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The Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry is a research institute of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The seminary is located at 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70126.

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Editorial Introduction



Adam Harwood, Ph.D.

Adam Harwood is Associate Professor of Theology, occupying the McFarland Chair of Theology; Director of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry; Editor, Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

I am pleased to announce the formation of the JBTM Editorial Advisory Board. The board will be comprised of a small number of Southern Baptists who hold terminal research degrees in the fields of theology, historical studies, and biblical studies. Some of the board members serve primarily in the church and the others serve primarily in the academy. Their primary role is to recommend topics and to review future articles for the two journal issues published each year. The following people have agreed to serve on the Editorial Advisory Board for 2014:

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Malcolm Yarnell, Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Any shortcomings with the JBTM are the responsibility of the editor alone, but I am confident that the counsel of the Editorial Advisory Board will strengthen the content of this publication.

The present issue features five articles, two article-length book reviews, and eleven book reviews. The articles address a variety of important topics. Kenneth Keathley, Professor of Theology and Director of the L. Russ Bush Center for Faith and Culture at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, explains his shift from young-earth creationism to old-earth creationism. R. Larry Overstreet, who served as Professor of New Testament at Corban University School of Ministry in Tacoma, Washington, addresses the intersection of time and eternity in the half hour of silence in heaven mentioned in Rev 8:1. Twyla Hernandez, Assistant Professor of Christian Missions at Campbellsville University in Campbellsville, Kentucky, reframes the discussion on poverty according to the counsel of Scripture. H. Edward Pruitt, Associate Professor of Christian Studies/Missions and Director of the World Missions Center

at Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Georgia, traces theological convergence from the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 to its impact on global missions through the First International World Congress on Evangelization in Lausanne of 1974. Douglas Groothuis, Professor of Philosophy at Denver Theological Seminary in Littleton, Colorado, considers the typically-neglected, thoroughly-biblical concept of lamenting.

Gerald L. Stevens, Professor of New Testament and Greek at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, writes an article-length review of Darrell Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program Realized for All Nations* (Zondervan, 2012). James Leonard, Assistant Registrar at Leavell College and Visiting Scholar at the H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, provides an article-length review of *The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart D. Ehrman and Daniel B. Wallace in Dialogue*, edited by Robert B. Stewart (Fortress, 2011). Other book reviews include titles in the areas of biblical languages, biblical theology, Christian education, church history, hermeneutics, historical theology, spiritual formation, systematic theology, and world religions.

May the articles and reviews in this issue of JBTM foster a greater love for the LORD, His Word, and all people.

Confessions of a Disappointed Young-Earther



Kenneth Keathley, Ph.D.

Kenneth Keathley is Professor of Theology and Director of the L. Russ Bush Center for Faith and Culture at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

I sometimes describe myself as a “disappointed young-earther.” By that I mean I started out holding to the young-earth position, but the shortcomings of most of the young-earth creationism (YEC) arguments and the shenanigans of certain YEC proponents forced me to the old-earth position.

During the late 1970s, I attended college at Tennessee Temple University (TTU) in Chattanooga, TN. At that time the fundamentalist movement was at a high-water mark among Baptists, and TTU enjoyed a record number of students. It was there that I was introduced to Whitcomb and Morris’ *The Genesis Flood*. In those days their project was called “scientific creationism.”

John Whitcomb and Henry Morris published *The Genesis Flood* in 1961. They intended the work to be a response to Bernard Ramm, who in 1954 had published a work arguing that Noah’s Deluge was a local catastrophe. Borrowing heavily from George McCready Price (1870–1963), a Seventh-Day Adventist author, Whitcomb and Morris contended that the flood of Noah’s day accounts for practically all the geological record. By any standard, the book was a publishing success with over 300,000 copies sold. *The Genesis Flood* launched the modern young-earth creationism movement. Let us remember that prior to 1961, the majority of fundamentalist and evangelical leaders held to some version of old-earth creationism (OEC).¹ It would be difficult to exaggerate the influence Whitcomb and Morris’ book had on me. My original copy was dog-eared and underlined. They were dedicated to upholding the authority of Scripture and the integrity of the Gospel. That resonated with me then and I affirm those commitments today.

The Main Arguments of *The Genesis Flood*

So when Whitcomb and Morris used the term “scientific creationism,” what did they mean?

¹B. B. Warfield, who coined the term “inerrancy of Scripture,” held to a form of theistic evolution. R. A. Torrey, who helped found Moody Bible Institute and Biola and who edited *The Fundamentals* (from which we get our term “Fundamentalist”) adhered to the gap theory. When Harry Rimmer and W. B. Riley debated about the proper interpretation of Genesis 1 neither man argued for a young earth. Even William Jennings Bryan held to a day-age interpretation of the seven days of creation.

They meant that an assessment of the scientific evidence which was not biased by anti-theistic presuppositions would objectively conclude that the earth is only a few thousand years old. We will look further at the nature and role of presuppositions later in the paper. Whitcomb and Morris' argument can be broken down into six parts.

Opposition to Uniformitarianism: Uniformitarianism is the principle that the processes of today should be used to interpret the past. Applied to geology, it implies that the geological formations were formed gradually over immense periods of time. Whitcomb and Morris argued that the presupposition of uniformitarianism hopelessly biased modern geological theory so that geologists fail to see the clear evidences for the global catastrophe that occurred during Noah's day.² They further contended that this current blindness on the part of the geological profession is a fulfillment of the apostle Peter's prophecy of apostasy during the latter days (2 Pet 3:3–7).³ In this way, flood geology and young-earth creationism fit very well within the premillennial worldview of classic Dispensationalism which dominated evangelical thinking for much of the twentieth century.

2nd Law of Thermodynamics as an Effect of the Curse: One of the most fundamental laws of nature is the second law of thermodynamics, otherwise known as entropy. It is the principle that nature has the tendency to move from a state of higher order to a lower state. In short, entropy is the phenomena of everything running down. Whitcomb and Morris interpreted the Genesis account to teach that the universe was originally created perfect: no death, decay, or deterioration. This, to them, does not seem to be compatible with entropy, so Whitcomb and Morris suggested that the second law came into effect when God cursed the earth for Adam's sake.⁴

The Canopy Theory: The creation account (Gen 1:6) speaks of God separating the waters above the firmament from the waters below the firmament. Whitcomb and Morris interpreted this to teach that God placed a vapor canopy above the atmosphere.⁵ This canopy provided the waters that inundated the world during Noah's flood. Whitcomb and Morris argued that the vapor covering provided by the canopy created a very different environment for the pre-flood world from that of the present world.⁶ The blanket of water produced a very favorable greenhouse effect that created a moderate climate worldwide. They interpreted Gen 2:5–6 to teach that in those days it did not rain, and suggested that the vapor canopy provided the mist mentioned. In addition, the canopy acted as a protection from cosmic rays, which perhaps accounted for the remarkably long lives listed in the genealogies of Genesis 4–5.

Rejection of the Geological Column: Whitcomb and Morris argued that the geological

²John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961), 130–42.

³Ibid., 451–54.

⁴Ibid., 225–27.

⁵Ibid., 239–43.

⁶Ibid., 243–58.

column, with its strata and layers, was created by the flood waters of the Deluge. Rather than giving evidence of great periods of time, the layers testify to different phases of the waters rising, cresting and receding. They pointed to “frequent flagrant contradictions to the established geologic time sequences” and to inversions in the geological column in which the supposed ages are out of order. They concluded that the “geologic time scale is an extremely fragile foundation on which a tremendous and unwieldy superstructure of interpretation has been erected.”⁷ The world underwent dramatic transformation during and immediately after Noah’s flood, with the world’s mountain ranges being formed as the waters receded.⁸ In addition, the ice age, if it happened at all, occurred almost immediately after the Deluge.⁹

The Bending of Space Theory: The immensity of the universe poses a special problem to the young-earth position. It appears that light from distance objects has taken millions and billions of years to arrive at earth. This does not seem possible in a 6000-year-old universe. YEC advocate Kurt Wise sums up the situation well when he states, “A face-value reading of the Bible indicates that the creation is thousands of years old. A face-value examination of the creation suggests it is millions or billions of years old. The reconciliation of these two observations is one of the most significant challenges to creation research.”¹⁰ Remarkably, Whitcomb and Morris devote only two pages to the starlight and time problem.¹¹ They dismiss the issue with an appeal to the “appearance of age” argument. However, they also appeal to an article published in 1953 by Parry Moon and Domina Spencer. In the article, Moon and Spencer argued that light, when travelling great distances through space, was able to take a shortcut, so to speak. Rather than travelling in a straight line, light travelled through “Riemannian space.” They concluded, “In this way the time required for light to reach us from the most distant stars is only 15 years.”¹²

Moon and Spencer never provided any mathematical support for their hypothesis. And critics pointed out numerous problems with the theory. For example, if the theory were correct, certain nearby stars would take up more of our night sky than the moon.¹³ There is some evidence that Moon and Spencer presented their theory with tongue in cheek, and that they never meant for the proposal to be taken seriously.¹⁴ Whitcomb and Morris presented the bending of space hypothesis only tentatively, and rather put much more emphasis on the “appearance of age” hypothesis, or

⁷Ibid., 209; cf. 169–211.

⁸Ibid., 141–53.

⁹Ibid., 288–303.

¹⁰Kurt P. Wise, *Faith, Form, and Time: What the Bible Teaches and Science Confirms about Creation and the Age of the Universe* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 58.

¹¹John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Philadelphia: P & R, 1961), 368–70.

¹²Parry Moon and Domina Eberle Spencer, quoted in Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, 370.

¹³Perry G. Phillips, “A History and Analysis of the 15.7 Light-Year Universe,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 40, no. 1 (March 1988): 19–23.

¹⁴Robert Schadeewald, “Moon and Spencer and the Small Universe,” *Creation Evolution Journal* 2.2 (Spring 1981): 20–22.

what is otherwise known as the mature creation view. We will come back to this issue later.

Dinosaur and Human Fossils Together. A centerpiece to the cumulative case presented in *The Genesis Flood* was the fossils found in a limestone bed of the Paluxy River near Glen Rose, Texas. Whitcomb and Morris presented photographs of what appeared to be fossilized impressions of dinosaurs and human footprints side by side. This evidence, they argued, overturned the conventional interpretation of geological history that the era of dinosaurs and the time of humans were separated by millions of years. Under the photos they declared,

These tracks were both cut from the Paluxy River Bed near Glen Rose, Texas, in supposedly Cretaceous strata, plainly disproving the evolutionist's contention that the dinosaurs were extinct some 70 million years before man "evolved." Geologists have rejected this evidence, however, preferring to believe that the human footprints were carved by some modern artist, while at the same time accepting the dinosaur footprints as genuine. If anything, the dinosaur prints look more "artificial" than the human, but the genuineness of neither would be questioned at all were it not for the geologically sacrosanct evolutionary time-scale.¹⁵

This was a spectacular piece of evidence. The photos of the fossils played no small part in convincing many readers (including me) of the feasibility of Whitcomb and Morris' thesis. An article in *Scientific American* predicted that "all the geologists will resign their jobs and take up truck driving" if the prints were found to be genuine.¹⁶ By providing a robust creationist model combined with exhibits such as the Paluxy River footprints, *The Genesis Flood* has had a powerful impact among conservative evangelicals. Unfortunately, as YEC proponent Paul Garner acknowledges, "not all of the ideas of the book have stood the test of time"¹⁷—including, as we will see, the Paluxy footprints.

The Current State of Young-Earth Models

Whitcomb and Morris inspired a generation of young-earth creationists, and I counted myself in their number. As a pastor during the 1980s, I invited a number of young-earth advocates to my church—Clifford Wilson, Carl Baugh, and Kent Hovind, to name a few. My church also served as an extension center for Clifford Wilson's creation studies institute headquartered in Australia. During this time two things became apparent to me: some within the young-earth camp lacked integrity and the model presented by Whitcomb and Morris had serious problems.

These issues were noted by others within the young-earth community. To their credit, organizations such as Answers in Genesis have attempted to address honestly the integrity issue.

¹⁵Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, 174–75.

¹⁶Quoted in Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1992), 121–23.

¹⁷Paul Garner, *The New Creationism: Building Scientific Theories on a Biblical Foundation* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2009), 183.

And some YEC scientists have attempted to provide an updated young-earth model. One such scientist is Australian geologist Andrew Snelling. Snelling wrote the 1,100-page, two-volume *Earth's Catastrophic Past: Geology, Creation, and the Flood* for the express purpose of updating the flood model presented in *The Genesis Flood*. But in many ways Snelling's work is a total revamp. Snelling, along with other YEC researchers such as paleontologist Kurt Wise and astrophysicist Russell Humphreys, recognize that the case argued by Whitcomb and Morris needed significant retooling.

Drops the Canopy Theory: Significantly, Snelling abandons the canopy theory.¹⁸ He and other current YEC advocates recognize that the biblical evidence for the canopy theory is tenuous at best. Some, such as Joseph Dillow, did extensive work to provide a viable model but today most YEC proponents have given up on the theory.¹⁹ Snelling points out there are simply too many scientific obstacles. Any such canopy would have created a runaway greenhouse effect that would have boiled the earth. He explains,

One consideration is that much more than a few inches of liquid water equivalent in a vapor canopy appears to lead to a runaway greenhouse effect. A second is that the amount of latent heat released from the condensation of water vapor limits the amount of condensation that can occur during the Flood without boiling the oceans and killing all the life on earth because of the high temperatures required to radiate the latent heat to space at a sufficient rate. These considerations imply that even if a water vapor canopy did exist above the atmosphere, it could not have contained sufficient water vapor to have sustained forty days and nights of intense, global, torrential rainfall.²⁰

Snelling accepts Humphrey's idiosyncratic interpretation that the "waters above the expanse" mentioned in Gen 1:6–8 are located on the other side of the universe.²¹ So where did the floodwaters come from? Snelling, along with others, argue for "catastrophic plate tectonics" (CPT). They suggest that subterranean reservoirs were unleashed during a catastrophic shift in the tectonic plates.²² The seismic activity exhibited today by plate tectonics is the residual effect of Noah's flood. In addition to dropping Whitcomb and Morris' canopy theory, Snelling also abandons the view that it did not rain prior to the flood (Gen 2:4–7).²³

Drops the Notion that the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics Is an Effect of the Curse: Snelling, along with other global flood advocates, realize that Whitcomb and Morris' argument that entropy was a manifestation of the curse was extremely problematic.²⁴ Without the second law in

¹⁸Andrew Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past: Geology, Creation, and the Flood* (Dallas: ICR, 2009), 663–67.

¹⁹Joseph Dillow, *The Waters Above* (Chicago: Moody, 1981).

²⁰Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past*, 472–73.

²¹*Ibid.*, 194–95, 212, 663–67; Russell Humphreys, *Starlight and Time: Solving the Puzzle of Distant Starlight in a Young Universe* (Green Forest: Master Books, 1994), 53–80.

²²Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past*, 683–706; and Wise, *Faith, Form, and Time*, 181–89.

²³Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past*, 669–73.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 620.

force no normal process would be able to function. For example, the second law is necessary for digestion. Whitcomb and Morris' theory also seemed to be contrary to certain biblical passages. The Bible states that Eden had four rivers (Gen 2:10–14). Rivers are channels of water flowing from a higher level to a lower level. By definition they are examples of the second law in action.

Drops the Paluxy River Fossils: Snelling makes no mention of the fossils found in the riverbed of the Paluxy River. To their credit, most young-earth proponents (with a few notable exceptions) admit that the supposedly human footprints are in fact not human at all. Henry Morris' son, John Morris, publicly acknowledges that none of the prints “can today be regarded as unquestionably of human origin.”²⁵

Accepts the Geological Column: Snelling departs from Whitcomb and Morris at another significant point in that Snelling accepts the validity of the geological column.²⁶ The column is real, and so is the sequence of the fossil record. However, Snelling contends that the geological strata do not present a chronological record. Rather they give evidence of geographical distinctions. The four broad geological divisions—the Precambrian, the Paleozoic, the Mesozoic, and the Cenozoic—give evidence of four distinct bio-geographical regions. This forms the basis of the “ecological zonation theory,” which we will examine next.

Humans and Dinosaurs Lived at the Same Time but in Different Regions: The current global flood model must account for the fact that the remains of dinosaurs and those of humans are never found in the same geological strata. Snelling and others posit the “ecological zonation theory.”²⁷ YEC proponents argue that the pre-flood world was segregated into highly distinct zones. Garner explains, “According to the ecological zonation theory, the order of burial of adjacent ecological zones by the encroaching flood waters produced a vertical sequence of rock layers containing characteristic fossils.”²⁸ Dinosaurs and humans ate different foods, so then they probably also lived in separate regions or “biome.”

Floating continents: One serious challenge to the global flood model is the amount of coal and oil deposits located in the earth. Such deposits are the remnants of buried vegetation. There simply could not have been enough vegetation growing on the earth at one time to account for all the deposits that have been found. As a solution, Snelling, along with Wise and others, propose that during the pre-flood era there existed giant floating continents.²⁹ Upon these floating islands, which covered much of the world's oceans, grew immense forests.

Based upon this, it has been proposed that the Primary plants actually formed the basis of a

²⁵John Morris, “The Paluxy River Mystery,” *Institute for Creation Research*, <http://www.icr.org/article/paluxy-river-mystery/> (accessed November 5, 2012).

²⁶Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past*, 329–54.

²⁷Wise, *Faith, Form, and Time*, 173–74; and Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past*, 727–63.

²⁸Garner, *The New Creationism*, 199–202.

²⁹Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past*, 675–77.

large floating forest biome. Based upon how much organic material made up the coals of the Primary, this floating forest may have been subcontinent-sized or even continent-sized. The basic structure was probably broadly similar to the “quaking bogs” found on a number of lakes in the upper Midwestern United States. Quaking bogs are floating vegetation mats whose outer edges are made up of aquatic plants.³⁰

Thus Snelling, Wise, and other global flood proponents hope to account for the immense seams of coal and the oil fields that geologists find throughout the world.

Suspension of the Normal Laws of Nature: Snelling concedes that much of the geological evidence cannot be reconciled with any interpretation that uses the physical laws, properties and relationships as they presently are. He postulates that God miraculously changed the laws of nature during the Flood. Snelling explains,

Coal beds were formed during the Flood year, approximately 4,500 years ago, as were many of the granites that contain uranium and polonium radiohalos, because the granites intruded into Flood-deposited strata. Thus, it is concluded that hundreds of millions of years worth of radioisotope decay (at today’s measured rates) must have occurred during the Flood year, only about 4,500 years ago.³¹

Appealing to a change in the laws of nature marks a remarkable change in YEC strategy, and in many ways it also makes a significant admission. As a strategy, it indicates an end to any real attempt to empirically establish the historicity of a global flood. Miracles, by definition, cannot be scientifically examined. The appeal also admits that the scientific evidence does not support the YEC model.

Compressed ice ages: Standard geological models hold that during earth’s natural history there have been five distinct ice ages which cover hundreds of millions of years. In addition, mainstream geologists believe that over the last million years there have been several glacial periods where glacial ice has advanced and retreated. These models, of course, do not fit with a global flood model. Global flood adherents argue that at the very most, from beginning to end, the ice age was only 700 years long.³² The ice surged out in a “couple of decades,” and then receded within “a couple of decades.”³³ The ice age lasted only a few centuries at the maximum. Therefore, rather than calling it the ice age, Snelling says a more accurate label would be “the ice advance.”³⁴

Accelerated evolution: Global flood proponents recognize that the ark presents two problems

³⁰Wise, *Faith, Form, and Time*, 171.

³¹Snelling, 847–48. Snelling admits that “the strata assigned to the Flood even appear to record 500 to 700 million years worth (at today’s measured rates) of accelerated radioisotope decay.”

³²Garner, *The New Creationism*, 209–21.

³³Wise, *Faith, Form, and Time*, 215–16.

³⁴Snelling, *Earth’s Catastrophic Past*, 774–86.

related to speciation: 1) the number of species that were on the ark, and 2) the worldwide distribution of species after they disembarked. The number of species of life on earth is mind-boggling. James LeFanu points out that there are over 40 species of parrots, 70 species of monkeys, tens of thousands of species of butterflies, 20,000 species of ants, 8,000 species of termites, 400,000 known species of beetles—this list goes on and on.³⁵ There are millions and millions of species.

How did Noah's ark contain so many different forms of life? And how did so many geographically specific species—such as kangaroos in Australia—disburse so quickly? The solution proposed by global flood advocates is one of the most controversial aspects of the model: a theory called AGEing process (where AGE stands for Altruistic Genetic Elements).³⁶ Snelling argues that instead of gathering the myriad of species, it was only necessary to gather progenitors who were specimens of each “created kind.” For example instead of loading dogs, wolves, hyenas, coyotes, and other canines onto the ark, it was necessary to have a male and female proto-canine (what he calls “baramin”). Then the number of required animals drop significantly. Snelling explains, “If, as the preponderance of evidence shows, the ‘created kind’ or *baramin* was possibly equivalent in most instances to the family (at least in the case of mammals and birds), then there would have only been about 2,000 animals on the Ark.”³⁷

The global flood model requires that a rapid diversification of species occurred immediately after the Flood. So proponents posit that species proliferated and dispersed in a matter of decades. Garner suggests that the creatures were “frontloaded” with genetically recessive traits that expressed when needed. He admits that in this area YEC has much more work to do, that there are “many as yet unanswered questions.”³⁸ Wise argues that many of the vestigial organs are the result of the rapid evolution that occurred after the animals left the ark.³⁹

Hugh Ross accuses proponents of the AGEing process of being “hyperevolutionists” who out-Darwin the Darwinists. Ross considers it ironic that, in their attempt to rescue the global flood model, YEC adherents are embracing a version of “ultra-efficient biological evolution.” He observes, “This efficiency of natural speciation exceeds by many orders of magnitude the most optimistic Darwinist estimate ever proposed...If naturalistic evolutionary processes actually did proceed with such speed, the changes would be easily observable in real time—in our time.”⁴⁰

Presuppositional Bias? Snelling repeats the assertion made by Whitcomb and Morris that

³⁵Charles Le Fanu, *Why Us? How Science Rediscovered the Mystery of Ourselves* (New York: Vintage: 2009), 59–62.

³⁶Garner, *The New Creationism*, 140.

³⁷Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past*, 136.

³⁸Garner, *The New Creationism*, 141.

³⁹Wise, *Faith, Form, and Time*, 219–21.

⁴⁰Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), 121–30.

the presuppositions held by mainstream geologists prevent them from considering the global flood model. Those who decide to embrace assumptions that go against the young-earth model and flood geology reveal a decision to throw off the authority of Scripture. “The bias exhibited by one’s choice of assumptions may not simply be a matter of objective science, but rather primarily of one’s subconscious spiritual condition.”⁴¹ However, many, if not most, geologists of the early 19th century were Christians who held to a high view of the Bible. These geologists gave up flood geology only reluctantly, and then only after they were convinced that the empirical evidence left them with no choice. As early as 1834, long before Darwin published his theory, an article in the *Christian Observer* lamented that Christian geologists felt they were intellectually compelled to abandon flood geology:

Buckland, Sedgwick, Faber, Chalmers, Conybeare, and many other Christian geologists, strove long with themselves to believe that they could: and they did not give up the hope, or seek for a new interpretation of the sacred text, till they considered themselves driven from their position by such facts as we have stated. If, *even now, a reasonable, or we might say POSSIBLE solution were offered, they would, we feel persuaded, gladly revert to their original opinion* [emphasis original].⁴²

The Bible-believing geologists of the nineteenth century were driven by the geological findings to the conclusion that the earth is ancient and that Noah’s flood cannot account for those findings. They resisted this conclusion, and did not come to it happily. They certainly were not motivated by an atheistic agenda, nor were they blinded by naturalistic presuppositions.

The Accusation of Fideism Parading as Science: To account for evidence that goes against YEC in general and the global flood model in particular, Snelling suggests that God supernaturally intervened to change the laws of nature during the flood event. Old-earth proponents Davis Young and Ralph Stearley, as fellow evangelicals, acknowledge that they, in principle, have no problem with an appeal to the miraculous. However, they contend that this puts the event beyond scientific investigation and defense.

The only recourse that flood catastrophists have to save their theory is to appeal to a pure miracle and thus eliminate entirely the possibility of historical geology. We think that would be a more honest course of action for young-Earth advocates to take. Young-Earth creationists should cease their efforts to convince the lay Christian public that geology supports a young Earth when it does not do so. To continue that effort is misguided and detrimental to the health of the church and the cause of Christ.⁴³

Davis and Stearley conclude that the entire “flood geology” enterprise is invalid as a scientific endeavor.

⁴¹Snelling, *Earth’s Catastrophic Past*, 295–97.

⁴²Quoted by Philip Henry Gosse, *Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot* (London: John Van Voorst, 1857), 5–8, n. 2.

⁴³Davis A. Young and Ralph F. Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks and Time: Geological Evidence for the Age of the Earth* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 474.

The Role of Presuppositions when Interpreting Empirical Data

As you can probably tell, my decision to move from YEC to OEC was motivated strongly (but not exclusively) by a reevaluation of the empirical evidence. However, I recognize that everyone approaches the empirical evidence with presuppositions. Facts are not self-interpreting, nor do facts “just speak for themselves.” The question before me—indeed, before all of us—is how, when, and how much should the empirical evidence cause me to adjust or change my operating presuppositions. What should I do since the scientific data seems to clash strongly with my presuppositions?

When reading the writings of Darwinists and young-earth creationists, I am struck by how presuppositions control the course of their thinking. The two positions are at opposite ends of the spectrum of position, yet they have some features in common. Significantly, both Richard Dawkins and Ken Ham recognize two things about the universe. First, the universe appears to be ancient and second, it appears to be very well designed. But they both believe these appearances are an illusion. What they disagree on is what part is the illusion. Dawkins believes the earth is old and the inference of design is a misconception. Ham argues that the truth is the other way around: the world is designed but its origin is very recent. What is going on here? Controlling presuppositions are at work.

