Emmanuel Christian Seminary, sweeps the reader into the ancient world of rhetoric and poetics to show how Paul appealed not only to the intellectual capacities of his audience but also to their capacity to visualize and experientially inhabit the truths he articulated.

Selby argues in this work that the NT authors, particularly Paul, used elements from the tradition of ancient poetics to create "vivid, transcendent, 'extrarational' experiences that would provide for their hearers a momentary, phenomenological apprehension of theological reality" (p. 16). They did this for a couple of reasons. First, the faith of the earliest Christians was never produced by a set of logical arguments alone. Instead, faith was understood



“as a vivid, extrarational and life-altering encounter with God, accompanied by the experience of amazement, literally, ecstasy” (p. 37). To continually nourish such a faith, therefore, would require more than a steady diet of logically airtight argumentation. It would require a periodic feast upon the riches of religious experience, prepared and served by the powers of imaginative, poetic language. Second, the obstacles and challenges that emerged in the earliest Christian communities required more than logical argumentation to surmount. In many instances, these communities needed to be able to envision “what they longed for but had not yet come to pass” (p. 17).

Selby believes that the “rhetorico-poetic” tradition from which Paul borrowed is best represented by ancient thinkers such as Gorgias, Longinus, and Aristotle. In chapter 1, he takes representative works from these authors and highlights the two key elements of this form. These elements were known as *mimesis* (representation) and *phantasia* (visualization). *Mimesis* sought to place the audience “in a position where they imaginatively experience states of consciousness that normally would only be experienced by other, natural means” (p. 27). *Phantasia* involved “the capacity for visualizing and emotionally responding to objects, people, and events not literally in the field of vision” (p. 32). In order to be maximally persuasive, a speaker or author would use the mimetic power of language to activate their audience’s capacity for *phantasia*, thereby creating an immersive, subjective experience of their content that invited a much warmer reception of its ideas.

In the next four chapters, Selby applies this method to four Pauline passages, devoting one chapter to each: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (ch. 2), Romans 7:14–25 (ch. 3), 1 Corinthians 13 (ch. 4), and Ephesians 1:3–14 (ch. 5). Each chapter first explores the situation that likely called forth the respective letters. Then, Selby situates the poetic text within the letter itself before exegeting the passage and analyzing its rhetorico-poetic effects. The final two chapters seek to draw out the implications of this poetic form, exploring how its use enabled the NT authors to alter the three central relationships in the typical rhetorical encounter: the relationship of the rhetor to the audience, the relationship of the audience members to each other, and the relationship of the audience to the content itself.

Selby’s work offers a fascinating glimpse into the methods of communication used by Paul. For this aspect alone, it is worth a careful reading by scholars and pastors alike. It is unclear, however, if the rhetorico-poetic tradition identified here finds usage in other genres of the NT besides the letters. Even though the title of the book implies that it does, Selby only examines the epistles, and even here, only Paul’s (debates on the authorship of Ephesians notwithstanding). Additionally, Selby does not offer a concrete methodology for identifying when an author is borrowing from the rhetorico-poetic tradition to achieve extrarational experiences. His exegesis directs the reader to grammatical and syntactical clues that point to the use of poetics, but some of these change from example to example and at no point is a framework for consistent identification offered. These minor criticisms, however, do not neutralize the main argument of this book. This work’s key contribution is to elucidate how a NT author like Paul used the power of mimetic language “to create imaginative representations of the ideas they sought to advance” (p. 127), which effectively served to place his hearers “in the content” of his discourse (p. 128). Once those hearers were “in” the content, Paul could alter the way they experienced God, each other, and the world.

Naturally, this way of using language holds particular promise for preachers who are heavily invested in altering the way their hearers experience God, each other, and the world each week. Although this book was not necessarily written with pastors in mind, the persuasive tools it describes can help them take their audiences into emotionally powerful experiences of divine truth that can form and stabilize

their Christian worldview in ways that abstract propositional truths alone cannot. The rhetorical powers of *mimesis* and *phantasia* go beyond the need to simply illustrate a point with a memorable image or story. They take discourse to a new level of persuasion whereby the audience is led to feel and inhabit the theological realities proclaimed from the pulpit. For the insight that this book contributes to a more robust model of biblical communication, it is cheerfully recommended.

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Runar M. Thorsteinsson. *Jesus as Philosopher: The Moral Sage in the Synoptic Gospels*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. x + 212 pp. £25.00/\$35.00.

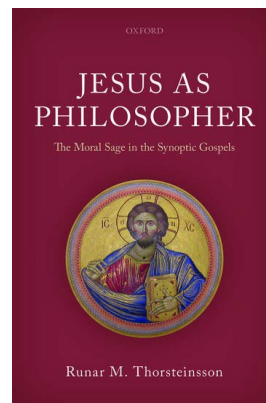
Jesus as Philosopher is a short book with the ambitious aim of tracing the influence on the Synoptic Gospels of philosophical traditions contemporary to Jesus. Thorsteinsson, Professor of New Testament at the University of Iceland, is well known for his earlier work *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), reviewed in *Themelios* 36. In *Jesus as Philosopher*, Thorsteinsson probes two key questions: (1) How do the gospel writers speak of Jesus in relation to contemporary philosophy? (2) Does Jesus take on a philosophical role and are Jesus's words and actions analogous to or different from leading Greco-Roman philosophical figures?

Thorsteinsson sets out his purpose and approach in an introduction which claims this is an area with limited literature. He cites Luke Timothy Johnson's essay in *Jesus and Philosophy: New Essays*, ed. P. K. Moser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) as well as the work of F. Gerald Downing and Hans Dieter Betz on the Cynics and Meier on the historical Jesus. He follows Morgan in asserting that philosophical doctrine and popular ethics were closer than previously assumed. Thorsteinsson is inspired by narrative criticism and seeks to work within a framework of ancient virtue ethics. He comments on ideal moral character in wisdom literature, but there is no consideration of the beatitudes.

Chapter 1 explores philosophy as a way of life, noting the wider social reach of Epicurean and later Stoic philosophical schools compared with Aristotelean and Platonic exclusivity. Thorsteinsson then defines the philosophical sage as sociable wise man with knowledge of ethical truth and related to the motif of a "divine-man" (p. 26), drawing on examples from Socrates, Diogenes, Epicurus, and Seneca.

Chapter 2 relates this to Mark's Gospel, noting the literary features and characterization of Jesus and highlighting the themes of asceticism (Mark 6:8–9), family (3:31–35), possessions (10:17–31), mission (9:37; 2:16–17), wisdom (6:2), emotions (11:14–16), and suffering and death (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34, 45).

Chapter 3 on Matthew briefly recapitulates the themes of asceticism, family, and possessions before focussing in more depth on ethics. Perfection, the golden rule, love for enemies, forgiveness, and prayer are found in Stoic ethics but Jesus differs in his emphasis on humility and child-like dependency. Philosophers share Jesus's sharp critique of hypocrisy (Matt 23:4–7), similarly using digestion (15:11, 17–20) as an analogy to express how sincere theoretical words should match practical action (Epictetus, *Dissertationes*, 3.21.1–3). Wisdom too is compared to a firm foundation. Distinctions between Jesus



and the philosopher sage in emotions are less pronounced in Matthew than in Mark. Thorsteinsson is content to draw parallels on suffering and death rather than assert the influence of philosophical traditions on the Gospels.

In Chapter 4, Thorsteinsson finds Luke philosophical and Stoic in particular. He covers again ascetic appearance, abandoning family, possessions, ethics, wisdom emotions, suffering, and death. He relates Jesus as messenger of God to the call to repentance (μετάνοια).

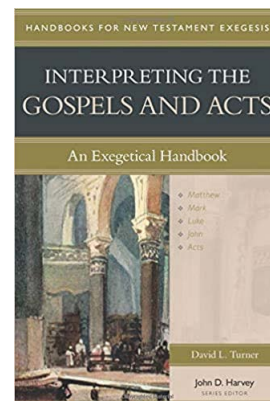
Thorsteinsson concludes that “the Gospel authors drew on Graeco-Roman traditions in addition to Jewish traditions, ... modelling ... Jesus as a philosopher” and “superior to them” (p. 184). While the parallels he identifies provide evidence of a multi-cultural background they are insufficient to show that a philosophical sage model for Jesus is consciously being used by the gospel writers. A Stoic model in particular faces several challenges (for example, Thomas E. Phillips [“Was Jesus a Bad Stoic?” *SBL Forum*, November 2004, <http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=334>] contrasts the Stoicism of 4 Maccabees with accusations of gluttony and drunkenness [Matt 11:16–19/Luke 7:31–35] and Jesus’s cry of dereliction [Mark 15:34/Matt 27:46]). Although Thorsteinsson is aiming to fill a gap by examining philosophy in the Synoptic Gospels, an exploration of John’s Gospel and especially the use of λόγος is important for evaluating such a model thoroughly (for example Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *John and Philosophy: A New Reading of the Fourth Gospel* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017]). Previous treatments have tended to focus on Paul and Luke (for example, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000], reviewed in *Themelios* 27; and C. Kavin Rowe, *One True Life: The Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016], reviewed in *Themelios* 41, as well as Thorsteinsson’s own writings).

Thorsteinsson’s approach is repetitious and he often points out differences between the Synoptics without attempt at harmonization or justification for the redaction and source critical comments he makes. However, his examples demonstrate that sensitivity to the Hellenization of the Jewish context of the Gospels would enrich interpretation. This book contributes to a deeper understanding of the background philosophical and intellectual climate of the first century.

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David L. Turner. *Interpreting the Gospels and Acts: An Exegetical Handbook*. Handbooks for New Testament Exegesis. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019. 358 pp. \$36.99.

David Turner, professor emeritus of the New Testament at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, is well-known to *Themelios* readers for his major commentary on Matthew (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008). In this handbook, Turner offers scholars, preachers, and enthusiastic Christians instruction in a subject that he cultivated only “later in [his] life and ministry,” after his initial interest in Pauline theology (p. 18). This substantial resource imparts data, methods, wisdom, and references that Turner developed while studying “the Gospels and the other narrative books of the Bible” (p. 18). According to the series editor, the four *Handbooks for New Testament Exegesis* are “designed to provide an understanding of the different types of literature in the New Testament ... [including] strategies for interpreting and preaching/teaching them” (p. 15). Like other books in the series, *Interpreting the Gospels and Acts* comprises eight chapters of topics that are specified by the editor. Turner’s robust, enlightening, and practical work more than meets the objectives of this series.



Turner’s first chapter discusses the subject of genre and argues that the gospel writers modeled their narrative after “Greco-Roman biographies” (p. 33). Although in a theological sense, Acts “presents the ongoing βίος of Jesus,” its genre is best understood “as a history or monograph” (pp. 34–35). Chapter one also discusses the genres and other features embedded within these five texts, including their intertextual relationship with the Old Testament.

Chapter two addresses “the historical settings of the Gospels and Acts,” which include the OT, “Second Temple Judaism,” the “archeology and physical world” of the holy land, and “Greco-Roman history” (pp. 69–74). The Jewish elements in this setting include rabbis, Pharisees, scribes, elders, Sadducees, the Sanhedrin, Essenes, politically leaning groups, and the feasts (pp. 84–93). Turner closes the chapter discussing the individual settings of the four Gospels and Acts.

After discussing the bounds of theology in general, the third chapter briefly reviews the theological treatments of Jesus and the Spirit in the four Gospels and Acts (p. 112). Matthew highlights the kingdom of God, the Church and its mission, and “intertextuality” with the Old Testament (pp. 123–28). Mark’s characters have “a limited recognition of Jesus” (p. 131); his Gospel “especially features the [disciples’] foibles” (p. 133), and it has an “abrupt ending” (p. 135). Luke-Acts is distinctive regarding salvation, the prominence of Jerusalem, the noticeable objective of Rome, and “evangelizing the outcasts” (pp. 136–40). John’s uniqueness involves its prologue, “signs and faith,” and “life eschatologized” (pp. 143–49).

The fourth chapter, “Preparing to Interpret the Gospels and Acts,” discusses textual criticism, the “theory and practice” of translation, and critical methods, including form criticism, source criticism, and redaction criticism (pp. 151–90). This chapter concludes by recommending “narrative criticism” and “Freytag’s Pyramid” (pp. 191–94).

Chapter five “focuses on the linguistic aspects of exegesis, which include translating the text from its original language into that of the exegete and analyzing the original language in terms of its structure, syntax, and key words” (p. 197). Turner recommends the methods of “visual display,” “phrasing,” “line diagramming,” and the “Ogden-Richards Triangle” (pp. 207–16). Moreover, word studies begin with

their meaning in the pericope and expand in “concentric circles” out to the “extra-biblical” context (p. 220).

Turner, in chapter six, relays the advice of Cicero and Augustine that “the goals of communication [are] teaching, delighting, and moving” (p. 232). Turner describes speech act theory and argues, “The distinction between exegetical interpretation and practical application cannot be turned into a rigidly sequential enterprise” (pp. 235–36). The chapter also reviews *Lectio Divina*, describes the difference between “deductive and inductive preaching” (p. 244), and offers a sermon case study of Acts 2:37–47.

Chapter seven offers two extended case studies for “exegesis and exposition” (p. 253). According to Turner, “Mark 4:1–20 ... is deceptively difficult to understand and preach” because it “creates a rollercoaster of emotions” (pp. 283–84). Turner, therefore, packages it into three “moments”: “ambiguity,” “humility,” and “clarity” (p. 285). John 1:1–18, which scholars interpret either as “a chiasmic” structure or “a step-parallel” (p. 301), has “high Christology” (p. 303) and exhibits its influence in the councils of Constantinople and Chalcedon.

The final chapter lists hundreds of “selected resources” for students (p. 323). Turner recommends bibliographies, electronic resources, sources for “establishing the text,” editions of the Greek New Testament, Gospel synopses, books about Greek grammar and syntax, and lexical resources (pp. 324–32). He also offers sources for establishing the text’s “historical-literary-cultural setting,” dictionaries and encyclopedias, commentary series, specific commentaries on the Gospels and Acts, books about communication, and resources about biblical and systematic theology (pp. 334–52).

Turner robustly fulfills his purpose in a way that is both enlightening and practical. He informs the reader about genre and other issues in the field of exegesis, educates her about scholarly methods, and recommends a variety of resources for her further study. The book’s strengths include Turner’s analysis of the distinctiveness of each gospel, his presentation of the sequence of exegesis, his cataloging of resources, and his discussion about Augustine’s call to beautify the message and motivate the recipient. If the other *Handbooks* in the series are as substantial as *Interpreting the Gospels and Acts*, it is one of the best mini-series on the market.

Turner’s inclusion of *Lectio Divina*, however, is unexpected because of its association with Christian mysticism. Even so, he plausibly argues that its “attitude of worshipful reflection is certainly appropriate for anyone who wishes to study and communicate the Bible” (p. 242). Turner warns against “open” contemplative state[s] and “repetition” (p. 242), and one suspects that his broach of this method intends more to redefine it than advocate it. He asserts that evangelicals have contributed to its “widespread” use (p. 241) yet does not claim any personal practice. In the end, Turner deflects: “Let our study be prayer” (p. 242). If one defines prayer as *communication with God*, *Lectio Divina* practitioners would hardly exclude their praxis from that definition.

This publication also has shortcomings. Turner’s identification of genres is helpful, but his list of embedded genres is not exhaustive. For example, he could have mentioned the *woe sequences* in Matthew and Luke (which resemble those in Isaiah and Habakkuk). Moreover, some of Turner’s headings could be more accurate. Under “The Distinctive Theology of Mark,” the subtitles, “Limited Recognition of Jesus” and “The Failure of the Disciples and the Ending of Mark” (pp. 129–33), may refer more to Mark’s literary purpose than his theology.

In summary, *Interpreting the Gospels and Acts* meets and exceeds its stated objective to provide “an understanding of the different types of literature in the [Gospels and Acts] and ... strategies for interpreting and preaching/teaching them” (p. 15). His extensive particulars support the value of this

work. I recommend the book for its intended audience: scholars, preachers, and “well-motivated” individuals who serve the Lord without remuneration (p. 16). I would count myself blessed to find the four volumes of Handbooks for New Testament Exegesis on my shelf.

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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

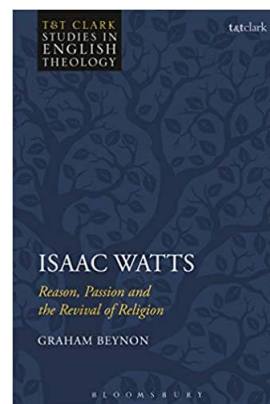
Graham Beynon. *Isaac Watts: Reason, Passion and the Revival of Religion*. T&T Clark Studies in English Theology. London: T&T Clark, 2016. 220 pp. £29.99/\$39.95.

Isaac Watts has been an important, though elusive, influence in the life of the reviewer. In Canadian growing up years, I came to associate Watts’s paraphrase, “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past” with civic assemblies held on the 11th of November. At a later stage, I can recall the thrill of joining in to sing his “We Give Immortal Praise to God the Father’s Love” (a hymn to the Trinity). So much from Watts is now lodged in the memory! But what of Isaac Watts (1674–1748), the man, the pastor-preacher, and the theologian? This question leads to a challenge for us: apart from his verses, Watts is largely unknown today.

Graham Beynon was once in this position until he read David Fountain’s compact biography, *Isaac Watts Remembered* (Southampton: Mayflower, 1974), while on holiday. We now have the impressive results of the quest generated by that reading: a published St Andrews dissertation (first released in cloth covers in 2016), which explores Watts in his cultural and theological setting. A biography it is not. To profit from it, a reader will, like Beynon, need to begin with an existing biography.

What we do have here is a fascinating investigation of Watts, considered as an heir of the ejected Nonconformists of 1662 in the early Enlightenment period. Beynon’s work joins a growing list of studies of Christian leaders who led Protestant Nonconformity into the eighteenth century. One thinks here of David Fields’s *Rigide Calvinisme in a Softer Dresse: The Moderate Presbyterianism of John Howe, 1630–1705* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2004), Dewey Wallace’s *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660–1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), and Robert Strivens’s *Philip Doddridge and the Shaping of Evangelical Dissent* (London: Routledge, 2015). Whether Presbyterian or Congregationalist, these Christian leaders (with Watts) aimed to defend the legitimacy of Protestant Nonconformity against suspicions of an exaggerated “enthusiasm.” This tendency towards religious subjectivism was popularly believed to have contributed to earlier civil war and regicide. Yet, they also aimed to speak and write in a nuanced way in a changed intellectual climate. This climate increasingly extolled the capabilities of human reason in a way that subtracted from the primacy formerly awarded to divine revelation.

If Watts can fairly be considered an heir of the Puritans ejected in 1662, the question must still be asked, “Was he a faithful heir?” One of the strengths of Beynon’s analysis—conducted with methodological rigor—is his survey of the variety of answers to this important question. Earlier appraisers



have considered Watts as (1) a rebel against his Puritan heritage who proceeded to undermine it, (2) a moderating influence upon a Puritan heritage needing to be shorn of emphases he reckoned extreme, and (3) a reconciler who synthesized elements of distinguishable systems of thought.

Having surveyed Watts's writings on the themes of reason's role, the place of the passions in religious psychology, and the importance of the clear expression of ideas through words in sermons, songs, and prayers, Beynon's verdict is that Watts represented a "modified Puritanism" or "an Enlightenment Puritanism" (p. 192). This involved an intentional synthesis of elements of the old and the new. "He believed that there was a clear way ahead that combined the best of Puritan and Enlightenment thought. Indeed, he thought that this path led to the revival of religion and not simply the preserving of it" (p. 197).

Accordingly, we do not find Beynon making major criticisms of Watts. We do find him acknowledging that Watts was at times tentative when he needed to be more definite, and overly optimistic that some mediating positions (for example, on the Trinity) would prove satisfactory (p. 198).

The importance of Beynon's study (and others like it) can hardly be exaggerated. Two concerns are paramount. First, for the past sixty years, conservative evangelicalism has been pointed towards the Puritan era as the period providing us with the best models for proclamation and theology. That "retro" directive is undiminished. The reviewer (like many readers) has just been urged to acquire the reprinted *Works* of William Perkins (1558–1602). The impression created by this fixation on the Puritan age is that those (such as Howe, Watts, and Doddridge) who restated the faith in a changing climate need not have bothered. Beynon shows us that unlike many of their contemporaries who were content to keep to the "old paths," Watts and others like him engaged in a necessary theological re-statement and produced a meaningful apologetic in a time of cultural flux.

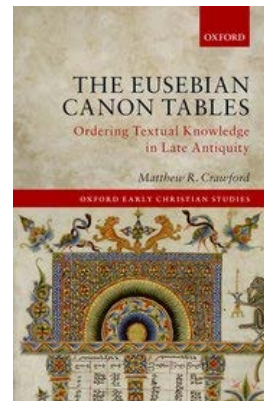
Second, conservative evangelicalism today is cultivating a "persona" of hipness, which gives no particular pride of place to the clarity of thought and speech. Instead, it exalts the spontaneous and the impromptu. Watts stands as a shining example of one who aimed to preach, write hymn lyrics, and pray, communicating clear ideas in clear words.

Thank you, Graham Beynon, for a timely study!

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Matthew R. Crawford. *The Eusebian Canon Tables: Ordering Textual Knowledge in Late Antiquity*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. £75.00/\$105.00.

In the fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea designed a systematic mechanism that would assist in the reading and analysis of the Gospel narratives as part of a fourfold grouping. This paratextual apparatus had three central components: (1) an introductory preface (*Letter to Carpianus*), (2) a set of ten tables that contained lists of section numbers that corresponded to textual locations in the Gospels, and (3) the section numbers themselves that Eusebius marked in the margins throughout a given codex edition of the four Gospels. These elements equipped a reader of that edition with the means to quickly locate the places in each Gospel that are unique or in parallel with another Gospel. This series of marked sections, along with the explanatory notes and the columns themselves, represented a sophisticated cross-referencing system.



In *The Eusebian Canon Tables: Ordering Textual Knowledge in Late Antiquity*, Matthew Crawford provides a comprehensive analysis of Eusebius's apparatus. Though the presence of cross-references is a common feature of modern printed Bibles, as Crawford observes, "this was an innovation of remarkable proportions for its day" (p. 7). Crawford's aim in this volume is to explain and illustrate "the ingenuity that went into its creation and the way in which readers interacted with it in the eight centuries thereafter" (p. 7). Interestingly, Crawford notes that there has been a relative neglect of Eusebius's Canon Tables in historical scholarship. Crawford speaks into this lacuna in large part because "the story of the reception of the Eusebian Canon Tables is paradigmatic for the history of late antiquity as a whole" (p. 16). As Crawford observes, "this innovative reading technology grew out of the long tradition of literary scholarship practiced above all in Alexandria, Egypt" and had a lasting impact on Gospel scholarship more broadly (p. 16).

The theoretical tools that Crawford utilizes to analyze the Canon Tables are paratextuality and information visualization theory. In this vein, Crawford argues that these tables were an integrated feature of a new edition of the fourfold Gospel where this "marginal apparatus related to the text of the gospels as a paratext" (p. 21). This feature, then, "served as the entryway into the text of the gospels and also ordered the disparate textual content contained therein, and in so doing shaped the reader's interaction with this text (or rather texts)" (p. 21). Further, as well-designed "tabular matrixes," the Canon Tables represent a "visual display of information that has the potential to reveal patterns or concepts that might otherwise take much longer to intuit, or even remain completely hidden" (p. 34). Using this device, "even an amateur reader of a gospel codex" (p. 53) could quickly discern both the relationship one gospel has to each of the others (by specific columns specifying these connections), and also the range of these relationships across the fourfold collection (the presence of *ten* columns rather than one). Crawford's overview of these concepts showcases the unique and "startling creativity of Eusebius's paratext" (p. 43).

How would a tool like Eusebius's Canon Tables inform a study of the Gospels? On this question, Crawford reflects, "Eusebius' paratextual system created intertextual links across the fourfold gospel and encouraged an open-ended, hypertextual reading of this corpus" (p. 16; see also pp. 96–121). This particular function and effect of the Canon Tables feature prominently in the reception history of this influential paratextual device. For example, Augustine drew upon the Canon Tables as a basis for his

scholarship on the unity and diversity of the Gospels (ch. 4). Syriac versions of the four Gospels include a revised and developed form of the Canon Tables that builds on Eusebius's foundational work (ch. 5). In the study of the Gospels among Irish scholars in the early medieval period (the Hiberno-Latin tradition), the Canon Tables are utilized more directly as a tool for exegetical analysis of textual parallels (ch. 6).

These tables were also decorated in various ways in manuscript illuminations. In some Armenian traditions, commentaries were written on the Canon Tables that focused on these artistic additions. Functioning similarly to the tables themselves, these images represent visual interpretations of the nature of the fourfold gospel as a complex unity that is part of the scope of redemptive history (chapter seven). The varied interpretive examples and historical contexts Crawford examines here are diverse (temporally and geographically) and demonstrate the wide-ranging influence that this textual tool has had on the reception of the four Gospels.

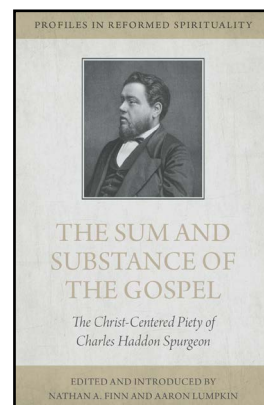
Considering the overall thesis of the book, Crawford convincingly demonstrates that Eusebius's paratextual device represents serious textual and hermeneutical work on the Gospels early in the history of the churches. The Canon Tables allow a reader to see similarities and differences while maintaining the narrative presentation of each Gospel. "It is precisely for this reason," Crawford reflects, "that the Canon Tables continue to be useful even today as a paratext for the fourfold gospel, in so far as they resist a separation of the form and the content of this corpus" (p. 293).

Throughout his analysis, Crawford takes decidedly complex discussions and provides a path for non-specialists in other disciplines to understand and reckon with the initial and ongoing significance of Eusebius's scholarship on the Gospels. The full-color images of manuscript pages containing portions of the tables also add considerable value to the book. Because of its well-sourced and carefully developed argument, Crawford's volume is a first-rate resource for serious study of the Eusebian Canon Tables.

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Nathan A. Finn and Aaron Lumpkin, eds. *The Sum and Substance of the Gospel: The Christ Centered-Piety of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*. Profiles in Reformed Spirituality. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2020. 167 pp. £7.99/\$10.00.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892) was one of the most influential figures in the nineteenth century. He exemplified the activism of evangelicalism, publishing millions of sermons, pastoring the largest church of his day, founding a college for pastors and an orphanage, and much more. Many books and dissertations have been written on Spurgeon's life, theological contribution, and far-reaching ministry. However, relatively little attention has been given to the inner life that motivated Spurgeon's ministry. Nathan Finn and Aaron Lumpkin have sought to fill this gap in *The Sum and Substance of the Gospel: The Christ-Centered Piety of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*. Finn serves as Provost and Dean at North Greenville University and has published extensively on Baptist history. Lumpkin has served in local church ministry and is working on his PhD in church history



under Finn's supervision. Together, they have produced a rich collection of primary source readings that summarize Spurgeon's Christ-centered spirituality.

This book is a part of the series, *Profiles in Reformed Spirituality*, which seeks to bring out the historic riches of Reformed evangelical piety to counteract the "shallowness and ... trivialization of the weighty things of God" (p. ix) that characterizes so much of present-day evangelicalism. This book begins with a substantial introduction (28 pages) to Spurgeon's life, ministry, and theology, and it ends with a chapter providing some guidance on where to go next in reading Spurgeon. But the heart of the book is in 49 chapters, each containing a brief primary source reading which highlights aspects of his spirituality. Together, these readings "hold [Spurgeon] forth as a model of Christ-centered piety" (p. 3).

One of the strengths of this work is the wide variety of sources that Finn and Lumpkin have collected. With selections from sermons, lectures, devotional readings, magazine articles, and even personal correspondence, this book allows the reader to encounter Spurgeon's spirituality from multiple angles. Finn and Lumpkin have also added helpful footnotes throughout that aid the modern reader in understanding more obscure references. With so much primary source material in existence, Finn and Lumpkin have focused these readings on the theme of Spurgeon's Christ-centered devotion. As Peter Morden and others have argued, the person and work of Christ are at the heart of Spurgeon's spirituality. Though there is no explicit chapter structure, the readings generally move from Christ's objective work to the Christian's personal hope in Christ, to the application of Christ's work in all of life.

For Spurgeon, a Christ-centered spirituality was robustly theological. As these readings make clear, at the heart of his relationship with God was a belief in penal substitutionary atonement. Living in a time when this doctrine was under attack by theological liberalism, Spurgeon's Christ-centered spirituality meant defending Christ's substitutionary death. In response to those who tried to present the cross as an expression of God's love apart from substitution, Spurgeon stated that Christ's death apart from substitution would be "a horrible mystery never to be explained." Indeed, he declared, "If our Lord's bearing our sin for us is not the gospel, I have no gospel to preach" (p. 42). A proper devotional experience of Christ's love could not be separated from this one central gospel truth.

At the same time, the gospel is not meant to be held abstractly or merely intellectually. Rather, Spurgeon urged his hearers to receive Christ's atoning work personally, for their sins, with confidence:

You are full of sin; well, but He is full of mercy. You are full of guilt; He is full of atoning merit. You are full of hardness of heart; He is full of long-suffering and tenderness toward you. You are full of mistakes; He is full of wisdom.... The mercy is that just in those very points where you fail, Christ excels, and His merits just fit your demerits as the key fits the lock. (pp. 72–73).

This Christ-centered piety connected to every part of the Christian life, from one's participation in the world to resisting temptation, to growing in good works, to personal evangelism, and even unto death. In all of life, Spurgeon presented a singular focus to Christian spirituality: "I will judge of your piety by this barometer: does Christ stand high or low with you?" (p. 88).

It is important to note that this book is not an academic study of Spurgeon's spirituality. Though the introduction provides a helpful overview, there is virtually no commentary or analysis from the editors on the readings. Rather, through the carefully selected and arranged readings, this book provides a faithful representation of Spurgeon's spirituality in his own words. The result is an accessible and encouraging

book from one of evangelicalism's greatest preachers that can both edify the average church attender, and also aid the more serious student of church history.

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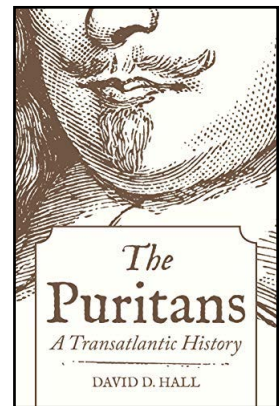
David D. Hall. *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019. pp. 520. £30.00/\$35.00.

In *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History*, David D. Hall tells the history of a quest for a “perfect reformation” in the British Isles and New England. Dissatisfied with the *via media* of the Elizabethan Settlement, the Puritans sought a more thorough and complete remodeling of church and society in accord with the Reformed international movement. Royal agendas and competing visions within Puritanism thwarted their hopes, yet their legacies deserve continued and careful deliberation.

Hall is professor emeritus of American religious history at Harvard Divinity School. He has arguably shaped the field of early American religious history more than any other scholar over the past half-century, contributing key studies in American Puritanism, popular religion, and print culture, among many others. *The Puritans* is a culmination of his work and achieves the unique breadth and erudition of a seasoned scholar. The endnotes alone are 136 pages. It is, however, no stagnant summation but a robust historiographical advancement.

Hall does not engineer this feat by reframing Puritanism according to today's trendiest political and social agendas. He cautions against the ahistorical use of the term “puritan” to ridicule everything wrong with America. This applies on a broader level as well. For example, the Heidelberg scholar Jan Assmann's 2018 *Friedenspreis* (peace-prize) winning work, *Totale Religion: Ursprünge und Formen puritanischer Verschärfung* (Wien: Picus Verlag, 2016), links puritanical religion with radical terrorism. As Hall reminds us with a sober historical perspective, modern social critiques of the Puritans can be applied to most sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europeans. Moreover, our “modern” values are not as irreproachable as we would like to think: “We may recognize that the price we pay for ‘modernity’ includes severe damage to the environment and ongoing inequality, but it seems impossible to jettison the assumption that things are better now than they were in the past” (p. 12). Rather than viewing the Puritans through modern standards, he takes a more unconventional approach by presenting the Puritans as they understood themselves—an approach that allows open minds to see ourselves and our own shortcomings through their eyes. Thus, Hall's Puritans were not drab killjoys, disciplinarian misogynistic witch-hunters, subversive separatists, militant radicals, nor the progenitors of democracy, capitalism, or a uniquely “American” intellectual or literary tradition. They were Protestants in pursuit of true religion, and to this end, they sought to purify worship of idolatry and refashion politics for the flourishing of British society and its churches.

Wishing to overcome deeply-ingrained limitations in Puritan scholarship, Hall pursues “a more fully Atlantic or Reformed framework” (p. 10)—leading him to cast Puritanism as an extension of the



wider Reformed international project in the contexts of Britain and New England. Building on works like Stephen Foster's *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), he situates New England Puritanism in a transatlantic perspective rather than isolating it as a unique “American” phenomenon. He goes further, however, by including Scotland as well as the important networks and exchanges of ideas with continental Protestants. Moreover, inspired by the scholarship of Richard A. Muller and evangelical historians like Mark E. Dever, Joel Beeke, J. I. Packer, and Paul C. H. Lim, he lends greater weight to theology. These works influence Hall's book in critical ways. His treatment of Puritan practical divinity in chapter 4 is thorough and judicious. Seeing it as ultimately rooted in classic Reformed Protestantism, he foregrounds key intertwined themes: covenant theology, the *ordo salutis*, the ongoing relevance of the moral law, providentialism, predestination, the Spirit and the Word, devotional practices, assurance, ministry practices, and more. In his treatment in chapter nine on the controversies in New England surrounding Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, and the witchcraft trials, readers find less about the authoritarianism and sexism of the clergy (the focus of most treatments) and more about the sincere pastoral concerns that drove their actions.

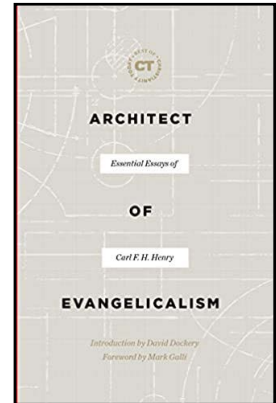
In contrast to some of these evangelical writers, Hall places greater emphasis on Puritanism as a political movement. Here again, the Puritans followed Reformed models on the Continent in their assumption that the powers of the civil state ultimately existed to serve the interests of true religion. However, unlike reform projects in Geneva, Zürich, Basel, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, the Netherlands, and elsewhere, the interests of the English and Scottish royalty never fully aligned with Puritan ideals. This conflict culminated in what Hall titles his eighth chapter, “The End of the Beginning, 1640–1660.” In an ironic twist, the political developments that brought about the height of the Puritan movement also resulted in its end. After winning the Civil War and beheading King Charles I, Puritans finally gained the opportunity to reform British politics in favor of the reformation agenda they had pursued since the 1570s. As late as 1646–1647, the Presbyterian-led Westminster Assembly seemed on the brink of forging a lasting and comprehensive Puritan state church. Yet their designs for a Puritan Christendom fell apart in the 1650s, due to a mixture of Oliver Cromwell's leadership as Lord Protector, the rise of groups like the Independents and Baptists who held opposing views on church governance and the state, and the growing push for voluntary religion, freedom of conscience, and toleration. With Cromwell's death in 1658 and rising agitation over disunity, Parliament restored the monarchy in 1660–1662, re-imposed the episcopal system, and ousted all dissenters with the Act of Uniformity (1662). While the Puritan movement to reform the Church of England was over, their legacies have shaped religion and society in significant ways up to the present day—a matter Hall explores in his Epilogue.

Unlike the many rampant misrepresentations out there, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* does not leave readers with the same self-congratulatory relief for our age's progressive liberation from all things “puritanical.” Instead, we are confronted with what we have sacrificed for our “modern” ways: rich spirituality and doctrinal depth for sentimentalism, social ethics for self-interest, communal solidarity for individualism, teleology for utilitarianism, Sabbaths for consumeristic leisure.

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Carl F. H. Henry. *Architect of Evangelicalism: The Essential Essays of Carl F. H. Henry*. The Best of Christianity Today. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019. ix + 421 pp. £18.82/\$23.99.

To speak of a Carl Henry renaissance would be an overstatement. But out of the theological and historical books published in the last ten years, there is a growing interest in his life and legacy. The evangelical journalist and theologian, Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry (1913–2003), has been called “the brain(s) of the evangelical movement,” even “the indispensable evangelical.” Although he certainly would have dismissed these notions, Henry was a driving force of neo-evangelicalism after World War II. Among other things, he served as the founding dean and the first professor of theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, and as the founding editor of *Christianity Today* (CT). He spoke extensively at numerous institutions worldwide and was a dear mentor for many evangelical leaders. *Architect of Evangelicalism* seems a fitting title.



The book consists of thirty-three essays written by Henry, which were published between 1957 and 1989. A foreword by Mark Galli (editor-in-chief of *CT*) and an introduction by David Dockery (former president of Trinity International University) winsomely help the reader to grasp Henry’s vision, relevance, and time. The essays are grouped into four parts.

The first part, “Defining Evangelicalism” (pp. 11–88), treats foundational issues. Here Henry traces the theological and historical kernel of fundamentalism, liberalism, and neo-evangelicalism as movements. Moreover, he expounds the programmatic vision of evangelicals and pleads for a convictional unity and collaboration. Henry also addresses the governing principles for social action, the evangelicals’ identity, their view of Scripture, and their drawbacks and opportunities over the years.

In part 2, “Evangelicals and Modern Theology” (pp. 91–213), Henry offers an integrative view of redemptive revelation in response to a then-important, but problematic publication. He also assesses Europe’s influential theologians, Neo-Protestantism, the fragmented theological liberalism, and the 1960s God-is-dead wave. Looking back in time, Henry’s analyses of the theological scene and their ever-changing trends prove to be quite outstanding.

Interestingly, Henry thought and wrote a lot about learning, while intentionally challenging the one-sidedness of both pietistic anti-intellectualism and secular rationalism. His articles in part three, “Evangelicals and Education” (pp. 217–62), cover a wide range of topics: the Christian responsibility in education, its strategic role in society, the idea of a Christian research university, the urgent tasks of Christian colleges, and the confessional orientation in theological education.

In part four, “Evangelicals and Society” (pp. 265–371), Henry connects a multi-faceted cultural analysis with theological thought and practical proposals for solution. Among other things, he discusses the increasing secularization of the West and the modern ideas of human rights, love, morality, democracy, truth, and meaning. He also writes about the nature and means of Christian influence upon society, the generational conflicts inside the evangelical milieu, and the risks of a biased political involvement.

The book concludes with a tribute written by Timothy George (Beeson Divinity School) in 2004, and with a moving editorial by Henry on how God called him to repent and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. While the Scripture index is short, the book’s extensive subject index helps readers to track and deepen specific topics.

Architect of Evangelicalism catches the comprehensive concern of its protagonist. In eventful times, Henry tried to cast a unifying evangelical vision, combining faithful theological reflection with a responsible course of action. He did not merely present a middle course between the Protestant fundamentalism and liberalism of his time. Instead, together with many others, Henry strove to awaken the evangelical mind and heart in commitment to God's glory and the well-being of others.

Admittedly, essays in themselves have their limits and may vary in their coherence, depth, and persuasiveness. Because of the complex themes, Henry sometimes unfolded his arguments in a series of editorials. On other occasions, he responded rather concisely to immediate developments, while uncovering the deeper significance of those events. Some more footnotes, references to other works, or a list for further reading might have added to the book's usefulness.

From a historical point of view, the book is a superb collection of primary sources for further research on the life and legacy of Carl Henry. It embodies the questions, concerns, and historical struggles of the American neo-evangelical movement in the second half of the twentieth century. In addition, students will find an accessible introduction to Henry's work and method, before reaching out to other monographs.

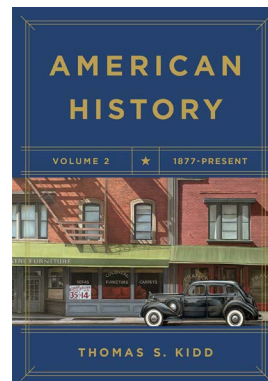
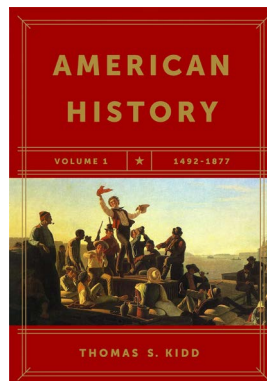
Beyond a scholarly interest, attentive readers will spot the timelessness of the many topics. Henry's combination of sincere evangelical piety with a serious evangelical worldview, in the light of contemporary challenges, is exemplary. In many ways, his essays present evangelicalism at its best and can serve as a basis for discussion, or perhaps even as a corrective, to some trends of our time. Henry points both skeptics and sympathizers to Christ and invites them to consider the momentous convictions of the global evangelical tradition and their churches. In summary, *Architect of Evangelicalism* is to be commended and will hopefully encourage, inform, and equip many present-day readers.

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Thomas S. Kidd. *American History, Volume 1: 1492–1877*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019. ix + 338 pp. £47.84/\$59.99.

Thomas S. Kidd. *American History, Volume 2: 1877–Present*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019. vii + 358 pp. £57.99/\$59.99.

Teachers of college-level American History survey courses have dozens of options to choose from when assigning a textbook for their students. However, instructors who desire to assign a respectable U.S. History survey textbook that doesn't simply parrot the secular progressive narrative that currently dominates the field of American history have very few options. Until recently, the best possible option was likely *Unto A Good Land: A History of the American People*, which was published by Eerdmans in 2005. Dubbed as a U.S. History text "that takes religion seriously," *Unto a Good*



Land nevertheless tended to segregate “religion” from the narrative of American history, and only a few of the six authors who wrote the text would even consider themselves to be conservative evangelical historians. While *Unto a Good Land* served as a viable alternative to the more widely used U.S. History textbooks, it was not entirely satisfactory, particularly to evangelical instructors and those teaching at Christian institutions. Thomas Kidd’s recently published work, simply titled *American History*, is the option that many Christian teachers of American History have been waiting for.

Kidd, who is a distinguished professor of history at Baylor University, is one of the most prominent and prolific evangelical historians in America today. His numerous published works are not only widely read by Christians but are also respected by his non-Christian peers in academia. It is not surprising, therefore, that with *American History* Kidd has produced what should be the standard textbook in U.S. History survey classes taught by evangelicals for years to come. *American History* reads like most of the U.S. History textbooks in use today. For instance, Kidd’s explanation for why Japan attacked Pearl Harbor (2:171–72) differs little, if any, from that found in textbooks written by secular scholars at elite Ivy League schools and state universities. The primary way in which Kidd’s work distinguishes itself from the standard textbooks in the field is in the fact that Kidd does not allow the reader to go more than a few pages without some reference to religion. In the case of Pearl Harbor, Kidd achieves this by quoting a chaplain who helped to identify those killed in the Japanese attack (2:171).

Kidd warns in the Introduction that “Readers should know that I am a Christian, and a Baptist in particular” (1:1). He goes on to explain that his Christian “commitment profoundly shapes my view of history.” One tangible result of this, he points out, is that he thinks “that religious people (which in America has mostly meant Christians), for all their faults, have generally been a force for good in American history” (1:1–2). One sees evidence of this nearly right away in Volume 1 when he deals with the Puritans. The authors of secular American History textbooks tend to focus on the flaws of the American Puritans and portray them as narrow-minded killjoys. In contrast, Kidd dedicates several pages (1:30–33) to somewhat sympathetically explaining the origins, goals, and motives of the founders of the Massachusetts Bay colony. Like his secular counterparts, however, Kidd also draws attention to their faults, namely their opposition to religious liberty, the mistreatment of their Indian neighbors, and their participation in the Atlantic slave trade. Kidd continues this pattern throughout both volumes, highlighting the contributions made by Christians in American history while also being careful to point out when Christians behaved badly, such as when the New Orleans Presbyterian minister Benjamin Morgan Palmer declared abolitionism to be atheistic and celebrated southern secession (1:247, 250).

Another feature of *American History* that sets it apart from most of its competitors is that it is written in the same engaging, clear, and reader-friendly style that characterizes Kidd’s other publications. Kidd succeeds in providing the basic narrative of American history, with many interesting and relevant vignettes woven into that narrative, without resorting to the overly academic or dry prose that is so often found in the most widely used American history textbooks. It is written for the average lay-reader and is the best available survey of American history for seniors in high school and those in their first year or so of college.

One of the few substantive complaints that can be leveled against *American History* is that there isn’t more of it. While most important figures, developments, and events are sufficiently explained, there are some which are relatively neglected. For instance, in the section dealing with the Bill of Rights, Kidd missed the opportunity to highlight the role that the Baptist minister John Leland played in adding the First Amendment to the Constitution. Kidd does point out that “James Madison assured Baptists

that he would work toward a bill of rights” (1:110), but for the average lay reader or undergraduate, this does not adequately explain the origins of *de jure* religious freedom at the national level. In addition, while Kidd does mention Samuel Adams several times (though he is not in the index), the average undergraduate will likely not get an accurate sense from those entries of Adams’s significance as it relates to the outbreak of the American Revolution.

While it would be ideal if Kidd’s *American History* could be a bit longer and more thorough, it is without a doubt the best American History textbook available today for use in college-level survey courses. It is very well-written, includes numerous high-quality images and maps, and, most importantly, accurately explains the role that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, played in the shaping of American history. Kidd and B&H Academic are to be commended for producing this helpful and long-needed resource.