Presuppositionalism or fideism? There are a number of approaches to the relationship between faith and reason, and at this point it is helpful to note the distinction between presuppositionalism and fideism.⁴⁴ As I noted before, presuppositionalism recognizes that all approaches to truth begin with certain assumptions that are taken on faith. However, there is one important caveat at this point. The presuppositionalist believes that the validity of one’s presuppositions must eventually be tested by using the laws of logic, and be demonstrated by a consistency with the evidential findings. Fideism, by contrast, does not believe one’s presuppositions can be tested. Like the presuppositionalist, the fideist believes that one starts with certain presuppositions. But unlike the presuppositionalist, the fideist does not subject his starting assumptions to any type of feedback or check. The fideist operates by “blind faith.”

Most YEC proponents identify themselves as presuppositionalists.⁴⁵ They start with the presupposition of the Bible’s inspiration and authority (as do all conservative evangelicals). However, YEC advocates add another crucial presupposition. Namely, they seem to hold that the YEC reading of Genesis 1–11 is the only interpretation available to the Bible-believing Christian.⁴⁶ The approach of many YEC adherents seems to veer perilously close to fideism.

⁴⁴See Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 47–65.

⁴⁵Numbers, *The Creationists*, 207.

⁴⁶“Since the Bible undisputedly teaches a young earth, when someone claims that scientific evidence proves otherwise, we can be certain that they are mistaken.” Tim Chaffey and Jason Lisle, *Old-Earth Creationism on Trial: the Verdict is In* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2008), 153. See also John MacArthur,

Consider the testimony of Kurt Wise about his attitude towards empirical evidence:

As I shared with my professors years ago when I was in college, if all the evidence in the universe turned against creationism, I would be the first to admit it, but I would still be a creationist because that is what the Word of God seems to indicate. Here I must stand.⁴⁷

As the context makes clear, when Wise spoke of creationism, he meant the young-earth position. His courage, candor, and fidelity to the Scriptures must be commended. But if one's presuppositions are unassailable, then his approach has shifted from presuppositionalism to fideism.

In contrast, I concede that I allow the findings of science to influence the way I approach the creation account in Genesis. I allow experience and evidence to have a significant role in the formation of my position. Young-earth creationists are strongly critical of this approach and often characterize those who take this course in very harsh terms.⁴⁸ However, I reject the accusation that I allow the empirical evidence to subvert the authority of Scripture. In addition, I believe that their criticism is a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

The Only Recourse Left: The *Omphalos* Argument

Whitcomb and Morris appealed to the “appearance of age” argument, and so does Snelling. As far as I know, Russell Humphreys is the only significant YEC scientist who rejects the mature creation argument as an option. The mature creation argument originates with Philip Henry Gosse. In 1857 (two years before Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*), Gosse published *Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot*.⁴⁹ Gosse was a respected naturalist and marine biologist. He is considered by many to be the inventor of the aquarium. *Omphalos* was well illustrated, well written, and revealed a thorough knowledge of geology, paleontology, and biology as understood in his day. Gosse surveyed the various attempts to reconcile the findings of geology with the first 11 chapters of Genesis—gap theory, day-age theory, appeals to Noah's flood, among others. He found all to be lacking. He contended that the only viable alternative was the theory that God created a fully-functioning mature creation.

The mature creation argument (or the “appearance of age” hypothesis) makes the following observation. Anything created by God directly and immediately would have the appearance of an age that it did not actually have. For instance, Adam was created as a fully-mature adult male.

“Creation Believe It or Not,” *The Master's Seminary Journal* 13.1 (Spring 2002): 17.

⁴⁷Kurt Wise, *In Six Days: Why Fifty Scientists Chose to Believe in Creation*, John F. Ashton, ed. (Green Forest: Master Books, 2001), Kindle location 5049–51.

⁴⁸See, for example, Jonathan Sarfarti, *Refuting Compromise: A Biblical and Scientific Refutation of “Progressive Creationism” (Billions of Years), as Popularized by Astronomer Hugh Ross* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2004).

⁴⁹Philip Henry Gosse, *Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot* (London: John Van Voorst, 1857).

He would appear, presumably, to be at least 18 years old. However, in Genesis 1–2, his actual age would have been only a few hours. Like Gosse, YEC proponents Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds argue that Adam would have possessed the appearance of age and the appearance of a history—complete with all the evidences of having been born. They state, “He looked as if he had once had an umbilical cord and had been in the womb of a woman. However, being created from the hand of God, he had no such history. Thus Adam has an apparent history different from his actual one.”⁵⁰ This is why Gosse referred to the mature creation view as the *omphalos* argument (*omphalos* is the Greek word for “belly button”).

Gosse made similar arguments concerning other plants and animals in the original creation. He points to examples such as the leaf scars on the tree fern.⁵¹ A tree fern’s trunk is composed of the scarring remnants of leaves that have fallen away, typically over a 30-year period. If one had stood in the Garden of Eden, by necessity it would have appeared to have been much older than it actually was. Gosse also contends that hardwood trees created in the Garden of Eden would have possessed growth rings. These rings also could have been interpreted as indicators of age (and history) that the trees, in fact, did not have.⁵²

YEC advocates apply this line of reasoning to the universe as a whole. Henry Morris argued that when God created a star that is millions of light-years away, he created its light in transit.⁵³ Vern Poythress can be taken as representative when he extrapolates from Adam to the cosmos.

I suggest, then that the mature creation view offers an attractive supplement to the 24-hour-day view. It retains all the main advantages of the 24-hour-day view, by maintaining that God created the universe within six 24-hours days. It supplements this view with a clear and simple explanation for the conclusions of modern astronomy. The universe *appears* to be 14 billion years old because God created it mature. Moreover, the universe is *coherently* mature, in the sense that estimates of age deriving from different methods arrive at similar results. This coherence makes some sense. God created Adam mature. Why should we not think that Adam was coherently mature?⁵⁴

When Poythress states that the universe coherently appears ancient, he is arguing that the appearance is comprehensive, that the mature creation argument implies that the entire cosmos

⁵⁰Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds, “Young Earth Creationism,” in *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, ed. J.P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 51. See also Gosse, *Omphalos*, 289–90.

⁵¹Gosse, *Omphalos*, 131–33.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 178–81.

⁵³Henry M. Morris, *The Remarkable Birth of Planet Earth* (Minneapolis: Dimension, 1972), 62–63. See also Don B. DeYoung, *Astronomy and the Bible: Questions and Answers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 80–18; and Don B. DeYoung, *Astronomy and Creation: An Introduction* (Ashland: Creation Research Society, 1995), 48–49.

⁵⁴Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 116. Also Gosse, *Omphalos*, 363.

will uniformly appear to be old. Most YEC advocates do not apply the mature creation argument as consistently as Gosse and Poythress do.

Implications of the *Omphalos* Argument

First, *an appearance of age is an appearance of a non-actual history*. Gosse demonstrated this with a litany of examples. Fish scales, tortoise plates, bird feathers, deer antlers, elephant tusks and many more—all grow in successive stages that tell the story of that particular creature's life.⁵⁵ Biologists regularly use these features to determine age of the respective animals. Gosse declares, "I have indeed written the preceding pages in vain, if I have not demonstrated, in a multitude of examples, the absolute necessity of retrospective phenomena in newly-created organisms."⁵⁶ If the original creatures were created fully grown, then they were created with an apparent history. By extension, a universe created fully mature will, by necessity, give signs of a history that did not actually happen.

Second, *the mature creation argument is unfalsifiable*. This means it can be neither proven nor disproven. As Bertrand Russell observed, "We may all have come into existence five minutes ago, provided with ready-made memories, with holes in our socks and hair that needed cutting."⁵⁷ Since there is no way to prove the theory, we have moved from the realm of science into the realm of metaphysics. The mature creation argument truly is a fideistic position, since it places creation beyond investigation.

Third, *the appeal to an appearance of age is an admission that the evidence is against the young earth view*. Gosse conceded this over 150 years ago.⁵⁸ If the overwhelming preponderance of empirical data pointed to a recent creation, then YEC advocates would not bother with such a difficult hypothesis as the *omphalos* argument. The very fact that YEC proponents find it necessary to appeal to the mature creation argument is a concession.

Fourth, *the mature creation argument seems almost to embrace a denial of physical reality*. Certain advocates of the argument do not hesitate to describe the universe as an illusion. Gary North declares, "The Bible's account of the chronology of creation points to an illusion...The seeming age of the stars is an illusion...Either the constancy of the speed of light is an illusion, or the size of the universe is an illusion, or else the physical events that we hypothesize to explain the visible changes in light or radiation are false inferences."⁵⁹ At this point the arguments for the appearance of age seem uncomfortably Gnostic.

⁵⁵Gosse, *Omphalos*, 182–290.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 349–50.

⁵⁷Quoted in Richard Dawkins, *The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 13.

⁵⁸Gosse, *Omphalos*, 90–100.

⁵⁹Quoted in Ross, *A Matter of Days*, 35.

Fifth, a consistent application of the mature creation argument will conclude *that there are no evidences of a young earth*. The universe has been coherently, uniformly created with the appearance of age. With the exception of Poythress, almost all young-earth proponents and flood geologists seem to overlook this portion of Gosse's argument. But this was not a minor point to him. It was, in fact, a main part of his thesis.⁶⁰ Gosse would have considered the efforts of Answers in Genesis, The Institute for Creation Research, and other YEC organizations quixotic at best and detrimental at worst. The appearance of age argument seems to imply that the movement launched by Whitcomb and Morris is misguided.

Sixth, Gosse arrived at the conclusion *that we should study the earth as if it were old*. He argued:

Finally, the acceptance of the principles presented in this volume, even in their fullest extent, would not, in the least degree, affect the study of scientific geology. The character and order of the strata; their disruptions and displacements and injections; the successive floras and faunas; and all the other phenomena, would be *facts* still. They would still be, as now, legitimate subjects of examination and inquiry. I do not know that a single conclusion, now accepted, would need to be given up, except that of actual chronology. And even in respect of this, it would be rather a modification than a relinquishment of what is at present held; we might still speak of the inconceivably long duration of the processes in question, provided we understand *ideal* instead of *actual* time;—that the duration was projected in the mind of God, and not really existent.⁶¹

This is a surprising, even stunning, conclusion. Yet it is entirely consistent with the logic of the mature creation argument. And, at present, the mature creation hypothesis appears to be the best argument that young-earth creationism has. The hypothesis may be true, but it will remain unproven and unprovable. The conclusion must be that, though a cursory reading of Scripture would seem to indicate a recent creation, the preponderance of empirical evidence seems to indicate otherwise. YEC advocates, by and large, do not use the term “scientific creationism” anymore. Despite 50 years of effort, the scientific endeavors of the YEC movement have borne little fruit.

Conclusion

And so I moved from young-earth creationism to old-earth creationism. However, I find it very helpful to highlight the distinction between creation and *creationism*. One is a doctrine while the other is an apologetic approach. On the one hand, creation is a foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. The essential features of the doctrine of creation are unchangeable tenets. The Bible teaches that those features include the truths that God, without compulsion or necessity, freely created the universe out of nothing according to his own will and for his own good purposes. Though marred by the arrival of evil and sin, creation reflects the nature of its Creator. So creation is both great and good.

⁶⁰Gosse, *Omphalos*, 114–27.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 369–71.

On the other hand, creationism is an apologetic approach which attempts to integrate the doctrine of creation with the current understandings of the natural sciences. In particular, creationism seeks to relate the first 11 chapters of Genesis to the latest findings of science.

So I teach my students that creation is an unchanging and unchangeable doctrine while creationism, by its very nature, must constantly change and be amended. The doctrine of creation is derived from Scripture, and is as old as the biblical witness itself. Creationism is relatively new, because it arose alongside the scientific revolution in the seventeenth century. As science developed, so did creationism, especially after Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. I remind my students that they must keep the distinction between creation and creationism in mind as we explore the important issues at hand. We must know what to hold firmly and what must be open to revision. Our commitment to doctrine must be strong, but we should hold to any particular apologetic approach much more loosely.

Time Within Eternity: Interpreting Revelation 8:1



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Introduction

What is God's relationship to time? How does God's eternality relate to time? Is God Himself temporal or atemporal? Did God create time and, if so, to what extent is He bound to it after its creation? When we are in heaven with God, will time still be measured? These are the types of questions that can come into focus when interpreting Rev 8:1, "When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour" (NASB). This article proposes to consider the major elements which are inherent within this text as they relate to the relationship between time and eternity. God's relationship to eternity as well as the relationship of people to eternity will also be investigated.

Common Interpretations of Revelation 8:1

Most commentaries on Rev 8:1 focus on the meaning of the half hour of silence in heaven. What is its significance? Nine major views are enunciated. Since interpreters consider this issue to be a major problem of the verse, the nine views will be briefly presented and evaluated. The primary purpose of this article, however, is not to focus on *why* there is a silence in heaven, but *how* there can be a half hour of silence in the eternal state.

Interpretation 1: Silence is so God can hear people's prayers

This view argues that the silence is explained by verses 3–4, "Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand." Charles, for example, writes: "The praises of the highest orders of angels in heaven are hushed that the prayers of *all* [*italics his*] the suffering saints on earth may be heard before the throne.

Their needs are of more concern to God than all the psalmody of heaven.”¹ Caird agrees with this position: “Just as the seals could not be broken until the Lamb had won the right to break them by his obedience on earth, so the **trumpets** cannot sound until the prayers of men have reached the **altar** of heaven [bold his],”² and Bauckham defends it at great length.³ Michaels, however, observes a particular weakness in this view: “The *prayers of all the saints* [italics his] are not mentioned until the half hour is over (v. 3), and when they are mentioned they are not ‘heard’ but offered up as incense.”⁴ One must also doubt that an omniscient God is hindered by noise from listening to prayer.

Interpretation 2: Silence is a prelude to prayer

A view similar to the first is that the silence comes from both Greco-Roman and Jewish culture to provide a liturgical prelude to prayer. Osborne, for example, advocates that this is one possible explanation for the silence, that it is “the liturgical silence of heaven in light of the incense and prayers of the saints in 5:8; 6:9–11; and 7:3–4.”⁵ Clarke holds to a similar thought: “The silence here refers to this fact—while the priest went in to burn incense in the holy place, all the people continued in silent mental prayer without until the priest returned. See Luke 1:10. The angel mentioned here appears to execute the office of priest...”⁶ Aune considers that this view is the most convincing because of its parallels with Jewish worship and with the Greek traditions of silence as a ritual prelude to prayer. Aune concludes that this “view is the most convincing, for silence was very probably maintained during the incense offering in the Jerusalem temple cult (see *m. Tamid* 5:1–6; *T. Adam* 1.12) just as it is here during the heavenly incense offering narrated in vv. 3–5.”⁷ The same problem exists with this view as the first, which is that the silence occurs prior to, not contemporaneous with, the incense offering.

Interpretation 3: Silence is a temporary cessation of revelation

Another suggested interpretation is that the silence comes about because God ceases to give revelation during this time. Swete advocates this view: “This silence does not spell a cessation of

¹R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 1920, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 1:224.

²G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper, 1966), 107. See also Ben Witherington III, *Revelation*, The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 139.

³Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 70–83.

⁴J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: IVP, 1997), 117.

⁵Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 338.

⁶Adam Clarke, “Revelation,” *Clarke’s Commentary*, electronic edition (Seattle: Biblsoft, 2006).

⁷David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 508.

the Divine workings... but a temporary suspension of revelation... Nor is it more to the point to refer to such passages as Hab. ii. 20, Zeph. i. 7, Zech. ii. 13; the Apocalyptic silence is in heaven and not on earth.”⁸ Thomas, however, observes “it is more accurate not to call it a cessation of revelation, because the period of silence is part of the revelatory process.”⁹

Interpretation 4: Silence repeats the primeval silence that greeted the first creation at this final re-creation of the world

Some scholars find a parallel of the silence of Rev 8:1 with the supposed silence that existed when God first created the world. Keener writes: “The silence may be a signal of return to the primeval creation characterized by such silence and followed by the resurrection (see 4 Ezra 7:30; 2 Bar. 3:7).”¹⁰ Rissi defends this view arguing that we “find in Judaism a clear conception of the eschatological silence.”¹¹ He contends that the silence “belongs to the creation myth in 2 Esdras 6:39” and is further explained by 2 Esd 7:29–31, 2 Bar. 3:7 and Ps.-Philo 60:2, and that according “to the apocalyptic rule that the primeval time would be a prototype of the End Time, it is expected from a part of the Jewish apocalyptic that the world will again sink back into primeval silence and a new world will arise out of the chaos.”¹² A weakness in this view is that it appeals to Jewish apocalyptic literature and a “creation myth,” but offers no biblical support, either from the immediate context or from the Scriptures as a whole.

Interpretation 5: Silence indicates that the seal visions are now complete

A fifth suggestion as to why there is silence is that it indicates that the seal visions are completed. Krodel asserts that “the silence following the opening of the seventh seal also indicates that the seal visions are now complete. In 4 Ezra 7:30 a cosmic silence of seven days signals the return of the world to its primeval state [the fourth view above]. John may have used this motif and, as usual, changed it. The interval of seven days of silence enveloping the whole world becomes a brief half-hour period and it is enjoined **in heaven** [bold his] only. At any rate, the silence in heaven rounds off the seal visions.”¹³ It is obvious that the silence occurs as the seal visions are complete. If that is all which is intended, however, it seems odd that neither the trumpet nor bowl judgments end in a comparable silence.

⁸Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 106–7.

⁹Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 2.

¹⁰Craig S. Keener, *Revelation, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 254.

¹¹Matthew Rissi, *Time and History: A Study on the Revelation*, trans. Gordon C. Winsor (Richmond: John Knox, 1966), 4.

¹²Ibid. See also J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 159.

¹³Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 189.

Interpretation 6: Silence is that of the condemned (from the sixth seal), as they await divine judgment

Beale has an extensive discussion of this text arguing that the Old Testament background “associates silence with divine judgment” in passages such as Ps 31:7; 115:17; Hab 2:20; he further argues concerning Hab 3:3–6 and Zech 2:13–3:2 that the “response or anticipated response to the judgment of these two texts is that ‘all the earth’ and ‘all flesh’ stand in silent awe (cf. likewise Isa. 23:2; 41:1–5).”¹⁴ He then observes this “means that it cannot be taken as ‘emptiness’ but represents judgment... The main point is the horror of divine judgment, which has such an awesome effect that no human is able to verbalize a response. However brief the description, this idea of judgment composes the seventh seal.”¹⁵ However, in view of the plethora of direct texts in Revelation which detail judgment it seems odd that such an idea is presented here by virtue of a silence. This is especially to be noted when Rev 6:15–17 testify that at the judgment of the sixth seal the people of the earth are anything except silent. Further, the silence encompasses more than humans; it extends to all the hosts of heaven itself.

Interpretation 7: Silence introduces the eternal (or Millennial) Sabbath rest

Alford affirms that this silence signals “the beginning of that blessed sabbatical state of rest, during which the people of God shall be in full possession of those things which ear hath not heard nor eye seen.”¹⁶ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown agree: “It is the solemn introduction to employments and enjoyments of the eternal Sabbath-rest of the people of God, commencing with the Lamb’s reading the book heretofore sealed up, and which we cannot know till then.”¹⁷ A weakness with this view is that nowhere in Scripture is silence connected with heavenly or Millennial rest. A more significant weakness is that the first six seals are “displays of the wrath of God against earth’s rebels, but this view wants to make the seventh a picture of blessing. This is not what the seals portray.”¹⁸

¹⁴G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 447.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Henry Alford, “Revelation,” *The Greek Testament*, vol. 4, rev. Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody, 1968), 630.

¹⁷Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, “Revelation,” *A Commentary Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the New Testament*, 1877 (reprinted New York: Doran, n.d.), 571.

¹⁸Thomas, *Revelation* 8–22, 2.

Interpretation 8: Silence is only a metaphor, not literal

Scott declares that the silence is not really silence at all, that it is not to be taken literally. John's reference to silence

does not mean that the songs and hallelujahs of the redeemed are silent. The silence must be interpreted in connection with the immediate subject on hand, which is *judgment*. But, inasmuch as the source of these judgments on earth is the throne set in Heaven, the silence is there. The course of judgment is arrested. There is a pause both as to the announcement and execution of further chastisements.¹⁹

While John clearly uses metaphorical language in Revelation this text seems too direct not to take the silence as literal silence.

Interpretation 9: Silence is a dramatic pause signifying awe and dread as the heavenly hosts await the coming events

Beckwith avers that the "long silence is interpreted by most com., probably with right, to signify the awe and dread with which the heavenly hosts await the events now coming upon the earth; they stand mute before the revelations of the opened book of destiny; cf. Dan. 4:19 (RV)."²⁰ Michaels asks if the silence is better understood as an indication of the End, or "is the silence a dramatic preparation for the resumption of sound and action? Are we waiting for something more? The fact that the silence is broken by a great deal of noise, *peals of thunder, rumblings. . . , an earthquake* (v. 5) [italics his] and the blasts of seven trumpets, argues for the second of these alternatives."²¹ Of this dramatic pause, Kiddle writes, "Hushed are the praises of the angelic hosts for this ominous period, the silent herald that all is over. It is a brilliant device for deepening the suspense."²² This view appears to be most consistent with the immediate context and argument of Revelation.²³

¹⁹Walter Scott, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), 178. Italics his.

²⁰Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, 1919 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 550.

²¹Michaels, *Revelation*, 117.

²²Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John*, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1946), 144.

²³Others who adhere to this view include: Stewart Custer, *From Patmos to Paradise: A Commentary on Revelation* (Greenville: BJU Press, 2004), 96; Kendall H. Easley, *Revelation*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 142; Dennis E. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation* (Phillipsburg: P. & R., 2001) 136; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 170–71; James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 142; Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, 1–3; John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary* (Chicago, Moody, 1969), 151.

Time in Revelation 8:1

Assuming that the silence is a dramatic pause signifying awe and dread as the heavenly hosts await the coming events provides a perspective on why the silence occurs. It does not, however, clarify how there can be a thirty-minute span of silence when we are looking at a heavenly, eternal, scene. That issue must now be addressed.

Interpreting the “Half Hour”

The text says that when the Lamb opened the seventh seal, “there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.” Two emphases in this verse must be considered. The first is that there was “silence” (*sigē*). This noun only occurs here and in Acts 21:40 where, as Paul prepared to give his defense before the Jews, “there was a great hush” in the angry mob before he spoke. It clearly has the idea of silence, “the absence of all noise, whether made by speaking or by anything else, *silence, quiet* [italics theirs].”²⁴ The noun comes from the verb *sigāō* which means: to “*say nothing, keep still, keep silent*” (cf. Luke 20:26; Acts 12:17; 15:12; 1 Cor. 14:28, 34); to “*stop speaking, become silent*” (cf. Luke 18:39; Acts 15:13; 1 Cor. 14:30); and “to keep someth. from becoming known, *keep secret, conceal*” (cf. Luke 9:36; Rom. 16:25).²⁵ This silence “creates a ‘hushed expectancy’ for the severity of the judgments to follow.”²⁶

The second emphasis in this verse is on the phrase “about half an hour” (*hōs hēmiōrion*). The noun *hēmiōrion* occurs only here in the New Testament, and is rare in extra-biblical Greek. It is formed from *hēmisys*, “half,” and *hōra*, “hour.”²⁷ This term, and its related terms, “appear in Koine Greek from the NT era and later.”²⁸ *Hēmiōrion* is interpreted variously in this text.

Boxall, for one, takes the term non-literally, as silence which “remains only **for about half an hour**, a limited period (for example, Dan. 7:25; 9:27), half of the ‘hour’ of divine judgment and salvation (cf. 9:15; 14:7, 15; 18:10).”²⁹ Rissi agrees with Boxall that John “used *hmiōros* to indicate the first, dark half of God’s great eschatological hour, which the other half, the bright new creation, will then follow. Only then is the whole hour of God brought to fulfillment.”³⁰

²⁴Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 922.

²⁵Ibid. Italics in the original.

²⁶Custer, *From Patmos to Paradise*, 96, n. 8:1.

²⁷A. T. Robertson, “Revelation,” *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1985), 6:356.

²⁸Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), 213.

²⁹Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), 130. Emphasis his.

³⁰Rissi, *Time and History*, 6. Beale, *Revelation*, 453, holds a similar view, but puts the stress on the judgment element.

Scott does not take the half-hour as referring to the judgment, but still considers it non-literally as denoting “an exceedingly brief period during which judicial action is suspended... How long the awful suspense lasts we are not informed.”³¹

Others, however, take the half hour as actually referring to a span of about thirty minutes. Walvoord, for example, writes: “Though thirty minutes is not ordinarily considered a long time, when it is a time of absolute silence portending such ominous developments ahead it is an indication that something tremendous is about to take place.”³² Another who takes it literally, showing how significant even a short time span can be, is Seiss: “A half-hour is not long in itself; but time is longer or shorter according to what is transpiring, or what the circumstances are. Moments of agonizing suspense stretch out into hours and days, in comparison with moments of ordinary life. Two minutes of delay, when a man is drowning, is an awful period to have to wait.”³³ Seiss also astutely observes, “The whole thing is distinctly located ‘*in heaven*,’ and its duration is specifically limited to ‘*about half an hour*.’”³⁴ Neither Walvoord nor Seiss, however, deal with the issue of how there can be a literal half hour in the eternal heaven.

Some interpreters who generally hold a literal interpretation of Scripture consider that this half hour is not literal since the text speaks of the eternal heavenly scene. It is, rather, a linguistic accommodation to human limitations. Thomas, for example, asserts: “The limit of the silence to about a half-hour duration is an interesting accommodation of heavenly actions to a human limitation. One must think of heaven under the immediate rule of the eternal God as not subject to time limitations, but for the sake of the prophet a specifically short restriction applies to the period of silence.”³⁵ Smalley also wrestles with this problem of a time indicator being used related to an eternal scene: “Strictly speaking, eternity cannot be temporally measured; but, in an apocalyptic vision such as this, logic has no firm place. The whole description, half an hour’s silence, symbolizes an interlude of some length, in preparation for the worship of God.”³⁶ This issue of the relationship of time to eternity is critical to understanding Rev 8:1 correctly. To their credit, Thomas and Smalley recognize this issue and answer it by asserting that time and eternity cannot exist together; therefore, time must be viewed as symbolic. The majority of commentators consulted on this text never mention this issue, let alone seek to answer it.

Time and Eternity

The relationship between time and eternity involves several elements. These must now be considered.

³¹Scott, *Revelation*, 178.

³²Walvoord, *Revelation*, 151.

³³Joseph A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 182.

³⁴*Ibid.* Italics his.

³⁵Thomas, *Revelation* 8–22, 3.

³⁶Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 212–13.

What Is Time? A basic question is: What is time? This has been discussed, argued and debated by philosophers for centuries.

In Platonic and Hellenistic thought eternity was often conceived of as timelessness. According to this tradition man's final goal is to seek to escape from time into timelessness, i.e., into eternity (cf. Plato *Phaedo* 79, 106 e-108 a; *Symposium* 208 a; *Republic* 611 a-b; *Timaeus* 27 d-28 a [contrast 37 d]). Because this present life in time was conceived of as consisting of unbroken cycles of experience which afford no means of escape from the limitations of mortality and a life oppressed (cf. the Orphic tradition), redemption could be found only in a transcendent experience of eternity, which would be qualitatively superior to the experience of being in time.³⁷

In Hellenistic thought, therefore, time is "unbroken cycles of experience." In contrast to the cyclical view of time (still advocated by some philosophers), the Bible sets forth a linear view of time. Horrell observes: "Unlike the cyclical concept of time in classical pantheism and some forms of animism, the biblical perspective of time is linear: the history of the world has beginning, direction, culmination, and (in some sense) end... Seen from a biblical viewpoint, time and creation have beginning but no definitive end."³⁸

Aristotle likewise pondered the question of time. In his *Physics*, he wrote that "we apprehend time only when we have marked motion, marking it by 'before' and 'after'; and it is only when we have perceived 'before' and 'after' in motion that we say that time has elapsed."³⁹

Throughout history philosophers have wondered what time is, and the discussions continue today. Some speculate that time may be real, but the way we perceive it is an illusion, that "what we perceive as time is mostly an illusion. Our memory creates the illusion of the past. Conscious perception of events gives the feeling of present. Future is a mental construct patterned on the memory experience of the past. Concept of time emerges as our mind tries to make sense of the world around us which is filled with change."⁴⁰ Although some have questioned whether time even exists, "most philosophers agree that time does exist. They just cannot agree on what it is."⁴¹

The discussion concerning time also involves Christian theologians. "One of the red-hot issues in contemporary Christian theology is the problem of a renewed understanding of God's eternity and its relation to time."⁴² Philosophers and scientists debate, for example, whether time

³⁷C. R. Schoonhoven, "Eternity," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 2:162.

³⁸J. Scott Horrell, "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Toward a Trinitarian Worldview," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (April-June 2009): 143.

³⁹Aristotle, *Physics*, 4.11.14, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.4.iv.html> (accessed May 3, 2012).

⁴⁰M. Khan, "What Is Time? What Causes Time?" <http://www.timephysics.com> (accessed May 3, 2012).

⁴¹Bradley Dowden, "Time," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/time> (accessed May 3, 2012).

⁴²Eunsoo Kim, *Time, Eternity, and the Trinity: A Trinitarian Analogical Understanding of Time and Eternity* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), vii.

is “tenseless (static)” or “tensed (dynamic).” According to the “tenseless” view the past and the future are always just as real as the present. Any distinction between them is only an illusion of our own consciousness. Albert Einstein, for example, wrote concerning death that it “signifies nothing. For us believing physicists the distinction between past, present, and future is only an illusion, even if a stubborn one.”⁴³ In contrast, the “tensed” view looks at time as a progression of continuing events.

In addition, there is the further problem of time’s relationship to eternity. While a full discussion of the relationship of “time” to “eternity” is beyond the scope of this article,⁴⁴ a summary of the major views is essential to understanding Rev 8:1. Before that summary, however, a consideration of key biblical terms must be presented in order to lay a foundation for the relationship of time to eternity, and how Rev 8:1 correlates with their connection.⁴⁵

Old Testament Words for Time/Eternity. Several Hebrew words occur with various time emphases, and these have been studied for over a century.⁴⁶ These include such common words as “day” (*yôm*), “week” (*šābûa’*), “month” (*hōdeš*), and “year” (*šānā*). In addition, the term *mō’ēd* refers to an “appointed time,” “without regard to the purpose of the designation. It may be the time for the birth of a child (Gen. 17:21. . .), the coming of a plague (Ex. 9:5),” etc.⁴⁷

Another common word with a time element is *’et*, which “relates to time conceived as an opportunity or season.”⁴⁸ It appears 295 times, and is used, for example, of regular events such as harvest (Jer 50:16), of the appropriate time for an un-recurring event, such as the appointed time to die (Eccl 7:17), and for the fixed time for a family to visit the temple gatekeepers (1 Chron 9:24–25).

⁴³Letter of Albert Einstein, March 21, 1955, quoted in *God & Time: Four Views*, ed. Gregory E. Ganssle (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 134.

⁴⁴In addition to Kim’s book, for further discussions on the question, see: Ganssle, *God & Time: Four Views*; Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity*, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991); *What God Knows: Time, Eternity, and Divine Knowledge*, ed. Harry Lee Poe and J. Stanley Mattson (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005); and Hugh Ross, *Beyond the Cosmos* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1996).

⁴⁵For further study on this issue, see James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, Studies in Biblical Theology (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005); Simon J. DeVries, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); E. Jenni, “Time,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 4:642–49; James Lindsay, “Eternity,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 2:1011–12; C. H. Pinnock, “Time,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:852–53; H. Porter, “Time,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 5:2981–82; C. R. Schoonhoven, “Eternity,” 2:162–64.

⁴⁶P. A. Nordell, “Old Testament Word-Studies: 10. Time and Eternity,” *The Old Testament Student*, 8, no. 10 (June 1889): 373–77.

⁴⁷Jack P. Lewis, “*mō’ēd*,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:388.

⁴⁸Leonard J. Coppes, “*’et*,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:680.

Two Old Testament words, however, are particularly relevant to this study. The first of these is the noun *'ad* which appears 53 times in the Old Testament, usually translated as “forever.” Nordell argued over 100 years ago that the term had various nuances, but that the basic idea is that of “duration, perpetuity.”⁴⁹ Only twice is the word used referring to that which is past: first, a reference that from “of old” when man was placed on the earth the wicked only triumph momentarily (Job 20:4); second, that God shatters the “perpetual” mountains (Hab 3:6). “Otherwise, it always denotes the unforeseeable future,”⁵⁰ and is often applied to God (Ps 45:17; 111:3), His Word (Ps 19:9), to Israel (Ps 89:29) and Zion (Ps 48:14).

The second key Old Testament word is *'ôlām*, which occurs 438 times in the Scriptures. Nordell asserted that when it is used in reference to time, it “suggests a duration whose limits are hidden from human sight, hence immeasurableness, illimitableness,”⁵¹ and God is understood to be absolutely limitless. The term refers to “indefinite continuance into the very distant future” in more than 300 of its appearances.⁵² The word can also be used in a limited sense, however. It refers to a man who will be a servant “permanently,” that is, for his lifetime (Exod 21:6), and to Samuel who was dedicated by Hannah to serve the Lord “forever,” that is, for his lifetime (1 Sam 1:22). It can also refer to the remote past, but not to the limitless past. Indeed, Watts asserts that the term “refers to a long period of time, probably best translated as an ‘age.’ It defines not only the time involved but also the total complex of circumstances that could be called ‘the world of that time.’”⁵³ That idea of “age” is why the word is commonly translated in the LXX by *aiōn*. Ludwig suggests that the “idea of eternity as unending time is perhaps first clearly established in Isaiah, especially chapters forty through forty-eight.”⁵⁴ Concerning its use in Isaiah, Watts summarizes that the word “can look back to a past era, as when it describes a period that extends back to Moses (chaps. 63–64), or back to Abraham in chaps. 29, 41, 51, and 63, or even as far back as Noah (54:9). Or it can describe the present to future in terms of the full thrust of chaps. 40–66, especially chaps. 60–61.”⁵⁵ Without doubt the word frequently refers to that which is of continuous existence, of an indefinite or unending future, not limited to the present, but it does so from the perspective of unending time, not timelessness.

New Testament Words for Time/Eternity. Several New Testament words also relate to the subjects of time and eternity. The first is *chronos*, which occurs 54 times, and “mostly means ‘span of time.’”⁵⁶ The noun emphasizes measured segments of time, such as that of Jesus’ ministry (Acts

⁴⁹Nordell, “Time and Eternity,” 376.

⁵⁰Carl Schultz, “‘ad,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:645.

⁵¹Nordell, 376.

⁵²Allan A. MacRae, “‘ôlām,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:672.

⁵³John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1987), 238.

⁵⁴Richard B. Ludwig, “Sovereignty and Access: Toward a Biblical Description of God’s Relationship to Time,” M.Div. Thesis (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1992), 9.

⁵⁵Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 239.

⁵⁶Gerhard Delling, “chronos,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 9:591.

1:21), or quantity of time, such as when Herod determined the “time” the star appeared to the magi (Matt 2:7). In the fullness of time Christ came into this world (Gal 4:4).

Another word for time in the New Testament is *kairos*, occurring 85 times. This word can stress the character or opportunity of the season (Eph 5:16), or can denote a point in time (Matt 11:25). It may also stress quality of time, such as when Paul states that this is the acceptable time, that of salvation (2 Cor 6:2). “Accordingly, with the time of Jesus Christ, the old age has passed away, and a new epoch, the fulfillment of the times has begun”⁵⁷ (cf. Matt 8:29; 26:18; 1 Tim 6:15).

The New Testament words which focus on limitlessness are the noun *aiōn* (120 times), the adjective *aiōnios* (73 times), and the adjective *aidios* (2 times). Discussions concerning the depth of meaning of these words is extensive. Some specific items, however, are critical to observe. First, the New Testament clearly indicates temporal ideas in these words. An “age” can have a beginning point (1 Cor 2:7, “before the ages,” *pro tōn aiōnōn*) and an ending point (Matt 13:39, “the end of the age,” *synteleia aiōnōs*). Vine asserts that *aiōn* “signifies a period of indefinite duration, or time viewed in relation to what takes place in the period.”⁵⁸ Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich summarize the word *aiōn* in four categories: (1) “a long period of time, without ref. to beginning or end;” (2) “a segment of time as a particular unit of history, age;” (3) “the world as a spatial concept,” and (4) “the Aeon as a person.”⁵⁹ The word “age” is used of the world by metonymy for that which is contained in time. Sasse likewise avows that from “the days of Heraclitus . . . and Empedocles the philosophers made use of the term in discussions of the problem of time.”⁶⁰ He advocates that the term is used “in the Sense of Prolonged Time or Eternity,”⁶¹ “in the Sense of the Time of the World,”⁶² as well as in “The Personification of *Aiōn*.”⁶³ The conclusion reached is that by “the usage of the word *aiōn*, *aeōn*, and the connected eschatology, one can establish that, with all the varied accentuations, the NT speaks of eternity in the categories of time.”⁶⁴

Thus, it is clear that several Old Testament words refer to time, as do several New Testament words. The relevant point to the interpretation of Rev 8:1 is that even the biblical words for “eternal” have within them the inherent concept of time. Attention turns now to the discussions concerning how “time” relates to “eternity.” This is important since a time frame (a half-hour) is identified as existing in the heavenly realm in Rev 8:1.

⁵⁷Kim, *Time, Eternity, and the Trinity*, 25.

⁵⁸W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Westwood: Revell, 1966), 1:41.

⁵⁹*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 32–33.

⁶⁰Hermann Sasse, “aiōn, aiōnios,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 1:197.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 198–202.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 202–07.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 207–08.

⁶⁴J. Guhrt and H. C. Hahn, “Time,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 3:832.

Relating Time to Eternity. Four basic positions are held by Christian theologians and philosophers concerning how time relates to eternity.⁶⁵ These are: (a) Divine timeless eternity—God is outside of time; (b) unqualified Divine temporality—God is temporal and everlasting; (c) eternity as relative timelessness—God is relatively timeless; and (d) timelessness and omnitemporality—God was timeless before creation and always temporal after it.

Divine Timeless Eternity. Helm forcefully advocates the view of an absolute timeless eternity of God.⁶⁶ This position advocates that God exists “outside time,” rather than “in time.” Although this view “is the ‘mainstream’ view represented by Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Calvin and a host of others—there is reason to think that it is very much the minority view among contemporary theologians and philosophers of religion.”⁶⁷ Helm admits that the idea of absolute timeless divine eternity is difficult to show from Scripture. He finds some inferences for it (cf. Ps 90:12; Isa 57:15; 1 Cor 2:7; 2 Tim 1:9; Heb 1:10–12), and suggests that the reason for the lack of clear support is “that the issues of temporalism and eternalism as we have sketched them were not before the minds of the writers as they wrote.”⁶⁸ A weakness in this view concerns how an absolutely timeless God can interact with the temporal world after He created it. “The difficult question for him is: does God necessarily need to change in His mode of existence from timeless to temporal because of His creation of the temporal world?”⁶⁹

Unqualified Divine Temporality. Wolterstorff takes a position the virtual opposite of Helm. He asserts that God is not eternal in the timeless sense. Rather, God is temporal and everlasting. He affirms that in Scripture God “has a history, and in this history there are changes in God’s actions, responses and knowledge. The God of Scripture is One of whom a narrative can be told; we know that not because Scripture tells us that but because it offers such a narrative.”⁷⁰ He argues, for instance, that Ps 90:1–4 does not state “that God is timeless but that God existed before creation, indeed from everlasting to everlasting. How could God exist *before* creation and yet be timeless?”⁷¹ He argues similarly concerning 2 Pet 3:8 and John 8:58. His conclusion

⁶⁵These are provided in detail in Ganssle, *God & Time: Four Views*. They are also concisely summarized in Kim, *Time, Eternity, and the Trinity*. A comprehensive philosophical approach to this subject is given by Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity*, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991).

⁶⁶Paul Helm, “Divine Timeless Eternity,” *God & Time: Four Views*, 28–91.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 28. For examples, see Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.13 in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rpt. 1979), 167–68; and *City of God*, 11.21 in *Post-Nicene Fathers*, 216; Anselm, “Proslogium,” 19–20, in *Saint Anselm: Basic Writings*, 2nd ed., trans. S. N. Deane (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Pub., 1962), 25; Charles Hodge held that God is in the “eternal now.” See Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rpt. 1979), 25; William Shedd said God’s eternity can be viewed as the “eternal now,” or the “universal present,” see Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 1:342–50.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁹Kim, *Time, Eternity and the Trinity*, 151.

⁷⁰Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Unqualified Divine Temporality,” *God & Time: Four Views*, 188.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 190. Italics his.

is that anything which has a history is in time. God has a history, and therefore God exists in time. To this he adds that God “does not have the defect of contingent and transitory time as we have because God is the everlasting God and the Lord of time.”⁷² A weakness in this view is that Scripture texts do indeed point to the beginning of time itself, and that God existed prior to that beginning. Interestingly, contemporary science also advocates that time came into existence with the physical universe.⁷³

Eternity as Relative Timelessness. Padgett rejects both of the preceding views and presents an alternative, that God is the Lord of time. He asserts:

God is not contained within time, not even God’s own time. Rather, God’s being is *conceptually prior* [italics his] (in terms of ontological dependence) to eternity, even though God’s life is not temporally prior to God’s time. God’s eternity is thus similar to other divine attributes that are always part of God’s existence but are not logically essential to the divine Being. Thus, God remains the Lord of time and the Creator of our (measured) time.⁷⁴

Padgett then explains in more detail what he means by “God’s own time”:

God is relatively timeless—that is, timeless relative to our created, measured time. This means, first, that God is the Creator of our time (space-time universe). Our time takes place within (and only because of the prior existence of) God’s own time. Second, even God’s own time, eternity, exists only because God exists (and not the other way around). Even eternity is dependent, ontologically, on God’s very Life and Being. The Being of God is thus rightly at the heart of the whole of reality in history or eternity, in heaven and on earth. Third, God’s own time is infinite and cannot be measured by our time. Eternity is infinite and immeasurable.⁷⁵

Although Padgett argues at length and in detail from a philosophical and a broadly theological perspective, a weakness is that he does not show how his view actually harmonizes with Scripture. Another difficulty is found in his comment that “God’s own time is infinite and cannot be measured by our time.” This encounters a significant obstacle in Rev 8:1.

Timelessness and Omnitemporality. The fourth major view concerning the relationship of God and time is that presented by Craig, who has written widely on this topic.⁷⁶ Craig concisely summarizes his view as follows:

⁷²Kim, *Time, Eternity, and the Trinity*, 165.

⁷³Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam, 1988).

⁷⁴Alan G. Padgett, “Eternity as Relative Timelessness,” *God & Time: Four Views*, 107.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁶For examples, see the following works by William Lane Craig: “God, Time, and Eternity,” *Religious Studies* 14 (1978): 497–503; *The Existence of God and the Beginning of the Universe* (San Bernardino: Here’s Life, 1979); “God and Real Time,” *Religious Studies* 26 (1990): 335–47; “Tense and the New B-Theory of Language,” *Philosophy* 71 (1996): 5–26; *Time and Eternity: Exploring God’s Relationship to Time* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001); and “God, Time, and Eternity,” in *What God Knows*, ed. Poe and Mattson, 75–93.

It seems to me, therefore, that it is not only coherent but also plausible that God existing changelessly alone without creation is timeless and that he enters time at the moment of creation in virtue of his real relation to the temporal universe. The image of God existing idly before creation is just that: a figment of the imagination. Given that time began to exist, the most plausible view of God's relationship to time is that he is timeless without creation and temporal subsequent to creation.⁷⁷

Craig argues that "it is indisputable that the biblical writers typically portray God as engaged in temporal activities, including foreknowing the future and remembering the past;" he then refers to Ps 90:2 and Rev 4:8 to show that when the writers "speak directly of God's eternal existence they do so in terms of beginningless and endless temporal duration."⁷⁸ However, in addition to God's temporal actions, he further argues that Genesis 1:1 sets forth "not simply the beginning of the physical universe but the beginning of time itself and that consequently God may be thought of as timeless."⁷⁹ Other Scripture texts which he brings to the issue to show that the creation of the world coincided with the beginning of time include Prov 8:22–23, where wisdom speaks with reference to a temporal beginning; Jude 25, which includes both a beginning to past time and also an everlasting future; as well as Titus 1:2–3; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Cor 2:7; Ps 55:19; John 17:24; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8. His conclusion is that "since God did not begin to exist at the moment of creation, it therefore follows that he existed 'before' the beginning of time. God, at least 'before' creation, must therefore be atemporal."⁸⁰ Craig thus holds that God is timeless before the creation of the temporal world. After creation, God has real interactions with His world, and is temporal. This view seems to be most in accord with Scripture, correlates well with the literal understanding of Rev 8:1,⁸¹ and is the view which seems most reasonable and biblical.

Time, Eternity, and Revelation 8:1

Craig used several texts to show that God existed before time, and was the creator of time. Other specific texts also testify to God as the one who created the "ages" which, as demonstrated

⁷⁷Craig, "Timelessness & Omnitemporality," *God & Time: Four Views*, 160.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 130.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 132.

⁸¹Hugh Ross suggests another possibility, which is that we should conceive of time as multidirectional and multidimensional, that dimensions exist beyond the four which we experience: length, width, breadth, and time. Among those multidimensions are extra time dimensions. See Hugh Ross, *Beyond the Cosmos* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1996). Ross argues that God can exist in these many time dimensions and that is the solution to the time-eternal question. In an interaction between Ross and Craig, Craig argues that while "string theory" can be used to show the possibility of additional dimensions, those are always "*spatial* dimensions, not *temporal* dimensions [*italics his*]," and it is "a metaphysical extravagance to postulate a hyper-time," See Craig, "God, Time, and Eternity," *What God Knows*, ed. Poe and Mattson, 90.

above, have a time element inherent within them. Beyond that, Scripture clearly indicates that an age can come to an end. Again, Scripture testifies that there are many “ages” yet to come in the plan of God. These concepts will be examined, and Rev 8:1 will be shown to be consistent with the rest of Scripture’s emphasis. Thinking of an “age” as “everlasting,” rather than “eternal,” may help differentiate God’s attribute of eternity, which He has before time, from that which occurs after creation, which is unending time.

God was before the ages and world (and time)

God existed “before the ages” (*pro tōn aiōnōn*). Paul wrote that “we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined **before the ages** (*pro tōn aiōnōn*) to our glory” (1 Cor 2:7). Paul assured believers that God saved and called them “according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus **before time began** (*pro chronōn aiōnōn*)” (2 Tim 1:9 HCSB). Paul also wrote about “the hope of **eternal** (*aiōniou*) life, which God, who cannot lie, promised **long ages ago** (*pro chronōn aiōnōn*, or “before times of ages”), but at **the proper time** (*kairois idiois*) manifested” (Titus 1:2–3).

Scripture also affirms that God existed before the creation of the world (*kosmos*). In His high priestly prayer, Jesus said to the Father that “You loved Me **before the foundation of the world** (*pro katabolēs kosmou*)” (John 17:24). This indicates that an ongoing and loving relationship existed within the Trinity prior to the creation of time, which also included a shared glory (John 17:5). Paul used the same phrase when he declared that the Father “chose us in Him (Christ) **before the foundation of the world** (*pro katabolēs kosmou*)” (Eph 1:4). Peter also used the same phrase to assert that Christ in His sacrifice for sins “was foreknown **before the foundation of the world** (*pro katabolēs kosmou*)” (1 Pet 1:20). In a similar way, John wrote that those on earth worship the beast, including “everyone whose name has not been written **from the foundation of the world** (*apo katabolēs kosmou*) in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain” (Rev 13:8). God existed and was active, therefore, in the timeless “past,” before time, the ages, or the cosmos were created.

God created the ages

God not only existed before the creation of the ages, and time, but He is the One who created the ages. This indicates an initial point of time for them. The author of Hebrews declared that God “in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also **He made the world** (*epoiēsen tous aiōnas*, or “He made the ages”)” (Heb 1:2). The Father made the ages through the instrumentality of the Son. The writer later expanded his thought: “By faith we understand that the **worlds** (*aiōnas*, “ages”) were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible” (Heb 11:3). English translations commonly use the terms “worlds” or “universe” to translate *aiōnas* (“ages”) since it can refer by metonymy to those things which are contained in the ages, that is the created worlds, the universe. Concerning this use, Kent observes: “Ages (*aiōnas*) are the vast eons of time and all

that fills them.”⁸² These ages were “prepared” by God, using the term *katartizō*. In this text the term means “to create, with the implication of putting into proper condition.”⁸³

Other Scripture texts which indicate a beginning to an age, or to ages, include: (a) “As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets **from of old** (*ap’ aiōnos*, “from the age”) (Luke 1:70); (b) “Since the beginning of **time** (*aiōnos*, “age”) it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind” (John 9:32); (c) “whom (Christ) heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets **from ancient time** (*ap’ aiōnos*, “from the age”)” (Acts 3:21); (d) “so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord, who makes these things known **from long ago** (*ap’ aiōnos*, “from the age”)” (Acts 15:17–18); and (e) “and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which **for ages** (*apo tōn aiōnōn*, “from the ages”) has been hidden in God who created all things” (Eph 3:9). Concerning this verse Hoehner argues that the word *aiōn* “refers to time,” meaning that “the mystery was hidden since the ages began or from the beginning of time.”⁸⁴

Ages come to an end

The Bible declares that ages have a beginning. In addition, numerous Scripture texts refer to an age, or ages, coming to an end. This indicates a terminal time point for them. Verses which indicate this include the following: (a) In His explanation of the parable of the tares, Jesus said that “the harvest is **the end of the age** (*synteleia aiōnos*); and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at **the end of the age** (*synteleia tou aiōnos*)” (Matt 13:39–40). The noun *synteleia* refers to “a point of time marking completion of a duration.”⁸⁵ At the point of time when Jesus returns in glory, this current age comes to its completion, and closes. Jesus gave a similar thought a few verses later in the parable of the dragnet, “So it will be **at the end of the age** (*en tē synteleia tou aiōnos*); the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous” (Matt 13:49). (b) While the texts in Matthew 13 look at the end of this age as one of judgment, the book of Matthew concludes with positive words for believers as Jesus said, “I am with you always, even **to the end of the age** (*heōs tēs synteleias tou aiōnos*)” (Matt 28:20). Turner observes that this “expression (13:39–40, 49; 24:3) clearly refers to the time of eschatological judgment at the conclusion of the present

⁸²Homer A. Kent Jr, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 218. Similarly, David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 111, writes that “*aiōnas* includes the space-matter-time continuum that is the universe, the totality of all things existing in time and space. It seems best to include both the temporal and spatial idea in the term.” Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 52, likewise asserts that this refers to “the whole created universe of time and space.”

⁸³Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 514.

⁸⁴Harold H. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 456–57.