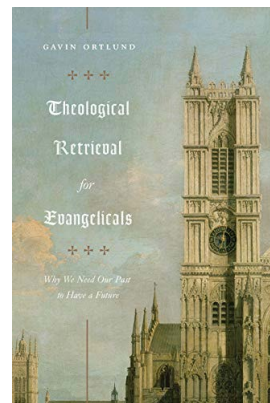
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Gavin Ortlund. *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 224 pp. £15.99/\$21.99.

Evangelicals in America have been reflective on two accounts in recent times. The first is intellectual and experimental in origin and involves the practice of historical and theological retrieval. Some call this *ressourcement* and others Reformed catholicity. One might call this a wave of sacred humanism, which leads *ad fontes*. The other account of reflectiveness is less structured and more difficult to trace, but it involves the *praxis* of the first. There is a trend towards liturgical retrieval in the church. People have been transferring from the low church to higher liturgical traditions, and low churches are evolving and ascending into higher ecclesiastical practices. This latter trend is one of the many reasons why resources such as Chan’s *Liturgical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), Buschart and Eiler’s *Theology as Retrieval* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), Allen and Swain’s *Reformed Catholicity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), and Stewart’s *In Search of Ancient Roots* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017)—among others—have been timely studies. *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals* is a much needed addition to this arsenal of historical and theological retrieval. Pastor Gavin Ortlund, who received a doctoral degree from Fuller Seminary in theological studies, provides a manifesto for evangelicals to engage in the retrieval of patristic and medieval sources in the first part of this study. Part 2 demonstrates the practice of theological retrieval with a series of case studies.

Recently, evangelicals have swum the Tiber, the Thames, or dipped into other liturgical currents to swim the Great Tradition’s seas. Ortlund explains how retrieval could remedy this phenomenon. He says, “One of the church’s greatest resources for navigating her present challenges is her very past” (p. 20). Chapter 1 explains that retrieval is consistent with the whole Protestant Reformation project. Reformers “not only regularly retrieved the theology of the early church but in large measure cast their entire reform effort *as* its retrieval” (p. 31, emphasis original). Ortlund provides evidence from Calvin, Turretin, Owen, and others to demonstrate retrieval as a garden variety practice. In chapter 2, Ortlund



resolves that “contemporary evangelical theology can be enriched and strengthened in her current task” by retrieval (p. 45). Young evangelicals seek historical rootedness to respond to cultural pressures in their modern context and are turning to Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Anglicanism. Ortlund denies the need to do this. Whereas Leithart argues for the end of Protestantism, Ortlund advocates to keep Protestantism and “claim the full heritage of the church” (p. 59). This heritage is a bulwark against disenchantment, religious skepticism, and secularization. He offers three benefits of retrieval. First, it is a beneficial means to educate people theologically. Second, retrieval draws people into a world wholly other than their own. Third, retrieval reframes modern debates with a premodern perspective.

After presenting a manifesto for evangelical theological retrieval, Ortlund presents four case studies of his engagement in this practice. Chapter four examines the Creator/creation distinction through the eyes of Boethius, Calvin, and Torrance. Chapter 5 rehabilitates the doctrine of divine simplicity from the vantage point of a patristic and medieval understanding. Chapter 6 resolves the conflict on atonement doctrine by retrieving Irenaeus, Anselm, and Athanasius to support penal-substitutionary atonement *and* to add recapitulation and satisfaction with no expense to substitution. Finally, chapter 7 explores Gregory the Great’s understanding of the pastoral office. Gregory, an early pastor-theologian, made doctrines of the church accessible and practical to serve the church, which strengthened the value of the pastoral office.

Ortlund’s manifesto and show-and-tell methodology are welcome contributions to the growing body of historical and theological retrieval. His writing is lucid, and though the content is quite scholarly, he manages to make it accessible to pastors and serious lays-persons. His facility with medieval thought is admirable. Rather than monopolizing his study with the problem of Protestant exodus or characterizing defined enemies of Protestantism, like Catholicism or Orthodoxy, Ortlund provides fruitful practices for the solution.

Perhaps a challenge for retrieval that Ortlund leaves unaddressed is how to assuage fundamentalists’ and anti-intellectuals’ fears of the project. I am not quite sure he substantively redresses the friction these challenges pose for retrieval. Evangelicals tend to be anxious about retrieving the past and pragmatic about exploiting the present. They tend to be caught in the echo-chambers of their traditions. For some traditions, retrieval could potentially affect doctrinal distinctives. This would be troublesome for the stability of more recent, yet entrenched, traditions. Likewise, some doctrinal matters have historically and sociologically bound contexts. Historical and sociological developments tend to apply pressure and force doctrinal development. One might say new conditions require the reconditioning of doctrine. When is it essential for a doctrine to develop? When must it stay static? Readers need a toolkit for understanding what can be lent to the present and what is best left to the past.

The place of private judgment in retrieval is also a matter that has to be negotiated as well. Martin Luther’s value of private judgment upon Scripture posed a significant threat to the stability of the church according to Cardinal Newman. The plethora of traditions today illustrates the outcome of this value. Who is to say this is also not the case for retrievers who exercise private judgment on the doctrinal tradition? Protestant retrievers are not constrained by the authority and heritage of the Roman Catholic tradition. Thus, Protestant historians and theologians can craft their own tailor-made traditions. After all, every retriever exercises selectivity and private judgment on what ought to be retrieved and the fallout of this, whether incidental or intentional, could be significant. As Timothy George has put it so well, no one should be ransacking (or cherry-picking) the past to meet present programs. Unfortunately, Ortlund’s project does not anticipate these common barriers and objections to retrieval.

Nonetheless, Ortlund's risky alternative to tradition hopping is accompanied with much reward. For those serious about retrieval work, Ortlund connects the dots with his case studies so others might mimic the practice. A forthcoming how-to retrieval resource might be a fitting project for pastor-theologians and scholars to develop in collaboration.

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Alan D. Strange. *The Doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church in the Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge*. Reformed Academic Dissertations. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017. xxx + 387 pp. £47.99/\$59.99.

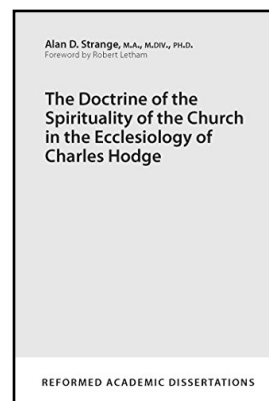
This book is the published doctoral dissertation of Alan Strange, who is a professor of church history at Mid-America Reformed Seminary and a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He completed his PhD at the University of Wales under the supervision of Robert Letham, who contributes the foreword to this volume.

The thesis of the book is that Charles Hodge of Princeton had a much more developed and nuanced understanding of the spirituality of the church than has often been recognized. In particular, he was able to use his understanding of the spirituality of the church to navigate his way through many of the most difficult debates of his day, especially slavery and the attitude towards the Southern church during and after the Civil War.

In the first chapter, Strange outlines the theological context of the study, namely the mid-nineteenth century debate on the spirituality of the church. This debate existed in the broader context of the discussion about the relationship between church and state. Strange explores the way that relationship was understood in biblical times, in the early church, and during the medieval period. He then focuses on the church and state debate at the time of the Reformation, paying particular attention to the English and Scottish churches, and the issue of religious establishment.

The second chapter deals with Hodge's life and career. With a view to the overall thesis, this includes a discussion on Hodge's politics and his views on slavery. Strange argues that Hodge's commitment to Scottish Common Sense Realism was not so dominant in his thinking that he became a rationalist. Instead, he was prevented from this because he was first and foremost a man of the Bible, and it is to his interpretation of the Bible that we must turn to understand him best. With that in mind, chapters 3–4 take us through Hodge's *Systematic Theology*, helping us to see how each main doctrinal section within the three volumes contributes to his developed understanding of the spirituality of the church.

It becomes evident that Hodge's ecclesiology is not as clearly developed as his other doctrinal commitments. As Strange writes, "Hodge's great three-volume *Systematic Theology* concludes without a developed ecclesiology" (p. 162). Based on a comment from A. A. Hodge, Strange says that Charles Hodge had wanted to write a fourth volume, focusing on ecclesiology, but health did not permit this. Nevertheless, what is not in doubt is Hodge's conviction that "the church was in its essence invisible, the visible church being the necessary outward expression of the inward reality of the work of the Spirit" (p. xxiv). Strange makes it clear that Hodge's "Achilles' heel" is the way he plays down the significance



of the visible church, and he compares Hodge's view to *Westminster Confession of Faith* 25.2: "there is ordinarily no salvation outside the visible church" (p. 108). Strange argues that Hodge's view of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's work in creating the church enabled him to avoid the worst implications of this neglect of the visible church.

In chapter 5, we come to the issue of slavery, which highlighted the clear differences between Reformed Presbyterian theologians on the spirituality of the church. Two of the participants in the debates were Charles Hodge in the North and James Henry Thornwell in the South. On the issue of slavery, Thornwell and others argued that, given the spirituality of the church, this was a political issue, and the church had no right to speak on the matter, not least because of the separation of church and state. Others argued that slavery was a moral issue and that the church must speak out in condemnation of it. Hodge argued that the church had no right to condemn slavery because the Scriptures do not condemn slavery, but it had every right to condemn other abuses and evil practices. Hodge's position changed somewhat during his life, such that towards the end, he referred to slavery as a sin but not at this early stage. Strange takes us through the key decisions on slavery of the General Assemblies of 1818 and 1845 and explains how the different sides reacted to those decisions.

Chapters 6–7 are concerned with the debates within the Presbyterian Church regarding the Civil War and its aftermath. Strange takes us through these general assemblies in considerable detail, all to demonstrate how Hodge's view of the spirituality of the church enabled him to take a clear and firm line. He was in favor of the Union and utterly against the secession of the Southern states, but his church and state views did not change through it all. Chapter 8 deals with the aftermath of the Civil War. Some within the Northern Presbyterian Church sought to prevent the re-entry to the church of those in the South unless they confessed that they were wrong to support slavery and wrong to engage in the Confederate "rebellion" against the Union. Hodge took a different view. He sought the unification of the Northern and Southern "Old School" Presbyterian churches on simple terms. When this did not happen, Hodge was deeply disappointed.

The issue of the spirituality of the church and whether or not it precludes comment on social and political affairs is a debate that has not gone away and Strange's teasing out of the various arguments in the nineteenth century and especially his clear and thorough analysis of Hodge's position will help people to engage in similar discussions today.

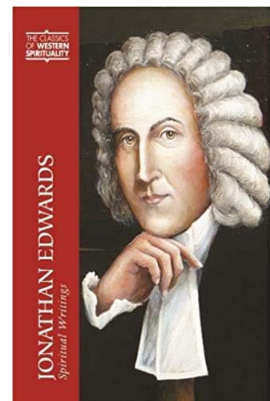
Like any dissertation, this is a comprehensive study that requires (but repays) many hours of careful reading. Some will find the detailed analysis of the discussions and decisions of various general assemblies somewhat tedious. But those who are willing to take the time and who have an interest in ecclesiology will find it a useful volume.

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Kyle C. Strobel, Adriaan C. Neele, and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds. *Jonathan Edwards: Spiritual Writings*. The Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist, 2019. xv + 440 pp. £38.99/\$59.95.

Since 1978, The Classics of Western Spirituality series has set the standard for republishing spiritual writings from noteworthy figures or religious traditions, both Christian and non-Christian alike. Over 125 volumes have been published thus far, each of them carefully edited and introduced by leading scholars. A volume on Jonathan Edwards has been long overdue.

Much of what Jonathan Edwards wrote during his lifetime could rightly be considered “spiritual writings” in the sense intended by the series. He was a pastor whose literary output was primarily directed at helping believers to mature in their faith. Furthermore, it is Edwards’s book-length spiritual writings that have remained most accessible, having been reprinted in various editions since his death in 1758. But it was not until 2008 that Yale University Press finished publishing the 26-volume critical edition the *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, which offered readers definitive texts and substantive scholarly introductions. In the years since, all of those volumes, plus another 52 volumes of previously unpublished material, have been made available electronically at the website of the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University (<http://edwards.yale.edu/>). If the present work had been published even fifteen years ago, the editors would not have had access to the best editions of some of Edwards’s writings. They would only have had limited access to unpublished material that was not yet available online. Readers would have been edified, to be sure, but they would have been left with an inferior volume.



The editors of the present work are arguably the three best scholars to tackle this task. Kyle Strobel is one of the leading historians of Edwards’s theology, including his spirituality. Adriaan Neele has done more than any other scholar in demonstrating the roots of Edwards’s thought in Reformed Orthodoxy. Kenneth Minkema, the executive editor of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, is perhaps the most knowledgeable historian of all things Edwards. They prove themselves up to the challenge of selecting representative writings—including sermons and other material previously unavailable in print—and introducing readers to Edwards’s spirituality.

The book opens with a brief contextual “prelude” by Neele. He argues Edwards’s spirituality had its historical roots in Reformed Scholasticism and monastic concerns about experiential faith. These streams came together in a form of evangelical Protestant piety that Edwards embraced and commended to others. Strobel builds on this foundation with a lengthier introductory essay that will become the starting place for other scholars and pastors interested in an overview of Edwards’s spirituality.

Strobel contends that Edwards’s piety was theologically driven but experientially focused. The Triune God communicates himself to his creatures, who are saved when they participate in the life of God through union with Jesus Christ by faith. Believers know God, love him, and increasingly behold him in his beauty. Like many medieval theologians and Puritan divines before him, Edwards understands the beatific vision to be the *telos* of the believer’s spiritual journey. The ordinary means of grace, coupled with occasional ecstatic experiences such as those associated with revival, provide rails upon which the believer’s sanctification advances. The Christian life is contemplative but also active—an Edwardsean synthesis that, to varying degrees, became characteristic of evangelicals across theological and ecclesial traditions. From beginning to end the spiritual life is a gift of grace; indeed, even the Christian’s striving

to mortify sin and cultivate virtue is animated by God's grace. Edwards put forward his wife, Sarah Edwards, and especially the famed missionary, David Brainerd, as exemplars of Christian spirituality. The upshot of all of this is a God-centered vision of the Christian life that is compelling theologically and yet imminently practical in its application.

Following this introductory material, the bulk of the book includes selections from Edwards writings that exemplify facets of his spirituality. The editors organize the material into five parts. Part 1 focuses upon the general contours of Edwards's spirituality. They include excerpts from his familiar personal writings and *The Life of David Brainerd*, as well as a previously unpublished sermon on Psalm 23. Part 2 is dedicated to Edwards's understanding of affections. The editors include excerpts from *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* alongside relevant sermons and reflections related to Sarah Edwards's spiritual experiences, including her own account that was later edited by Jonathan for publication. Part 3 takes up the theme of beauty, which was a significant emphasis in all of Edwards's thought. Selections include both famous and lesser-known sermons, unpublished shorter reflections, and a letter offering spiritual counsel to a woman who has recently lost a child.

Part 4, on the means of grace, includes more sermons, a relevant miscellany, and another well-known letter—this time to a recent convert on the topic of cultivating piety. This section also includes a written confession of faith from two Native Americans. The final part focuses on the internal and external work of grace in the believer's life. Again, the selections primarily include sermons from various seasons of Edwards's ministry and another appropriate miscellany, along with his "Treatise on Grace," which was published after his death. These works show how a significant theme in Edwards's theology (and one of his best-known legacies) was distinguishing between true and false religion in the lives of professing believers.

The editors have made a signal contribution to Edwards studies with this work. They have also provided a distinguished series with an entry on Edwards that is worthy of inclusion. Scholars especially will appreciate the introductory material. All readers will benefit from reading the selections themselves. Right now, this work is only available as an expensive hardback. I hope Paulist will continue its past practice of following up with an affordable paperback within a year or two. This book deserves as wide a reading as possible.

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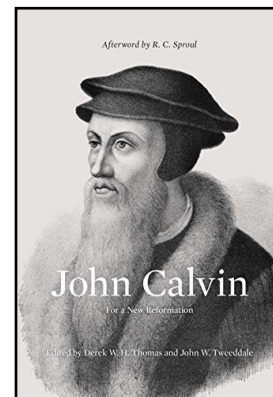
Derek Thomas and John Tweeddale, eds. *John Calvin: For a New Reformation*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 608 pp. £31.90/\$40.00.

Derek Thomas and John Tweeddale have edited a new book that brings together respected historians and theologians to provide an up-to-date overview of John Calvin's ministry and theology in light of current scholarship. The aim was not to publish a volume for the academy (though the academy will certainly benefit from the chapters), but to produce a work for the church in general. Instead, the volume was written with the hope that "pastors, elders, Sunday school teachers, Bible college students, seminarians, and serious lay readers" (p. 12) would pick up the reformer and read for themselves.

The book is broken down into two main parts. Part 1 introduces the reader to the life and ministry of Calvin. Michael Haykin and Stephen Nichols cover Calvin's early life and how he came to Geneva. Both Haykin and Nichols provide valuable background information for understanding Calvin's ministry. When Calvin returned to Geneva in 1541 after his exile, he settled into his pastoral labors. David Calhoun, Douglas Kelly, Robert Godfrey, and Steven Lawson unpack Calvin's pastoral work, including his labors in the Consistory, the friends who surrounded Calvin, and Calvin's preaching ministry. In some works on Calvin, the ground covered by these men is sometimes confined to a one, two, or even three chapters. Dividing Calvin's life and ministry into seven chapters provides space for the authors to pay attention to important details. This results in a book that provides a helpful and thorough introduction to the overall life and ministry of the reformer.

Part 2 describes Calvin's theology. The subject matter moves along in what might be described as theological order. First, K. Scott Oliphint explains Calvin's doctrine of Scripture. From there, reputable theologians like J. V. Fesko, Burk Parsons, Joel Beeke, Paul Helm, and others consider God's act of creation and works of providence, the law of God, the person and work of Christ, and the role of the Spirit. After discussing how the Spirit has sovereignly worked to bring sinners to Jesus, the book progresses through Calvin's understanding of the Christian life, the role of adversity, the Church as Mother, God's preservation of the saints, and eschatology. The only chapter that seemed out of place was the chapter on predestination. However, placing predestination here in the book is consistent with Calvin's own decision to move his discussion of predestination from Book 1 (cf. 1539 edition) to Book 3 in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes*. Derek Thomas explains that Calvin moved the discussion of predestination to Book 3, in part, because election was a "family secret" (p. 220; cf. *Institutes* 3.21.1–2). However, in chapter 16 Paul Helm unpacks Calvin's predestinarianism by carefully defining the term, explaining related concepts like election, reprobation, and foreknowledge, showing how predestination and the larger category of divine providence relate, and articulating how Calvin saw Christ as a mirror in election. These elements combine to provide a window into what is perhaps Calvin's most famous doctrinal contribution.

The book closes with two short chapters. In the "Afterword," R. C. Sproul reminds us that what we need in this age are those like Calvin (p. 578). Perhaps God will use the works of the great Reformer to raise up such persons. To that end, John Tweeddale closes the book by offering several suggestions on how someone might begin to read Calvin.



There are several strengths to this work that deserve mention. First, every chapter provides helpful background information that sheds light on Calvin. For instance, Stephen Nichols takes time to give the reader insight into the history of Geneva rather than turning immediately to Calvin's time in the city (pp. 42–52). Or, consider how Derek Thomas provides the historical context to Calvin's sermons on Job (pp. 426–29). This type of work strengthens the book by helping us understand the historical context of Calvin's life and ministry. Second, practical applications are offered to the reader throughout the book. As an example, Edward Donnelly explains Calvin's view of the Christian life *and* provides practical application for today. Likewise, Paul Helm, who unpacks the doctrine of predestination, does not leave the idea hanging in the air. Instead, he shows how this "dreadful" doctrine is useful, as it is integrally tied to God's "meticulous" providence (p. 465). For example, "someone who believes that nothing happens by chance ... will come to regard what befalls him or her differently from someone who thinks that evils may happen for no reason at all" (p. 466). Though some may find such applicational material distracting, we must remember that the book is aimed not merely at academics but is written "for the church" (p. 12). Finally, the book is full of footnotes that provide the motivated reader with plenty of trails to follow if they are inclined to take deeper dives into the study of Calvin's ideas. As someone who teaches a course on Calvin's *Institutes*, I have used several resources to introduce students to Calvin's life and theology. However, *John Calvin: For a New Reformation* provides a single resource that I can trust to do the overview work and do it well.

In terms of weaknesses, one thing missing is a stand-alone chapter that introduces the reader to the larger writings of Calvin. Unfortunately, students of Calvin have too often restricted their engagement to his commentaries or the *Institutes* and ignored his other writings (e.g., tracts, letters, sermons, etc.). Though Tweeddale provides some comments about Calvin's larger corpus at the end, a chapter that gives historical context and introduction to this part of Calvin's legacy would have been a welcome addition, perhaps something like Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide*, trans. Lyle D. Bierma (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). Additionally, the book's overall size (over 600 pages) will likely intimidate many non-academics who might otherwise benefit from this resource.

Nonetheless, Thomas and Tweeddale have produced a volume that overviews Calvin's life and teachings with clarity, conviction, and in a pastorally compelling way. As the Lord has used Calvin to help so many see and savor Jesus Christ, may he use this book towards that same end.

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— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY —

J. Todd Billings. *Remembrance, Communion, and Hope: Rediscovering the Gospel at the Lord's Table*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. xx + 217 pp. £20.99/\$25.00.

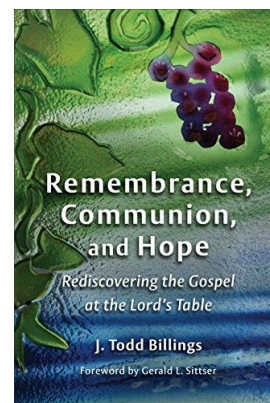
J. Todd Billings believes that churches today need to move “congregations from a static, nominal encounter with the gospel into a deeper, transformative embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (p. 107). For Billings, there is no easy solution to this dilemma, primarily because the gospel begins and ends with God and God’s action in Christ. Therefore, instead of turning to human-centered options, Billings offers his readers an enticing God-centered wager: “that a renewed theology and practice of the Lord’s Supper can be an instrument for congregations to develop a deeper, more multifaceted sense of the gospel itself” (p. 1).

In this readable book, Billings offers anyone willing to take his wager a fresh and dynamic depiction of the fullness of God’s gift of the Lord’s Supper. A world-renowned Calvin scholar and the Gordon H. Girod Research Professor of Reformed Theology at Western Theological Seminary, Billings draws upon the riches of the Reformed tradition (especially Calvin) throughout, generally with an ecumenical tone. The volume is also interdisciplinary, weaving together insights from biblical exegesis, systematic theology, history, and congregational ministry.

In chapter 1, Billings exposes a few ways that the church’s functional theologies of the Lord’s Supper truncate the gospel. God’s gift of remediation is the icon of the Lord’s Supper that provides an embodied sign-action of the gospel. Moving to chapter 2, Billings builds upon James K. A. Smith’s Augustinian insights on humans as affective creatures made to love. In their embodiment, people are created to delight in God and his Word by means of spiritual practices that overflow “in concrete acts of embodied love” (p. 56).