⁸⁵*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 974.

order...Through all these days, there will never be a single day when Jesus will not be with his disciples as they are busy about his business.”⁸⁶ (c) Writing about experiences of Israel, Paul observed, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom **the ends of the ages** (*ta telē tōn aiōnōn*) have come” (1 Cor 10:11). Fee comments that interpreters “almost all agree that Paul’s point is that he and the Corinthians belong to the period that marks the end of the ages.”⁸⁷ (d) Observing that if the sacrifice of Christ were like the multiple Old Testament sacrifices, the writer of Hebrews pronounced, “Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often **since the foundation of the world** (*apo katabolēs kosmou*); but now once at **the consummation of the ages** (*synteleia tōn aiōnōn*). He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb 9:26). Concerning the plural “ages,” Keener writes, “Jewish people frequently divided history up into many ages (they proposed a number of different schemes), but the most basic was the division between the present age and the age to come. The ‘consummation of the ages’ (NASB) thus refers to the goal of history, climaxing in the coming of God’s reign.”⁸⁸

Ages follow after each other

The statement that at Christ’s sacrifice there was a “consummation of the ages” indicates that ages follow after each other. Other Scripture texts verify this. (a) Concerning the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit Jesus stated, “Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come” (Matt 12:32). Although much has been written concerning identifying the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the point to observe here is that it was an unforgivable sin during the age in which Jesus spoke, and also in that age which was to follow it. Thus, an age follows an age. (b) Concerning the immense value of following Christ, Jesus said that His followers “will receive a hundred times as much **now in the present age** (*nyn en tō kairō toutō*, “now in this time”), houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and **in the age to come** (*en tō aiōni tō erchomenō*), **eternal** (*aiōnion*) life” (Mark 10:30). In this verse (cf. Luke 18:30), Jesus draws the contrast between this present “time” and the “age” to come. (c) Drawing a contrast between this present existence and that which is to come, Jesus also said, “The sons **of this age** (*tou aiōnos toutou*) marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain **to that age** (*tou aiōnos ekeinou*) and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Luke 20:34–35). Luke drew a contrast between the present age and a coming age of “blessing in the afterlife.”⁸⁹ (d) In

⁸⁶David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 690–91.

⁸⁷Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 459 n. 45.

⁸⁸Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 668.

⁸⁹Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 1623.

his grand doxology, Jude observed the distinction between the past age-time, the present time, and the coming many ages; he wrote, “to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, **before all time** (*pro pantos tou aiōnos*, “before all the age”) and **now** (*nyn*)⁹⁰ and **forever**” (*eis panta tous aiōnas*, “unto all the ages”) (Jude 25); (e) The resurrected Christ is seated at the right hand of God, Paul stated, “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in **this age** (*tō aiōni toutō*) but also in **the one to come** (*tō mellonti*)” (Eph 1:21). Concerning this statement Hoehner astutely observes that “in Ephesians there is not the cessation of time . . . but there is a time division between the present and future ages. The word *aiōn*, ‘age,’ consistently refers to ‘age’ or a period of time in Ephesians.”⁹¹ As was the case elsewhere, so it is here that time is an integral part of each age, as one age follows another. (f) In similar ways Paul spoke of “the mystery which has been hidden **from the past ages and generations** (*apo tōn aiōnōn kai apo tōn geneōn*)” (Col 1:26), and the author of Hebrews considers those who “have tasted the good word of God and the powers **of the age to come** (*mellontos aiōnos*)” (Heb 6:5), again showing a sequence of ages, and thus also of time.

Ages upon ages continue indefinitely

Scripture specifies that the ages do not cease; rather they continue on indefinitely. Paul recorded concerning God “that **in the ages to come** (*en tois aiōsin tois eperchomenois*) He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:7). “The setting for this manifestation of God’s grace is spelled out by means of the temporal phrase ‘in the ages to come’ The plural ‘ages’ is not simply a stylistic variation of the singular, but a more general conception, implying ‘one age supervening upon another like successive waves of the sea, as far into the future as thought can reach.’”⁹²

Scripture also uses the phrase “forever and ever,” referring to age following age for the unlimited future of time. The Greek phrases include the following: (a) *eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn* (“unto the ages [plural] of the ages [plural]”) (Gal 1:5; see also Phil 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 13:21; 1 Pet 4:11; Rev 1:6; 4:9, 10; 5:13; 7:12; 10:6; 11:15; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5); (b) *eis . . . tou aiōnos tōn aiōnōn* (“unto the age [singular] of the ages [plural]”) (Eph 3:21); (c) *eis ton aiōna tou aiōnos* (“unto the age [singular] of the age [singular]”) (Heb 1:8); (d) *eis aiōnas aiōnōn* (“unto ages [plural] of ages [plural]”) (Rev 14:11).

⁹⁰The Greek adverb *nyn* is a “temporal marker with focus on the moment as such, *now*” or a “temporal marker with focus not so much on the present time as the situation pert. at a given moment, *now, as it is*” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 681).

⁹¹Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 282.

⁹²Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 173.

Conclusion

This article has explored the significance of the declaration in Rev 8:1 that when the seventh seal was opened “there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.” Most commentaries focus attention on the question of “why” this silence occurs, and nine possibilities were enumerated. The view that the silence is a dramatic pause signifying awe and dread as the heavenly hosts await the coming events was seen to be most consistent with the context of Revelation.

The main issue examined, however, was: how can there be a thirty minute time interval in the heavenly, eternal scene? Can time and eternity coexist? To answer those questions, this article considered what time is, and showed how both Old Testament and New Testament words for “eternal” actually have within them the inherent concept of time. This was followed by a summary of four suggestions as to how time relates to eternity, concluding that the view most in accord with Scripture is that God existed before time and ages, is timeless prior to His creation, and afterwards is omnitemporal. The article concluded by demonstrating that God is the One who created the ages, those which are past, that which is current, and those which are to come, and with those ages He created time. Since some Scripture texts (e.g., Acts 3:21–24; Eph 2:7) indicate that God reveals truth during an age, a working definition of “age” is: a period of time in which God gives revelation of Himself to relate truth to His creatures. Once He created time, then God functions within that time, and will continue to do so indefinitely into the everlasting future revealing Himself to His creatures. Time functions within each age. Therefore, time functions in the heavenly realm just as it does in the earthly. Revelation 8:1 is consistent with this functioning time. John correctly observed that when the seventh seal was opened “there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.” That half hour actually existed in heaven, just as it did on earth. Those in heaven will be blessed with all the glories of God, continually learning of Him, for hours, days, years, and ages to come indefinitely and unceasingly. The song writers were correct.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we first begun.⁹³

And on that day, when my strength is failing,
the end draws near, and my time has come;
Still, my soul will sing Your praise unending—
Ten thousand years, and then forever more.⁹⁴

⁹³John Newton, “Amazing Grace,” public domain, published in 1779.

⁹⁴Jonas Myrin and Matt Redman, “10,000 Reasons,” (Brentwood: Sixstepsrecords/Sparrow records, 2011).

The War that Cannot Be Won? Poverty: What the Bible Says



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Introduction

I have seen poverty. I have seen it in the small towns of Bolivia, in the slums of Ghana, and in the children's faces of Cuba. I have seen pastors in other countries who do not have enough food to feed their families and have no money to pay the bus fare to send their children to school. I have seen poverty in the face of the woman washing her clothes with a bottle of dirty water on a street corner in Buenos Aires.

But, I have also seen poverty in the United States. With all of our resources, it seems unlikely that the citizens of our country would lack any basic need. But it happens. It happens in the large cities, and it happens in the small towns. It happens in Appalachia, and it happens in New York City.

On January 8, 1964, President Johnson famously declared a "War on Poverty." He stated, "Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope—some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity."¹

Johnson said that the war on poverty's "chief weapons" would be "better schools, and better health, and better homes, and better training, and better job opportunities." It was an underfunded war that was quickly overtaken by a more pressing war in Vietnam. But in the years following Johnson's declaration, several government programs were begun to help the poor, such as Medicaid, the Job Corps, and Head Start. These programs now seem to be part of the framework of our country.

Because of the fiftieth anniversary of the declared war on poverty, many political pundits today are writing about what is going on in our country as it relates to the poor and how things have (or have not) changed since 1964. There was less poverty after the programs of Johnson's war were put into place. Dylan Matthews of the *Washington Post* writes, "In 1964, the poverty rate was 19

¹Lyndon B. Johnson, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 8, 1964, <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/640108.asp> (accessed March 26, 2014).

percent. Ten years later, it was 11.2 percent.”² The programs worked. Today, however, it seems the opposite is true. In 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau found that 46.5 million Americans lived at or below the poverty line.³ This figure is equivalent to 15% of the population.

We seem to be going backwards in the war on poverty. Ronald Reagan said, “In the 60s, we waged a war on poverty, and poverty won.”⁴ Is there no hope of eradicating poverty during our time here on earth? Does poverty always win? What if it were possible to forget the political rhetoric and reliance upon government and see what we, as Christians, are supposed to do? Should we not look to the Bible for answers? The Bible provides Christians with instruction regarding how we should treat the “poor among us” and how the treatment we give the poor demonstrates our salvation.

What the Bible Does *Not* Say About the Poor

If we are to look in the Bible for our answer to the problem of poverty, then perhaps we should start with what the Bible does *not* say in relation to this pressing issue. There are two passages that are often quoted in relation to the poor, but these two passages are often repeated out of scriptural context. They are Matt 26:11 and 2 Thess 3:10.

In Matt 26:11, Jesus said “You will always have the poor with you” (HCSB).⁵ Is that why the war on poverty cannot be won? Does that mean that the Christian community should just accept this fact? Evidently not. The passage also goes on to say, “but you do not always have Me” (Matt 26:9). This is not a prescription that Jesus is giving about the poor, but instead, it is a foreshadowing of His upcoming death, burial, and resurrection. It is set within the context of the woman who poured expensive perfume on Jesus’ head and washed His feet with her hair. The disciples criticized her by saying, “This might have been sold for a great deal and given to the poor.” Jesus responds in verse 11, “You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.” He is not saying that we should not have compassion on the poor. He is not saying that Christians should not be concerned with the suffering of those in poverty. Instead, He is saying that we, as Christians, must celebrate first our relationship with Him before all else.

Jesus never implies in the passage above, though, that we should turn a deaf ear to those in

²“Poverty in the 50 years since ‘The Other America,’ in five charts,” *The Washington Post*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2012/07/11/poverty-in-the-50-years-since-the-other-america-in-five-charts/> (accessed March 26, 2014).

³“Poverty,” *United States Census Bureau*, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/>. This data also includes 10.5 million who are considered to be the “working poor” in 2010 according to “Working poor rate 7.2 percent in 2010,” *United States Bureau of Labor*, http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2012/ted_20120405.htm (accessed March 26, 2014).

⁴“50 years later, war on poverty has new battle lines,” *USA Today*, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2014/01/06/war-on-poverty-50-years-later/4344985/> (accessed March 26, 2014).

⁵See Mark 14:7 and John 12:8 for the parallel passages.

poverty. As He often did, Jesus here is quoting Scripture, namely Deut 15:11. This verse says: “For there will never cease to be poor people in the land; that is why I am commanding you, ‘You must willingly open your hand to your afflicted and poor brother in your land.’” This passage is speaking specifically about the special year set aside every seven years for cancelling debts among the people of Israel. The Bible, however, also states in the preceding verses that it would be sinful for a person to consider the timing of the seventh year in deciding if he/she should make a loan to a poor person:

If there is a poor person among you, one of your brothers within any of your gates in the land the LORD your God is giving you, you must not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. Instead, you are to open your hand to him and freely loan him enough for whatever need he has. Be careful that there isn't this wicked thought in your heart, “The seventh year, the year of canceling debts, is near,” and you are stingy toward your poor brother and give him nothing. He will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty. Give to him, and don't have a stingy heart when you give, and because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you do (Deut 15:7–10).

In quoting this passage from the Old Testament, Jesus emphasizes that His followers must be willing to help the poor always, every year. Christians have sometimes used Matt 26:11 to say that the idea of poverty is something that will never change, and so we are justified in being tight-fisted toward the poor. In contrast, this passage that Jesus was quoting in Deut 15:11 tells us that we are supposed to be “open-handed” in our dealings with the poor, giving generously and not being stingy.

The second passage that is often misinterpreted as it relates to poverty is 2 Thess 3:10, “In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: ‘If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat.’” Upon first reading this passage, it seems to put the hungry person's needs squarely on his own shoulders. If he wants to eat, he should get a job. This was stated in Scripture roughly two thousand years ago by the Apostle Paul, but it is also being screamed on airwaves, in convention halls, and around family dinner tables today. So, did the Apostle Paul mean that Christians should not be concerned if someone is hungry? Is it the person's fault if he or she cannot find a job?

If we look deeper into the passage, we see that Paul gives us more information in verse 11 about the people who were not working: “For we hear that there are some among you who walk irresponsibly, not working at all, but interfering with the work of others.” The people to whom Paul is referring are people who were troublemakers. They are not people who could not work because of physical limitations or lack of opportunities; these are people who were rabble-rousing and instigating problems. A couple of verses after Paul issues the warning about the troublemakers, though, he also cautiously reminds the Thessalonians to “not grow weary in doing good” (verse 13; also Gal 6:9), lest they start withholding aid from the poor. If we think that all the poor are like these troublemakers, we “could fall into the error of thinking that everyone is lazy, that no one needs help. After inflicting some discipline we could think that discipline is what everyone

needs, and we could become cold-hearted toward those truly in need.”⁶ We must indeed learn to hold people accountable. We have to learn to help without hurting, as a well-known book title puts it.⁷ But we must not allow ourselves to become so cynical as to think that all of the poor fall into this same category. Indeed, we must “not grow weary in doing good.”

In this section, we have looked at two important and oft-misquoted biblical passages as they relate to dealing with the poor. We have examined how Jesus was *not* saying in Matt 26:11 that we should just ignore the poor since they will always be present; instead He was predicting His death and at the same time pointing us back to the passage in Deut 15:11. We have also seen how Paul’s injunction in 2 Thessalonians 3 is not an excuse for Christians not to help the hungry, but is a limitation placed on those who were rabble-rousing as an alternative to working. Christians should err on the side of not growing “weary in doing good.” We must be careful that we do not take our advice from the political adages and pundits of the day, but that we search the Scriptures to find out what God Himself asks of us in our dealings with the poor.

What the Bible *Does* Say About the Poor

There are many passages in the Bible that deal with how the poor and other disenfranchised groups should be protected. Let us begin with a quick and albeit modest survey of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament on Poverty

We have already looked at Deut 15:11 above, but there are other passages in the Old Testament that inform this discussion, such as:

- “You must not deny justice to a poor person among you in his lawsuit” (Exod 23:6).
- “You must not strip your vineyard bare or gather its fallen grapes. Leave them for the poor and the foreign resident; I am Yahweh your God” (Lev 19:10).
- “He saves the needy from their sharp words and from the clutches of the powerful. So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth” (Job 5:15–16).
- “Happy is one who cares for the poor; the Lord will save him in a day of adversity” (Psa 41:1).
- “The one who oppresses the poor person insults his Maker, but one who is kind to the needy honors Him” (Prov 14:31).

⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 396.

⁷Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody, 2012).

- “They trample the heads of the poor on the dust of the ground and block the path of the needy” (Amos 2:7a).
- “Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor, and do not plot evil in your hearts against one another” (Zech 7:10).

These and other similar passages can be found throughout the Old Testament. They emphasize the special care that God has, and therefore Christians should have, for “the poor among us.” In this short treatment of the subject, it is imperative to limit the scope of our examination of the Scriptures. Therefore, we will focus our Old Testament discussion on poverty on the book of Isaiah to illuminate the importance God gives to taking care of the poor.

The prophet Isaiah’s audience was the southern kingdom of Judah. At this time, the people in Jerusalem were getting the “religious” part right. They were meeting together and worshipping God. Where they were going wrong was outside of the temple. They were not taking care of the poor, and injustices were abounding. The situation was so dire that God tells the people to stop making sacrifices and that He will not hear their prayers because their “hands are covered with blood” (Isa 1:15).

What have the people of Jerusalem done, then, that has brought about this strong reaction from the Lord? We discover the problem in Isa 1:23: “They do not defend the rights of the fatherless, and the widow’s case never comes before them.” While this passage does not specifically mention the poor, the fatherless and the widow are two categories of people in the Bible who were typically poor and limited in their power to change their situation. They were left vulnerable to the whims of the powerful, and God demanded that His people take special care of the less fortunate.

Indeed, Isaiah later shows how God Himself specifically takes care of the poor. In Isa 25:4, the prophet states, “For You have been a stronghold for the poor, a stronghold for the needy person in his distress, a refuge from the rain, a shade from the heat.” These are the qualities that God looks for in Christian today as well. We should be a place of safety and refuge for the poor and others in distress.

In Isaiah 41, we begin to see how this care for the needy is related to the coming restoration and that again, God will care for the poor. In Isa 41:17, we read, “The poor and the needy seek water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. I, Yahweh, will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.” In this case, God is talking about restoring the people of Israel, even after they have been so wicked that He sent them into exile in Babylonia. He looks on them with His infinite loving kindness and promises that He will answer them.

Likewise, Christians must be willing to restore broken people without taking their former offenses against them. Yes, it is true that sometimes poverty is brought on by bad choices in life. But, just as God forgave the people of Israel and sought to restore them, we must be willing to do the same.

Last, we cannot depart from our study of Isaiah without focusing on Isaiah 58, where we find out the meaning of a true fast. Once again, we hear an echo of Isaiah 1, where God is fed up with the religious practices of His people. He wants them to live out their faith on a daily basis, and part of living out the faith for Isaiah was in the God-followers' treatment of the poor. In Isa 58:6–9a, God says that what He desires from His followers is the following:

Isn't the fast I choose:
To break the chains of wickedness,
to untie the ropes of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free,
and to tear off every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
to bring the poor and homeless into your house,
to clothe the naked when you see him,
and not to ignore your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will appear like the dawn,
and your recovery will come quickly.
Your righteousness will go before you,
and the LORD's glory will be your rear guard.
At that time, when you call, the LORD will answer;
when you cry out, He will say, 'Here I am.'

God demands that His followers reach out to and protect the oppressed, the hungry, the poor, and the naked. There is no justification for not following God's commands. If we do these things, then God will hear our prayers and our "light will appear like the dawn" and our "recovery will come quickly."

The New Testament on Poverty

Just as with the Old Testament, we must limit the scope of our examination of passages in the New Testament dealing with poverty. In this section, we will deal with one question: How does our treatment of the poor relate to our own salvation? Based on the examination of passages below, I contend that our treatment of the poor is a necessary evidence of our salvation.

To begin this discussion of how our treatment of the poor is a necessary evidence of our salvation, however, I must clarify one basic fact regarding our salvation. I acknowledge that to some of my fellow Christians, it may appear that I am overstating my case. I am not saying that our salvation *depends* on how we treat the poor. Our salvation is a free gift to all who confess with their mouths that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead (Rom 10:9). I cannot overstate the importance of how our salvation is independent of our works. We receive our salvation only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:8). At the same time, God has created us "in Christ Jesus for good works, which [He] prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). Our good works, then, are an expression of our salvation.

Several passages in the New Testament make the connection between our “good works” to the poor and how these relate to our salvation. The story of the Sheep and the Goats in Matt 25:31–46 is a good illustration of this connection. In this passage, Jesus begins by discussing that “when the Son of Man comes in His glory,” He will separate the nations into two categories: the sheep on the right and the goats on the left. He then invites the sheep on the right to come and “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (v. 34). The goats on the left, however, will be sent into “eternal punishment” (v. 46). How does Jesus make this division at the end of time? Surprisingly, it depends on how the righteous have treated those in need. Jesus says:

For I was hungry
and you gave Me something to eat;
I was thirsty
and you gave Me something to drink;
I was a stranger and you took Me in;
I was naked and you clothed Me;
I was sick and you took care of Me;
I was in prison and you visited Me.’
“Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or without clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and visit You?’
“And the King will answer them, ‘I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.’ (Matt 25:35–40)

The connection to our salvation is clear. While our salvation does not depend on helping the poor, it is evidenced by our willingness to feed and clothe the poor, provide medical care to the sick, and visit the imprisoned, according to Jesus’ words here in Matthew.

Another passage in the New Testament that demonstrates the fact that our salvation should be evidenced by our care for the poor comes appropriately from the “Love Chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13. When reading this chapter, we sometimes skip the first few verses in order to arrive at the “Love is...” part of the passage that begins in verse four. The first three verses, though, address how we are to show love in the human realm. They say:

If I speak human or angelic languages
but do not have love,
I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal.
If I have the gift of prophecy
and understand all mysteries
and all knowledge,
and if I have all faith
so that I can move mountains
but do not have love, I am nothing.
And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor,

and if I give my body in order to boast
but do not have love, I gain nothing (1 Cor 13:1–3).

The first two verses reference religious traditions that Christians may practice. The passage then goes on to say, echoing Isaiah 1, that if Christians do these religious things but do not have love, then the practices themselves are worthless. They are simply human activities with religious overtones. Verse three also says that even if we give to the poor, but we do it without love, then that also is worthless. So, how does that relate to our current discussion? First, the true Christian must give to the poor out of love, not out of mere religious obligation. It also means that the most meaningful aid for the poor should come from loving Christians. The church should no longer outsource its care for the poor to the government or other social aid organizations. While these types of organizations may have their place, they cannot and should not replace the genuine loving care evidenced by true Christians.

The last passage that we will examine in the New Testament comes from the book of James. This practical handbook of how Christians are supposed to live out their faith speaks very candidly to how our salvation relates to our treatment of the poor. In the second chapter of this book, James writes:

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can his faith save him?

If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you don’t give them what the body needs, what good is it? In the same way faith, if it doesn’t have works, is dead by itself (Jas 2:14–17).

Our faith cannot be lived in a vacuum. Our salvation must be evidenced by good works towards those who lack the basic needs in order to demonstrate the transformation that God’s grace has worked in us.

Conclusion

Given the above biblical evidence of the injunction for Christians to care for the poor, why do many Bible-believing Christians often criticize the poor more readily, using the opportunities presented to them as a means to share the gospel in word and deed? Twenty-first century Christians should provide care for the poor with love that comes from the Father. This is what the first-century church did. The Book of Acts records for us:

Now the large group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common. And the apostles were giving testimony with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them. For there was not a needy person among them, because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the

apostles' feet. This was then distributed for each person's basic needs (Acts 4:32–35).

Is this a radical treatment for the poor? Yes. Does it require sacrifice by Christians? Yes. D. L. Moody once said, "Every Bible should be bound in shoe leather!" We must, indeed, put feet to our faith. So, the question remains: Can the war on poverty ever be won? I believe it can, but it will require Christians to radically live their faith on a daily basis much like the first-century believers. May we as Christians determine to live out our salvation by welcoming and helping "the poor among us" today and every day, just as the Bible commands.

The Effects of Theological Convergence: Ecumenism from Edinburgh to Lausanne



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Introduction

Evangelicals have asserted that a theological convergence began at the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910¹ and has continued to affect evangelical theology to this day. This article provides evidence that there was a convergence of theologies that took place at Edinburgh 1910 when evangelicals and ecumenicals sought unity for the sake of world evangelization. This article explores the ecumenism that flowed from Edinburgh 1910, analyzes its impact on evangelical theology, and demonstrates how convergent missiological practices emerged as a result.

This article acknowledges that there were multiple causes for the theological convergence that continue to affect twenty-first century evangelicalism. However, the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 was a foundation for and primary contributor to theological convergence. David Hesselgrave asserts that “from the time of Edinburgh the modern ecumenical movement has been characterized more by organizational togetherness than theological consensus.”² Hesselgrave as well as other evangelicals attribute much of the convergence to a lack of adherence to biblical theology, which in turn leads to less than biblical missiological practices. This article will explore these claims.

However, before delving into these assertions, it must be noted that there were several contributing factors to theological convergence from Edinburgh 1910 to Lausanne 1974. Charles E. Van Engen asserts that as

North American Evangelicals experienced new sociocultural strength and confidence, changes in ecumenical theology of mission, and developments in evangelical partner churches in the Third World. They responded with a broadening vision of an evangelical theology of mission that became less reactionary and more holistic without compromising

¹Subsequent mission conferences will be referred to by their city and the date of the meeting. For example, the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 will be referred to as Edinburgh 1910.

²David J. Hesselgrave, “Will We Correct the Edinburgh Error? Future Mission in Historical Perspective,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 49.2 (Spring 2007): 123.

the initial evangelical élan of the ‘spirit of Edinburgh 1910.’³

Van Engen further points out that 1940s and 1950s evangelicals were influenced theologically by the threat of communism, war, a pessimism over humanity and the human condition, as well as the “essential emptiness of the old social-gospel mentality.”⁴

Wilber R. Shenk states that by 1966 there was a convergence stemming from “Third World Evangelicals’ concerns for an identity that included social justice and cultural integrity.”⁵ It is likely that convergence resulted as western evangelicals and “Third World” evangelicals interacted at mission gatherings like Wheaton 1966, Berlin 1966, Bangkok 1973, and Lausanne 1974.

Additionally, while Daniel W. Hardy never actually uses the term “theological convergence,” he makes a strong case for convergence as a result of the transition from “Enlightenment” thinking to “Modernity.” As Christian theologians, laymen, and missionaries (holding reconstitution, instrumentalization, and/or conciliatory views) transitioned into modernity, certainly theological orthodoxy was altered. These changing views did not exist in a vacuum. The views “coexisted and interacted, often within the same churches or mission organizations, stimulated as much by each other as by anything outside.”⁶

Other factors influenced twentieth century evangelicalism as well. The West faced economic collapse after the 1929 Wall Street Stock Market Crash and the Great Depression that followed. There was also a deep pessimism resulting from incredible destruction of war as Germany and Britain unleashed devastation upon humanity. These are but a few of the possible influences that may have contributed to convergence as evangelicals and ecumenicals hammered out the road to world evangelization in the twentieth century. While there were indeed numerous factors, the fact that there was theological compromise or convergence away from the moorings of biblical absolutism is still evident, and further analysis of that phenomenon is pertinent.

Ecumenism that flowed from Edinburgh 1910

There were three major movements that emerged from Edinburgh 1910. The first movement resulted in the formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921 (also known as the Missionary Conference Movement). John R. Mott (chairman of Edinburgh 1910) was named chairman of the council. J. H. Oldham (who served on the Edinburgh Continuation

³Charles E. Van Engen, “A Broadening Vision: Forty Years of Evangelical Theology of Mission 1946–1986,” in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions 1880–1980*, ed. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 204.

⁴*Ibid.*, 206.

⁵Wilber R. Shenk, “North American Evangelical Missions since 1945: A Bibliographic Survey,” in *Earthen Vessels*, 325.

⁶Daniel W. Hardy, “Upholding Orthodoxy in Missionary Encounters: A Theological Perspective,” in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 214.

Committee) was appointed as Mott's assistant. The IMC was formed to study and transform the non-Roman Catholic Christian missions into a more unified and harmonious organization.

The second movement formed the Stockholm Continuation Committee. The committee existed to engage the non-Roman Catholic churches in an effort to implement what they considered essential documents from Edinburgh. The committee was founded on practical and social bias which were established at the Edinburgh World Missions Conference. This movement established the Life and Work Movement, which originally focused on issues of peace and justice, but later broadened its work to include economic, social, and moral issues. The Life and Work Movement held conferences in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1925, and in Oxford, England, in 1937.

The third movement found expression in the Lausanne Continuation Committee, which was committed to matters of faith and order. They worked to achieve authentic unity by establishing a community of faith and common doctrine of ministry.⁷ Since this work is most applicable to a correlation between Edinburgh and Lausanne, this article will briefly examine the first two movements, but will concentrate primarily on the third movement.

The first movement, known as the IMC, formed in 1921. The IMC organized several mission conferences, including the second World Mission Conference, which was held in Jerusalem in 1928, and was quite different from that of Edinburgh. The two main topics that arose from the Jerusalem conference dealt with the relation of the Christian message and other religions and theological interpretations of Christian social and political responsibilities. No consensus emerged from Jerusalem 1928.⁸ One reason it created controversy and divergence may have been due to its relativistic position that all paths lead to God.

According to some evangelicals, the trend of Jerusalem 1928 was toward "the social gospel, the ethnic concept of religion in which Christianity was denominated as differing in degree rather than in kind from other religions."⁹ John D. Rockefeller Jr. financed a report on "Rethinking Missions" by the Laymen's Committee. William Earnest Hocking, professor at Harvard University, was selected as chairman of the committee. He also served as co-editor of the report. The report was rejected by most delegates.

⁷Jacques Desseaux, *Twenty Centuries of Ecumenism*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 48–49.

⁸"History," *World Council of Churches*, www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/cwme/history (accessed March 26, 2014).

⁹George P. Gurganus, ed., *Guidelines for World Evangelism* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1976), <http://bible.ovu.edu/missions/guidelines/chap1.htm> (accessed February 2, 2009). The debate centered around the committee's five conclusions, namely: 1. There should be an eventual transfer of all authority in the churches and the institutions from the missionaries to the natives; 2. Non-Christian religions should not be debated by missionaries; 3. A positive presentation of Christian principles should be made; 4. A sharing should take place between Christianity and non-Christian religions. Each should adopt the good points of the other; 5. Ultimately, the missionary should become an advisor or minister in the service of the native church.

The IMC also hosted a conference in 1938 in Tambaram, India (also referred to as Madras 1938), commonly known as the third World Mission Conference. It was largely represented by Western churches, yet it included a growing number of leaders from the younger churches. The younger church leaders were conservatives and they defended the Christian message regarding other religions, but also advised missionaries to dialogue with other religions.

In 1947, the IMC held its conference in Whitby, Canada. By this time, the use of the terms “Christian” and “non-Christian” when referring to peoples or countries had been dropped. By the end of the conference, the door had been opened for “new paths in mission theology.”¹⁰ Within thirty-seven years of Edinburgh 1910, a convergence was well under way in this first movement that flowed from Edinburgh.

New Delhi 1961 was a turning point as the IMC and the World Council of Churches (WCC) became effective when mission councils who had been affiliated with the IMC aligned with the WCC, and the IMC ceased to exist. From the time of the New Delhi Conference, “World mission conferences could truly be called ecumenical because of the much larger denominational participation, including Orthodox churches and soon after the Second Vatican Council also Roman Catholic observers.”¹¹

One of New Delhi’s speakers was a deeply committed Lutheran named Joseph Sittler. He was a leader who was unafraid to address issues of ecumenism and Christian unity. Widely known for his keynote speech, “Called to Unity,” which he delivered at the Third Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi 1961. Sittler may have set the tone for the future meetings at Uppsala and Bangkok. Sittler’s interest in Eastern Orthodox thinking contributed to his own theological stance and influenced his New Delhi speech, which emphasized unity and the Cosmic Christ.

Sittler argued that God calls the Christian churches to unity, and “this relentless calling [that] persists over and through all discouragements ... is what engendered the ecumenical movement among the churches, and steadily sustains them in it.”¹² For Sittler, Cosmic Christology affirmed to mankind that the gift of God in Jesus Christ was for all of creation. Cosmic Christ stems from God’s cosmic plan based on Scriptures such as John 1:1–14; Mark 16:15; Col 1:15–20; Eph 1:3–4, and 9–10.

Other conferences were held between 1961 and 1973. However, theological convergence was clearly evident at Bangkok 1973, when the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) held its conference under the theme of “Salvation Today.” The terminology which had been inspired by liberation theology took center stage in Bangkok and promoted social, political,

¹⁰“History,” *World Council of Churches*, www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/cwme/history (accessed March 26, 2014).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹²“Ecumenism/Unity,” *The Joseph Sittler Archives*, <http://www.josephsittler.org/topics/ecumenism.html> (accessed February 16, 2009).

and economic justice, as well as racism and environmental issues. Salvation which once referred to mankind's spiritual life had become holistic and concerned with his earthly existence as well. Throughout the years, the terms would be redefined to focus on existential issues.¹³ This theological shift deeply concerned some within evangelicalism. Historically, evangelicals have considered "salvation" as referring primarily to man's spiritual life; the CWME, under the WCC, repeatedly held conferences focusing on soteriological themes which include all areas of human life.¹⁴

The second movement that stemmed from Edinburgh was the Stockholm Continuation Committee, which later became known as the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work. Originally designed to focus on issues of peace and justice, the movement quickly broadened its scope to include economic, social, and moral issues. The Life and Work Movement found expression in several other conferences from 1925 to 1937, then it was absorbed into the preliminary stages of the WCC in 1938 prior to its official inception in 1947.¹⁵

When in 1938 the movements 'Life and Work' and 'Faith and Order' decided to form a World Council of Churches, a connection-committee to the IMC was set up under the guidance of John Mott and William Paton. And from the very beginning of the WCC in 1948 both councils were associated with each other and maintained joint enterprises.¹⁶

Today, the WCC promotes the work of the Life and Work Movement and the ideals of the Faith and Order Movement. The ideals and work of the WCC will be examined later in this work since all three movements have become so interwoven into the WCC that they now appear to be one broad movement interwoven with the World Evangelical Alliance and Lausanne.

The third movement on which this article focuses is the Lausanne Continuation Committee. This committee urged churches to study the difficulties raised by theological differences. Their objective was for the churches to overcome their theological differences, thus promoting Christian unity. One of the committee's achievements was the organization of the Faith and Order Movement, which held its first conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1927.

¹³Vebjørn Horsford, "Healing and Salvation in Late Modernity: The Use and Implication of Such Terms in the Ecumenical Movement," *International Review of Mission* 96.380/381 (January/April 2007): 5.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 6. In the latter part of the twentieth century the WCC and/or the CWME sponsored the following assemblies: Mexico City 1963, Uppsala 1968, New Delhi 1972, Bangkok 1973, Nairobi 1975, Melbourne 1980, Vancouver 1983, Canberra 1991, Salvador 1996, and Harrare 1998.

¹⁵The Life and Work Movement found expression in the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work (Stockholm 1925), The Continuation Committee of the Conference (1926–1930), The Universal Christian Council for Life and Work (1930–1938), and The Oxford Conference on Church, Community, and State (1937).

¹⁶Christoph Benn, "The theology of mission and the integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches," *International Review of Mission* 76.303 (July 1987): 394.

The Faith and Order Movement

The idea for a conference on faith and order was first proposed by Episcopal Bishop Charles H. Brent at the World Missionary Conference in 1910, but it did not take place until 1927. The task of the Faith and Order Movement was to study diversities of belief, liturgical practice, polity, and ministry within Christianity. The hope was that a better understanding of such diversities might enable good will and cooperation between differing denominations.

At the heart of the agenda of Lausanne 1927 was the call for unity. The Faith and Order Movement was part of the larger ecumenical movement that stressed an agreement on faith that was accompanied by a shared mission. The Faith and Order Movement became a Commission in 1948 when it joined with the World Council. The World Council “became a principal context for the faith and order conversations focused in the Commission on Faith and Order.”¹⁷ The World Council of Churches has made many structural changes over the years. However, the Faith and Order Commission has remained and is today the most comprehensive forum for debate on the subject. The 120-member commission has continued to expand its vision steadily to become more inclusive. It has even received approval from the Pope. While the Roman Catholic Church has never officially become an active member of the World Council of Churches, it did become a full member of the Faith and Order Commission after Vatican II.¹⁸

Lausanne 1927 was the first of many conferences on Faith and Order. Other conferences included Edinburgh 1937, Lund 1952, Montreal 1963 and Santiago de Compostela 1993. On August 5, 2002, the Faith and Order Movement celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary in Lausanne. The commission continues to carry out its mission

to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe.¹⁹

On August 25, 2002, Mary Tanner delivered a paper at the seventy-fifth Lausanne 1927 Anniversary celebration that encapsulates some of the milestones of the Faith and Order Movement. Speaking of Lausanne 1927 she states,

That meeting saw so clearly the necessity of expressing agreement in faith if churches were to come together and stay in mission and service to God’s world. The meeting identified an agenda on which agreement was deemed to be required for the unity of the Church and it made advances in understanding by comparing positions held by different churches in some

¹⁷Mary Tanner, “What is Faith and Order,” *World Council of Churches*, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/xii-essays/what-is-faith-and-order-mary-tanner> (accessed March 26, 2014).

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

of those areas. So, Lausanne began an ecumenical theological conversation which has gathered momentum in the last 75 years, in multilateral conversations within the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and also outside the World Council in many bilateral discussions which have blossomed, particularly with the entry into the conversation of the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II. We rightly celebrate its fruits of the conversations: the convergences, even consensus, reached between churches in areas that were causes of division and which once seemed intractable. And we celebrate the fact that this theological conversation has gone in an ever more inclusive circle and amidst increasing friendships of trust and confidence. The conversation has continued, together with the other crucial endeavors of the ecumenical movement: shared mission, education, witness, the search together in this broken world for justice and peace, for the overcoming of violence, and for the establishment of an inclusive and participatory community.²⁰

Tanner makes it clear that the Faith and Order Movement was intentionally ecumenical and that there were great achievements from its inception in 1927 until 2002. She boasts that the theological conversations led to theological convergence and even consensus as a result of gaining the trust and confidence of the differing denominations.

The Rise of the World Council of Churches

The Life and Work conferences and the Faith and Order conferences of the 1920s and 1930s were considered fruitful by some, but by the 1940s “there was a growing realization that the life-and-work was inevitably theological, and consequently, could not be kept in isolation from faith-and-order considerations.”²¹ When the World Council of Churches held its founding assembly in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1948 the Life and Work Movement and the Faith and Order Movement came together and found their new expression. The two movements were formalized into a union and became known as the World Council of Churches.²² After the joining of the two movements in 1948 the Life and Work Movement ceased to exist. However, Faith and Order continued as a distinct movement within the WCC.

The WCC grew in membership and influence. By 1957 the Free Methodist Church sent Donald Demaray to work with the Baptism Into Christ Committee. Indirectly, James Royster represented the Church of God (Anderson) at that meeting, although John W. V. Smith worked with the committee on “Doctrinal Consensus and Conflict.” By 1963, the Church of God (Anderson) was sending delegates and observers to attend the WCC conferences. Gene W.

²⁰Mary Tanner, “The First World Conference on Faith and Order, Lausanne, 3–12 August 1927: what difference did it make?” <http://www.anglicancentreinrome.org/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=92821> (accessed March 26, 2014), 1.

²¹Gilbert W. Stafford, “Faith and Order: Holiness Church Participation,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32.1 (Spring 1997): 145, http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported_site/wesleyjournal/1997-wtj-32-1.pdf (accessed March 26, 2014).

²²*Ibid.*

Newberry was a delegate to the Montreal 1963 Conference along with Louis Meyer and John W. V. Smith as observers. The Salvation Army also sent their first two delegates, Commissioner S. Hepburn and Lt. Col. Kaiser.²³

The Wesleyan Theological Society had been indirectly participating with the WCC, but in 1985 they began officially working with the WCC with the appointment of Dayton and David Cubie of the Church of the Nazarene. Today there are a wide range of churches cooperating with the WCC. Most are full members such as the Church of God (Anderson), the Church of God (Cleveland), Mennonites, International Evangelical Church, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Independent Christian Churches, Christian Reformed Church, and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Additionally, there are churches and organizations that participate, but do not hold membership.

The WCC grew in membership and influence from its inception throughout the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. However, it did so in spite of controversy from conservative evangelicals. Some evangelical leaders feared that the WCC's involvement with social, economic, and political agendas distracted the Church from her mission of evangelization through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ.²⁴

Ecumenism's Relationship to Theological Convergence from 1910

Ecumenism has been closely connected to theological convergence from the day of its infusion into the Edinburgh 1910 World Missions Conference. The desire for Christian unity at whatever cost has prevailed from that time until now, and as a result (direct or indirect) attributed to convergence. Charges have been leveled by conservative evangelicals that the authority of Scripture has been challenged for the sake of being more inclusive. One example is that the gospel of eternal salvation has been overshadowed by a social gospel. Some believe that after Edinburgh 1910 and Madras 1938 the Bible has been viewed as a book with human limitations and the authority of the Church to proclaim the gospel of salvation has been undermined and called into question.

The issue of unity was so pressing on the hearts and minds of the Edinburgh conveners that they set plans into place to ensure its eventual outcome. Lesslie Newbigin asserts,

The most important thing about the Edinburgh Conference, so far as concerns our present subject [cooperation and unity], was not what it said but what it did. By creating a continuation committee with J.H. Oldham as its secretary, it ensured that international and interdenominational missionary co-operation should move from the stage of occasional conferences to that of continuous and effective consultation.²⁵

²³Ibid., 146–47.

²⁴Harold Lindsell, "Uppsala 1968," *Christianity Today*, August 16, 1968, 4.

²⁵Lesslie Newbigin, "Co-operation and Unity," *International Review of Mission* 59.233 (Jan 1970): 67.

The quest for unity appeared to be on the road to success within eighteen short years of Edinburgh. By the time of the Tambaram Conference in 1938 the subject of unity and cooperation was not a separate topic, but had been integrated into the conference dynamics as a whole. In fact, at Tambaram there were only thirty pages written on unity.²⁶

Convergence Dynamics

Evidence supports the fact that theological convergence has taken place. Before the evidence is examined, it might be beneficial to explore some possible dynamics that may have contributed to convergence.

Some evangelicals and ecumenicals alike believe that the major problem in achieving unity is a failure on the part of all involved to define adequately who they are. This can be seen as early as 1949. Concerning the 1948 Amsterdam Conference, when C. H. Dodd felt that no one was addressing the real problem of unity, he states,

In section 1 at Amsterdam one of the most striking things was the failure to define the differences between what we were pleased to call the 'Catholic' and the 'Protestant' positions in any way that both parties could accept. When Protestants define their own position over against Catholicism, Catholics refused to accept the implied definition of their position and vice versa.²⁷

Dodd was not satisfied with the results of the conference findings. He knew there were deep issues that separated Protestants and Catholics and believed that those issues needed to be addressed, but the conference was allowed to close without any genuine resolution. He expressed his displeasure by stating, "I should be reluctant, though to accept this as final, in its full implications, but will let it pass."²⁸

Dodd was at least partially correct. Conservative evangelical Protestants in the first part of the twentieth century had serious reservations concerning partnering with Catholics. The theological issues should have been dealt with and allowed to come to some sort of general consensus between the two groups. It may have threatened unity within the conference, but it may have also prevented or at least lessened theological convergence as some conservative evangelicals today have little or no difficulty working with Catholics. Since Catholics continue to hold to their historical sacred beliefs and yet now partner with many evangelicals, it appears that theological convergence has been primarily from within the evangelical camp.

A second possible dynamic may be denominational loyalties, and/or commitments to sacred traditions and historic confessions. Dodd suspects that part of the problem that prevented

²⁶Ibid., 69–70.

²⁷C. H. Dodd, "A letter concerning unavowed motives in ecumenical discussions," *Ecumenical Review* 2.1 (Aut 1949): 52.

²⁸Ibid., 53.

unity at Amsterdam 1948 was an “unavowed motive” to hold on to confessions, and historic or denominational principles. Dodd states, “We all feel constrained to insist on certain convictions because we must be true to our sacred traditions or our historic principles, which we must on no account compromise.”²⁹ Evangelicals and ecumenicals alike have deep rooted convictions to which they are genuinely committed, and all too often these strike at the very heart of unity.

Again, Dodd is partially correct. However, he fails to mention those who fail to unite over perceived biblical convictions and commitments. Almost every denomination, sect, and faith has doctrines and traditions that make them distinctly unique, and to a degree those who proclaim to be adherents to such beliefs should hold tightly to those teachings. However, Christian-evangelicals and ecumenicals alike—must determine by which standard he or she will live. If their faith is in their commitment to a denomination, doctrine, or tradition, then they should then live or die by their commitment. However, if the Bible—God’s written Word to humanity—is the standard for their life, they must closely examine their beliefs and commitments by God’s Word and see if those traditions and doctrines are biblical. God’s Word is clear concerning God’s desire for Christian unity and fellowship. Man should never allow denominationalism, doctrine, or confessions to stand in the way of Christian unity, unless they are biblical and can be solidly affirmed by Scripture.

A third possible dynamic is the blurring of mission fields. During the Edinburgh era defining mission fields was much easier. Those lands that lived by Christian principles were considered Christendom, and all other lands were pagan. However, many countries that send Christian missionaries today have nearly the same beliefs and practices as pagan countries. Upon reflecting back on the Edinburgh era G. M. Setiloane recalls,

The boundaries between Christendom and heathen lands are no longer so easily defined. The darkness and the light interchange everywhere so much that we are struck by the naïve innocence of this age which produced the report.³⁰

Convergence through the Life and Work Movement

There is a direct correlation between the Life and Work Movement and theological convergence. From the first meeting held in Stockholm in 1925 convergence has been taking place. Evangelicals prior to Stockholm tended to focus on man’s eternal destiny, but also attempted to minister to the whole person. Some advocates of the Life and Work Movement between the years 1925 and 1975 led the more moderate evangelicals to believe that evangelicals were overly interested in man’s souls. Many set out on a spiritual journey for a more holistic evangelism which was enforced by a revival of mystical experiences. This journey led to a change in evangelical thought

²⁹Ibid., 53.

³⁰G. M. Setiloane, “The Missionary and His Task at Edinburgh and Today,” *International Review of Mission* 59.233 (Jan 1970): 66.

from “an authority of Scripture” worldview to “an authority of Christ” worldview. This shift in worldview allowed for a more mystical inclusiveness.³¹

Additionally, evangelical German Baptist Walter Rauschenbusch, after adopting liberal views of Scriptures, eloquently pleaded with evangelicals to stop being so overly concerned with the souls of men and pressed for social and political reform. The salvation of man’s soul became irrelevant during the years following Jerusalem 1928, and the “Social Gospel” became the focus of Christian ministry. After the death of D. L. Moody, Rauschenbusch wrote an article entitled “The New Evangelism,” which replaced the old evangelism that tended to focus on man’s eternal destiny with a gospel concerned with social justice and reform.³²

Convergence through the Faith and Order Movement

Ecumenical theology within the Faith and Order Movement has converged with evangelical theology in several areas. Baptism is one arena where ecumenicals have continued to press for unity. Many evangelicals have changed their policy on baptism for the sake of Christian unity. One example is the accepting of people of differing denominations where different modes of baptism have been exercised. One such case took place in Union, South Carolina, when a small conservative Southern Baptist church was willing to accept a Presbyterian into its membership without believer’s baptism as understood by Southern Baptists.³³

Another place of convergence has been in the Eucharist, or Lord’s Supper. A prime example was witnessed at the Promise Keepers Pastors Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia, in the early 1990s. Over twenty thousand pastors converged on the Georgia Dome and fellowshiped. At the closing session each pastor shared communion with others; Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Catholic, Brethren, Assembly of God, Four Square Church, and others.

A third sign of convergence is found in ministry practices. Prior to Edinburgh 1910 evangelicals did not partner with ecumenicals in ministry. However, over the years after Edinburgh there has been an ever growing cooperation in ministry between the two groups. Today, evangelicals and ecumenicals participate in ministry together. This participation can be seen as Southern Baptists partner with Great Commission Christians (GCC) globally in an effort to evangelize the world.³⁴ GCCs hold to differing theologies concerning baptism, the Lord’s Supper, women’s role

³¹Arthur Johnson, *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1978), 56–58.

³²*Ibid.*, 59–62.

³³The Southern Baptist Church referenced is Philippi Baptist Church in Union, South Carolina. The event took place in 1995 when a Presbyterian joined the church. The church body and leadership (except the pastor) saw no need for baptism by immersion, even though this person had never experienced believer’s baptism. The individual was eventually baptized after some conversations with the pastor.

³⁴This writer uses the term “Great Commission Christian” in reference to people who take the “Great Commission” of Jesus Christ seriously and attempt to share their interpretation of the Gospel of Christ to those who have never heard. GCCs include Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Evangelical Catholics, Four

in ministry, salvation, and spiritual gifts to name a few. Even though they hold differing views on important theological issues many GCCs work together in an effort to evangelize the world. Often this practice results in theological convergence.

Evangelical Practices that Emerged from 1910 as a Result of Ecumenism

Mission strategies and methodologies have continually changed from the beginning of the Protestant mission movement. Few would argue that these would continue to change after Edinburgh even without theological convergence. Therefore, the real question that needs to be addressed is, “what changes have taken place as a result of or due to the influence of theological convergence since Edinburgh?” The limited space and scope of this work will not permit a thorough examination of every change that has taken place since Edinburgh. Therefore, only three areas will be examined—changes in ecclesial practices, changes in missiological practices, and changes in organizational structures. While the period from Edinburgh 1910 to Lausanne 1974 is the general scope of this article, this section on “changes” will focus primarily on the twenty years preceding Lausanne 1974. This should provide a better vantage point from which to examine the changes as they have had time to begin maturing and become part of evangelicalism.

Changes in Ecclesial Practices

Mary Tanner tells how the ecclesial landscape has changed due to the direct influence of what began at Lausanne 1927. The change in church practice provides evidence that the Church of England has experienced convergence in that their ecumenical conversation has provided a theological basis in regard to baptism, eucharist, and ministry. The Church of England passed Ecumenical Canons that govern these three areas as they form partnerships with local ecumenical leaders in towns and villages.

Additionally, theological convergence has taken place as churches and denominations created documents together that act as instruments for closer relations in ministry. This can be seen in the working relationship between the Reformed Churches in Europe and the Lutherans as they signed the Leuenberg Agreement on March 16, 1973. Another alliance was created when the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Church of England signed the Meissen Agreement. Other working alliances were created between the French Reformed and Lutheran churches of France, and also the Anglican churches of Great Britain who partner with the Irish churches through their Reuilly Agreement of 1999.³⁵ The Lausanne 1927 Anniversary conference that met

Square Gospel Church, Full Gospel Church, Anglicans, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Campus Crusade for Christ, and Dawn Ministries to name a few.

³⁵Tanner, “The First World Conference on Faith and Order,” 2; http://www.urc.org.uk/conversations/broader_context.htm (accessed October 3, 2008); “What does the Council for Christian Unity do?” *The Church of England*, www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu/europe/ecumbbackground/reuilly_english.rtf (accessed March 26, 2014).

in 2002 celebrated “the fact that the fruits of theological conversation that begun at Lausanne 1927 have been used by churches as instruments of internal reform and renewal.”³⁶

On a more practical level the transition from a salvation focused on mankind’s eternal destiny to a more social transformation Gospel has attributed to stress and caused confusion in the local church. One example was the church in the Philippines as early as 1962. During the late 1950s and early 1960s new emerging leaders within the Filipino church were pressing the church to take more responsibility concerning social transformation. However, the church was slow to respond. Montes concludes that,

Because the church herself has not been a leader in social thought and concern, her laity, with very few exceptions, are hardly, aware of the social implications of their faith. Therefore in spite of their considerable social and political prestige, they can hardly be expected to influence fundamentally the larger social order toward the realization of a more equitable and just development of the body politic, towards better and higher standards for all, towards the re-designing of the social structure to enable all people to achieve the abundant life.³⁷

The local church struggled with this shift in theological emphasis. Even in America during the late 1960s the Western church struggled with its call to missions. Glasser recalls,

It was now 1968. Apparently, the IMC transfusion has not been successful. Uppsala [the WCC Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden] uncovered ‘widespread defeatism in churches about the work of evangelism and missions,’ attributed variously to the process of secularization in society, the resurgence of non-Christian religions, and a deep confusion in the churches about the nature of the Christian faith itself.³⁸

This debate concerning the biblical nature of evangelism and missions continues well into the twenty-first century. The struggle within many churches continues to this day.