In chapter 3, Billings provides a confessional overview of the Reformed teaching on the Lord’s Supper in eight doctrinal theses drawn from a variety of Reformed confessions. The multifaceted sketch situates the Supper within the Triune drama of salvation and the Spirit-enabled affective human desire for, reception of, and faithful response to the multifaceted good news of union with Christ by the Spirit. Taking a minor diversion in chapter 4, Billings make the case that a healthy theology of union with Christ demands a Trinitarian and covenantal ontology. Responding to Radical Orthodox authors and Hans Boersma, Billings contends that Calvin and the Reformers did not hold a dualistic understanding of God and creation that puts nature and grace at odds. Instead, seeking to be faithful interpreters of the whole of Scripture, they asserted that God’s gracious work in Christ restores and fulfills God’s original purposes for humanity to participate in God by the Spirit. This Trinitarian and covenantal approach enables a view of the sacraments in which the sign is not empty in holding forth God’s grace, nor is the sign to be so identified with the signified that people trust in the sign instead of in Christ.

In chapters 5, 6, and 7, Billings unpacks the importance and meaning of “remembrance, communion, and hope” at the Supper. He first explains that remembrance transcends mental recollection of the cross, instead serving as an invitation to the people of God to partake in the sign-act of God’s deliverance, even as they cry out in painful groaning for new creation and justice. Billings then describes the communion of the people of God at the Lord’s Supper, engaging primarily with 1 Corinthians 5–11. In their



participation in this sign-act, the people of God experience the now and the not yet of *both* union with Christ *and* union with the body of Christ. Finally, Billings describes the hope signified, experienced, and enacted in the Lord's Supper. Instead of witnessing to a human-driven social revolution or a spiritual escapism for the soul, the material Supper correctly orients Christian hope toward union with the risen and ascended Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper provides an embodied foretaste of the glorious future feast with Christ and his multicultural people.

Of particular note in Billings's insightful book is the way that he illuminates the shift in American evangelicalism away from sacraments as instruments of divine grace to invitations for personal remembrance and reflection. He highlights this in two historical expositions from the 18th and 19th centuries—one on the holy fairs of Scotland (ch. 2) and another regarding the debate on the meaning of the Lord's Supper between American Reformed theologians Charles Hodge and John Williamson Nevin (ch. 5). In the first case, Billings shows that the shift to more personal faith expressions did not arise from Reformed theology proper but emerged from the revivalist movement's emphasis on individual choice. In the latter case, Billings demonstrates how the Reformed churches, in conformity with Enlightenment and rationalist tendencies of the day, embraced Hodge's emphasis on Zwinglian sacramental teaching. This opened the door to a spiritualized and rationalized approach to the Supper that focused on personal faith and mental recollection.

Another strength of the volume is Billings's application of Calvin's doctrine of the "double grace" of Christ that includes both justification and sanctification inseparably in the atoning work of Jesus. In regard to the Lord's Supper, this emphasis provides an appropriate corrective both to churches that focus narrowly on the forgiveness received at the Table and to churches that focus on the personal or social transformation that occurs through the Table. Instead, the Supper is *both* forensic and transformational, providing reconciliation with God *and* the sanctification of the Spirit that overflows in acts of love and justice in the world.

Also helpful are the ways that Billings addresses several practical questions regarding the Table and its administration. Congregational snapshots help the reader envision these beliefs in practice.

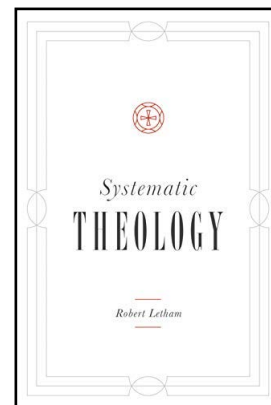
One minor weakness of the volume is its ambiguity regarding its preference for the Reformed tradition. Although Billings acknowledges that he is approaching this topic from a Reformed perspective, he also claims that readers from other traditions will be able to find common ground with the intentionally broad and equivocal Reformed confessional approach. However, parts of the book feel like an overt apology for Reformed doctrine. For example, Billings repeatedly and directly criticizes the symbolic-remembrance approach to the Lord's Supper as human-centered and rationalistic. Readers holding non-Reformed perspectives on the Supper should be ready to encounter direct critique.

According to Billings, to bring the revival and reinvigoration that many churches long for, they should not look for "quick fixes" but instead look to God and to the "Spirit's own divinely given instrument: the Lord's Supper as a sign-act of the gospel itself—remembering, communing, and hoping with Jesus Christ, our only hope in life and death" (p. 112). This book will help readers embrace the "three-dimensional icon" of the Lord's Supper and thus know, receive, and live into the Triune God's drama of redemption in an embodied manner today.

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Robert Letham. *Systematic Theology*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 1072 pp. £40.03/\$50.00

There was a time we only had Berkhof, Hodge, and a little bit of Bavinck translated into English. A juggernaut has opened up in recent years. The Bavinck appetizer, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. William Hendriksen (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978), gave way to the English translation of his four-volume *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003–2008). Now Reformed theologians such as Robert Reymond, John Frame, Michael Horton, Douglas Kelley, and Joel Beeke have expanded the available literature with substantial and in some cases, multi-volume systematics still in process. Robert Letham, Professor Systematic and Historical Theology and Union School of Theology in Wales and Adjunct Professor of Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, enters this assembly with a solid and, typical for Crossway, handsome one-volume *Systematic Theology*.



Letham is rightly esteemed for his hearty and essential texts in confessional history and theology and Christology, as well as the recently updated treatment of the Trinity. His new *Systematic Theology* is tightly woven yet conversational, accessible yet muscular, exegetical where it counts, and keeping to the biosphere of biblical, historical, and systematic theology. In this sense, one familiar with the “synthetic-genetic” method of Bavinck will feel at home. One reads Letham with a sense of his staggering breadth of learning and years of ministry and scholarship. Letham admits he is not trying to say everything about everything in this project. That is not what a one-volume systematic theology is for. However, it is clear he says what he wants and how he wants. For instance, he admits to a methodological arrangement that departs from typical Reformed theologies (not to mention the Westminster Confession of Faith). Rather than taking Scripture as his pedagogical *principium*, Letham begins with 140 pages of detailed, historical-theological exposition of the doctrine of God. He contends that to begin with Scripture as epistemological foundation “begs the question, in today’s world, of the identity of the God whose Word it is. Moreover, God precedes his revelation” (p. 36). Letham ably summarizes the traditional proofs for the existence of God (Aquinas, Anselm), their critics from Gaunilo to Kant, and assesses these classical arguments as lacking much more than “*ex post facto*” utility for buttressing what is to be “believed on the basis of revelation, creation, and Scripture” (p. 49). Even with his explanations, one may still wonder, why then not start methodologically with revelation?

As one would expect of Letham, his treatment of the Trinity, which “is the Christian doctrine of God, which the unfolding of biblical revelation discloses in Christ” (p. 152), is a high horsepower discussion. Letham appropriately flexes his historical-theological muscle throughout these pages, not to mention his facility with pertinent secondary literature in New Testament studies, for instance, in his discussion of the preexistence of Christ. He sprinkles insightful observations throughout, such as his insistence that the eternal generation of the Son mitigates against subordinationism. Letham helpfully discusses the main contours of Eastern and Western issues related to the Trinity, particularly the filioque, including Moltmann’s and Pannenberg’s hesitation on the same. Letham defends the filioque yet leaves the reader wanting more attention concerning the prevailing disparities between East and West (cf. Letham’s book on Eastern Orthodoxy—*Through Western Eyes: Eastern Orthodoxy: A Reformed Perspective* [Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2007]).

The doctrine of Scripture receives nimble, historically wide-ranging, up-to-date treatment. In particular, he deploys Bavinck's incarnational model to answer both Barth and Peter Enns, whose use of incarnational modeling lacked Bavinck's (and the church's) recognition that the divine and human initiative in both incarnation and inspiration are asymmetrical. Indeed, Letham's lament that Open Theism lacked historical-theological awareness and was a product of Postmodernism (pp. 178–81) could be fittingly cut and pasted in this critique of Enns. Letham offers a clear cessationist assessment of continuationism, including a healthy interaction with Wayne Grudem. His clarification of cessationism in light of the relative infrequency of the miraculous and extraordinary gifts in apostolic times offers a pointed argument.

Just as a one-volume *Systematic Theology* cannot say everything about theology, so a brief review cannot say everything about said one volume. Hence, a few remaining comments on some unique features of this text must suffice. First, Letham's treatment of the *pactum salutis* (the covenant of redemption) unhelpfully characterizes it as inconsistent with "the heart" of God's covenant and the Trinity (p. 437). No historically Reformed orthodox treatment of the Covenant of Redemption intends or requires subordinationism or any confusion in relation to the indivisibility of the Trinity or hypostatic distinctions. Unfortunately, in this section, there is much suggestion, and less substantiation. Letham's language of "the eternal Trinitarian counsel" or *consilium salutis*, as a means of avoiding the supposed problems of the *pactum* offers an attempted corrective to perceived, but non-existent problems. To assert that the *pactum* "generally overlooks the point that central to the covenant is the promise of living fellowship, communion, and union" (p. 437) does not seem to *account* for the fact that most positive treatments of the *pactum* in the various strands of the Reformed tradition explicitly insist upon these very relational aspects of the Trinity *ad intra* in order to explain what the Triune God accomplishes redemptively *ad extra*.

Letham, in true Reformed fashion, has much helpful to say about sanctification and union with the resurrected Christ, keeping in step with Calvin's emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. However, Letham's positing of *theosis* as an operative category in soteriology will not likely prove convincing. Although he is careful to clarify what his doctrine of *theosis* is and is not within a Reformed theological program, insofar as no ontic assimilations are implied, etc., and while he certainly means to take seriously the mystical (in the biblical sense of that word) implications of union with Christ in progressive sanctification, this will likely strike many readers as undue effort to appropriate an Eastern category. In other words, with good reason Reformed systematics have maintained the place and nomenclature of glorification in the *ordo salutis*. This historic commitment must also be held in mind as one reads Letham's, at many points, helpful material on the connection between soteriology and ecclesiology.

Reminiscent of Warfield, Letham paints postmillennialism and amillennialism with similar brush strokes. He finds it difficult to distinguish between the two. While this is so on the surface of things, such as the parousia of Christ coming after the millennial age, there are redemptive-historical, biblical-theological, and hermeneutical trajectories behind an amillennial position that provide a trajectory toward more granular distinctions between the two eschatological positions than Letham expresses.

Notwithstanding these idiosyncrasies, this impressive achievement by Letham offers countless helpful tools, such as study questions, suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter, appendices on creation days in Genesis and the historic creeds, a massive glossary and bibliography, and typical indices. This brilliant volume is among the very finest of recent entries into the field. The

symbiosis of historical and systematic theology is likely the most robust of this late embarrassment of riches in reformed systematic theology.

At so many places Letham is simply excellent, at points he is constructively independent, at a few points, crucial ones, mind you, this reviewer finds him veering off and asserting more than accounting. So, eager appreciation will be aided by humble critical assessment at various junctures of his theological program. All in all, Letham's *Systematic Theology* is a learned loadstone of theological guidance that will find a ready place close at hand for pastor and scholar, alike.

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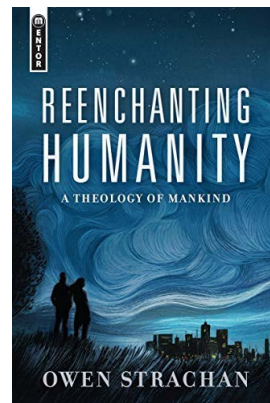
Owen Strachan. *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind*. Mentor. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2019. 418 pp. £31.99/\$39.99.

It is probably *not* a truth universally acknowledged that humanity needs a good dose of reenchantment. But it takes only a little reflection to realize that issues of anthropology lie just below the surface in many divisive contemporary discussions. Owen Strachan argues that the church can only address these challenges by a deep, faithful biblical anthropology. Repurposing a phrase from Charles Taylor, Strachan's book aims to "reenchant" humanity by a fresh but historically informed reading of the Bible's teaching about men and women as the image-bearers of God.

Reenchanting Humanity consists of nine chapters, which Strachan helpfully summarizes in the final chapter with a single phrase each. Biblical anthropology must have at least the following elements: an ontological anthropology, a hamartiological anthropology, a vocational anthropology, a sexual anthropology, a unitive anthropology, a creaturely anthropology, an ethical anthropology, a contingent anthropology, and a teleological anthropology.

By an ontological anthropology (ch. 1), Strachan means an understanding of humanity that is grounded in an ontological bearing of the image of God, which not only distinguishes man from God but also man from other creatures. Humanity alone stands in this relationship to God. This high view of man's origin must be balanced by a realistic view of man's depravity, since "there is no tragedy like the tragedy of the historical fall of the human race" (p. 51). Thus chapter 2 addresses original sin and its subsequent effects on the human race. Yet even after the fall, men and women are called by God to tasks, and such work remains an intrinsic part of humanity. Chapter 3 discusses this topic, arguing that "work is a crucial part of a properly God-centered existence" (p. 103).

The longest chapter in the book is the fourth chapter on sexuality. Strachan argues from both the Old and New Testament for a robustly complementarian vision of sexuality and gender roles, including discussions of fatherhood and motherhood, singleness, and gender roles outside the home. He then addresses four cultural trends that compete with this vision: feminism, postmarital sexual libertinism, transgenderism, and homosexuality (p. 182).



Chapter 5 also touches on a controversial topic: race and ethnicity. Strachan lays out what he calls a “unitive anthropology” which recognizes the fundamental oneness of the human race, discussing how sin manifests itself in the specters of racial and ethnic prejudice (p. 218), and concluding with an exposition of the cross as the ultimate hope for racial reconciliation among the diverse people of God.

After this, chapter 6 discusses technology, giving a nuanced vision of human technological achievements as simultaneously a function of the image of God and yet also capable of serving human idolatry. Strachan helpfully discusses both posthumanism and transhumanism. Chapter 7 discusses the broad topic of justice, what Strachan calls an “ethical anthropology” beginning with the interpersonal sin of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 and expanding to include the imprecatory psalms and the cross as the ultimate display of God’s justice. Chapter 8 is about “contingency,” under which Strachan discusses our dependent nature, relationship to time, and death. Finally, he concludes the book with a chapter on Christology, arguing that Christ as the true image and second Adam is the *telos* of the human race.

Even this brief survey of the chapters shows that *Reenchanting Humanity* covers a vast array of topics, which is arguably both its strength and weakness. As a textbook for a Bible college or master’s level course on anthropology, Strachan’s book would provide an excellent starting point for discussion of many vital topics. But, especially on more controversial issues (e.g., sexuality, race, and justice), *Reenchanting Humanity* will probably not be an adequate exposition for most readers, though Strachan’s footnotes should provide an entry point into the broader discussion. While this present reviewer shares most of Strachan’s positions, others may find themselves wanting more thorough argumentation and documentation.

That points to another strength and weakness of the book, the writing style itself. Strachan is a gifted wordsmith, and my copy now has many underlined phrases and sentences. Yet at times it seems well-crafted assertions begin to crowd out careful argument. For instance, discussing Adam’s role: “Coded into the man’s mind was the expectation that he would work in Eden; God had not placed him there to whittle away the time. He had both a provisional role ... and a protective role” (pp. 133–34). While I am convinced that “provide/protect” are helpful summaries of Adam and the Christian husband’s role, the unconvinced (or opposed) reader may find this assertion well phrased but insufficiently supported.

There are also a few places where Strachan offers idiosyncratic (not unorthodox) theological positions with little comment, such as his assertion that Christ would have become incarnate apart from the fall (p. 63 n. 25; p. 359), or the statement that the Spirit-empowered Jesus “thus shows us what we may be by divine grace” (p. 366). Context makes clear that Strachan is not at all downplaying the divinity or uniqueness of Jesus, but he still leaves open the question as to how much of the ministry of Jesus may be seen as exemplary of what the Spirit-empowered Christian may achieve through union with Christ.

Overall, however, these slight issues do not detract from this much needed book. A careful doctrine of mankind is indeed necessary for churches in Western society, and Strachan has provided an accessible, yet informed volume meeting that need.

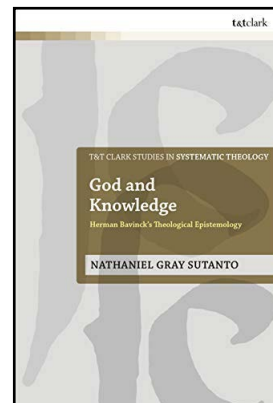
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Nathaniel Gray Sutanto. *God and Knowledge: Herman Bavinck's Theological Epistemology*. T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology 35. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020. x + 208 pp. £85.00/\$115.00.

In recent decades, there has been a surge within the scholarship of one of the most prominent yet neglected Dutch Neo-Calvinist theologians, Herman Bavinck. Gray Sutanto, an Indonesian-born Reformed theologian, who now teaches at Reformed Theological Seminary, has quickly become one of the world experts in the theology of Bavinck. This monograph is the fruit of Sutanto's doctoral work at the University of Edinburgh, where James Eglinton supervises some of the most rigorously constructive works on Bavinck.

Like Eglinton, Sutanto seeks to demonstrate that Bavinck is *no* conflicted thinker, as some have contended (e.g., Valentine Hepp, Jan Veenhof, etc.), but rather an *eclectic* Reformed theologian. In contrast to those that insist Bavinck is merely orthodox and those who claim he is a modernist, Sutanto insists he is *both* orthodox and modern. Sutanto argues that, first and foremost, Bavinck is a Reformed trinitarian theologian with a catholic spirit. According to Sutanto, Bavinck discerningly appropriated contemporary philosophical thought by baptizing the so-called organic motif or organicism, which refers to “the regularity with which Bavinck describes creation and other theological loci under organicist terms” (p. 9). As Sutanto further elaborates, “Organic connectedness is the pattern of creation and doctrine because God himself is the original unity-in-diversity as the self-existent three-in-one” (p. 9). In other words, the organic motif communicates the triune shape of creation, with a prevailing unity through all its diversity: “The Trinity is an archetypal unity-in-diversity, and creation reflects its creator *as an organism* filled with unities-in-diversities” (p. 177). In this case, Sutanto attempts to show how Bavinck carefully deployed the organic motif in his theological epistemology, and thereby maintained coherence in his eclecticism.

In chapter 1, Sutanto maps the conflicting interpretations of Bavinck's theological epistemology where the organic motif is conspicuously absent, and then proposes we read Bavinck through the lens of his organic worldview. Chapter 2 re-affirms Bavinck's organic worldview as rooted in his doctrine of the Triune God, which in turn shapes cosmology, anthropology, special and general revelation. Chapter 3 explores the organic structure of Bavinck's epistemology in view of the relation between theology and the sciences, where diversities would have been perfectly united as one organism had sin not disrupted such harmony. In Chapter 4, Sutanto counters reductionistic Thomistic and Kuyperian interpretations of Bavinck's epistemology, and offers a middle way *in-between* Thomas and Kuyper, most accurately represented by the “Gestalt Holism” recently defended by Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor. Then in chapter 5, Sutanto revisits the question of an epistemological gap between subjects and objects in Bavinck, and argues against the two common perceptions that Bavinck's epistemology either contains post-Kantian elements, as claimed by Cornelis van der Kooi and Henk van den Belt or [Thomas] Reidian elements, as claimed by Reformed epistemologists like Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff—who once called Bavinck the “proto-Reformed epistemologist.” Sutanto turns in chapter 6 and 7 to more constructive analysis, arguing for Bavinck's critical appropriation of Eduard von Hartmann's conception of human consciousness to navigate between naive realism and subjective idealism, which then allows Bavinck to conceive the possibility of God's revelation taking place internally in one's self-consciousness, producing thus “an intuitive kind of knowing that is akin to feeling—a non-conceptual knowledge” (p. 152). These last two chapters uniquely highlight Bavinck's Reformed catholicity and eclecticism in



his principled attempt to engage the conceptual and philosophical tools of various nineteenth-century thinkers.

This monograph explicates Bavinck in his historical context, as it interacts with archival sources of Bavinck only in Dutch, which are mostly unfamiliar to contemporary readers. Sutanto's project attempts to retrieve Bavinck not only as a coherent thinker, but also a bold theologian who sought to produce a unified vision of Christian worldview, whereby theology, the "servant-queen" of the sciences, "remains to be an ideal to be demonstrated [rather] than a proven axiom" (p. 178). Bavinck's ambitious vision, though theoretically intriguing, may, as Sutanto recognizes, remain practically unconvincing, even unachievable. Additionally, Sutanto claims that his present work is not meant to be conclusive, where "Bavinck's epistemology offers definitive answers to all of the [epistemological] questions," but rather to provide "an exemplary test case of how a Reformed theologian should relate to the broader movements of philosophy and epistemology prevalent in one's own time" (p. 179).

With humble appreciation for Sutanto's work, I would have liked discussion on specific issues in *theological* epistemology such as the testimony of the Holy Spirit, natural theology and/or apologetics, and the role of the church in mediating the knowledge of God. To be fair, Sutanto openly qualifies his work as more of a "general epistemology" (p. 143 n. 103). Still, I believe that *some* discussions on such topics would make Sutanto's reading of Bavinck even stronger as it applies to those other specific and significant (Reformed) epistemological issues. This suggestion, I hope, will generate further research in light of what Sutanto has helpfully offered in this present work.

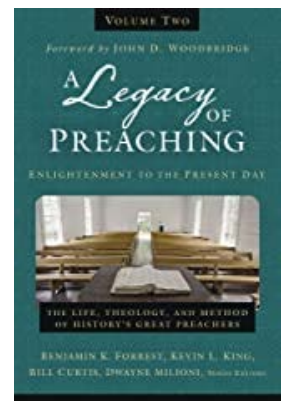
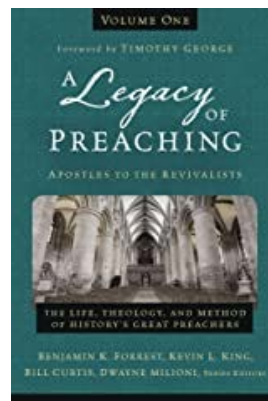
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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Benjamin K. Forrest, Kevin L. King, Bill Curtis, and Dwayne Milioni, eds. *A Legacy of Preaching, Volume One: Apostles to the Revivalists*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 517 pp. £18.99/\$25.00.

Benjamin K. Forrest, Kevin L. King, Bill Curtis, and Dwayne Milioni, eds. *A Legacy of Preaching, Volume Two: Enlightenment to the Present Day*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 550 pp. £18.99/\$27.76.