The debate at times has proved to be quite intense. Ilion T. Jones refers to the shift toward a more social ministry as “The Church’s Defection From a Divine Mission.”³⁹ He states,

Among the changes taking place in Christendom in recent decades, none is more radical, or more controversial, or fraught with more serious consequences, than the Church’s understanding of its role in society. Traditionally the Christian Church has devoted its resources to the evangelization of individuals. But recently a number of church leaders, both ministers and laymen, have embarked

³⁶Tanner, “The First World Conference on Faith and Order,” 3.

³⁷Valentin G. Montes, “Social Thinking of the Church in the Philippines,” *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 4.1 (1962): 42.

³⁸Arthur F. Glasser, “What Has Been the Evangelical Stance, New Delhi to Uppsala?” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 5.3 (Spring 1969): 131.

³⁹Ilion T. Jones, “The Church’s Defection from a Divine Mission,” *Christianity Today*, May 24, 1968, 3.

on a campaign to persuade churches to use their resources to bring about a social revolution.⁴⁰

Ilion's fear was that the new direction in ministry was designed to change social structures rather than change mankind's heart.⁴¹

Changes in Missiological Practices

Ecumenism has made its impact on missiological practices in several ways. First, the Roman Catholic Church has been working with Anglicans to discover new forms of committed life and mission. They are seeking how to implement a substantial agreement in faith for baptism, eucharist, and ministry.

Second, Valentin G. Montes is quick to point out that the church in the Philippines originally focused on man's eternal salvation as its mission. They were committed to evangelizing the Philippines because "salvation was thought of in terms of escape from this world."⁴² He attributes the slow move of the Philippine church to accept social responsibility to the conflict between evangelicals and ecumenicals, stating,

The social lag of the Philippines church is rooted in historical causes. Protestantism came to this country from America at the turn of the century when the sharp conflict between the proponents of the so-called 'Social Gospel' and of the conservative anti-evolutionist, literal-inspiration-believing Christians was raging.⁴³

After defending the Filipino Church for their slow entrance into the world of social change, Montes makes the point that it was after the older missionaries had retired and the younger more theologically open leaders emerged that the focus shifted from salvation of man's eternal soul and was redirected to the social needs of the day. Monte believed that,

As more and more Filipino leaders became involved in the inter-national and inter-church activities of the ecumenical movement, they acquired a new sense of the importance of rethinking the mission of the church, of her renewal and her role in society.⁴⁴

Then Montes demonstrates that convergence has taken place by listing the social work of the Methodists who became involved in experimental rural farming, the United Church who also

⁴⁰Ibid., 3.

⁴¹Ibid., 5. Ilion concluded that "social engineers are not going to devise a better social order without making better men. Educators are not going to make better men without spiritual motivation of religion. Socially effective religion is not going to be generated without the unique work of the Church." For Ilion, the work of the church was the proclamation of the Gospel.

⁴²Montes, "Social Thinking of the Church in the Philippines," 38.

⁴³Ibid., 37.

⁴⁴Ibid., 38.

provided ministry in rural farms, and the Baptist Convention who actually started a university and a college of agriculture.⁴⁵ The social-gospel ministry was in high gear by 1960. He illustrates his point by showing that “in 1960 the United Church General Assembly hammered out her hopes and aspirations concerning industrialization, rural and urban development, and population growth in a ‘Statement of Social Concern’”⁴⁶

Third, ecumenism has influenced the practice of Southern Baptist missions through the International Mission Board (IMB). This is best evidenced in the difference in nomenclature between the “IMB Mission Statement” and “IMB Vision Statement” from 1999 to 2009. In an effort to broaden the IMB’s global impact, President Jerry Rankin partnered with other GCCs. This shift has resulted in more relaxed vision and mission statements that are not as Baptist-focused. A careful reading of both works reveals that partnering with GCCs requires a shift in language.⁴⁷ The focus is no longer on assisting local Southern Baptist churches and their members in engaging in missions. The focus has broadened to working with GCCs. While it is true that the shift in vision has not been documented until recently, it is believed that the reason for the shift away from Southern Baptists began prior to Lausanne 1974 when Jerry Rankin was a field missionary. His involvement with Lausanne further illustrates Rankin’s ecumenical tendencies. Rankin’s ecumenism may have led to theological convergence in the IMB as proposed by Keith Eitel, who states, “I am concerned that evangelism, church planting and discipleship are in the hands of theological novices.”⁴⁸

A fourth way in which ecumenism has contributed to theological convergence is in the manner in which the Gospel of Christ is presented to those who have never heard. Donald McGavran asserts, “Recently [1970], the word proclamation has seemed to some in ecumenical circles ‘too harsh, direct, and ineffective’, and they have begun to use the word presence.”⁴⁹ McGavran

⁴⁵Ibid., 39.

⁴⁶Ibid., 40.

⁴⁷Office of Overseas Operations, “Something New Under the Sun: Strategic Directions at the International Mission Board,” (January 1999: pp-40m-2/02-p2962-e), 52; Jerry Rankin, “The International Mission Board, SBC, Vision for Global Advance” (January 2009: imb-1m-1/09-p5802), 18. The 1999 mission statement declares “the Mission of the International Board, SBC, is to lead Southern Baptists in international missions efforts to evangelize the lost, disciple believers, develop churches and minister to people in need,” 52. In contrast, the 2009 mission statement “is to make disciples of all peoples in fulfillment of the Great Commission,” 18. Additionally, the vision statement has changed. The 1999 statement declared that “we will lead Southern Baptists to be on mission with God to bring all peoples of the earth to saving faith in Jesus Christ,” 52. It has been replaced with the 2009 vision of “a multitude from every language, people, tribe, and nation knowing and worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ,” 18.

⁴⁸Keith Eitel served two terms as a missionary and has served for more than 20 years as a professor of missions. The quote above is from page 4 of a paper commonly referred to as the “Eitel Vision Assessment.” This eight-page document was written after Eitel’s 2002-2003 sabbatical when he worked with numerous IMB field missionaries in Asia.

⁴⁹Donald McGavran, “The Right and Wrong of the ‘Presence’ Idea of Mission,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 6.2 (Winter 1970): 98.

believes that proclamation needs little or no explanation as it is a biblical concept and is clearly understood by all. However, “presence” on the other hand, “is so new and so fashionable that it is used in many ways and with many meanings.”⁵⁰

While McGavran does not use the term “theological convergence” he does attribute to it the fact that even the term “Christian Mission” has become ambiguous at best over the past twenty to thirty years [prior to 1970].⁵¹ Additionally he believed that,

The unfortunate turn of events of the last twenty years, by which mission is taken by many to mean, ‘everything Christians do outside the four walls of their church’, contributes nothing but confusion. Today [1970], according to these apostles of obscurantism, the church doing anything at all which may be considered the will of God is dubbed ‘the church in mission’. What our fathers called simply ‘doing God’s will’ is today in grandiose phrase called ‘sharing in the *Missio Dei*’.⁵²

It is this type of theological convergence that led McGavran to write that some “missiologists advocate presence as the only safe stance. Christians are tiny minorities in many lands and will remain so-they-think for generations.”⁵³ Many of these missionaries are not allowed to share the Gospel through proclamation in any shape or fashion. For McGavran, this was a travesty.

Changes in Organizational Structures

As mentioned earlier, the three major movements that emerged from Edinburgh 1910 were separate movements with differing agendas until the Life and Work Movement and the Faith and Order Movement came together in 1948 and formalized into a union which became known as the World Council of Churches. However, in 1961 the WCC was joined by the third movement when the International Missionary Council joined the ranks. All of the programmatic work and responsibilities of the IMC were turned over to the WCC. With all three movements now under the control of the WCC, a three-fold structure was created: (1) the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism; (2) the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME); (3) a staff group to handle matters concerning the CWME.

The CWME Commission is composed of twenty-five members and has experienced a broader ecumenism which includes cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church as well as evangelical and Pentecostal churches. The WCC website states that, “Roman Catholics, evangelicals and Pentecostals are full members of the CWME commission and participate in all its activities.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., 98–99.

⁵²Ibid., 99.

⁵³Ibid., 100.

⁵⁴“Commission on World Mission and Evangelism,” *World Council of Churches*, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/cwme> (accessed March 26, 2014).

There is a theological convergence taking place in the WCC. One primary example of it is in one of their major thematic foci as they prepared for Edinburgh 2010. The topic centered on the theology of evangelism in a world of religious plurality. Prior to the 2010 conference, the official Edinburgh website assured the reader,

This will involve a new reflection on the significance of evangelism and on methods of sharing the gospel. CWME is also participating together with other programs of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church, the World Evangelical Alliance and Pentecostals in the search for a code of conduct on conversion.⁵⁵

Evangelism is one of the “critical issues” for conservative evangelicals. It concerns them greatly when topics of such magnitude are being discussed with people of faith who hold to such different understandings on the topic. It remains to be seen if what Edinburgh 2010 produced will in some way lead to more theological convergence. It was the conveners’ intention for Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, and evangelicals to come together and agree on a “code of conduct on conversion.” If they were successful, it has the potential to foster greater theological convergence.⁵⁶

Perhaps this is what Peter Ainslie had in mind on September 22, 1927, when he allowed his article, “The Rapprochement of the Churches,” to be published in the *Christian Century*. He states,

Lausanne marked the passing of uniformity and the coming of diversity within unity. The equality of all Christians before God must find its embodiment in the ecclesiastical order. The next conference will go beyond this conference. If there could be a conference without officially appointed delegates and constituted of younger groups, the interpretations would go far in advance of our denominational conservatism. There is room in these times for adventurers, and the adventurers will come.⁵⁷

Convergence has occurred. But why should that concern conservative evangelicals? Perhaps a closer look at the Uppsala Assembly might shed light on their concerns.

Convergence: The Evangelicals Concern

The Uppsala Assembly (WCC Fourth Assembly) of July 4–19, 1968, was anticipated by many ecumenicals to be the pinnacle of mission assemblies. Evangelicals and ecumenicals gathered in Uppsala, Sweden for the WCC’s Fourth Assembly. For a few it was considered a success, but for the majority it was a disappointment. It has even been referred to as “a five-ring circus.” What happened at Uppsala? Albert H. van der Heuvel asserts,

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶For more information concerning the Edinburgh 2010 Centennial and the committee’s desired impact, see: <http://edinburgh2010.org>

⁵⁷Peter Ainslie, “The Rapprochement of the Churches,” <http://www.piney.com/Peter-Ainslie.html> (accessed October 1, 2008).

Uppsala was to be the first Assembly to the WCC after the incorporation of the International Missionary Council into its structure seven years previously. Before New Delhi (1961) missiologists argued that an IMC-WCC merger would make possible an end to the nineteenth century distortion that placed church tension with mission. The ecumenical slogan 'The Church in Mission,' would then be realized in actuality. The worldwide mission of the church would be transformed from a peripheral activity to its central theme.⁵⁸

Glasser brings to light the depth of disappointment Uppsala was for ecumenicals and evangelicals alike. The Church was struggling with the concept of what actually constitutes biblical missions and evangelism and was looking for answers. The WCC had hoped that Uppsala would be to the ecumenical movement what Vatican II was to the Roman Catholic Church, but evangelicals were looking for dialogue with ecumenicals concerning the issues within the churches. Evangelicals "were disappointed when the actual Assembly agenda began to unfold."⁵⁹

Many evangelicals felt that open dialogue with ecumenicals at Uppsala was not even a possibility. The WCC had planned well for their Assembly. Delegates and speakers were carefully selected. Studies and documents were produced in hopes of unifying the two sides, but to no avail. Prior to Uppsala the WCC held the Geneva Conference on Church and Society in July 1966. Glasser believes,

On the surface the [Geneva] conference was a representative group of experts 'charged with advising the churches and the WCC on their ministry in a world undergoing revolutionary social change'. But its delegates had been so artfully selected beforehand that evangelicals were quick to protest.⁶⁰

Documents were prepared for Uppsala from the Geneva Conference findings. If there was one primary criticism of the Fourth Assembly it was its documents. Henry and many others were outraged over the documents. The WCC

Department of Studies in Evangelism produced 'The Church for Others' (by Europeans) and the 'Church for the World' (by North Americans). To read these studies is to find oneself in a strange world in which familiar themes are discussed in anything, but conventional terms. Although two or three years in preparation involving major revisions, these documents are almost totally silent on the great basics of the 'faith once delivered to the saints.'⁶¹

Harold Lindsell recalls the massive amount of reading and asserts to "the making of documents, even prior to the assembly, there was no end."⁶²

⁵⁸Albert H. van den Heuvel, "Survey of Press Comments: Reactions to the Fourth Assembly," *The Ecumenical Review* 21.1 (Jan 1969): 34.

⁵⁹Glasser, "What Has Been the Evangelical Stance, New Delhi to Uppsala?" 130.

⁶⁰Ibid., 138.

⁶¹Ibid., 137–38.

⁶²Lindsell, "Uppsala 1968," 4.

Again, conservative evangelicals felt betrayed and isolated. They felt as though they had no real voice in WCC matters. As some evangelicals accepted the Geneva documents and would also accept the Uppsala documents, the evangelicals as a whole were beginning to fragment. Some saw value in what would become known as “Renewal in Mission,” but others would remain skeptical.

The most telling documents are the actual Uppsala documents themselves (not the ones prepared at Geneva). The WCC had hoped that this Fifth Assembly would explode upon Protestantism with much the same basic affect that Vatican II had upon the Roman Catholic Church. The documents were “hailed as the ‘precise issues’ the WCC regards as most relevant to the contemporary situations and tasks of the Ecumenical Movement.”⁶³ These documents were encased in the theme of “All Things New.”

Glasser points out that even the most basic casual reader who reads the Uppsala documents will quickly see that they are introducing a major shift in ecumenical thinking. He further states, “Here is a call for a new theology and a new methodology to support a radically new objective for the Christian Church.”⁶⁴

Carl F. H. Henry quickly picks up on this shift in thinking and asserts that this shift is “a radically new emphasis that could move the institutional church away from its primary, Christ-commanded task of preaching the biblical gospel that men of all nations and races might become disciples of Jesus Christ.”⁶⁵

John R. W. Stott (one of the architects of Lausanne 1974) condemned portions of the documents. Referring to Section II, he states that it was a “hotchpotch, a compromise document, a variegated patchwork quilt sewn together out of bits and pieces contributed by delegates and advisors whose convictions were in fundamental disagreement.”⁶⁶

Donald McGavran referred to this “Renewal in Mission” shift as “a betrayal of the two billion who either have never heard of Jesus Christ, or have no real chance to believe on Him as Savior and Lord.”⁶⁷ McGavran whole-heartedly endorsed Christian responsibility to meet humanity’s need. However, it was his judgment that the “Renewal in Mission” was a shift in mission that was contrary to Scripture. He pressed the issue at Uppsala and called the shift, “a deliberate attempt to divert attention away from man’s need to hear the Gospel of salvation.”⁶⁸

⁶³Glasser, “What has been the Evangelical stance New Delhi to Uppsala?” 139.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid. Even after reading the pre-Uppsala documents Henry warned evangelicals within and without the WCC to carefully evaluate all the documents with great discernment and caution. Ibid., 140.

⁶⁶Ibid., 147.

⁶⁷Ibid., 140.

⁶⁸Ibid.

Perhaps the last articulation of the old WCC was voiced by W. A. visser't Hooft when he stated,

There is a great tension between the vertical interpretation of the gospel as essentially concerned with God's saving action in the life of individuals and the horizontal interpretation of it mainly concerned with human relationship in the world. A Christianity that has lost its vertical dimension has lost its salt, and is not only insipid but useless for the world; but a Christianity that would use vertical dimensions as a means of escape from its responsibility in the common life of man is a denial of the incarnation of God's love for a world manifested in Christ.⁶⁹

Albert H. van der Heuvel gives an accurate assessment of the attitude and atmosphere of Uppsala,

Commentators on the Fourth Assembly seem to say: this assembly was an important moment in the ongoing history of the ecumenical movement. It marks a highlight in the light of discovery of the services and witness of the Church in the world. It also was very representative of the membership of the whole Christian community and in a new way for some of its parts, namely the Orthodox churches in the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church increasingly co-operative with it.... It was representative in that it invited non-Christians to its meetings and to its platforms. It was also representative of some of the diseases of the churches: its over-emphasis on the ordained, on men, on ripe age... From now on we need a better representation, a chance to really discuss in depth the issues the churches are facing. Restructuring of the Assembly is needed to keep the movement on the move.⁷⁰

After Uppsala the WCC shifted its primary focus from hosting large assemblies reaching upwards of twenty-five hundred to working through smaller venues. They became part of commissions, committees, and consultations during and between other assemblies.⁷¹

Evangelical Concern over Authority

Generally speaking, conservative evangelicals have always been deeply concerned over the issue of biblical authority. Ultimately, authority determines truth. Evangelicals maintain that God as He has spoken through His written Word has absolute authority and thereby has absolute truth.

Carnegie Samuel Calian addressed the issue of authority in 1970 when he foresaw tumultuous times ahead for the church. He warned Christians,

We are at the beginning of a traumatic metamorphosis with emerging patterns still-off-stage preparing to make their *début*. As a consequence, traditional lines of authority for Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox are under question and attack.⁷²

⁶⁹Ibid., 143.

⁷⁰van den Heuvel, "Survey of Press Comments," 54.

⁷¹Glasser, "What Has Been the Evangelical Stance, New Delhi to Uppsala?" 142.

⁷²Carnegie Samuel Calian, "Is there a common authority for Christians? Protestant Expectations," *The*

Would the church be ready for the attacks that were to follow the 1970s? While conservative evangelicals had settled the issue of authority long ago, Calian admits that “authority [was] the unresolved ecumenical issue of the past as well as the present.”⁷³ Evangelicals were quick to dismiss absolute authority as being beyond human attainment. For them absolute authority lodged in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.⁷⁴ The ecumenical inability or unwillingness to confess that their view of Scripture was the same as conservative evangelicals deepened the rift between them.

Many evangelicals refused to accept Uppsala’s shift in mission because they felt it was not based on truth as revealed by God’s Word. Glasser states,

One has only to read the ‘official’ document of Uppsala and he will encounter again and again statements built upon the fatal premise that God has not disclosed Himself to man in any real sense. No word has come to man from beyond himself. God has displayed no objective authority by speaking to His church.⁷⁵

Evangelicals either failed to or were prohibited from defining the very nature of truth as revealed by God. That allowed Uppsala to become a Babel of two groups. The “horizontalists and the verticalists were politely in session together, but no real headway was made on either side.”⁷⁶ Some think that the rift over authority and whether or how God reveals Himself was superficial. However, one’s understanding of authority and truth does affect his views theologically and missiologically.

One example of this can be seen in Patricia Budd Kepler’s theological understanding of women’s role in ministry. While traditional evangelicalism has long held that only men should hold the office senior pastor and be responsible for guiding the flock of God, many ecumenicals (men and women), like Kepler, and a growing number of evangelicals hold to a “new theology.” Kepler reminds the church that it does not minister in a day where people believe that the sun rotates around the earth. The church lives in a world where women are equal in every sphere of life (or should be). She asserts that “in its deepest expressions, the women’s movement has implications for the liberation of the human race.”⁷⁷

Ecumenical Review 22.1 (Jan 1970): 29. Calian points out that Protestants have been under “massive attack” by critical biblical scholars concerning the authority of the Bible since the nineteenth century.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., 31.

⁷⁵Glasser, “What Has Been the Evangelical Stance, New Delhi to Uppsala?” 148–9. The Uppsala documents refer to Scripture, but it is not taken at face value. Scripture is considered non-literal and used existentially. It is quoted and applied to promote social action and is not considered to be the normative Word of God directed towards His people.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Patricia Budd Kepler, “We need a New Theology,” *Church and Society* 63.1 (Sept/Oct 1972): 9. Kepler,

Kepler's call for a "New Theology" is a "theology of the present" and it "must be a theology based on love, based on faith, looking toward hope; but wrestling with values, and accepting the reality of the moment."⁷⁸ Patricia Budd Kepler claims that,

Such a theology must face the reality of pluralism, the gift of diversity, the depth of alienation, the necessity of conflict; such a theology must measure authority and accept it on new terms; such a theology must be able to feel as well as reason and such a theology must be prepared by women as well as men, blacks as well as whites.⁷⁹

Obviously this "New Theology" sounds an alarm in the ranks of conservative evangelicalism. Since evangelicals hold that authority comes from God and His revelation of Himself to mankind, Kepler's statement "such a theology must measure authority and accept it on new terms" appears to question the way evangelicals have accepted authority in the past. And her declaration that "such a theology must be able to feel as well as reason" sounds a bit existential to the evangelical. Here again appears to be a convergence as Kepler blends a traditional theology with a new theology.

Another area of convergence is the acceptance of non-Christians into the WCC Assemblies and other Christian gatherings. Allowing non-believers to participate in Christian dialogue, share the speaking platform, and have influence over church leaders is unthinkable to most conservative evangelicals. The WCC infuriated conservatives when for the sake of human relationships they issued a statement seriously considering inviting "men of other faiths and ideologies for partial or full participation in conferences sponsored by the World Council."⁸⁰

In August of 1969, the Executive and Central Committees of the WCC met at Canterbury. They determined that the topic of "men of other faiths" was an urgent issue that needed to be addressed. It was their desire that Christians living among peoples of other religions would "co-operate rather than compete in matters of religion."⁸¹ S. J. Samartha states,

The involvement of Christians in development and nation-building calls for a new relationship between men of different faiths on the local, regional, and world level. What this would mean to the understanding of the nature of the Church and the practice of mission must be considered afresh.⁸²

9–12, claims that the current systems (created by men) have been primary in causing war, tolerated hunger, oppression, and disease. She attributes environmental pollution to them and calls for a New Theology.

⁷⁸Ibid., 12.

⁷⁹Ibid. Kepler admits that the Women's Movement is a revolution and if they are serious about love and humanity, they need not become too defensive and take themselves too seriously. They can accept a bit of imperfection.

⁸⁰S. J. Samartha, "The World Council of Churches and Men of Other Faiths and Ideologies," *The Ecumenical Review* 22.3 (July 1970): 197.

⁸¹Ibid., 191.

⁸²Ibid.

In 1970, Samarth made it clear that he advocated the WCC act swiftly with men of other faiths. He thought that the present moment [1970] was the appropriate time for Christians to act and work with such men and they should “be open and sensitive to possibilities of cooperation and study and action.”⁸³ Samarth challenged the WCC to keep in mind that there might possibly be theological implications when partnering with men of other faiths and ideologies.⁸⁴ Samarth never commanded a majority following among evangelicals or ecumenicals. In fact, the strong stand against Samarth by the Orthodox at Bangkok 1973 may have been responsible for the change of direction at Nairobi in 1975.

Donald McGavran condemned Samanth’s type of thinking. He addressed the issue head on by claiming that God did not reveal Himself through other faiths. McGavran asserts that some claim, “We must approach the man of another faith other than our own in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him and what new understanding of grace and love of God we ourselves may discover in this encounter.”⁸⁵

McGavran’s response is to reply with Scripture. He refers to the Apostle Paul speaking at Mars Hill. While it is true that Paul affirmed man’s religious longing, he did not “explore Socrates, Plato, and others to find what God had told them.”⁸⁶ Paul simply presented the Gospel of the one true living God. When confronted with reasoning that seems to indicate that God reveals Himself to non-Christians through means other than the Bible, conservatives will always dissent.⁸⁷

Summary

The theological convergence infused at Edinburgh 1910 survived and at times thrived through avenues like the “Life and Work” movement and the “Faith and Order” movement. Ecumenism’s survival was strategically insured by appointing a Continuation Committee to carry out Edinburgh’s vision and by placing Mott and Oldham as its first Chairman and Secretary. It led to three distinct movements each of which promoted ecumenism. The constituency of the three movements eventually found themselves absorbed into the World Council of Churches or some affiliates of these movements later joined the WCC. The primary vehicle since its inception in 1948 until Lausanne 1974 has been the WCC. Focusing on the twenty years prior to Lausanne, it has become evident that one of ecumenism’s most impactful strategic shifts in theology on evangelicalism is the focus of a salvation for mankind’s eternal soul to a more social activism/deliverance salvation.

⁸³Ibid., 198.

⁸⁴Ibid., 191.

⁸⁵Donald McGavran, “The Right and Wrong of the ‘Presence’ Idea of Mission,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 6.2 (Winter 1970): 101.

⁸⁶Ibid., 102.

⁸⁷Ibid., 105.

Through venues like “Uppsala 1968” the WCC continued to spread its vision of unity and social, economic, and political justice as part of the whole Gospel. While most ecumenicals and many evangelicals embraced the WCC’s vision, there were dissenters. One such dissenter was Harold Lindsell, who claimed,

At the Fourth Assembly there was the Establishment and there were the delegates. The latter were diverse and disorganized. They ranged from evangelical to liberal in theological persuasion, from supporters of evangelism to far-left-social-auctioneers, from deeply committed priests whose language was the language of Scripture, to social engineers who spoke the secular lingo of the profane world.⁸⁸

In Lindsell’s mind, Uppsala had been intentionally organized to promote the “Establishment’s” (WCC) agenda as they clearly were aware of “power structures and how they can be used to implement ideology.”⁸⁹

In spite of adversity, ecumenicals just prior to Lausanne, still sought Christian unity. One of the major stumbling blocks with the evangelicals was the issue of authority and truth. Evangelicals strongly believed that any authority other than Scripture would lead to unscriptural theologies, practices, and methodologies, a sampling of which have been presented in this article, such as in 2002 when Mary Tanner celebrated the Lausanne 1927 conference and attests to the achievements of ecumenism from that time.

Ecumenism has continued to influence evangelicalism and press for a convergence in theology as is evident in the Geneva and Uppsala documents. However, evangelicalism has also influenced ecumenicalism as ecumenism is also diverse and differs strongly on some issues. By Bangkok 1973, many evangelicals had forsaken their conservative theologies and allowed them to converge with the “new” ones.

What began in Edinburgh over a century ago has now become a full-blown ecumenical movement with ecumenicals and many evangelicals either holding to new theologies or at least partnering with one another, yet seldom if ever questioning the other’s theology. The WCC has been a key factor in bringing this to fruition. They have successfully brought together Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Presbyterians, Cooperative Baptists, Salvation Army, Evangelical Free, Wesleyan, Nazarenes, Mennonites, International Evangelical Church, Lutherans, Christian Reformed, Church of God (Cleveland and Anderson), and a multitude of others. When this many denominations partner together, convergence occurs.

⁸⁸Lindsell, “Uppsala 1968,” 3.

⁸⁹Ibid.

Learning to Lament



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A vast literature on happiness has emerged in recent years based on “positive psychology.” Instead of emphasizing neurosis and disorders, psychologists are exploring what leads to human fulfillment. One book—which I read—*Auththentic Happiness*.¹ That is good in its place, but we have little instruction on the wise use of woe. There is, to my knowledge, no book called *Authentic Sadness*. Virtuously aligning human feeling with objective fact is no small endeavor, and it takes us far beyond pleasurable sensations. As C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Abolition of Man*,

Until quite modern times all teachers and even all men believed that universe to be such that certain emotional reactions on our part could either be congruous or incongruous to it—believed, in fact, that object did not merely receive, but could merit, our approval or disapproval, our reverence or out contempt.²

If Lewis is right, then some objects and situations, in this fallen world, merit lament as well. But our affections are too often out of gear. We often weep when we should laugh and laugh when we should weep or we feel nothing when we should feel something. Decades ago, a pop song confessed, “Sometimes I don’t know how to feel.” We have all felt this confusion. Nevertheless, our affect should follow our intellect in discerning how to respond to a world of groaning in travail and awaiting its final redemption (Rom 8:18–21). We live in between times and “under the sun,” as Ecclesiastes puts it. Accordingly, we are obligated to know what time it is.

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance (Eccl 3:1, 4).

Sadness has its seasons as does happiness; this is simply because God’s creation has fallen into sin and has yet to reach its culmination in The New Heavens and the New Earth (Revelation 21–22). Before then, we are still exiles, but living in hope. If we are to be godly stewards of our emotions, we must know the signs of the times, know our present time, and know what these times should elicit within us.

¹Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness* (New York: Atria Books, 2004).

²C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (orig. pub., 1948; New York: MacMillan, 1976), 25.

Our sadness should be judicious and obedient, not hasty, melodramatic, or inane. This is a moral and spiritual matter, not one of mere feelings. Emotions easily err. After the Colorado Rockies baseball team was eliminated from a playoff game some years ago, a Rockies fan reported on television that this loss was like “a death in the family.” That struck me as pathetic, if not daft—a sadness spoiled by a disordered soul. I wonder how her family members responded to this, since the sadness was not rightly related to the event that occasioned it.

Sadness intrudes unbidden in a variety of dark shades. I cannot offer a taxonomy or hierarchy of it here. (Robert Burden did so in 1621 in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*.) Rather, consider one often-misunderstood form of sorrow—lament. What is it? Frederick Buechner wrote that “Vocation is the place where our deep gladness meets the world’s deep hunger.” In that spirit, lament is where our deep sadness meets the world’s deep wounds. And this world has its wounds. The largest wound of all wounds was the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered more than anyone ever had or ever will, and with the greatest possible effect. His cry was the apex of all laments, “My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46; see Psa 22:1). It is only because of this lament that our laments gain their ultimate meaning. If the perfect Son of God can lament and not sin, so may we. Further, that anguished cry was answered by his resurrection on the third day.

Christians lament because objective goods have been violated or destroyed. Creation is deemed good by God himself (Genesis 1). Yet humans have rebelled against God, themselves, each other, and creation. As the Preacher puts it, “All things are wearisome, more than one can say” (Eccl 1:8). In *Lament for a Son*, Nicholas Wolterstorff notes that Jesus blessed those who mourn (Matt 5:4), because they are “aching visionaries,” seeking genuine goods that escape their grasp. In this sense, their godly frustration is their blessing—and the aching will one day be answered. His profound words demand to be quoted in full.

Who then are the mourners? The mourners are those who have caught a glimpse of God’s new day, who ache with all their being for that day’s coming, and who break out into tears when confronted with its absence. They are the ones who realize that in God’s realm of peace there is no one blind and who ache whenever they see someone unseeing. They are the ones who realize that in God’s realm there is no one hungry and who ache whenever they see someone starving. They are the ones who realize that in God’s realm there is no one falsely accused and who ache whenever they see someone imprisoned unjustly. They are the ones who realize that in God’s realm there is no one who fails to see God and who ache whenever they see someone unbelieving. They are the ones who realize that in God’s realm there is no one who suffers oppression and who ache whenever they see someone beat down. They are the ones who realize that in God’s realm there is no one without dignity and who ache whenever they see someone treated with indignity. They are the ones who realize that in God’s realm of peace there is neither death nor tears and who ache whenever they see someone crying tears over death. The mourners are aching visionaries.³

³Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 85.

But when we lament, we do not do so in a void of meaninglessness. Even though many of our desires are disordered, and thus vain or evil, a good many of them remain in line with God's desire to restore shalom. We cry out over the loss of a child, over war, over stupidity, cupidity, mortality, and more. Paul was in anguish over the unbelief his countrymen when he wrote, "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel" (Rom 9:2–4; see also 10:1). But Paul never descended into despair or gave up the cause of Christ. Even having suffered terrible torments for Christ, he marched on, knowing that the End puts all the means into place and that our "labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor 15:48).

Lament is not only a literary genre of Scripture (consider the many Psalms of lament, such as 22, 88, 90, as well the book of Lamentations), but is an indelible category of human existence east of Eden. It can be done well or poorly, but it cannot be avoided by any but sociopaths. Fallen mortals bemoan life's suffering, often mixing their grief with outrage. Whether outwardly or only inwardly, they raise their voices, shake their fists, beat their breasts, and shed hot tears. The Negro spiritual intones, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Nobody knows but Jesus." The blues, leaning on the spirituals, lament in a thousand ways. "Nobody knows you when you're down and out," cries Eric Clapton. When Duke Ellington played his wordless lament, "Mood Indigo," on his first European tour, some in the audience wept. Even heavy metal, full of thunder, rage, and debauchery, often laments life's burdens with pain-soaked shouts. In Metallica's "Master of Puppets," the singer's voice is that of cocaine. It lies, enslaves, manipulates, and pulls the strings of the addicted. This is a roaring, electronic lament. But there is no hope; it is protest without promise.

We all bewail the injustices, suffering, and terrors of this life, but not all worldviews make room for the full expression of human personality amidst these misfortunes. For instance, the Zen poet, Isa, lost several children and his young wife. In his deep sorrow, he went to a Zen master who told him that "Life is dew." It all passes away and one must adjust to the inevitable. This is the Buddhist teaching of non-attachment to the impermanent. But Isa, made in the image of God and wanting a better answer, wrote a short poem: "Life is dew, life is dew...and yet, and yet." Isa could not accept the cure, because Zen did not understand the disease. Life is more than dew. Zen let him down, because it would not let him inhabit his sorrow.⁴

If we have established something of the meaning of lament biblically and philosophically, we need delve into its practice in this world of woe and wonder, of weeping and laughing, morning and dancing (Eccl 3:1–8).

First, those who take the Bible to be the knowable revelation of God about the things that matter most (2 Tim 3:15–16) should discover the genre of lament in Scripture. Besides the Psalms of lament and Lamentations, perhaps Ecclesiastes is the richest biblical resource. The

⁴See Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 222–23.

Teacher is weighed down by the seeming futility of life, but realizes that sadness gives needed, if unwanted, lessons.

It is better to go to a house of mourning
than to go to a house of feasting,
for death is the destiny of everyone;
the living should take this to heart.
Frustration is better than laughter,
because a sad face is good for the heart.
The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,
but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure (Eccl 7:2–4).

Ecclesiastes, more than any other book of Holy Scripture, has given me the perspective and language of lament necessary for my own sad sojourn during the last fifteen years. It is a deep well of tough wisdom for the weary and wasted soul.

Second, lament requires a deep knowledge of God, of the world, and of ourselves. It is often said that our hearts should break where God's heart breaks. We should "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Rom 12:15), and not the opposite. To adjust our emotions to reality, we must gain knowledge from the Bible and sound thinking (Rom 12:1–2). We are not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30). A corollary is that we should know what grieves the Holy Spirit, and grieve along with him.

Third, lament is not grumbling, which is selfish, impatient, and pointless. The children of Israel grumbled against God even as God was providing for their pilgrimage, just as he promised. Paul says, "Do everything without grumbling or arguing" (Phil 2:14). While the distinction between grumbling and lament is not easy to make (I may defend my selfish outbursts as laments), it is a real distinction, since Scripture encourages lament and warns against grumbling. Isaiah declares a lament was needed, "The Lord, the LORD Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth" (Isa 22:12). James says much the same to Christians who should lament over their sins: "Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (Jas 4:9–10).

One day God will lift up those who mourn and grieve before him on his terms. He will judge and resurrect the entire cosmos in the end (Dan 12:2). On this, we place our trust and direct our hope. Yet the Lamb then in our midst was once scared and even forsaken by his Father for the sake of our redemption. God counts our tears before he takes them away (Psa 56:8; Rev 21:4). Learning to lament is, then, part of our lot under the sun. We and our neighbors are better for it, tears and all.

Review Article: *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program Realized for All Nations* by Darrell L. Bock



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Introduction

Biblical Theology of the New Testament is a series of eight biblical theology volumes surveying recent scholarship, covering introductory issues, providing a thematic commentary, pointing out individual themes, and reflecting on canonical integration. The series assumes the continuum of a salvation-historical story centered in Christ to be precipitated out of biblical texts. The attempt is to be context sensitive to historical settings while establishing these themes. Bock did his original dissertation study at the University of Aberdeen in Luke-Acts focused on Christology, and has been writing volumes in Luke and Acts over the decades.

Content

Bock follows the general pattern for this series. Each chapter begins with a selected, current bibliography that is a useful resource for students who will engage in further research. Book contents are broken into three parts of introduction, themes, and canon, but these parts receive uneven treatment in the number of pages (70, 330, 17). The opening and closing parts and Bock's conclusion receive attention in this article first. Then we overview strengths, missed opportunities, and weaknesses.

The opening part on introductory matters is perfunctory (chapters 1–4). The series requires covering introductory matters, but since we already have Bock's own previous publications on Luke and Acts, this material is redundant. The closing part on the canon briefly surveys the process of canonization and then Luke's distinctive contribution to the canon (chapter 22). Much of Jesus' teaching beyond parables, Bock points out, is uniquely Lukan. A table of references

lays out this contribution (435). The material shows Luke's pastoral concern, resurrection-ascension as vindication theme, role of the Holy Spirit, miracles unique to Luke, outreach to the nations, the hub role of certain churches, Paul's missionary journeys, understanding of the early kerygma, emphasis on women and the poor, the impact of repentance on human relationships, and a distinctive highlight on prayer. Bock then surveys parallels with other parts of the NT. Bock concludes the chapter with comments on the normative in Acts. He rightly distinguishes between normative as normal and normative as standard. He recognizes the problem within the second definition in which readers search the Acts narrative for establishing standards for church organization, offices, and polity. He then offers this fine summary: "What Luke calls for from his readers is a genuine pursuit of relationship with God rooted in humility, repentance, and faith, with no sense of entitlement other than to receive what the grace of God gives under his direction. Beyond that we are to reflect values that honor God and show love for our neighbor" (445).

The last chapter of the book is the conclusion on the matter of Luke-Acts as the continuity of Israel's story in the new era inaugurated by the coming of Messiah Jesus (chapter 23). The death of Jesus is the means of forgiveness for a new covenant with God's people that incorporates Gentiles, and the new community is enabled supernaturally to carry this mission to the world. In this chapter, Bock briefly summarizes six key theses of his theology of Luke-Acts:

- (1) Divine direction, salvation history, continuity of promise, mission
- (2) Israel's story includes the nations and is not anti-Semitic
- (3) The Spirit as the sign of the new era
- (4) Salvation and identity tied to Jesus' work
- (5) A new era and structure in a Trinitarian story
- (6) Realized promise in prophecy and pattern

Overall Evaluation

Bock's work is composed of strengths, missed opportunities, and weaknesses. The strengths include a narrative emphasis for doing theology, God as the centering concept of Lukan theology, sensitivity to the Old Testament contexts that inform Lukan theology, and the presentation of law in Luke-Acts. Missed opportunities include the political side of the announcement of peace in Luke 2:14, the interaction between Paul and Lydia as illustration of the patronage system, the implications of the leadership change in Jerusalem from Peter to James, and the issue of the will of God regarding Paul and Jerusalem at the end of the third missionary journey. The weaknesses of the volume include repetitive discussion that unnecessarily lengthens the text and a dispensational scheme that distorts Luke's picture of Israel, the kingdom of God, and the church.

Detailed Critique

Strengths

Bock shows how narrative order is revelatory of theological development. The following observations are examples.

- The messianic portrait in Luke and Acts shows the descriptor, “the Lord Jesus” (Acts 1:21), is not found in Luke except at the very end (Luke 24:3). In Acts the title appears eighteen times, which “shows a deepened appreciation of Jesus because of his resurrection-ascension and divine vindication” (169).
- The infancy narrative itself already shows that, for Luke, the messianic status of Jesus was preincarnate, not conferred at birth or baptism (294).
- The homelessness of Jesus from his birth predicates what a disciple of Jesus must anticipate in order to follow Jesus (318).
- The image of the church in Acts focuses less on “structures, strategies, and offices as with attitudes, allegiances, growth, character, and outreach” (332).
- The Acts narrative shows an evident interrelationship between the conversion of Cornelius and the story of Paul (423) that is mutually interpretive.

Such observations show the contribution to theological reflection through following Lukan narrative order. The methodological procedure in general is first to observe narrative sequence and then do synthetic work with the results. This methodology generates sound results except at those points where dispensationalism’s interpretive distortion field kicks in.

A second strength is centering Lukan theology on God. This centering is an integrative force helping to synthesize theological themes. Further, whereas Christology is crucial in understanding Lukan theology, Bock does not allow a christological focus to overwhelm the actual Jewish story Luke is tapping as revelatory of God at work in Christ. Bock avoids this common pitfall.

A third strength is attention to Old Testament contexts. Bock carefully crafts a narrative storyline that could be called salvation-historical, yet enhanced by a theology of God revealed along the lines of plan, activity, and character. This synthetic methodology results in a conceptualization of a divine “program” revealed in Israel’s story, affirmed in Israel’s prophets, and confirmed by the pattern of the story of Jesus. Typological reading is part of the methodology here, but substantiated in the main by multiple attestation across the entire scriptural corpus. In the Hebrew Scripture, a program is promised. Jesus is fulfillment. Behind these two simple statements is a complexity that takes chapters for Bock to unpack completely. In this way, Bock’s subtitle is worded carefully to express this thesis: “God’s Promised Program, Realized for All Nations.”

Bock's later discussion of Luke's use of Scripture in chapter 21 uses a two-fold methodology. Bock first lays out hermeneutical axioms that reveal Luke's concept of divine history. This concept of history plays into how Luke reads Scripture. In this way, Bock is taking his lead from Hays's "grand narrative of election" (409). We get a spirited defense of the promise-fulfillment pattern against the arguments of Litwak (410, n8) and then as an entire section in discussion of axiom 3 (412–14). Bock presents a strong case, well argued. Bock then develops five scriptural themes that show how Luke supported his claim that the new Jesus community was the fulfillment of OT promises. The places where the discussion of Luke's use of Scripture falters is in inserting "national" as a descriptor for anything to do with Israel. The descriptor is alien to Luke's linguistic field, and, as such, a clear signal of an external perturbation driving the discussion, not genuinely Lukan thought.

A fourth strength is Bock's carefully nuanced discussion of law in Luke-Acts. Bock negotiates a middle ground between arguing that Luke understood the law was at an end or arguing that Luke saw the law in qualified ways as having relevance for believers. Bock takes the Banks and Luce teleological argument: the Law meets its goal in Jesus, so does not fail in its intended salvation-historical role of pointing to Jesus (362). Christ does not deny the Sabbath law, for example, but he does reinterpret common Jewish views about its implementation (364). For Jewish believers, then, the law is not abrogated but certainly relativized (364–65). John the Baptist is presented as the transitional bridge between the OT prophets and the NT era, but not along the lines of Conzelmann's abruptly demarcated eras.

Missed Opportunities

Bock misses opportunities along the way. Most are minor, but the last one related to Paul and his last trip to Jerusalem is substantial.

One missed opportunity is in the paragraph on "peace" in Luke (271). Bock failed to set the context of the message of "peace" brought by the angels in 2:14 against the backdrop of the era of Caesar Augustus that Luke intends (2:1). Augustus had popularized and propagandized the *pax romana* he had brought to the entire world (*Res gestae*). Rome's Augustan poets followed in that lead (Virgil). With the angels' message of "peace," Luke is sending a shot across the bow of Roman imperial ideology of the Augustan age.

Bock is somewhat sensitive to social issues, but sometimes misses social cues. For example, he points to Paul's role with Lydia as painting a positive picture for women in Acts (351). Bock, however, does not raise the even more salient point that Paul has negotiated with Lydia to establish Lydia as his sponsoring patron in a patron-client relationship. The nature of this early beginning to the church at Philippi has implications for Paul's future relationship to the church and the future role of women in this Macedonian congregation, whose social structures and prescribed gender roles were distinct from those of other provinces of the Roman empire.

Bock's discussion of key personalities in the early church is somewhat perfunctory. His discussion of Peter and then of James does not even attempt to address the question of why early church leadership shifts from Peter, the undisputed leader at the opening of Acts, to James by the time of the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15. This shift is a sea change sociologically and one of the strong indications not only that the Petrine leadership no longer is favored in Jerusalem but that the church there has taken a distinctly conservative Jewish turn. In this change in leadership already noticeable in Acts 15, the implications for why the center of gravity for the early church inevitably must shift from Jerusalem to Rome already are insinuated. Luke's narrative intentionally ends in Rome, more than a city for Luke. Rome is the theological center of gravity for the last in the series of gospel advances of the programmatic Acts 1:8, "to the ends of the earth."

Bock's read that God willed Paul to go to Jerusalem from Ephesus is quite wrong (224). To arrive at this conclusion, he fundamentally misreads the significance of 21:14 as the disciples' affirmation of Paul when the narrative makes clear this is resignation in the face of Paul's obstinance. The disciples have no other choice in the face of Paul's obdurate insistence. What makes transparent the real deal about Paul, Jerusalem, and the will of God from the Lukan perspective is *not* Acts 21:14, the verse Bock focuses on with his misreading, but rather, Acts 21:4. Luke could not be clearer in 21:4. *The Holy Spirit through the mouths of multiple individuals* (the verb in 21:4 is plural) *told Paul explicitly not to go to Jerusalem*. Bock fails to realize that Acts 21:4 is Luke's clear exegesis of 19:21. That is to say, the "spirit" in 19:21 that decides to go to Jerusalem is Paul's spirit, not God's. Bock misses that the verb in 19:21 is middle voice, so the grammar is a clear reference to Paul's spirit, not the Holy Spirit, a matter on which even the King James translators were correct. (Bock's footnote, therefore, on 224 is grammatically and narratively off base.) God's will was Rome. Rome is the only destination in 19:21 to which Luke attaches the verb of divine necessity. Paul's will was a Jerusalem detour first, which royally messed up the divine itinerary west. God in his sovereignty still got Paul to Rome, but Paul was about as bull-headed about his Jerusalem detour from the divine itinerary west to Rome as he was fighting disciples of Jesus on the Damascus Road, or fighting Barnabas about John Mark, or fighting God about Jerusalem even at the beginning of his ministry (Acts 9:1; 15:39; 22:17–21).

Getting the trip to Jerusalem wrong, Bock keeps repeating the error, such as rejecting the clear inference in the text that James's suggestion to Paul in Acts 21 was ill-conceived, poorly executed, and had disastrous results in riot, arrest, imprisonment, and a full, two-year delay in Paul's getting to Rome (360). Paul was supposed to go straight to Rome from Ephesus is what Acts 19:21 means, but Paul insisted on his own ill-fated detour first. This rhetorical characterization of Paul (*ethos*) is fully in concord with Luke's theme built up in the Stephen speech in Acts 7 of God active, God resisted—not only by enemies of God, but most particularly his own chosen. Bock should apply his own argument about Paul backing down after insulting the high priest in Acts 23 in an "emotional and awkward dispute" where Paul's "temper temporarily gets the best of him" (368). I would agree that Paul is presented consistently throughout Acts as prone to impetuous words and actions, who can overreach impulsively and regret doing so (even though I do not agree with Bock that that is what is going on in Acts 23). In terms of Paul's Jerusalem

itinerary, I am arguing for just as much humanity in Paul in Acts 19:21 as Bock reads in 23:3. Moreover, the narrative flow through Acts 21 and the fundamental chaos and riot Paul creates by showing up in Jerusalem absolutely confirms this reading of the disaster of Paul's self will in Acts 19:21.

Weaknesses

One distracting weakness of the volume is that discussion throughout is repetitive. Bock makes reference to previous discussion from chapter to chapter, but offering only slightly different points another time around. This repetitiveness is frustrating, because one realizes that the volume unnecessarily is inflated as a result. A better organization of material could have achieved a more concise presentation.

The major weakness of this volume is in its dispensational presuppositions that generate an inadequate understanding of Lukan theology, most egregiously on specific themes. At times, Bock literally contradicts himself when these presuppositions kick in to control the discussion rather than actually allowing the Lukan narrative to unfold along genuinely Lukan lines of development, as Bock's chosen methodology required. The problem becomes acute when Bock supposedly is giving Lukan perspectives on the kingdom of God, Israel, and the church. For these topics, Bock has five favorite texts: Luke 22:29–30, Acts 1:6, Acts 3:18–26, Acts 13:13–41, and Acts 15:14–18 (Amos 9:11–15).

(1) *Bock's kingdom of God is non-Lukan.* Bock unsuccessfully tries to mate his dispensationalism with inaugurated eschatology. Bock's dispensational innovation kicks in to subdivide the second part of inaugurated eschatology's classic two-age scheme into incarnation, church age, and earthly millennial rule (390). Strikingly, Bock admits in a footnote that this tripartite division of the era of fulfillment is not Lukan! "For Luke there are no stages to the consummation. He simply presents it as a unit" (390, n3). This candid admission to non-Lukan eschatology in a book on the theology of Luke-Acts is quite the surprise.

(2) *Bock's Israel is non-Lukan.* Bock constantly inserts "national" as a descriptor for Israel related to God's promises, a descriptor Luke never uses. Bock cannot see the forest for the trees: *Luke's multi-ethnic Israel by definition is non-national.* One can note how Bock when referring to the topic of "Gentile inclusion" regularly avoids saying inclusion into what. If he says the church, then he has broken his read on Romans 9–11. If he says Israel, then he has broken his read on Acts. Bock acknowledges that Luke presents Jesus as relativizing the Jewish law. Yet, Bock seems oblivious to the reality that to relativize the law by definition is to relativize national Israel. Bock cannot understand that the same interpretive procedure of christological shifting of the original meaning as for a text about David (418) or about God's enemies (421, n21) can apply to national Israel as well.

What Bock seems never to acknowledge in working through the Acts narrative is that *Gentile*

inclusion into Israel inherently transforms the definition of Israel. By being multi-ethnic, messianic Israel is non-ethnic. True Israel as the people of God transcends nationalism, and God always defined Israel this way from the beginning. Israel in the New Testament is a family of faith, not a nation (Romans 4). Bock can say the gospel message knows no national boundaries, and even can say, “It is no longer a Jewish message and hope” (133). Bock also can acknowledge that the early disciples did assume that the gospel message exclusively was for Jews, and then remark, “Only later (Acts 10–15) do the disciples see that this limited sense was inappropriate” (133). Somehow, however, he cannot see that these are the very observations that build the case that the disciples’ original question in Acts 1:6 derives from this “limited sense” of understanding the Israel of God and is, therefore, inherently wrong-headed.

The singular passage of Acts 3:19–25 stands high above them all for Bock’s canon within the dispensational canon on national Israel. This one passage gets a total of 30 citations (!) in this volume’s Scripture index, grossly outnumbering references to any other text in Acts (again, not even counting references to this particular passage in footnotes, which add even more instances). The reason Acts 3 is so important to Bock is because this “period of restoration” in Acts 3:21 is another key dispensational text, always tied directly to Acts 1:6, and always assumed to be the hope of *national* Israel. That John the Baptist said the axe was at the root of the tree (Luke 3:7–9) or that Jesus spoke of cutting down the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6–9) or said that Israel’s house is desolate (Luke 13:35) or that Israel’s daughters are to weep and mourn the coming judgment of the nation (Luke 23:27–31), Bock adamantly insists, “does not mean that Israel is permanently rejected, just as the exile was not permanent” (379). Bock here egregiously begs the question. The two events of the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon and the arrival of Messiah to Jerusalem are in no way of the same historical character. Bock’s analogy utterly fails because the exile was not eschatological judgment, but the coming of Jesus was. The coming of Babylon is not the coming of Messiah.

By not giving due weight to the coming of Messiah as eschatological judgment, Bock empties John the Baptist’s eschatological judgment message of its immediacy and potency for Israel. After all, Luke presented John the Baptist as Elijah, the long-expected prophet of eschatological judgment for Israel (Luke 1:17). Israel confronted by Messiah is at her eschatological crossroads, her moment of destiny, a crucial moment Bock does not seem to appreciate. Bock asserts, “Though the actual judgment to which John refers will come later,” by which Bock makes clear in following comments that he means the last judgment after this life (283). Such an assertion is simply inexplicable in the light of Luke’s actual narrative. John the Baptist was not warning Jews coming to him for baptism about a judgment that would not actually occur for another two millennia. The eschatological axe was at the root of the tree right then.