This two-volume set provides a survey of sixty individuals who have influenced Christian preaching from various perspectives, eras, and contexts over its first two millennia. The compilation is not intended to be exhaustive but illustrative, as the editors acknowledge that preacher selection is an imperfect science and that "some readers may be disappointed about who was left out" (1:28). Those included exhibit faithfulness to the proclamation of the Scriptures and maintain a Christocentric focus. Considered experts on their specific historical character, the chapter authors



represent a good cross section of evangelicalism, while the editors (Forrest, King, Curtis, and Milioni) are all Southern Baptists. This set divides preaching into seven eras: (1) Early Church and the Patristic Fathers, (2) Medieval Ages, (3) The Reformers, (4) The Puritans, (5) The Revivalists, (6) Nineteenth-Century European and North American Preaching, and (7) Twentieth-Century European and North American Preaching. Each chapter profile presents the historical background, theological approach to preaching (theology *of* preaching or *for* preaching), analysis of the preacher's methodology, and finally the character's overall contribution to the field of preaching along with a sermon excerpt to provide a glimpse of that individual's style and impact.

This work does not describe "*how* biblical preaching is done but demonstrates how it *has* been done" (1:27). Therefore, one does not need to accept or even desire to employ a particular preacher's hermeneutic (e.g., Origen's allegory, Meister Eckhart's mysticism, or Phillips Brooks's liberal romanticism), homiletic, or theology (e.g., Charles Finney's Pelagian leanings or gender role issues raised with the ministries of Aimee McPherson and Catherine Booth), yet the editors believe there is something one can learn from their preaching. While they want readers to recognize that each personality believed they were declaring the Christ of Scripture for the glory of God and his gospel and hope their "big-tent approach to the history of preaching is evident" (2:30), they are candid about the fact that some lessons from preachers "are lessons to follow and some are lessons to leave behind" (2:145).

Despite each preacher's significance, the authors do not hide the faults and frailties of their subjects. Peter's fiascos required his own repentance and restoration, which God used to develop his preaching (1:48). Melito's *On Pascha* smacked of anti-Semitism (1:71). Origen's desire was to be thoroughly biblical, still the process and result often failed to live up to the approach. Ephrem used beautiful word pictures yet "at times his exegesis clearly runs amok" (1:103). Basil of Caesarea favored literal interpretation of the biblical text, yet haphazardly, believing that "as long as the derived meaning leads one to Christ and the pursuit of holiness, the interpretation is acceptable" (1:116–17). Even John Calvin constantly corrected mistakes in translation, showing he is "human like the rest of us!" (1:351). Tragedy dogged the colossus Charles Spurgeon (the aftereffects of the Downgrade and physical ailments), the legacies of both Gypsy Smith and Billy Sunday suffered negative consequences from family issues, and Henry Ward Beecher allowed culture to bend his theology.

One can find encouragement and confirmation in the fact that their preaching ministries often resemble ours. Of note is Paul's gospel-oriented preaching which, needless to say, is an example worthy of imitation (1:39). Significant for the Early Church and the Patristic Fathers were Chrysostom's expositions based on *lectio continua* and Augustine's *agape*-driven hermeneutic: "The impetus for exegesis and its outcomes should be knowing God and loving neighbor" (1:148). What preacher has not felt like Chrysostom as "he lamented that his audience's lack of progress in Christian training prohibited him from going as deep as he wished" (1:130)? The Medieval Ages' Gregory saw the sermon as central to shepherding. Zwingli preached with an "element of expectancy" (1:310), Alexander Maclaren with "contemporary relevance" (2:70), and John Jasper with strong eschatological storytelling. Although both were Southern Baptist stalwarts, John Broadus believed application was "the main thing to be done" (2:223) while B. H. Carroll was "less concerned with the application of the text" (2:262). D. L. Moody earmarked his preaching with simplicity and clarity, Karl Barth "believed that the most effective Christian response to Hitler was preaching" (2:301), and W. A. Criswell's lifetime of expository preaching and his remarkable sermon "Whether We Live or Die" galvanized both a denomination and American Christianity in regard to biblical orthodoxy.

As noted earlier, these volumes may disappoint some because of the exclusion of numerous notable preachers. To be sure, if one were aiming to write a complete *legacy of preaching* it would need to begin with the preaching of the Old Testament, starting with Moses, as well as Isaiah, Ezra, John the Baptist, et al. It would have as its central figure, Jesus—the greatest preacher who ever lived. For as Thomas Watson correctly observed, “He alone is the Prince of Preachers. He alone is the best of expositors” (Thomas Watson “The Beatitudes: An Exposition of Matthew 5:1–12,” quoted in Mike Abendroth, *Jesus Christ: The Prince of Preachers* [Leominster: Day One, 2008], 17).

Despite these omissions, anyone interested in church history, Christian biography or preaching will welcome these two volumes. While not as comprehensive as Hughes Oliphant Old’s seven-volume *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998–2010), *A Legacy of Preaching* fits admirably on the shelf next to E. C. Dargan’s two-volume *A History of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1974), David Larsen’s two-volume *The Company of the Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), or Warren Wiersbe’s *Walking with the Giants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976) and *Listening to the Giants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980). *A Legacy of Preaching* also has a devotional feel which makes for pleasurable reading.

The goals of this work were to “present a historical, theological, and methodological introduction to the history of preaching” and “aid the reader in the exploration of preaching history, with a biographical and theological examination of its most important preachers” (1:27). The editors have realized these goals, and the format and content of the book will make this a meaningful biographical and homiletical reference for years to come. It will prove particularly valuable for three groups of people: first, for the inquisitive pastor who ponders the strengths and weakness of each character and, in so doing, is “refreshed and encouraged to press in and press on in your calling” (1:29); second, for the student who will find a hero to inspire, an example to follow, looking “to these preachers who sought to follow Christ, love his bride—the church—and preach the Word” (1:29); and, third, for those preparing to teach homiletics, history, or practical theology as they use these volumes as a source to inform and challenge as a textbook or supplement.

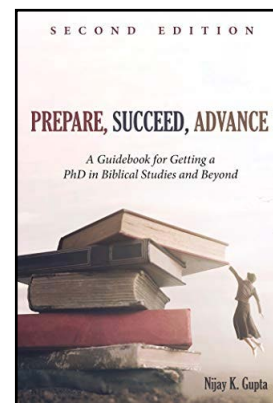
Two of the better chapters are “John Huss” (by Mark A. Howell) and “Robert Murry M’Cheyne” (by Jordan Mark Stone), and quite possibly the most poignant line in the entire work is from Howell concerning Huss’s forfeiting of his pulpit: “While it is possible to remove a preacher from their pulpit, it is not possible to take the message out of the preacher” (1:255).

A Legacy of Preaching is not only a necessity for the preacher’s shelf, it is an invitation for every preacher to realize that they too are part of that legacy. So “let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:1–2). Forrest, King, Curtis, and Milioni convincingly and clearly remind preachers of the race before and the legacy behind them. *A Legacy of Preaching* will enable preachers to preach better and more effectively “by standing on the shoulders of giants.”

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Nijay K. Gupta. *Prepare, Succeed, Advance: A Guidebook for Getting a PhD in Biblical Studies and Beyond*. 2nd ed. Eugene: Cascade, 2019. vii + 171 pp. £19.00/\$23.00.

The main thrust of *Prepare, Succeed, Advance* is neatly captured in its subtitle: *A Guidebook for Getting a PhD in Biblical Studies and Beyond*. The volume is designed to “demystify” the process of earning a PhD, whose origin Nijay Gupta conceived “fifteen years ago when I first began to think seriously about pursuing a doctoral degree” (p. 1). Gupta currently serves as professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary and is the author of several NT commentaries and other books, such as *A Beginner’s Guide to New Testament Studies: Understanding Key Debates* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020). Desiring to give direction to ambitious doctorate seekers, this book is a virtual manifesto of Gupta’s own trial-and-errors in traversing the PhD journey. Because the author’s doctorate is in New Testament (from the University of Durham), the book is geared specifically toward those seeking a research doctorate in fields related to *biblical studies* yet without being restricted to the NT. Relevant counsel is offered throughout the volume to any student entering the field of Bible and theology, such as choosing the right doctoral program (e.g., American or European), a topic to research that can morph into a thesis and sustain a successful defense and merit publication, even engaging the academic world through conference presentations and job networking.



The book is deftly structured around three broad concepts encompassing the PhD path: prepare, succeed, advance. The “Prepare” section (pp. 9–56) aims at graduate Bible students who have their eyes fixed on gaining a terminal degree but may be overwhelmed by the prospect. Personal and practical advice permeate the section as the author discusses “six big factors” one must consider in choosing a doctoral program: theological orientation, the prestige and difficulty of entrance into certain institutions, financial obligations to mediate (e.g., stipends, grants, or personal savings), the time it takes to actually complete a PhD (four to seven years), the locations of potential schools, and, the most neglected factor by far, an institution’s library. Regarding the latter, the aspiring student who has a broad sense of their dissertation topic would do well to consider the differences between library holdings in research universities and seminaries, and plan accordingly. Further chapters include Gupta’s “tiered ranking” of British and American institutions, developments in online options, as well as the “nuts-and-bolts” of applying to PhD programs such as examination scores, preparatory course work, and collating application materials.

The second section, “Succeed” (pp. 59–99), targets the doctoral student who has been accepted by an institution for study. Personal anecdotes relaying the author’s experience of getting accepted to Durham initiate the section, followed by counsel on what is generally expected of a doctoral student. Language requirements, critical thinking skills, and a solid incoming knowledge base help ensure “that he or she is well-read and up-to-date on the key ideas, debates, problems, and contributions in their field” (p. 61). Current PhD students anxious about the dissertation process will be helped by the section’s guides on surviving doctoral exams (pp. 69–89) and succeeding in the actual writing and defense of a dissertation (pp. 90–99).

The book’s final section, “Advance” (pp. 103–66), surveys what life looks like for the freshly minted PhD: “Getting an academic job and becoming a professional” (p. 103). In other words, a PhD from a

respected school carries only so much weight. In today's competitive world, the newly hooded doctor should seek to bolster his or her CV with legitimate publications, some form of teaching experience, broadened research and teaching interests, conference presentations, and, if possible, administrative experience. The section unfolds with sage advice on how to submit articles to academic journals (accompanied by another "tiered ranking" of respected journals) as well as crafting presentations for academic conferences (e.g., SBL, ETS, and IBR in the US; BNTS, SOTS, and Tyndale Fellowship in the UK). The section closes with advice on gaining teaching experience, as well as "job hunting," followed by how to publish one's dissertation and subsequent works. A final addendum included in the updated edition is Gupta's exposé on the unfortunate marginalization that occurs in some corners of biblical scholarship with wisdom offered on how to build "a more healthy, diverse, and inclusive Academy" (p. 154).

There is much to commend in the second edition of *Prepare, Succeed, Advance*, beginning with material absent from its predecessor in 2011. By enlisting the help of current doctoral students offering their insights on GRE and doctoral exam requirements, the volume keeps abreast of recent changes in the academy. Further updates ensuring the book's relevance are developments in distance learning options, pedagogical advice drawn from the author's own teaching methods, and, as mentioned, a reflective essay addressing discrimination and unfair bias in biblical studies departments (with encouragement on advancing a more inclusive guild)—all of which aptly justify the volume as a "new" edition.

Moreover, that the book is aimed at students pursuing a *PhD in Biblical Studies* makes it unique among a sea of "doctoral journey" books focused on professional and applied doctorates or those outside of biblical scholarship. Gupta's advice on academic publishing and presenting at theological conferences, in addition to the importance of a good research library and his "best practices" in biblical research (e.g., pp. 87–88), are pure gold for serious students who feel called to biblical scholarship. Indeed, Christian institutions using outdated guidebooks not relevant to research degrees in Bible and theology would do well to add Gupta's volume to their assigned doctoral seminars. Finally, the volume's organized structure—Prepare, Succeed, Advance—makes the work accessible for readers in different stages of the PhD journey, from those just beginning with curiosity to those entering the academic world of publications, presentations, and vocational teaching. Gupta's advice on writing for journals and chairing conference sessions truly owns the "beyond" aspect of the book's subtitle.

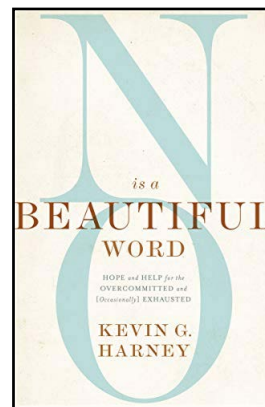
Compared to its strengths, the book's weaknesses are relatively minor. One may be the almost exclusive attention given to critical and ecumenical sources for the reader to explore throughout the volume. By their underrepresentation, a reader can get the impression that conservative voices are considered irrelevant or subpar for doctoral study. Furthermore, research universities, specifically British ones, take the pride of place over American evangelical seminaries in Gupta's (implicit) estimation, as more attention is devoted to their rankings and offerings. In fairness, Gupta discloses that his own PhD entry consisted of applying only to top-tier research universities along with a personal desire not to be prejudged by his confessional interests (see p. 25 n. 11). Thus, it is out of his *own experience* that he writes the book, not presuming on other possible avenues. Nevertheless, the imbalance is felt. A final limitation is that the volume is essentially addressed to the PhD *scholar* (not the pastor). Ministers seeking a program to advance their exegetical and research methods for church ministry should be aware they are not the targeted audience; rather, those prone to a life fully immersed in Christian scholarship are.

Despite these minor critiques, Gupta's second edition of *Prepare, Succeed, and Advance* is overwhelmingly helpful. It is an exceptionally well-organized, well-written, and accessible volume that is sure to benefit the ambitious Bible student whose sights are set on the PhD with the intention of serving Christ in the academy.

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Kevin Harney. *No Is a Beautiful Word: Hope and Help for the Overcommitted and (Occasionally) Exhausted*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 208 pp. £10.99/\$16.99.

Kevin Harney is perhaps best known for his teaching encouraging Christians to reach out and proclaim the gospel to their co-workers, neighbors, and friends through organic relationships and conversations. His most recent book, *No Is a Beautiful Word*, is a fascinating, unique, and challenging book in the genre of David Murray's *Reset* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), Kevin DeYoung's *Crazy Busy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), and Greg McKeown's *Essentialism* (New York: Crown, 2014). While having some similarities to these volumes, Harney provides a fresh vantage through the window of that little word we all use: "no." If you are looking for counsel to help you gain greater balance in re-entry to a busy life, or in re-thinking the motivations and character of your communication, this is a great place to start.



No Is a Beautiful Word is immediately engaging. Rich with personal anecdotes, it is like a conversation with a wise friend who is also a master storyteller. Opening with a description of a buffet, Harney describes a multitude of attractive options: "despairing, you know that you can't have it all. You've loaded your plate, mixing several dishes together, filling and squeezing in as best you can. But there just isn't room. Your plate is full" (pp. 17–18). He goes on to share, "there is an art to dining at a buffet. Few have mastered it. It demands superhuman restraint" (p. 18). This is too often like our lives. Our plates are full, our margins are thin—at times to the extent that we can't "add one more responsibility, help one more person, squeeze in one more meeting, or volunteer one more minute without something falling off" (p. 18). If we are weary and overextended, "longing for more time, margin, peace and productivity," then Harney calls us to realize "it is time to discover a simple but profound truth ... no is a beautiful word" (p. 19).

Harney shares that the book was a long labor of love, with the aim of helping the reader not only see the value in saying no, but also "learning to love saying no" (p. 20). The goal in doing so is not ultimately negative, but to give space for "an essential and life-changing yes" (p. 25).

The first part of *No Is a Beautiful Word* seeks to define what it is to say no, and how "no" can be good, beautiful, and a godly expression of conformity to Christ. Harney provides a compelling beginning point here for the rest of the book, but there are two areas where it could be better. The first would be to avoid using the movie *Bruce Almighty*—which many Christians see as blasphemous—as a positive illustration. The second would be to move beyond the exemplary description of Jesus's use of "no," to explicitly root the book in the gospel, using passages like Philippians 2:7 and others to show our Savior's

willingness to say no to his prerogatives, even as he fulfilled the redemption that is God's marvelous yes to us.

The second part of the book is titled "Know Your Nos." Here Harney shares excellent advice about how to fit our nos to the occasion. He notes there are "many ways to say no" (p. 45) and walks the reader through scenarios providing a variety of ways of saying no in the best possible way. Harney's sample nos range from "No, never, I'm offended you asked me, and don't ever ask me again" to "no, but I love what you are doing."

The third section of the book, "Picking Your Nos," continues the theme of part two, but now with a focus on wisely selecting "which no is right for each of life's situations" (p. 88). Part of Harney's emphasis in this section is on connecting the manner of saying no with the occasion. The same is true of part four of the book: "No Strategy." Here Harney helps us see that we can grow in saying no well: "it is a strategic learning process" (p. 110). Whether it is saying no with kindness, or realizing that we do not need to apologize when we say no for good reasons, Harney again gives thoughtful and engaging counsel on how and why we should say no. The same is true of part five, "Critical Nos," and six, "No Results."

The fitting capstone of the volume comes in part seven, "The Freedom of Yes." You might wonder whether an entire book focused on the use the word "no" would be worth reading; my answer is "yes"! While I wish it had a more substantive gospel content, the book captivated me. Harney subtitled his book, *Hope and Help for the Overcommitted and (Occasionally) Exhausted*. He has admirably achieved both, teaching us a basic life lesson many of us need to be reminded of—a wise "no" really is a beautiful word.

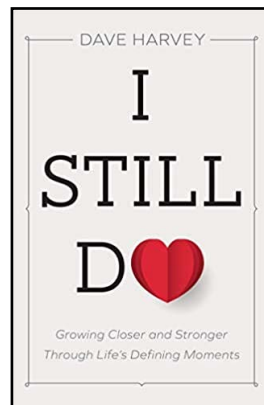
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Dave Harvey. *I Still Do: Growing Closer and Stronger through Life's Defining Moments*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2020. 218 pp. £10.99/\$15.99.

The mountain of Christian marriage books on the market testifies to the fact that marriages within the church (and, no doubt, outside the church too) need help. Nary a pastor exists who has not spent considerable time and effort shepherding couples through the travails of matrimony. While the wealth of biblical marriage resources is certainly a gift to the church, the flooded market can make the best resources difficult to identify.

In a sea of helpful marriage books, Harvey's work is quite literally outstanding. While many marriage books are aimed at either newlyweds or particularly troubled marriages, *I Still Do* is more like a "ten-year checkup" (p. 22). Through the lens of three-and-a-half decades of experience as a husband and a pastor, Harvey specifically unfolds how time, aging, and the normal sufferings of life come to bear upon marriages.

The book is divided into three sections, each with four chapters. The first section, "Starting Together," lays a foundation for the problems that fracture many marriages. The subtitle of chapter 2, "When You Discover Brokenness is Broader Than Sin," captures the essence of the first section well. Leaning on



David Powlinson's theological anthropology (the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual elements of being human), Harvey explains that just because "sin is our biggest problem does not mean sin is our only problem" (p. 25). "Sticking Together," the second section of the book, addresses the topics of local church involvement, grudge-holding, and sexual intimacy, which are standard fare in most premarital counseling books. What makes this section intriguing and particularly valuable, however, is that Harvey writes not for the newly engaged couple wearing rose-colored glasses, but for those who are well aware that the once-tiny weeds in their newlywed garden have sprouted into a formidable briar patch over the years. Section 3, "Ending Together," is written with the refreshingly blunt tenor of Ecclesiastes, as Harvey shows that even the best marriages have regrets and failures, but can still be honoring to God in broken world.

The hopeful realism, particularly evident in section 3, is the greatest strength of the book. It's the unpleasant facts of life and marriage outside of Eden that make the hope and necessity of Christ's power so vivid. An example of this is Harvey's exploding of the myth that a good marriage is one with no regrets. He writes, "Stay married for more than a couple of decades and you will have regrets. We're not omniscient, omnicompetent beings who always achieve what we want. We let things slip. We battle weariness. We prioritize wrongly ... as long as you draw breath you will have regrets" (p. 166). Couples who have celebrated an anniversary or two know by experience that Harvey is speaking truth. Yet he continues with hope: "The gospel meets us in the flood of that flaw-drenched place. Jesus chooses people with regrets as vessels to display his glory" (p. 166). Indeed, the gospel is glad news of redemption and a Christian marriage is not one with a façade of cheer, but one with living hope amid imperfect matrimony.

Another strength of *I Still Do* is its practicality. Harvey shows that the gospel is a message to be lived and *must* be lived if Christ is to bring healing, hope, and staying power to marriages. In addition to the practical nuggets and illustrations in Harvey's very down-to-earth writing style, each chapter concludes with a chart of application questions. These end-of-chapter questions (which are typically skimmable in most Christian living books) are pure gold. The questions are pointed—e.g., Do I bristle at correction? (p. 57), Will I refuse to be satisfied unless my circumstances change? (p. 76)—and a biblical practice or belief is listed to correspond to each question. Even if the book weren't well written (which it is), these end-of-chapter assessments, soaked in the wisdom of 35 years of pastoral ministry and marriage, are worth the purchase price.

A final strength of the book is its nuance. The work is thoroughly biblical, but does not treat Bible verses as bandages for marital bullet-holes. Harvey is hard on sin, yet nuanced and patient in diagnosis. He writes, "Some couples nudge their problems toward simplified solutions ... some spouses just slap a 'SIN' sticker on the side of every issue that irritates" (pp. 25–26). Harvey calls a spade a spade when needed, but he wisely shows how fallen creation includes suffering and stresses that are not the result of personal sin. This diagnostic precision helpfully rebukes the self-righteous judgment that so often accompanies and further complicates marital stresses. Chapter 6, "When Your Spouse Suffers," includes another exceptional application of the nuance of Scripture. Like many of the psalms, chapter 6 includes both lament and hope. He laments, "When your spouse suffers, a part of you dies ... watching a spouse suffer brings sorrow that mere words cannot describe" (p. 96). And yet, "Trials are never barren. They arrive pregnant with opportunity" (p. 109). *I Still Do* captures biblical tensions in a way that resonates with personal experience and cultivates cross-bearing faith.

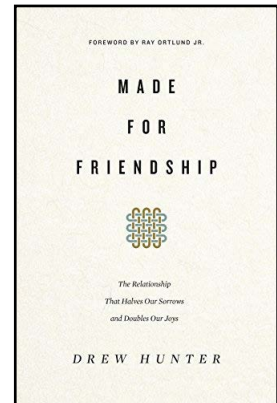
I don't know Dave Harvey, but I feel like I've been graciously pastored by him after reading *I Still Do*. It's a book that applies to good marriages in need of a check-up as well as troubled marriages on the brink. It's readable, practical, and filled not only with Bible verses but with a rich, biblical understanding of marriage. It's a book of such broad edificatory value that I held it up on a Sunday morning and recommended it to all married couples in our church. I want to get it into the hands of as many people as possible. I have no doubt that it is an instrument God will use to help couples truly love and cherish one another until they are parted by death.

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Drew Hunter. *Made for Friendship: The Relationship that Halves our Sorrows and Doubles our Joys*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2018. £11.99/\$16.99.

Editor's note: In order to get both male and female reflections on the important issues raised by Hunter's book, two brief reviews follow: the first by the Steve Frederick, the second by Kirsten Birkett.

Whether as a nervous child scanning the playground on our first day of school or as an accomplished professional glancing up from our all-consuming career for the first time in decades, friendship is something that many of us feel we've never quite mastered. But help is at hand. Drew Hunter's *Made for Friendship* is a great primer for anyone who suspects that they've not given friendship the attention it deserves. The book is set out in three parts.



Many falsely assume that friendship should come naturally to us in childhood and thereafter require little further attention. To counter this, in part 1 of the book ("The Necessity of Friendship") Hunter assembles a surprising collection of Christian writers who gave sustained attention to the topic of friendship and invested sustained energy in developing friendships—theologians (such as Augustine), church fathers (Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil the Great), bishops (J. C. Ryle), and apologists (C. S. Lewis). However, Hunter's aim is not simply to compile an encyclopedia of *examples of* or *ideas about* friendship. Rather it is to assure readers that the topic of friendship really is worthy of our own careful attention.

In the middle section of the book ("The Gift of Friendship"), Hunter ventures a working definition of friendship: "*Friendship is an affectionate bond forged between two people as they journey through life together with openness and trust*" (p. 80, emphasis original). He weaves this definition together with the help of both secular and Christian writers, illustrating along the way how many of their deepest insights about the nature of friendship are already present in the wisdom of the book of Proverbs. Hunter is especially keen to contrast what he calls "covenantal friendship" with "consumer friendship" (p. 82). Hunter is surely correct that a consumer mindset has hollowed out the modern experience of friendship, but I think it is misleading to frame friendship itself in covenantal terms. A covenant is a particular kind of relationship, with clearly stated obligations from the outset; our friendships rarely

form or persist in that way. Hunter himself seems to step back from insisting all friendships be framed covenantally when he recognizes that “not every relationship needs a covenant. But even if we don’t formalize our commitment, we still must make it felt. No friendship can last without loyalty” (p. 83). Amen to that.

In Part 3 of the book (“The Redemption of Friendship”), as Hunter engagingly retells the “unfolding storyline” of Scripture, it seems at times as if the theme of friendship is a little too controlling. Does rejecting God’s offer of friendship really capture the essence of human rebellion (p. 129)? Even so, Hunter did convince me that both the Old and New Testaments use the language of friendship far more often than I’d previously recognized. In fact, rightly understanding our friendship with God, as opposed to friendship with the world, will deeply influence what the Christian life looks like (Jas 4:4). In this last section of the book I found myself growing in delight at the very thought of being known by God himself as “friend.” By exploring the treasures of friendship with God, Hunter wonderfully deepened my own sense of spiritual security. And he does so in a way that is likely to embolden readers to further open themselves to the possibility of friendships with others as well.

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I recently wrote an email to my gas company which I began “Dear friends.” Why did I use such an intimate form of address? I don’t know these people; I don’t even know who will be reading the email. Yet I had to address it somehow, and “Dear Sir or Madam” or “To whom it may concern” just seemed too formal and stilted; definitely out of fashion. To call total strangers my friends, however, devalues my true friends, and will no doubt affect how I treat them (even if unconsciously). It is incidents like these that have come to mind since reading Drew Hunter’s book, *Made for Friendship*.

This book wasn’t what I expected from the title (and especially the cover); it’s not an in-depth treatise analyzing friendship either as a concept or in the Bible; rather, it’s a popular-level book talking to people about the ordinary experience, and value, of friendship. However, it is far from shallow and makes a timely case for the need to recover friendship in modern life. In the process, it looks at historical and biblical wisdom about the nature of friendship, and gives a number of practical tips about making and keeping true friends. The truest friend, of course, is Jesus; so this book is also evangelistic, as well as providing biblical encouragement for Christians.

Drew Hunter makes big claims for friendship: it is “the meaning of the universe” (p. 22), because Jesus came to befriend us. (Friendship therefore is certainly “cosmic”; is it the *meaning* of the universe? Perhaps a little extravagant.) That friendship is one of the most important parts of human life is much easier to defend.

Yet friendship has been much trivialized in modern life; something which probably correlates with the over-sexualization of relationships. It is also insightful that “how highly (or lowly) we esteem friendship with God will correlate with how highly (or lowly) we esteem friendship in general” (p. 26). Statistics on loneliness denote a very big, and very modern, problem. Social media has certainly not solved the problem; to the contrary, it appears to have exacerbated it.

Drew Hunter has provided a useful little book that gives some good theology about friendship with God, and some very practical, even challenging, advice about cultivating real friendships with others. It is something that should be part of being Christian, as well as something that helps us to become more human. I was reminded of how easy it is to slip into isolation without thinking; in a highly mobile, highly individualized culture, creating and keeping friends requires thought and effort.

Yet what this book has reminded me of overall is how much that effort is worth it. Life is about more than duties of obedience; loving others is more than being efficient in relationships. Friendship is that difficult to define, but profound aspect of relationship that gives it substance. It makes both evangelism and ministry part of living rather than tasks to be done. I recommend this book for the wisdom and encouragement it gives.

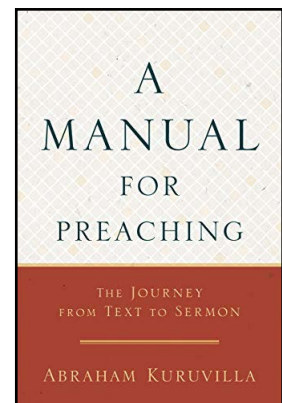
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Abraham Kuruvilla. *A Manual for Preaching: The Journey from Text to Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. 316 pp. £19.99/\$29.99.

With the literature on preaching abounding to such a degree, most would not expect a new book on homiletics to carve out any new ground. However, Abe Kuruvilla, Senior Research Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Ministries at Dallas Seminary, speaks of preaching in such a way as to garner attention and force readers to rethink old paradigms. One may disagree with some aspects of Kuruvilla's approach, but this work will certainly generate numerous worthwhile discussions and debates in the areas of hermeneutics and homiletics.

While the author has written several commentaries on Genesis, Judges, Mark, and Ephesians, he is best known for his works on preaching. Two of these works—*Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue*, LNTS 393 (London: T&T Clark, 2009) and *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013)—are quite similar in nature and lay a foundation for Kuruvilla's overall hermeneutical/homiletical approach. *A Manual for Preaching* builds on these aforementioned treatises but is best seen as a sequel to his *A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015). Kuruvilla states that preaching “by a leader of the church, in a gathering of Christians for worship, is the communication of the thrust of a pericope of Scripture discerned by theological exegesis, and of its application to that specific body of believers, that they may be conformed to the image of Christ, for the glory of God—all in the power of the Spirit” (p. xiv; cf. *A Vision for Preaching*, p. 1). The present work, the author claims, “is an attempt to describe my own praxis of preaching and share what I have learned over the decades” (p. xvi).

Within this book the author deals with various preliminary discussions, ranging from the purpose of preaching, choosing a text, and short and long-term planning when preaching a series (ch. 1). Chapters 2–3, which are core to Kuruvilla's purpose, deal with understanding a passage, discerning the theology of that given text, and then moving from the text and its pragmatics to the application to the people. Subsequent chapters then deal with creating maps (ch. 4) and fleshing moves for the sermon (as opposed



to writing an outline and making an argument [ch. 5]), illustrating (ch. 6), introducing and concluding (ch. 7), writing a preaching manuscript (ch. 8), and the skills needed when actually delivering the sermon (ch. 9). Throughout these chapters, as the author builds his argument and instructs in sermon making, he also provides examples from Genesis and Ephesians that demonstrate how he would apply each chapter when preaching from those texts. The work concludes with several appendices, including Kuruvilla's preference for a "Theological Focus" as opposed to the "Big Idea" (a notion made popular by Haddon Robinson's work *Biblical Preaching*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014]), as well as a contention that preaching is primarily demonstration, as opposed to argumentation.

This work will serve as a helpful resource for any preacher, especially those who are new to the task. Kuruvilla's wisdom displayed in the first chapter gives sage guidance, especially in the areas of short-term and long-term planning. He makes clear that these proposals should not be followed slavishly, as each preacher will develop his own rhythms in preparation, but there is much here to apply to the process, especially so one is not simply starting fresh with a new sermon merely one week before it is delivered. The fact that the author works through the steps contained in his chapters by including examples from Genesis and Ephesians at the end of each chapter is also a great benefit. This allows the reader to see how specific texts get worked through the process Kuruvilla is describing, offering both theory and application. His interaction with authors like James K. A. Smith is also helpful regarding application in preaching, noting that one must work toward habits instilled in a person by virtue of appealing to their minds and affections through the truth of the Word in the power of the Spirit. In other words, preaching is aiming at "ritual practices (of application) becom[ing] radical passions (of Christlikeness) by the revolutionary power of the Spirit" (p. 81). Beyond these specifics, this work is filled with useful anecdotes, practical thoughts on illustrations, introductions, and conclusions, and tips on delivering the sermon effectively.

Alongside the many aspects of homiletical wisdom, it should be noted much of this work—as with any book on preaching—is rooted in hermeneutics. Reflecting on the homiletic vision of his former work, Kuruvilla states that "at the core of that vision was a hermeneutic, a way of reading Scripture, that influenced how I saw preaching. That same hermeneutic also informs my conception of how preaching ought to be undertaken" (p. xiv). The author is certainly consistent, not only in this book, but in all his works on homiletics, focusing on "theological exegesis to discern the doings of the author of the text (i.e., the theology of the pericope) so that we and our listeners, the people of God, can move to valid application" (p. 8). Discerning the theology of the various pericopes allows one to enter the "world in front of the text," the ideal world that each pericope projects, which we are called to live by, which Christ has lived out perfectly (pp. 28–29). This last phrase is captured in Kuruvilla's understanding of Scripture as Christiconic; that is, each pericope displays a character quality of Christ and thus shows us what it means to perfectly fulfill the call of that pericope.

Several points should be noted. First, the debate continues regarding whether Scripture should be interpreted from a Christocentric, Christotelic, Christiconic, or some other perspective (see Scott Gibson and Matthew Kim, eds., *Homiletics and Hermeneutics: Four Views on Preaching Today* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018], to which Kuruvilla is a contributor). The Christiconic view, while certainly correct in some respects, seems delimiting, since the NT both quotes and alludes to the OT in ways that shows fulfillment and clearly go beyond what Kuruvilla is suggesting. It seems, then, that we should allow the later OT prophets and NT apostles to teach us how we should read Scripture in view of Messiah's coming, taking into account promises, prophecies, types, etc.

Second, Kuruvilla's sole focus on the pericope, while needful to ensure we are genuinely preaching that particular text, abstracts the text from its wider context. One must see a particular pericope within its book-level context. For example, his thoughts on Genesis 22 must be seen in light of what Moses is accomplishing in authoring the whole book. That passage and book must then be understood within its Testament, and then within the canon as a whole. Kuruvilla states, "Biblical and systematic theology do not usually or necessarily come into play in the discerning of the pericopal theology and the derivation of its application for life. For preaching purposes, biblical and systematic theology serve only as cautionary barriers" (p. 47). Indeed, these branches of theology do serve as cautionary barriers, but they serve as more than that. If, for example, biblical theology is the attempt to understand and embrace the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors (see James Hamilton's *What is Biblical Theology?* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013]), then it is imperative that the preacher sees how the biblical authors understood said pericope and see what development comes about within the canon. In summary, the preacher must think theologically about the particular text, but must also always look beyond that one text to the wider book, testament, and canonical context.

Finally, in creating maps and fleshing moves, Kuruvilla seeks to get away from outlines and argumentation in his preaching. This may be a good suggestion, but where one goes will be contingent on the structure and genre of the particular text. Preachers work to show their hearers what the author is saying and doing in that text. This will likely require various structures and approaches to the homiletical outlining process, not merely the ones suggested by Kuruvilla. Also, if the biblical authors are teaching us how to rightly interpret and apply the Scripture to our lives, we would do well to show our hearers what the biblical author is doing, especially with other portions of Scripture. However, Kuruvilla is clear in saying that "as a rule, you will rarely need to bring other portions of Scripture into your sermon.... I am convinced that no two biblical passages can ever have the same pericopal theology, and thus one cannot render substantial support to the other" (p. 126). This, in my estimation, misses how the Bible is written as an interrelated, intertextual book. While I appreciate and applaud his hesitancy when it comes to topical preaching, as well as the need to focus on particular passages, the preacher must show their hearers what the author is saying and doing. For example, it would be doing an injustice to what the biblical author is saying and doing if one preaches Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1 without referencing 1 Samuel 2, or the book of Revelation in general without drawing attention to Daniel and the OT Prophets. We need to show these things as preachers so our people can better study their Bibles and know their God.

With virtually any book on hermeneutics and homiletics there will be disagreements of various kinds, particularly on issues of methodology. But this should not dim the vigor of those who wish to read this book. Within they will find a treasure trove of preaching wisdom with real practical value. As with any book of this kind they will need to look at the author's approach and measure it according to their own convictions.

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Michael McGarry. *A Biblical Theology of Youth Ministry: Teenagers in the Life of the Church*. Nashville: Randall House, 2019. 180 pp. £15.40/\$19.99.

In *A Biblical Theology of Youth Ministry*, Michael McGarry addresses some of the central concerns of youth ministry today. Questions such as: is youth ministry biblical? Is the local church structured and programmed in a way that silently encourages parental negligence? And, of course, the dropout rate. McGarry emphasizes “a clear and simple but thoroughly biblical framework for thinking about youth ministry as the church’s expression of partnership with the family in co-evangelizing and co-discipling the next generation” (p. 3).

The aim of this review is not to summarize each of the chapters but rather to engage with some of McGarry’s main points and offer some thoughts for my own context here in Sydney (and maybe even beyond).

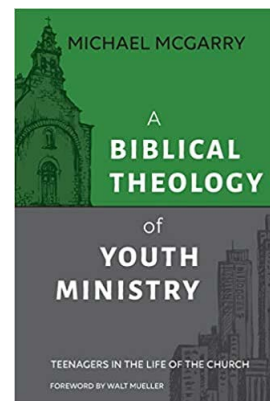
McGarry outlines three of the foundational problems facing modern youth ministry: (1) the dropout rate; (2) the nexus between the dropout rate, adult faith and our changing culture; and (3) the fragmentation between youth ministry, the family and the Church. These issues are not new. We can all acknowledge that we need to do better at ministry transitions (which I think we are), engaging our culture (not as much) and addressing the connection between the church and our families (it’s on the agenda but we have more work to do).

To address these problems, McGarry encourages gospel-centered youth ministers to connect young people with God and his people. Young people are not going to be transformed by their parents’ or youth pastor’s wisdom but by the power of God (p. 117). To connect and grow our young people we need to emphasize “the narrow and broad gospel” (p. 117). “The narrow gospel is the proclamation of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection in order to redeem and secure the people of God by grace through faith” (p. 117). This is the call for faith and repentance. The broad gospel “grounds the believer in a worldview saturated by the grace of God” (p. 117). This emphasizes the communal identity of the Christian within salvation history.

Both the narrow and broad gospel are necessary components to develop the faith of young people, yet McGarry identifies that there is a tendency to focus almost entirely on the narrow gospel which has led to a generation of Christians in the US with an “individualistic faith that is theologically under-developed” (p. 118). What we need is to preach the gospel “reflecting both the narrow and the broader gospel so that teenagers grow a faith that is both personal (narrow) and deep enough to shape a Christian worldview (broad)” (p. 118).

This is not easy to do, but I think it’s essential. What we need to do better is understand the world of teenagers and how the biblical text can be brought to bear on them with “pastoral care and conviction” (p. 133). The continuing challenge for youth pastors, then, is to manage their time well so that they can be serious in their preparation of God’s word, while also finding time to engage with the young people in their “patch” outside of school times.

One of the biggest challenges for many churches, and their youth ministries, is their lack of engagement with non-Christian young people outside the church family. What is our strategy to reach these young people? Are they even on our radar? This isn’t meant to be a guilt trip. But how are we attempting to engage those beyond the reach of our kid’s friendship groups? Are we so busy maintaining (ineffective?) programs in our churches that we miss opportunities to engage with our local



communities in meaningful ways? I have had more gospel conversations at the local sporting clubs in the last few years than I have at church! This means prayerfully considering how we are going out to the young people rather than simply inviting people in.

At the heart of McGarry's approach is the importance of the local church and the connection between the church and her families. In fact, one of the major proposals of the book is that "youth ministry serves as a faithful bridge to lifelong discipleship when it is an expression of meaningful partnership between the family and the local church" (p. 142). We will come back to the idea of the "faithful bridge" in a moment. The point for now is that youth ministries need to seek more intergenerational integration not less (p. 137). McGarry believes that "creating age-specific worship venues that separate generations during gathered worship, aside from childcare and ministry to young people, simply has no biblical foundation" (p. 137). In fact, they seem to be "the exact opposite of what the Bible presents as normative" (p. 137). Amen to that! What we need to do is be more intentional to ensure teenagers are not merely welcomed at church but are also seen as valued contributors. "Creating opportunities for students and adults in the church to build friendships and get to know each other should be seen as a vital aspect of the church's ministry to teenagers" (p. 138). Amen again!

Overall, I found that McGarry's perspectives resonate with my own experiences and understanding of youth ministry. However, I'd challenge his use of the "faithful bridge" metaphor (p. 142). Part of McGarry's argument is that in the past the church's youth ministry has been the "destination" rather than "the link" between the family and the church (p. 142). I get that. Yes, youth ministry is temporary and parents can have more influence in their children's lives than youth ministers (p. 142). But the danger of the bridge metaphor is that it pushes the local church and families into two separate spheres that are disconnected. Christian families are a part of the local church and the youth ministry is not separate to the local church. If we want to use a metaphor (knowing that none are perfect), maybe the space shuttle is a better one. As a space shuttle takes off it has two solid boosters and a fuel tank that are attached to it. As the shuttle takes off and it reaches orbit, the boosters and fuel tank separate leaving the shuttle to propel towards its destination. Maybe children's and youth ministry are the boosters and fuel tank. They help our young people launch into life under Christ, but after achieving their goal, they fall away having fulfilled their purpose.

Ultimately, I found McGarry's book a great read and encouragement. It made me think that youth ministry continues to grow up. There is an impressive range of topics covered, with some important insights into the history of youth ministry and the nature and purpose of discipleship. As a Reformed Anglican, I found myself questioning McGarry's thoughts regarding the place of children in the church, the concept of church membership, and the need to evangelize our children (p. 112)! But the fact that the book raises such questions does not diminish its value. In fact, it would be a great book to read with your ministry team or to use in a youth ministry course as a foundational textbook.

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W. David O. Taylor. *Glimpses of the New Creation: Worship and the Formative Power of the Arts*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. 312 pp. \$22.00.

It's often difficult to separate one form of art from the others. The *musical* art of melody often joins with the *poetic* art of lyric to achieve the *narrative* art of storytelling. When that musical, poetic, and narrative art is used within the *architectural* art of musical theatre and the *kinetic* art of dance, a person recognizes the interconnected reality that is "the arts." Now, place that dynamic and complicated use of the arts within the context of a local congregation and you have a powder keg—a *dynamis* for transformation or destruction.

So, how should churches think about something as complicated and interrelated as the arts?

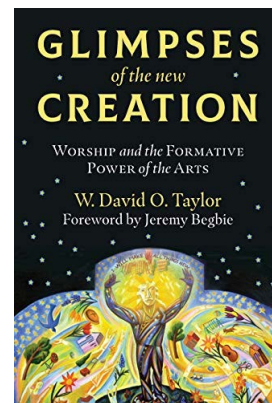
Thoughtful writing about the arts is notoriously difficult to find. It is unusual for an individual who has developed proficiency in one artistic field to also have developed proficiency in the written word. When that does occur, the books produced tend to investigate a single artform from the perspective of a master practitioner. Books that attempt to discuss the arts more comprehensively often solicit chapters from multiple authors—multiple perspectives from various individuals with expertise. Inevitably, though, such collections often lack a unifying concept or any interaction between the presenters.

Thus, who would have the expertise to consider the various forms of the arts, their individual and collective contributions, and their use within corporate worship? Happily, we have found someone: W. David O. Taylor. Taylor's new book, *Glimpses of the New Creation*, provides the sort of comprehensive and unified consideration of the arts and their wise use within the context of the local church that advances the conversation.

One of Taylor's best gifts to this conversation is found in his discussion of the "power" of the arts. Cognizant of both those who view the arts overly suspiciously and those who imbue art with salvific power (*ex opera operato*), Taylor provides the useful maxim, "The arts in worship ought to be freed to form the church in their own ways, though not on their own terms" (p. 2). Like a compass, Taylor's bon mot guides his book to carefully evaluate the ways and terms of the arts that allows for both generous inclusion and cautious warning.

After a lucid and theological introduction to the topic, the main section of the book consists of chapters that consider forms of art (musical, visual, poetic, narrative, theatrical, and kinetic) using the same thoughtful paradigm. First, it considers the form of art theologically; that is, it seeks to catalogue biblical descriptions and uses of the important terms and to examine those descriptions in light of the whole canon. Next, it seeks to tease out the "singular powers" and the "purposes" of the artform. Having considered these aspects within the context of corporate worship, each of these chapters conclude by discussing the "formative possibilities" that utilizing that particular form of art provides.

Taylor has spent plenty of time reading, thinking, and teaching about these subjects, and his expertise is on full display. Each chapter pushes the discussion from the initially intuitive to the genuinely insightful. A worship leader who may have skipped Taylor's chapter on the kinetic arts (because of, say, a disinterest in ribbon dancing) would miss his insightful discussion of the various ways congregational seating forms a congregation.



Taylor's insights don't end with the concluding chapter, as several appendixes tease out his insights in very practical, conversation-starting ways. In particular, Taylor's appendix providing "questions for discernment" regarding videographic arts has turned out to be prescient in the era of COVID-19. And his appendix on "Further Reading" should inform the Amazon wish lists of worship pastors for years to come.

Taylor's work here is a tremendous gift to Christ's church. I have already assigned it in several courses that I teach, and I whole-heartedly recommend it to any thoughtful person engaged in artistic endeavors within the church.

Given such an undoubted achievement, the following comments should be regarded as gnats to strain. First, after carefully noting the notorious difficulty of finding a proper starting place for beginning a theological exploration of the arts, Taylor may overstate his own—the life of the Trinity. Of course, all Christian faith is bound up in the Triune God, but not all believers would consider their Trinitarian faith in the vicarious terms that Taylor uses. If worship "is about how we have entered into the rhythms of *Christ's* own liturgical life" (p. 25, emphasis original), how might that relate to, say, repentance? Asserting that Christ *repents* on behalf of his people requires further demonstration than we find here.

Second, while *Glimpses of the New Creation* offers a compelling and inspiring account of the arts, it does so from a particular perspective: the English Reformation. At the risk of oversimplifying the discussion, consider the distinctions between Anglican piety (such as Taylor advocates for) and Puritan piety (my own heritage). Alongside a focus on Christ's sacrifice for sin, Anglican piety contemplates Christ's life—through observation of the Christian year and devout meditation upon the Divine mysteries of revelation—to the end that the believer might "follow the blessed steps of his most holy life" (*Book of Common Prayer*, "Collect for the Second Sunday after Easter"). This sort of contemplation and ceremonialism made Puritans suspicious, as it seemed to perpetuate the mysticism and superstition of medieval England. For Puritans, the Christian life was the war for their own soul more than the recapitulation of Christ's. Consequently, Puritans were interested less in the birth in Bethlehem than in being born again; less in past historical drama than in the current war for the soul. (See the discussion in Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, Volume 1: From Cranmer to Hooker, 1534–1603* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970], 67–69.) These two heritages of the English Reformation have often served as two eyes: providing churches with the "perspective" they need to be faithful followers of Christ.

I am thankful that Taylor has pointed out the log in my (more restrictive) tradition's eye. May the specks in all of the eyes of our heart be removed so that we may know the hope, riches, and power of the Lord.

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Trevin K. Wax. *Eschatological Discipleship: Leading Christians to Understand Their Historical and Cultural Context*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2018. 269 pp. £21.99/\$29.99.

In the silos we are comfortable occupying, *discipleship* is a subject for popular devotion, *disciple-making* is a topic for missiologists and church-growth authors, *eschatology* is explored (in quite different ways) by systematic theologians and New Testament scholars, and the question of *how worldview informs identity and morality* is something we leave to the ethicists and philosophers.

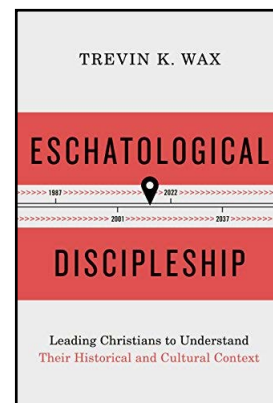
How refreshing it is, then, to join Trevin Wax in his exploration of why and how these various aspects of Christian thought belong together. Wax's essential point is that the New Testament portrayal of Christian identity and moral action (individually and corporately) is profoundly eschatological, and that this has important implications for contemporary mission-oriented discipleship, particularly in view of the powerful rival eschatologies that shape our culture.

Wax's argument unfolds in four sections. He begins by defining terms. By "discipleship" he means an integrated, holistic form of life that responds to Christ in belief and practice, in affection and knowledge, in outward witness and inward transformation. In particular, he sees discipleship as being worldview oriented—that is, as springing from a comprehensive, storied view of reality that shapes our thinking and life. Following N. T. Wright, he suggests that one of the important functions of a worldview is to answer the question "What time is it?"—that is, to locate us in the cultural and historical moment we occupy, in relation to a past and a future.

This provides Wax with a link to eschatology. Christianity has a powerful answer to the "What time is it?" question, one that encompasses God's grand plan for human history, culminating in the death, resurrection and return of Christ. "Eschatology" in this broader sense concerns not just the end times, but our current historical existence that leans forward to that final consummation and is shaped by it. Thus "eschatological discipleship" is a form of spiritual formation that "seeks to instill wisdom regarding the contemporary setting in which Christians find themselves (in contrast to rival conceptions of time and progress) and that calls for contextualized obedience as a demonstration of the Christian belief that the biblical account of the world's past, present and future is true" (p. 41).

Part 2 of the book grounds this contention in Scripture. After a very brief survey of Old Testament precedents, Wax outlines how the picture of discipleship in the Gospels is consistently oriented towards a coming future kingdom, not only in the teaching and parables of Jesus but in his commissioning of the disciples to "make disciples" of the nations. He likewise shows that the Pauline view of the Christian life is consistently grounded in future realities that are experienced or anticipated now in this present evil age—whether in living as children of the light (1 Thess 5:1–11), doing away with the current deeds of darkness (Rom 13:11–14), living as colonial citizens of a heavenly kingdom (Phil 3:20), or putting on now the life of Christ's kingdom that is coming (Col 3:1–11).

Part 3 helpfully contrasts the biblical eschatology that Wax has constructed with three alternative eschatologies that dominate our current context, and with which we need to engage if discipleship is to be faithful (both in terms of missionally confronting these rival views and in ensuring that they do not contaminate or distort our discipleship). Wax looks in turn at (1) the enlightenment eschatology of human technological progress, (2) the emancipatory eschatology of the sexual revolution, and (3) the consumer society's quest for personal fulfilment through acquisition and personal branding. In each



case, Wax deftly highlights how these dominant secular eschatologies tell a very different story from the Christian one, and how faithful discipleship involves a missionary engagement with them.

The fourth and final section of the book considers how “eschatological discipleship” relates to three streams within contemporary evangelical thinking about the Christian life: (1) discipleship as evangelistic reproduction (disciples-making-disciples); (2) discipleship as personal spiritual discipline (in the Dallas Willard style); and (3) discipleship as a gospel-centered, gospel-motivated life. Wax provides insightful suggestions as to how each of these valid emphases could be clarified and strengthened by an appreciation of the fundamentally eschatological shape of Christian existence.

Wax’s presentation is well-written and well-argued. He succeeds in bringing together these two subjects that are so often found together in the New Testament (our “discipleship” and the eschatological shape of the gospel). In so doing, Wax not only corrects common imbalances in contemporary thinking about the Christian life but also provides a fresh perspective for thinking about missionary engagement with our culture. He also commendably interacts with significant scholars from across the disciplines—from biblical studies (e.g., N. T. Wright), systematic theology (e.g., Kevin Vanhoozer) and ethics (e.g., Oliver O’Donovan).

It is inevitable in such a wide-ranging and multi-disciplinary work as this one to notice subjects or texts that could have received more attention, or in which the emphasis could have been different. For example, I personally would have liked Wax to run harder and further with the idea of “learning” as the conceptual centre of what it means to be a “disciple” (μαθητής) in the Gospels and Acts, and I finished the biblical section thinking how useful it would have been also to explore the eschatological nature of Christian discipleship in Hebrews, 2 Peter and Revelation. Theologically, I would have loved Wax to address explicitly the connection between the eschatological blessings of the next age and their realization in this current age (an issue often expressed these days in terms of the degree of continuity between this creation and the new creation). This is a much-contested question, and could easily have hijacked the agenda of the work. However, where one lands on this issue does have a massive impact on what discipleship looks like—in mission, in apologetics, in socio-political engagement and in obedient living. From the assessments he draws at various points, Wax seems to inhabit the kind of optimistic amillennialism characteristic (in different ways) of N. T. Wright and Tim Keller (he quotes with favor Michael Bird’s view that “the seeds of the new creation have already begun budding in the old garden,” pp. 87–88). A more explicit engagement with this question would have clarified and bolstered the practical conclusions of parts 3 and 4 (especially for those of us who occupy a slightly different location on the realized eschatology spectrum).

All the same, finishing a book stimulated and wanting more is a compliment rather than a criticism. Wax has done us a real service by arguing so cogently that Christian discipleship is intrinsically eschatological, and that Christian eschatology is inescapably practical and directive for our life and mission now.

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Stephen Witmer. *A Big Gospel in Small Places: Why Ministry in Forgotten Communities Matters*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019. 216 pp. £14.99/\$18.00.

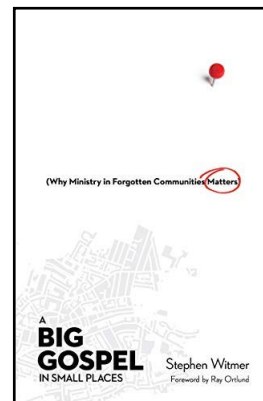
Amid a culture that cries “bigger and faster is always better,” Stephen Witmer’s *A Big Gospel in Small Places* is a clarion call to faithful small place gospel ministry. Indeed, the cry of “bigger and faster is always better” has been adopted by many in the church as well, with much being written in recent years prioritizing city ministry.

To begin on a personal note, I live and minister in a place of about 1,000 people in northern NSW, Australia. In sharing this fact with a bishop of another diocese, his laughter indicated amusement. My father is also an Anglican minister. His desire to move from a place of 8,000 people to a church in a place of 2,000 people was met with bewilderment from his bishop: “it’s not good for your CV,” was the implication. Witmer has provided a valuable corrective to this way of thinking. His is a rallying cry, not to prioritize small place ministry, but to value it alongside the push for city ministry.

In his first section, Witmer helpfully shows us how small places are both better and worse than we often think. In clarifying terms, he’s talking of places that are “small in population, influence, and economic power” (p. 22). With the rapid movement of people towards the cities, small places are often marginalized and overlooked (p. 29). Witmer says they can either be despised or idealized (p. 42), and only time spent with people in small places can give you a true picture of the good and the bad.

The heart of Witmer’s book is his second section where he develops a theological vision for small place ministry. He argues that we need to know the source and goal of small place ministry to value it and to minister faithfully and fruitfully. He summarizes these as “a shaping gospel and a see-through church” (p. 61). Witmer articulates the gospel as “the good news of the salvation God has accomplished through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ” (p. 66). This gospel is big in four ways: in its importance, power, effects, and centrality (p. 67). Drawing on Ephesians 3, Witmer contends that God’s purpose for the church is that it displays his wisdom and glory (pp. 70–71). Therefore, Witmer raises the question: “Wouldn’t we expect God to show forth various aspects of his character with particular clarity through churches wealthy and poor, big and small, in big places and small places, of various cultures and ethnicities and classes?” (p. 73). Witmer believes that there are some aspects of the wisdom and glory of God that a large church cannot display, just as there are some aspects that a small church cannot display. Witmer then has an insightful chapter titled, “Strategic Isn’t Always What We Think” (ch. 5), looking at the lavish nature of the gospel and Jesus’s ministry in the Gospels. He then propounds that “Small Is Usually Better Than We Think” (ch. 6) and that “Slow Is Often Wiser Than We Think” (ch. 7). When one begins to think that Witmer is swinging the pendulum too far, he counters by saying things like “the gospel’s valuing of small doesn’t mean small is *always* good” (p. 92) and “the high velocity of the gospel shows that fast isn’t necessarily bad” (p. 106). And he always comes back to the grounding question of whether our preferment for big or fast is shaped more by the gospel or by our culture. Witmer then concludes this section by showing what small place churches should look like and helps the small place pastor to battle joy-killers.

In the book’s final section, Witmer employs some piercing questions to help identify both good and bad reasons to minister in small places and helps us to reconsider some of the common reasons for



prioritizing city ministry. To those ministering in small places he says, “My prayer is that ... you won’t stay where you are simply because it’s easier, safer and more convenient to do so.... I pray also that you won’t *leave* your current ministry because you hear the siren song of making a name for yourself in a famous, important place” (p. 144, emphasis original). Witmer raises some bad reasons not to serve in small places. One of these bad reasons is particularly salient and strikes at our prideful hearts: “I’m too gifted/educated for a small place” (p. 149). Witmer challenges this, saying, “Do we doubt that God in his sovereign wisdom can give a big talent a small platform? ... Those who walk closely with God and are deeply engaged in small place ministry soon realize they’re not overqualified to stand before God’s people and declare the mysteries of the gospel” (p. 149). Witmer provides good reasons for considering small place ministry, though I find one reason a little too subjective. Witmer writes, “If your heart beats faster when you think of small places—or perhaps one small place in particular that you’ve grown to love—that may be a good reason to follow your heart and love deeply what God loves perfectly” (p. 157). Given what Witmer says in the rest of the book, I suspect he would see this love as God-given, rather than succumbing to our own comforts. However, this was not clarified sufficiently on this occasion.

Witmer seeks to push back against the common reasons to pursue city ministry, helping to refine them so that they are truly grounded in the gospel. The apostle Paul’s ministry in large centers has often been put forward as a reason to prioritize cities. But, asks Witmer, “Didn’t Jesus and his disciples spend lots of time in villages and the countryside?” (p. 166). Witmer raises the question of the appropriateness of citing Paul’s ministry pattern as a template for our own: “Paul never commanded anyone to focus on cities, nor did he explain why he himself was drawn to cities” (p. 172). Witmer also challenges the idea that reaching the city is strategic for reaching the countryside. He says, “Getting the gospel from the city to the small towns requires sending people from the city to the countryside, which is generally the *opposite* of what the urban apologetic literature calls for” (p. 176). Another reason given for pursuing urban ministry is eschatological—i.e., “The end-time destiny of the people of God is life in a city” (p. 177). However, Witmer persuasively pushes back against this solely urban understanding of the apostle John’s revelation.

The great value of Witmer’s book lies in his insistence that our questions of where and how ministry should happen are driven not by the culture but by the gospel. As Witmer calls for a valuing of small place ministry, it would be an unfounded criticism to say that he is calling for us to neglect city ministry and to focus solely on small place ministry. His argument is that both are needed to display the glory and wisdom of God in all its fullness.

Whether you are a small place pastor, a pastor of a large city church, or a seminary student considering where God is calling you to serve, your love for the gospel and your desire to serve God wherever he has placed you or wherever he sends you, will only increase as you read this book. I highly commend it!

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— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Afe Adogame, Raimundo C. Barreto, and Wanderley Pereira da Rosa, eds. *Migration and Public Discourse in World Christianity*. World Christianity and Public Religion. Minneapolis: Fortress. 2019. xi + 300 pp. £23.99/\$34.00.

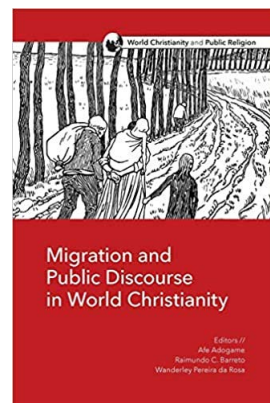
This book gathers fifteen authors from five continents to promote a worldwide interdisciplinary conversation on the theme of migration and public discourse in world Christianity. The book divides into five sections.

Part 1 (chs. 1–3) focuses on the impact of transnational networks and cross-cultural interactions in shaping religious identities and theologies. In chapter 1, Edmond Agyeman and Justice Richard Kwabena Owusu Kyei investigate how the engagements in transnational religious fields help to create space for construction of transnational religious identity among second-generation Ghanaians in Amsterdam. In chapter 2, Eduardo Albuquerque highlights the non-Catholic central Americans' migration to the United States and the religious market exchange through the mega churches on both sides. Moses Biney, in chapter 3, discusses transnationalism, religious participation, and civic responsibility among African immigrants in North America. African immigrants are contributing their share to the good of all, both transnationally at a global scale and in their host countries through religious participation and civic engagement.

Part 2 (chs. 4–7) details the migrants' experience and religious discourse. In chapter 4, Joao Chaves presents how Brazuca Baptist pastors are pushed to revise their "theopolitical" conservatism because of their church membership that is largely comprised of undocumented immigrants. In chapter 5, Sharon Park highlights the connection between Juche, Christianity, and subjectivity. The chapter discusses how North Koreans come to understand their identity (Juche) through conversion to Christianity in South Korea. In chapter 6, Sonia Maria de Freitas takes the case of Orthodox Russian immigration to Brazil and explains the resistance they have faced in Brazil because of their religious identity. In chapter 7, Janice A. McLean-Farrel looks at the feminization of migration. She argues that the Afro-Caribbean females' lives in New York City are shaped by the intersection of family, faith, and personal development, drawn from both traditions and values of their countries of origin as well as the women's lived experience in the country of destination.

The third part (chs. 8–10) brings out migrants' own voice in developing theologies of migration. Christian J. Hong, in chapter 8, highlights the importance of intergenerational storytelling in the formation of identity, spirituality, religion, and theology. In chapter 9, Henrietta M. Nyamnjon reflects on the lives of Cameroonian migrants in Cape Town, how they cope with their challenges by seeking God through Pentecostal churches trans-locally and transnationally. In chapter 10, Fabio Baggio presents a theological reflection on his concept from "neighborhood" to "proximity." He uses four stories and Pope Francis's four verbs in parallel with the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The fourth part (chs. 11–13) examines the role of migration, public policy, and civil discourse in theological formulation. In chapter 11, Luis N. Rivera-Pagan highlights the need for an ecumenical, international, and intercultural theological perspective that counters xenophobia with xenophilia, a concept that seeks to perceive issues from immigrants' perspective. In chapter 12, Gioacchino Campese



offers theological reflection on “refugee crisis.” In particular, it is not essentially a humanitarian and emergency crisis, nor a capacity and resource crisis, but a warning light of major structural change in Europe which leads to fear and xenophobia (p. 217). In chapter 13, Francisco Pelaez-Diaz reflects on Central American migration as the “Way of the Cross” for theological framing of the migrant. The reenactment of the Way of the Cross is the theological framework which helps denounce the violence directed to the immigrants and enables them to cross political/geographical, religious, and social boundaries.

The book’s final part (chs. 14–15) offers two stories about Brazilian Pentecostalism and migration. Fabio Py, in chapter 14, focuses on the Pentecostal expansion with the settlement of landless workers in the northern part of Rio de Janeiro. In chapter 15, David Mesquiati de Oliveira highlights the Pentecostalism of Brazilians in diaspora as it links migration with mission. Migration is a theological project for most Brazilian Pentecostals.

Migration and Public Discourse in World Christianity has several strengths. One is the contribution of diverse views by authors from different continents. Another is the bringing of migrants’ own voices, their different stories, and practical experiences, to develop migration theology. The book also covers key issues in the discourse between world Christianity and migration. Some of the issues include theology of migration, transnationalism and identity, feminization of migration, and migration and civic responsibility.

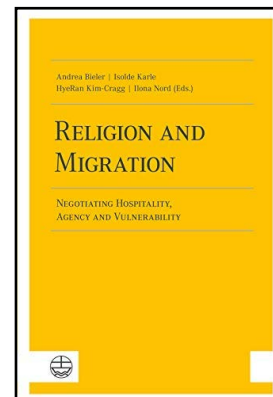
The book also has some shortcomings. Even though it covers several issues, migrants’ stories, and experiences, it does not connect them so as to develop a comprehensive migration theology. For instance, the Ghanaian transnational experience and Korean intergenerational storytelling approach could have been brought together to better understand their commonality and develop a theological framework which works among the second-generation of both immigrant communities. Migration from the Arab world and public discourse in world Christianity are major phenomena in the contemporary migration yet are not discussed in this book.

Despite these concerns, I commend the book to students, professors, and church leaders who seek to better understand the interdisciplinary conversation on migration and public discourses in world Christianity.

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Andrea Bieler, Isolde Karle, HyeRan Kim-Cragg, and Ilona Nord, eds. *Religion and Migration: Negotiating Hospitality, Agency and Vulnerability*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019. 262 pp. £38.23/\$48.00.

How does religion relate to migration? Answering this question from a Christian perspective is both sobering and heartening. Christians are haunted by a past that was all too mixed-up with colonialism. At the same time, they are called to an ancient path of hospitality even while living as pilgrims in the world. In today's climate rife with polarized debate, Christians often struggle to know how to engage important issues. Consequently, this leads to disengagement. *Religion and Migration* seeks to break from the dichotomistic nature of many discussions of global migration and the flat characterization of migrants either as "passive and powerless victims" or "dangerous villains" (p. 11). The book purposes to thoughtfully engage a variety of perspectives that shed light on complex realities in order to clarify Christian thinking and show a way forward for constructive engagement.



Part one explores the power of migrants to effect change on religious thought and practice. Chapter 1 examines the effects of the reality that "religion and beliefs always travel with migrants" (p. 22). It uses the example of migration between Mexico and the USA to demonstrate how the religious landscape of both countries has changed due to the movement of people between them. Chapter 2 considers "postcolonial perspectives on migration," which expose the need for a robust "postcolonial theology of migration" (p. 43). Chapter 3 begins with this pithy yet profound assertion: "Migrants are agents of social and religious innovation." The chapter proceeds to unpack this idea, demonstrating the potentially positive effects of "living with and learning from refugees" (p. 72). Chapter 4 examines the "transnational (religious) identities" of migrants in Southern Africa and suggests "a minority discourse" as opposed to "an ethnic discourse" (p. 80) as a helpful paradigm for their theological reflection.

Part 2 questions the usage of the "highly ambiguous" terms "hospitality" and "home" (p. 14). Chapter 5 promotes a "post-migrant understanding" (p. 95) of migrant churches in Switzerland, giving them due consideration as a permanent and growing fixture in Switzerland's religious narrative rather than a transient one. This chapter calls Canadian Christians to reconsider their self-identification as "a *host nation* to immigrant guests" in favor of pursuing a paradigm of "mutual hospitality" (p. 110) in order to resist neo-colonialist pitfalls. Chapter 6 holds out the Indigenous Church as a potential leader in moving towards a deepened understanding of true hospitality based upon Indigenous peoples' biblically congruent ideals regarding treaty, collaboration, and reconciliation. Chapter 7 explores the loss of a sense of place and the realities of living in limbo experienced by asylum seekers participating in relationship-oriented church program in Basel, Switzerland. Chapter 8 describes the results and implications of research conducted by university students among young refugees in southern Germany concerning the creation of art that communicated "feeling at home" (p. 147).

Part 3 considers the current global religious and political milieu and how various practices and issues interact with the realities of migration. Chapter 9 affirms the Bible as "migration literature" (p. 164). It discusses problems facing the Protestant Church in Germany as they seek to help migrant communities. Chapter 10 examines the effects of the "religious mobility" of Cameroonian migrants in various Pentecostal churches in South Africa. It explains why Pentecostal charismatic Christianity has been "rendered meaningful and relevant" in a globalized world. Chapter 11 proposes migration as a

relevant hermeneutical-theological paradigm informed by the pathos and diaspora “hybridity” (p. 206) of immigrant identities. Chapter 12 ponders the reasons for “remigration” in the Hebrew Bible and in the experiences of Pasifika migrants. Chapter 13 contributes ideas for “homiletical engagement of migration” (p. 233) using an inductive approach with an emphasis on “acknowledging vulnerability” in the practice of hospitality (p. 242). Chapter 14 suggests that the church “take seriously the alleged fears of the people” who oppose increased migration rather than “simply tabooing them with an attitude of moral superiority” (p. 255).

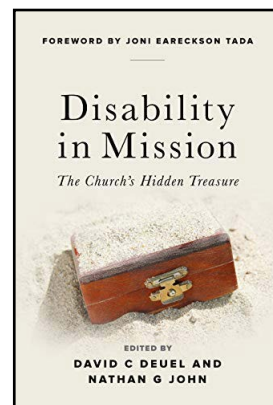
Religion and migration are intricately connected and influence one another. But this relationship is complicated and not often discussed in a nuanced way. This book is a refreshing, thought-provoking exception. It is an invitation to delve into the complexities of migration issues with an eye towards constructive dialogue and respect for the agency of all people, while reflecting a grassroots connection to the struggles and insights related to the experience of migration. The contributors hail from a broad range of countries and cultures. This diversity creates a truly multifaceted exploration of the relationship between religion and migration. Each chapter explores hospitality, agency, and vulnerability in a way that moves beyond dichotomized party-line polarization. Instead, we get a thoughtful and wise conversation with experts in the field and, perhaps even more importantly, with migrants themselves. *Religion and Migration* is well-worth reading for anyone seeking to understand the immigrant experience and to engage in migration issues in a nuanced way that is informed by biblical principles.

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David C. Deuel and Nathan G. John, eds. *Disability in Mission: The Church's Hidden Treasure*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2019. 167 pp. £19.99/\$19.95.

I am the daughter of an indigenous missionary to the First Nations or Native American people of the North and South Americas. We spent many summers traveling all over the United States engaging in evangelism and discipleship with different native communities. My first memories of engaging someone with a disability was from visiting a community in Florida. One young man left a big impression. He had an intellectual disability. His passion for God was filled with such a refreshing innocence! Each time we were with this community of Christians, he unashamedly gave a big hug to each familiar face. As I have gotten older, I've learned this not so young man now was an integral part of his church community. Everyone knew him, and everyone loved him. He brought a spark of joy to his community!

Disability in Mission shares these stories, these windows into the beauty of God's good and varying design to present a paradigm shift to the church regarding global mission. Deuel and John lay the foundation by arguing that God's kingdom is an upside-down kingdom. He uses the weak things of the world to shame the wise. They challenge the church to re-evaluate their role in global missions. Those who *seem* weak truly are indispensable (1 Cor 12:22). The book shines a light on global stories of our brothers and sisters in Christ by striving to “(1) inspire those with disabilities and vulnerabilities to seek to be involved in ministry; (2) inspire churches and communities around them



to facilitate their ministry; and (3) embolden the church to think beyond God working *in spite* of our disability, towards acknowledging that God intends to work powerfully *through* our disability” (p. 7). Joni Eareckson Tada, who wrote the forward to the book, has said for decades that disability ministry is not complete until ministry is *with* those who are disabled. She encourages the church to “enlist, and even exploit, people’s limitations for the glory of God on the mission field” (p. xxi).

Our family includes a child with multiple medical issues. This book was a refreshing, healing and empowering read that gave glimpses of our own story. The various biographical sketches of God, who enables his witness to flow through different individuals, expanded our view of his bigness, his power, his glory. This book magnificently shows how weakness is a key component to seeing God’s power displayed to the nations. Among the book’s many incredible testimonies, none stood out to me like that of Paul Kasonga from Zambia, whom God used to bring revival to almost 80% of Zambia! It is an empowering read that reminds us that God’s power comes is not partial to those with more ability. When we read, “Resource abundance or resource lack is ultimately dispensed by our good and loving God. Jesus is the ultimate resource manager. Jesus is the ultimate advocate” (p. 124), God reminds us that the doors are still open to pursue him wherever he may lead. His mission does not depend on the availability of “good resources.” Those with disability need not miss out on the experience of being used by God in missions. Such ministry, however, will require the support, engagement, and creativity of other brothers and sisters.

While *Disability in Mission* does not directly address why people affected by disability have been excluded from this arena of ministry, it builds on this fact. Time after time, each story has an element of exclusion or struggle to engage on the mission field. So, the question arises from these experiences, “What is the local church doing to either support or impede this work of mission?” The book does not engage the church’s history of exclusion or its historical perspective on disability. It is a big topic that has a hard history. Michael Beates’s *Disability and the Gospel: How God Uses Our Brokenness to Display His Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012) is a valuable tool in understanding the long-standing history between the disabled community and the church. John Knight of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minnesota recently challenged pastors to engage beyond inclusion and move to equip the intellectually disabled. He asks, “Church, have we been putting God’s Marines on the sidelines because we live by worldly standards?” (“Gospel Hope for All Who Come: Your Church and Those Living with Disability” [Bethlehem Conference for Pastors + Church Leaders, 3 February 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y8psxvbp>]).

Those in Christ should not be hidden in the back of a sanctuary, displaced to a restricted classroom, prevented from being on the mission field or, worse forgotten because of a lack of presence. As 1 Corinthians 12 reminds us, those parts of the body that seem less presentable should receive greater honor. Organizations such as Joni and Friends and Key Ministry are a few ministries that can be starting points for churches to begin this work. Benjamin T. Cooper’s *Disabling Mission, Enabling Witness* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018] is also a valuable companion for understanding inclusion in mission.

I wonder how many people will be inspired to pursue global missions after reading the stories in this book. Church, in humility and eagerness, be ready for those families who are stepping by faith,

trusting that God will use their struggles, their frailty, their diversity, and their brokenness for his glory. *Disability in Mission* will ready us to join them in this good work of re-envisioning missions.

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Jayson Georges. *Ministering in Patronage Cultures: Biblical Models and Missional Implications*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. 176 pp. £16.99/\$22.00.

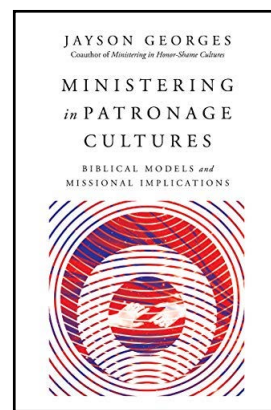
With over fifteen years of ministry in Central Asia and the Middle East, Jayson Georges (pseudonym) certainly has the credentials to address the topic of patronage, as co-author of *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016) and founding editor of HonorShame.com,. Although the subject dominates the landscape of Scripture (linguistically and culturally), from Genesis to Revelation, books rarely discuss it. I began reading *Ministering in Patronage Cultures* with high expectations and was not disappointed.

Ministering in Patronage Cultures alerts the reader to a cultural, biblical, and theological blind spot that impacts our relationships with others and the divine patron. Rather than providing rules for the reader to follow, Georges gives principles to help clarify the cloudy conversations that surround patronage in antiquity and today. He does so because patronage differs from culture to culture as demonstrated in the text by past church historians and the numerous case studies Georges includes from around the world.

Georges defines “patronage” as a “reciprocal, asymmetrical relationship” (p. 10). This is in contrast to an impersonal contract that demands equal fulfillment by both parties. The author then walks through anticipated objections by Westerners—a big one being that non-Western locals are just after my money. He also notes that all patron-client relationships are not equal; this point does not imply they are all malevolent. Georges concludes, “A biblical perspective on patronage reframes our relationship with God and reframes our relationship with God and adds depth to theological concepts such as faith, grace, and salvation” (p. 3).

Georges divides the book into four parts. Collectively, they help readers to discern a biblical perspective of patronage. Part 1 (chapters 1–3) introduces cultural issues, such as the meaning of patronage and its various expressions and misperceptions. Part 2 considers biblical models demonstrated by Yahweh, Jesus, and Paul. Their examples provide the backdrop to develop a biblical theology of patronage. The third part considers theological concepts in relation to patronage—God, sin, and salvation. Part 4 investigates missional implications. These include how we engage patronage, transforming relationships, and reframing the Christian life.

Georges writes clearly and avoids technical terms. He also provides further resources for those who wish dig deeper (appendix 1). Two appendixes and two indexes (general and Scripture) are included. Here are a few outstanding quotes that I found particularly instructive:



- “Patrons are the ‘haves,’ clients are the ‘have-nots,’ and patronage is when the ‘haves’ solve the problems for the have-nots” (p. 9).
- “Reciprocity is a moral obligation” (p. 16).
- “Extending patronage towards other people is not a means to acquiring honor or authority, but an expression of thankfulness towards God” (p. 59).
- “*Grace* is gift-giving benefaction, the relational giving and repaying of favors” (p. 99).
- “Patronage is not a system of dependence, but a model of relational *interdependence*” (p. 115).
- “The goal of cross-cultural relationships should actually be stewardship—managing resources and relationships for kingdom purposes” (p. 129).
- “Wealth is not just financial in nature” (p. 136).
- “Patrons love to ‘play God’” (p. 140).
- “A biblical theology of grace and divine patronage keeps us from the grace-denying extremes of ungratefulness and repayment” (p. 145).

The chapters in this introductory book on patronage are well laid out and offer plenty of meat for the reader to chew on. Sprinkled throughout each chapter are case studies and ample quotes from theorists and/or practitioners. With 246 footnotes, the ambitious reader will have much to digest beyond that found in the text. A number of helpful summary figures, tables, and colorful illustrations are scattered throughout the text. Georges fulfills what he proposes to do in the book.

The book presents a number of ideas that some readers will find controversial. For example, Georges proposes that God is the divine patron and Jesus is the client. This will be a difficult pill for many to swallow. While seldom considered, this needed insight affords a whole different (and necessary) perception of the relationship between the Father and Son.

A second example is found in how local and expatriate organizations relate. Georges asks, “Is ‘partnership’ the most helpful (or even realistic) approach to cross-cultural relationships?” (p. 127). Advancing from paternalism to partnerships in the missions world has resulted in numerous books advocating partnerships (which are noted in a footnote). Often overlooked, however, are the Western values that drive the partnership model. Georges then asks, “Might *patronage* be a more appropriate, life-giving model for cross-cultural relationships?” (p. 128). The answers are found in the questions. Patronage challenges the Western values found in partnerships, e.g., individualism, independence, democratic equality, goal-orientation, earned respect, guilt, efficiency, private ownership, and directness.

Books always raise a number of questions not addressed due to brevity or because they fall outside their parameters. If I could ask the author a series of questions, here are a few: What is the central question that drives this book? How do we avoid seeing patronage as the same across all cultures as was done with honor and shame in the past? How does patronage relate to present-day politics in the West? My final question would be followed by a comment. What will be your sequel on this long-minimized topic? We eagerly await 2.0!

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Brian M. Howell. *Short-Term Mission: Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012. 234 pp. £14.28/\$19.20.

In the past fifty years, short-term mission has grown from a relatively minor, little-known dimension of Christian mission to arguably the most prominent form of mission activity in contemporary North American churches. Brian Howell, a professor of anthropology at Wheaton College, has done a huge service for the missiological guild and the global church (especially the church in the North America). He adds to the growing literature that studies this growing phenomenon of short-term mission (STM) as an academic subject.

Howell's research is solidly rooted in classic anthropological method. He gathers his ethnographic data by studying a short-term mission team, conducting extensive interviews with those involved, and engaging in a two-year ethnographic project with a large sending church. This provides ample data that Howell analyzes, from which he makes qualified specific claims and suggestions.

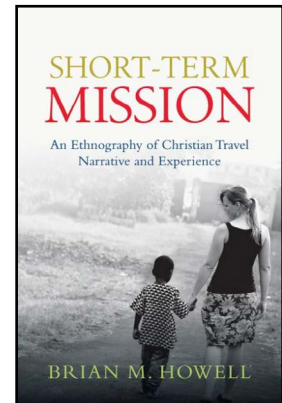
Although no consensus definition exists as to what qualifies as a STM, Howell focuses his study on one- or two-week trips of high school teams. For Howell, the critical issue is not time but meaning. Therefore, this study looks at the cultural significance of the STM trip for participants. Howell condenses his findings into a composite narrative framework. This narrative, Howell notes, frames STM as "a culturally mediated form of travel with particular dynamics" (p. 57). Those dynamics consist of two basic tropes--the self-focused experiences of tourism and pilgrimage. Howell elaborates in great detail as to how this emphasis on personal transformation, adventure, and spiritual growth forms the primary foci of the STM experience for most participants.

As some claim, this results not in legitimate mission labor but a form of Christian tourism (what some label "vacationary" or "voluntourism"). That is, the criticism is that STM provides Christians with the opportunity to *feel* that they've done something while not having to leave their comfort zone or make significant sacrifice. Most participants often ignored issues of political life, race, and structural poverty, focusing more on their own personal experiences.

Can such efforts be redeemed? Howell gives a qualified "yes," but in doing so he contends that redeeming STM will take more than simply better preparation and post-trip follow-up. Rather, Howell contends, "we must imagine structural and institutional change" (p. 198).

In the final two chapters, Howell suggests a new narrative that would assist in producing more fruitful STM expressions. This will involve, at the very least, a reorientation of STM around *listening* and *presence*. That is, education and community should become the primary goals of all STM. Howell approvingly cites the opinion of Kenyan pastor Oscar Muriu, who suggests a change of terminology from "short-term missions" to "short-term learning opportunities." Doing so would disabuse participants of the notion that their primary job is to *do something for others*. STM leaders should work to create opportunities for the exchange of "linking social capital" (p. 219). Activities associated with tourism and shopping should be utilized as opportunities to highlight local issues of poverty, social inequities, and global issues.

Howell's treatment is erudite and deeply conversant with recent anthropological literature. This work is exceptional in that it is the first (to my knowledge) rigorous ethnographic description of STM



from research data. In particular, Howell's crafting of a powerful narrative, brought into conversation with the anthropology of tourism and pilgrimage, mark this book as truly ground-breaking.

STM is likely not going away any time soon. This constructive work provides thoughtful challenges to make the phenomenon of STM a more helpful one, both to participants and those who receive STM trips.

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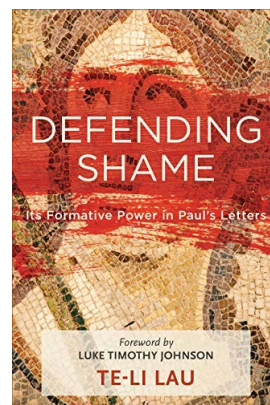
Te-Li Lau. *Defending Shame: Its Formative Power in Paul's Letters*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020. 233 pp. £19.99/\$27.99.

I might have found my new favorite book on honor and shame: Te-Li Lau's *Defending Shame: The Formative Power in Paul's Letter*. Most books relating honor, shame, and ethics come from philosophers and historians; this is the most extensive treatment by a theologian on the work of Paul. Lau is an associate professor in New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He summarizes the goal of his project in this way: "My interest lies in the ethical significance of shame, not so much in the phenomenology, sociology, or psychology of shame. These other approaches will be examined only insofar as it helps elucidate the rationale underlying Paul's use of shame for Christic formation" (p. 10).

In part 1, he outlines the framework for the discussion. It highlights the function of shame in its ancient Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts. In part 2, Lau engages Paul's letters. He specifically focuses on 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, and Philemon, though he touches on other letters here and there. In part 3, he compares and contrasts Pauline shaming with contemporary and ancient voices.

Readers might be tempted to skip the first section (chs. 1–3), eager to get to his study on Paul. Lau's survey, however, provides invaluable insight into the underlying logic that affects shame dynamics. Rather than focus on social shame, he focuses more on psychological and ethical (or "dispositional") shame. Lau's distinction and explanation of "retrospective shame" and "prospective shame" is critical for making sense of Paul's use of shame.

Part 2 is the heart of the book and consists of three chapters. In chapter 4, Lau shows how Paul uses retrospective shame in 1 Corinthians and Galatians. Several key characteristics mark Paul's shaming tactics. First, he does not merely berate his readers; he gives thoughtful reasons to buttress his rebuff. Second, Lau notes, "Effective shaming rebuke also requires solid ethos or unimpeachable character on the part of the speaker" (p. 104). Paul highlights his own character and efforts as "a foil demonstrating the shameful character of the agitators" (p. 104). Third, "Like a skillful doctor, Paul balances his shaming refutation with gentle words so that the bitter pill of correction is more easily swallowed" (p. 104). Fourth, Paul's purpose or goal in shaming is to "engage them in the core of their being" in order to "transform the mind" (pp. 104–5). They must know that "within the divine court of opinion, the Galatians are shame-worthy" (p. 106).



Chapter 5 explores Paul's use of prospective shame within Philippians and Philemon. According to Lau, "Paul uses honor and shame categories in Philippians to cultivate a dispositional sense of shame in his readers" (p. 123). He wants to shape their conscience so that they can persevere in the faith, resisting temptation and fruitless disputes. For the church, the cross and humility no longer are "social markers of shame." They are "nullified and transformed in God's economy" for the sake of glory (p. 128). Paul points to Christ and others as moral exemplars, who can guide them forward to true honor. Christ is the new standard that must shape one's conscience.

Paul's use of honor and shame in Philemon is breathtaking. He keenly alternates between the roles of superior and inferior. Paul ensures that Philemon grasps the way Christ transform our identity and thus his relationship to Onesimus. Lau astutely points out that the letter to Philemon actually is a *public* letter, a detail that's easily overlooked.

Chapter 6 synthesizes Lau's findings. Prospective shame is not independent of retrospective shame; rather, they are intertwined. In Lau's study, this point becomes increasingly evident. It is also quite useful. Lau states, "Paul may engage in specific acts of shaming so as to evoke the occurrent experience of shame not for a past or present transgression but for a potential bad act in the future. He brings about the experience of prospective shame to forestall the performance of bad acts" (p. 158). The experience of shame does not cause a pain rather than pleasure response. It reflects and modulates one's values. It moves our morality.

Paul understands that "Virtue is not just doing virtuous things but doing virtuous things *virtuously*" (p. 162). Accordingly, shaming acts are not punitive for punishment's sake; they aim at restoration. In fact, Lau observes that the converse can be true, as when Israel finally felt shame once they were restored. This form of shame is healthy and healing for those who suffer from shamelessness.

Part 3 consists of chapters 7–8, where Lau explores several practical implications of his study. To do this, he brings Paul into conversation with Confucius and John Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming theory. This discussion is especially valuable for discerning ways the contemporary church can apply Paul's teaching and follow his example. Chapter 8 responds to potential challenges posed against Paul's use of shame. For example, Lau speaks to the inadequacy of guilt as a moral emotion to be used for moral transformation. He says, "Shame gets at the root of the problem, focusing on the imperfections in our character that prompt us to go astray. Guilt is sufficient if we narrowly focus only on moral responsibility and blame. Shame, however, is needed if we extend our focus toward moral character and values" (p. 214).

The book's strength is also its greatest limitation. Lau has written a scholarly book. It is not so technical so as only to be helpful for a select few scholars. Still, it's not a fast read simply because of its density. I found myself having to stop again and again because I could not cram another idea into my brain. I needed to let them simmer in my mind. *Defending Shame* is not terribly long. He does not waste one of its 233 pages. For these reasons, the book unfortunately will likely have a limited readership.

Lau makes a distinct contribution to the study of Paul and the biblical use of shame. I recommend people read *Defending Shame* slowly, thoughtfully, and in conversation with others. Paul demonstrates a healthy way of using shame as a way of honoring people. In order to internalize such insights, we need time and opportunity to process with other people.

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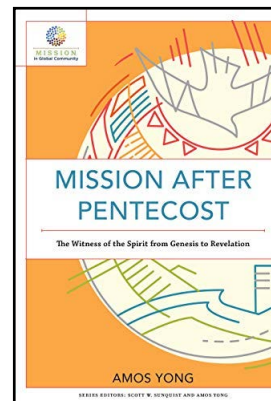
Amos Yong. *Mission after Pentecost: The Witness of the Spirit from Genesis to Revelation*. The Mission in Global Community. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. xvii + 300 pp. £19.99/\$29.99.

The aim of Yong's book is quite straight-forward: to set forth a biblical theology of mission from a pneumatological perspective; more precisely, its theology of mission is based on a theological interpretation of Scripture from the perspective of the Pentecost phenomenon (pp. 12–13). From this perspective, Yong works through the entire Bible to discern the intersections between pneumatology and mission.

The work has a number of commendable features. First, the broad sweep of Yong's pneumatological missionary vision is quite astounding for a book of this length. I find his discussion of the Old Testament particularly helpful and illuminating, such as the tension between the centrifugal and centripetal impulses in the earlier history of Israel or the tension between accepting foreigners and distancing from them. Yong does not flinch from the difficulty of addressing Israel's ambiguous relationship to other nations: to convert but also to destroy (pp. 57–69). Translated into today's context, how does the church maintain its international outlook in mission without dissolving its local identity? How does it preserve its local identity without falling into tribalism? How does it present the gospel to the religious "other" without questioning their religious integrity? Yong also deftly fleshes out the missionary activity of the spirit in places where we least expect it, such as Revelation and the Johannine epistles. For example, with respect to the latter, the "divine breath" helps the church to discern between true and false missionaries (pp. 262). Second, the bibliographical references are vast—typical Yong vintage! Third, questions at the end of each chapter offer readers opportunities to reflect missiologically on their own contexts. It serves as a good collateral text for a course on mission theology.

The strength of a pneumatological perspective has been demonstrated in a number of recent works by Pentecostal scholars (e.g., Frank D. Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church: A Dogmatic Inquiry* [London: T&T Clark, 2020]). But unlike Macchia, Yong's approach is governed less by a theological pneumatology and more by what I would call a phenomenology of "spirit" (note the lower case)—that is, the spirit as divine action, which Yong believes to be strictly "biblical" (pp. 278–79). This approach allows for an expansive view of the Spirit's action in the world without the need to specify how Spirit's missionary activity is affected by his personal relation to the Father and the Son and his presence in the church. It is consistent with many of his previous works where "late modernity" serves as the contextual horizon of interpretation. The underlying concern is to find common ground between church and world while recognizing that we are past the age of Enlightenment "reason" (pp. 5–6). This approach is helpful when applied to the Old Testament where "spirit" generally refers to Yahweh-in-action rather than a distinct personal agent.

When applied to the New Testament, Yong's approach becomes problematic. Yong would have us believe that the New Testament writers had not yet understood the Spirit as a distinct person, that the Spirit's distinct personhood is post-Nicene (pp. 18–19). In this, Yong relies, perhaps too heavily, on John R. Levison [*Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009)]. But when it comes to John's Gospel, it becomes almost impossible to force the Spirit into the Yong's procrustean bed. He concedes



to a “proto-trinitarian” theology but sidesteps its anticipation of Nicene pneumatology by regarding the Farewell Discourse as possibly a later interpolation (p. 256).

I would not say that Yong’s pneumatological missiology is seriously compromised by its pneumatological deficit, but if the New Testament does present a view of the Spirit as a distinct third person, as recent proponents of “prosopological exegesis” have argued (Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016]; Kyle R. Hughes, “The Spirit Speaks: Pneumatological Innovation in the Scriptural Exegesis of Justin and Tertullian,” *Vigiliae Christianiae* 69 [2015]: 463–83), it would have important ramifications for our understanding of the contemporary global missionary movement, which is propelled largely by global Pentecostalism.

What makes Pentecostals Pentecostal is their sense of being led by the Spirit as a speaking agent. The early Pentecostals were biblicists, who were drawn to such texts in Acts as “the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (13:2 KJV), “Thus saith the Holy Ghost...” (21:11), etc. They grasped intuitively what prosopological exegesis seems to confirm. One cannot underestimate the powerful missionary impulse of the early Pentecostals (notwithstanding some reckless ventures) without coming to terms with their sense of the *personal* presence of the Spirit who speaks. The title of David du Plessis’s autobiography, taken from Acts 11:12 (KJV), epitomizes this quintessentially Pentecostal insight: *The Spirit Bade Me Go* (Monroe: Logos International, 1970). It is this dimension of the missionary Spirit that Yong, unfortunately, has missed by bracketing the third person of the Trinity.

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