In building his case for Acts 3:19–25, Bock puts significant weight into expressions in this passage that occur only once in Luke-Acts (and in the entire NT). Bock admits that “times of refreshing” in 3:20 is a unique expression (occurs only once in the New Testament; 392). A second expression unique to the NT in this passage occurs in the very next verse in “the seasons of the restoration of all things” (3:21). Bock reads the meaning of such unique expressions as

playing out the significance of OT texts such as Isaiah 65–66; Isa 34:4; 51:6; Jer 15:18–19; 16:15; 23:8; 24:6; Ezek 17:23; and Amos 9:11–12. To this list Bock adds the NT passages Matt 19:28; Rom 8:18–23; and Heb 2:5–8. In citing these passages, Bock never acknowledges that the NT transforms the concept of Israel and of eschatological expectations related to Israel.

Bock takes note of the unique development of the Melchizedekian priesthood of Jesus and the coordinated ministry of the king-priest in the heavenly temple in Hebrews (443). He seems oblivious, however, to how this very concept, which is crucial to Hebrews, completely transcends any idea of a national Israel. Hebrews represents the kind of NT theology from which we develop a more sound understanding of the NT doctrine of Israel than Bock's dispensational approach can accommodate.

The problem of Israel for Bock surfaces pointedly at the end of the book. Bock subtly contradicts elements of his dispensationalism throughout the book. However, in chapter 23 he presents a blatant contradiction to that future national Israel thesis he attempts to shoe-horn into Lukan theology throughout the volume. As he summarizes the story of Israel, he finally reveals the weakness of never giving a definition of Israel throughout the entire volume. Bock writes, "The way Israel functioned in the past has been forever changed. Now it is not a national entity that is the residence for blessing but a messianic multinational community that spreads across the globe" (450). Right on. That characterization is sound Lukan theology and an accurate description of what Luke means regarding Israel. Dispensationalism, however, immediately kicks in. Bock follows this clear statement of Lukan theology of Israel with a dispensational disclaimer that obviates the point just made. The disclaimer also completely obfuscates Lukan theology: "All this does not mean Israel is cast aside, for she also is to be included as long as she responds" (450). Bock means his dispensational scheme of end-time, national Israel. With such Orwellian double-speak, we are forced to ask, "Will the real Israel please stand up?"

(3) *Bock's church is non-Lukan.* Missing the mark on Israel in Luke-Acts, naturally, Bock misses the mark on the church. Bock's chapter on ecclesiology perhaps is the weakest of the volume. Bock presents the church as a distracting half-time show during the pause in the real ball game of national Israel out on the field. Bock's discussion in this material includes distinct oddities. The most obvious is that Bock strangely equates synagogue Jewry with Israel (372–73). Into this mix could be thrown Bock's earlier handling of "times of the Gentiles" (295–96) and later handling of "this generation" (400). Beyond these idiosyncratic distractions, Bock uses a "sneak preview" phrasing that subtly summons the dispensational scheme of the church age as the great parenthesis in the Daniel prophecy of the 70 weeks. Bock writes, "So the church age represents a sneak preview of Christ's coming earthly rule," and then later says, "So Luke sees two phases of rule, of which the church is the first" (375). He repeats this church as a parentheses thesis on multiple occasions (e.g., 381).

Conclusion

Bock's volume on the theology of Luke-Acts has much to commend in its modeling the methodology of following narrative development as a way of teasing out theological nuance. This methodology generates keen and rich observations well worth the read, if one can be patient with the repetitive nature of the arrangement of material. Dispensational distortions, however, kick in when the discussion turns to the kingdom of God, Israel, and the church. Alien ideas imported from outside the Lukan narrative skew a genuine Lukan understanding of these topics not insignificantly.

Review Article: *The Reliability of the New Testament:
Bart D. Ehrman and Daniel B. Wallace
in Dialogue*, edited by Robert B. Stewart



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The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart D. Ehrman and Daniel B. Wallace in Dialogue. Edited by Robert B. Stewart. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011. 220 pages + indices. Softcover, \$22.00.

Fortress Press has again published a volume associated with the Greer-Heard Counterpoint Forum hosted by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, designed to promote civil and productive dialog between evangelicals and non-evangelicals. In addition to Ehrman and Wallace, participants at this 2008 event included Michael Holmes, Dale Martin, David Parker, and Bill Warren. The book is further enhanced by essays from K. Martin Heide, Craig A. Evans, and Sylvie Racquel. The Ehrman-Wallace dialog and audience questions entail 47 pages, about a quarter of the book, making the title somewhat inadequate for this collection of text-critical essays.

Robert B. Stewart introduces the book by outlining the crucial work done by text critics which put Bible readers in their debt. He then brings to bear his own philosophical expertise by assessing the truth claims of those who reject the textual reliability of the New Testament. This anticipates the presentations of Ehrman and Parker later in the book. Stewart asserts that textual criticism is, above all, an evidentiary discipline, and thus he questions the logic of pessimistic assertions about the original text based upon no evidence:

We must therefore insist not only that one must note *general* evidence of corruption over time but also that one's conclusions concerning any variant must be based upon *specific* evidence for a particular reading, rather than allowing evidence of alterations to lead one to a radically skeptical position with regard to the possibility of recovering the original wording (9).

Stewart's philosophical expertise brings a fresh perspective deserving of a hearing within the textual criticism guild.

Ehrman's 40-minute lecture would be a very fine popular introduction to textual criticism, if his skepticism were tempered. From his portrayal, one gets the impression that the textual

tradition is in utter chaos. Readers need to interpret Ehrman's argument in light of his concession that the number of variants would be reduced by 88 percent were spelling variants excluded, a number that would be further reduced dramatically if only viable readings were included (37). The depiction of a chaotic, intractable textual tradition also contradicts its own considerable homogeneity, as attested by the considerable agreement of our modern critical editions (125). One might also note the irony in Ehrman's comment, "the more evidence you have, the harder it is to figure out what you're doing... So, it turns out, half the time, evidence just complicates the picture" (21), as if a dozen eyewitnesses to a car accident confounds the truth, or that a single eyewitness is preferable for accuracy.

Much of Ehrman's argument hinges on the claim that we do not have "the originals." By this, he means that we do not have the original autographic manuscripts for any of the New Testament writings. Having made this incontrovertible point, he then subtly shifts this claim to the "original text," as if it were self-evident that we do not have the original text. Such an inference is not tenable. If, for example, the original manuscript of John Newton's poem "Amazing Grace" were no longer extant, we would nonetheless be able to reconstruct confidently its original text. Yet, Ehrman claims differently for the New Testament text. Our textual tradition is very rich, and in any given verse, there is good reason to believe that the original text is preserved therein (see Holmes' article for a balanced discussion of the issue, 65–68). Revisiting Stewart's introduction, one must ask for evidence to support Ehrman's claim that we do not have the original text of any given verse.

Ehrman's presentation should be read in light of the fact that he would likely change fewer than 20 readings in our best Greek critical editions, few of which would affect evangelical theology (122). Wallace notes, "[Ehrman and I] agree on what we think the wording of the original text was almost all the time" (28). Ehrman's extreme skepticism is also evident in his concession that we can be more confident of what the biblical authors wrote than we can of other ancient authors (51).

As Stewart points out in his introduction, Ehrman ironically accepts the argument from the great Textus Receptus advocate Dean Burgon that if God inspired the original text, then he would have preserved it perfectly. Ehrman, however, turns the argument around, claiming that since God did not preserve the original text perfectly (an assumed premise), then it must not be inspired. Wallace argues against Burgon's claim by 1) providing an alternative explanation of key prooftexts for divine preservation; 2) noting that divine preservation is not an ancient doctrine; 3) citing points in the Old Testament which require conjecture; and 4) asserting that the initial miracle of inspiration does not entail the on-going miracle of preservation.

Wallace argues that there is a disparity between Ehrman the scholar and Ehrman the popular writer and media consultant. Ehrman the scholar aligns himself with views consonant with textual reliability in his academic works and lectures, while Ehrman the popular writer and media consultant projects a chaotic text to others (32–33). Wallace accuses Ehrman of either writing "more provocatively than is necessary, and...misleading his readers" or of overstating his case (43). Wallace offers no motive to explain the disparity between Ehrman the scholarly author

and Ehrman the best-selling author. Wallace concludes his presentation by challenging Ehrman on his view of theologically-motivated variation.

The issue of textual reliability turns on the question addressed by Michael Holmes in the second chapter, “How well does the text of the New Testament as we have it in the late second/early third century reflect the state of the text in the late first century?” (62). To this end, he critiques three views by well known text scholars, David Trobisch, Kurt and Barbara Aland, and William L. Petersen, along with a negative assessment of D. C. Parker’s declaration that pursuit of an original text is “neither appropriate nor possible” (74). Holmes’ discussion of Petersen’s claim that “Our critical editions do not present us with the text that was current in 150, 120 or 100—much less in 80 C.E.” is particularly important since few have challenged Petersen’s work on the second century text. Holmes concludes by offering eight observations about trends, patterns, and tendencies from the evidence-rich later period which might suggest something about the earlier period for which we lack evidence.

Dale Martin, in his presentation, asserts a significant deficiency in evangelical approaches to biblical interpretation and application, and in evangelical bibliology. Martin’s basis for this critique is his own experience among Fundamentalist churches as a child. He does not interact with significant evangelical theological works, such as Carl F. H. Henry’s six volume *God, Revelation, and Authority*, or with evangelical works which present a nuanced outworking of biblical authority in the church such as Gordon D. Fee’s *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*. Much more could be said.

The article that is perhaps most challenging to the textual reliability of the New Testament is D. C. Parker’s “What Is the Text of the New Testament?” To support his thesis, Parker exhibits Matt 15:30–31 containing a list of ailments needing to be healed, and the order in which the ailments were actually healed. There are four items in the list (lame, blind, deformed, dumb), with six different orders attested in the Greek critical editions. From the data, Parker despairs of any success in ascertaining the original text, leading him to conclude, “I can therefore already offer a provisional answer with regard to the textual reliability of the New Testament. This variant indicates the impossibility of believing every word of the text to be reliable...In this detail, the text is not reliable...” From this, Parker adduces that we should abandon the quest to reconstruct the original or best form of the text (98).

Parker’s analysis and conclusions must temper anyone’s enthusiasm for the original text. However, Parker’s pessimism in this article should be tempered. First, I know of no text-critical scholar who claims that every variation unit is settled; their textual optimism is relative, not absolute, and they freely admit there are readings too difficult to claim certainty with our present knowledge.

Second, Parker gives the impression that these two verses are more or less typical of the whole New Testament. The reality is that this passage reflects the exception rather than the rule. Most

verses do not contain lists, but when they do, transposition of word order is often pervasive. Reproducing word order of items in a list was a foremost challenge to scribes, perhaps because they reduced their concentration on such particulars that do not affect meaning. In this case, however, the list consists of words characterized by similar spelling and pronunciation: *χωλους κυλλους κωφους τυφλους*, making accurate transmission even more difficult. So, instead of a verse with typical text-critical dynamics, Parker has chosen a verse containing elements exceptionally prone to scribal variants. Furthermore, the verse occurs in the Synoptic Gospels, so that the reproduction of the list might also be affected by harmonization. Thus, out of the many possible verses that could have been chosen, Parker's selection of the test passage does more to facilitate a negative assessment of textual reliability, rather than to offer data from which a balanced view of the reliability of the New Testament text might be derived. Finally, the intractability of this verse might be exaggerated at least a little. While there might be six or more readings in the textual tradition for this variation unit, the six are not equally viable. Only four of the readings were deemed sufficiently supported as to be chosen as the text reading in any of the nine critical editions I checked. We might also hope that future research will shed light on this passage; after all, Michael Holmes' recent SBL Greek New Testament is the first critical edition to adopt the word sequence found in f1 and 33. If, in support of f1 and 33, a manuscript were to be discovered which has a close affiliation to 01 and 03 (whose support is otherwise split between two other readings), editors might indeed reach a consensus on the earliest attainable reading for this verse.

Thus, while Parker's passage should inform our assessment of the textual reliability of the New Testament, it should not be taken as typifying it. Working through the textual tradition of 1 Peter, I was struck at the textual certainty of some passages which might support the reliability of the text just as much as Parker's passage implies its unreliability. For example, I checked out the reference in 1 Pet 3:22 to Jesus as being at the right hand of *God*. One might have thought that interference from the wording of the Apostle's Creed might produce multiple occurrences of the phrase for "right hand of *the Father*." However, researching very deeply into the textual tradition of these 14 New Testament references to Jesus at the right hand, I found only a single manuscript at a single passage that harmonized with the Apostle's Creed—a little known 15th century ms (1751). This example attests a highly accurate transmission of the text since a profusion of scribes resisted the otherwise powerful draw toward a creedal statement. Such examples of textual reliability are replete throughout the tradition.

Center for New Testament Textual Studies Director Bill Warren's article reminds readers of why many text critics remain confident in the textual reliability of the New Testament. In many ways, it could have served as an introduction to this collection of essays. Accordingly, he denies the notion that the text is full of uncertain wording everywhere (106). Warren argues that the text is sufficiently attested "so that we can ascertain what is most probably the original form of the text or at least a very early form of the text" (105). To this end, Warren documents witnesses to the New Testament text prior to the year 800, and then concludes that "the number of manuscripts ... is sufficient at least to allow for a responsible job to take place of recovering the

earliest attainable form of the New Testament text, even if the exact result of that work may not be totally identical..." (109). In this context, Warren discusses scribal attitudes and competencies, and then turns to the issue of theologically motivated variation. Warren outlines a set of criteria for assessing relative certainty or uncertainty in ascertaining scribal motives. The article could have explicated some of the issues involved in the second-century text, but this would have repeated some of the discussion elsewhere in the book.

Martin Heide's presentation offers perhaps the best argument for the reliability of the New Testament text in this collection of essays. However, it is fraught with difficulties. The sheer complexity of Heide's presentation and method, loaded as it is with caveats, makes his argument difficult to follow. The cards he deals to his readers at any given time are so numerous that they are hard to hold and organize mentally, so that one desperately clutches on to vague perceptions of the argument until the conclusion is laid in the final play of the game. Heide includes numerous charts to reinforce his argument, but even these are difficult to interpret, perhaps even confounded further with the lengthy explanations that accompany them. Yet, Heide's article is very important in that it attempts to quantify characterizations of New Testament textual reliability. This is needed precisely because statements on textual reliability are as relative as saying that it is warm or cold outside. Heide also recalls the Alands' oft forgotten but tempering assertion that 5,000 of the 7,947 verses of the New Testament, as contained in the major text-critical editions of the last 150 years...show no differences at all in the text" (125).

After establishing a rate of 94 percent word-for-word agreement between NA27 and the Byzantine text (185 variations out of 3,104 words) in his sampling, Heide compares these two texts with 26 papyri or samplings of papyri, and in a sampling of 10,263 words (about 7.5 percent of the New Testament word pool), agreement with the Byzantine text achieves an average of 92.6 percent, while agreement with NA27 is at 96.2 percent. Applying this method to ascertain the stability of the early Christian writing *Shepherd of Hermas*, Heide indicates a relatively low average rate of agreement of 83 percent when individual manuscripts of *Shepherd of Hermas* are compared with its critical edition. Heide's groundbreaking method and research enable him to assert that "the history of the text of the New Testament is not characterized by error and alteration, but far more by a high degree of stability" (154).

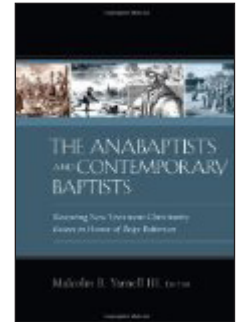
Craig Evans' contribution revisits a number of well known textual variants, but rather cursorily so that few fresh insights are gained. The one exception is his discussion of Matt 27:51–53—the report of the resurrection of some holy people at the point of Jesus' death. He classifies this text as a significant error in manuscript transmission, not on the basis of the textual evidence (all witnesses attest the passage!), but rather due to its improbability as a historical event. Accordingly, he holds out hope of the discovery of an early manuscript which lacks the text. He concludes with a discussion of the New Testament's historical reliability.

Sylvie T. Raquel provides a fitting and thoughtful conclusion to the collection of essays with her aptly entitled article "Authors or Preservers? Scribal Culture and the Theology of Scriptures."

She argues that, early in the transmission history, Christian scribes adopted attitudes toward their writings similar to their Jewish counterparts, as preserving revelation of God, and serving a faith community characterized as a religion of the book. This understanding provides a case for them being cautious scribes, a point which Raquel elaborates. Raquel offers a case for inspiration, or perhaps a method of inspiration which she thinks reflects the cultural milieu, centered in community rather than in the individual. In some ways, her article addresses issues raised in Martin's earlier article on bibliology.

As often the case with essay collections on a topic, this collection suffers from some discussion items being duplicated while other issues are overlooked. Also, one is unsure of whether the intended audience is non-specialists or text-critical experts. Nonetheless, this collection does manage to achieve significant dialog between the more recent skepticism of some scholars with the optimism of other scholars that has traditionally pervaded the textual criticism guild. The articles by Stewart, Ehrman, and Warren are particularly helpful in introducing textual criticism to non-specialists, while Parker's article needs to be appreciated by textual optimists. Finally, text-critical specialists need to digest and apply Heide's method for quantifying textual reliability.

The Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists: Restoring New Testament Christianity. Edited by Malcolm B. Yarnell III. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013. 306 pages. Hardcover, \$49.99.



Malcolm B. Yarnell III is Professor of Systematic Theology at Southwestern Seminary and Director of the Center for Theological Research. His previous publications include *The Formation of Christian Doctrine*; and three books co-edited with Thomas White and Jason G. Duesing: *First Freedom: The Baptist Perspective on Religious Liberty*, *Upon this Rock: A Baptist Understanding of the Church*, and *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*.

This volume is described further as “Essays in Honor of Paige Patterson,” many of the essays originating as papers presented at a 2012 conference on Anabaptists at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Other contributions were made by Patterson’s students and associates.

The preface is written by a surprising contributor, R. Albert Mohler, who admits the incongruous nature of his participation because of his commitment to Calvinism as opposed to Patterson’s commitment to the Anabaptist tradition. Mohler, however, affirms his admiration for the Radical Reformers because of their many contributions to Baptist thought and for Patterson, whom he describes as a radical, “one who stands without compromise at the source,” and a “gun-toting Anabaptist” (xi-xiii).

The introduction is written by Richard D. Land, who is much more sympathetic to the Anabaptist tradition. Land provides apt summaries of the book’s chapters and its authors’ purpose, which he sees as “exploring the question of how many markers of the *spiritual* genetic code of the Anabaptists are replicated in the contemporary expressions of Baptist spiritual life. As the reader will see, they find more than enough genetic evidence to declare spiritual paternity” (3-4).

The book is divided into three parts: Theology, Balthasar Hubmaier, and History. The most effective part is the first one, which will be summarized here at length. In the opening essay, Paige Patterson stated clearly the purpose of the book: “What Contemporary Baptists Can Learn from the Anabaptists.” Patterson organized much of his essay by comparing the *Baptist Faith and Message* 2000 with Anabaptist articles of faith. His conclusion sets forth the underlying viewpoint of this volume: “Given that Baptists do not baptize infants or anyone else without faith, that we treasure the concept of the free church and of religious freedom in general, the future is bright only if Baptists identify with and imitate the Anabaptists. The current trend in Southern Baptist life to identify with the Reformed faith is a major step backward and must be resisted. Why should Baptists identify with those who formerly persecuted and misrepresented them? May God bless the rebirth of Anabaptism among Southern Baptists today” (25).

In his chapter on the Anabaptists’ theological method, Malcolm Yarnell called for Baptists to recognize their dependence upon Anabaptists. In summarizing the differences between the

Reformed theologians of the sixteenth century and the Anabaptists, Yarnell clarified his view that “the Anabaptists had a different theological foundation than the Reformed: the Reformed based everything on election; the Anabaptists, on the transformed life in Christ. Both affirmed salvation by grace and both affirmed Scripture’s authority, but they could not reconcile their competing foundations. Baptists have before them two different worldviews, two different hermeneutical systems, two different theological methods vying for allegiance. Will there be a clear choice? Will we adopt a foundation characterized by specialist language through which Scripture is read? Or will we recognize a foundation derived from a Christ-centered, Trinitarian reading of Scripture tightly integrating the faith believed with the faith lived?” (47).

In any survey of Anabaptist history, one would expect a discussion on suffering, since the Anabaptists knew themselves as the Church under the Cross. What one would not expect necessarily is that this discussion would be embedded in the story of little-known Leonhard Schiemer. The author, Michael D. Wilkinson, however, wrote his dissertation on *A Necessary Smelting: Leonhard Schiemer’s Theology of Suffering*, and, as Wilkinson noted, “Smelting proved to be an apt illustration of the benefit of the cross. Smelting strengthens the iron in two ways: first, it removes the impurities, and second, the heat treatment tempers the metal, changing its structure in order to make it harder and more elastic so that the metal becomes quite durable” (57). Wilkinson concluded that, following the Anabaptists’ example, contemporary Christians must recognize the centrality of the cross in the “day-to-day call to follow Christ” (64).

Along with the recovery of believer’s baptism and the theology of suffering, the Anabaptists’ other major contribution to Christendom was religious liberty, the focus of Thomas White’s chapter. White organized his essay around the two pillars upon which the Anabaptist view of religious liberty rested: the separation of church and state; and the idea of the believers’ church, which included proper church discipline. White outlined the arguments for religious liberty delivered by a variety of Anabaptists, many of whom lost their lives under the civil repression of Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran states. White concluded: “The Anabaptists began a long fight in which they would ultimately win the argument but lose their lives defending it” (81).

Another surprising contributor to this volume is Rick Warren, who is notable more as a pastor than as an academician. His essay on “The Anabaptists and the Great Commission,” however, is a very appropriate contribution on “The Effect of the Radical Reformers on Church Planting.” Warren examined the ministry and history of the Anabaptists through the template of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20). After a concluding call to his readers to study the Anabaptists, Warren included a helpful bibliography of books and articles about the Radical Reformation.

The second section of the book focuses on Balthasar Hubmaier, arguably the most educated and the most significant Anabaptist theologian. As Land said in his introduction, these four essays “provide provocative and convincing evidence that Hubmaier would have become the Calvin or Luther of the Reformation’s left wing had his life not been snuffed out at the comparatively young age of forty-eight. What a tragic loss!” (6).

The third section is a collection of miscellaneous essays concerning a variety of individuals and movements within Anabaptism. Throughout this third section are presented six short reviews composed by Michael Whitlock that serve to broaden the historical approach of an otherwise scattered discussion of Anabaptist history.

As an anthology of essays on a variety of topics related to Anabaptism from an outstanding array of scholars, including many who are established and others who are new, this volume makes a valuable contribution to scholarship on the subject. It would be an excellent choice as a secondary textbook in a course on the Reformation in general or the Radical Reformation in particular.

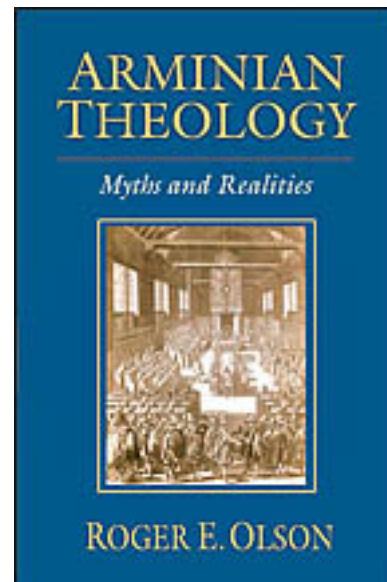
This book's appeal, however, may be limited among institutions committed to the Reformed tradition, in spite of recommendations from Daniel Akin and Russell Moore and the preface by Al Mohler. The overall editorial message of this anthology elevates the influence on Baptists by the Radical Reformation, with its commitment to the Word of God, believer's baptism, voluntary faith, religious liberty, and a return to the New Testament pattern of Christianity, over that by the Magisterial Reformation, with its commitment to Reformed theology and practice. For this reason, *The Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists: Restoring New Testament Christianity* goes beyond a survey of Anabaptist history and theology and becomes a treatise in favor of non-Calvinists in the Southern Baptist Convention over the New Calvinists.

— Rex Butler, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA*

Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities. By Roger E. Olson.
Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006. 250 pp. Hardcover, \$25.

For several years, I have had Roger Olson's book *Arminian Theology* on my bookshelf. Some scholarly friends had recommended it, and I had skimmed through it, but I had never found time to give it a careful read. At last I have found that time, and have profited from reading this important work, and I am glad that I did.

First of all, Dr. Olson should be commended for writing this clarification and defense of Arminian theology. Classical Arminianism has been so consistently misrepresented and caricatured by Reformed theologians in recent years that such a clarification and defense was desperately needed. The theological works of John Calvin are widely available, and most theologians have read at least some of his works. Unfortunately, Jacob Arminius' limited number of theological works have not been widely distributed, and few theologians have actually read them. Therefore, impressions about Arminian theology have often



been made not from the writings of Arminius himself but from the writings of his critics and his later followers. Some who are counted within the broad stream of Arminianism—Wesleyans, Pentecostals, and Open Theists—differ in significant ways from the Arminius himself and other classical Arminians. Therefore, in debunking some significant myths or misconceptions about Arminianism, Olson's work is an Arminian complement (though not by design) to Kenneth Stewart's later excellent volume, *Ten Myths about Calvinism: Recovering the Breadth of the Reformed Tradition*.¹ As a person who considers myself neither fully Calvinist nor Arminian, I approach both books as an outsider and quasi-neutral theological observer, and I find both books to be immensely helpful in bringing clarity to these theological perspectives.

However, while appreciating the contribution of this work, it also suffers from at least three significant shortcomings. First of all, Olson leads us in this extensive study of Arminian theology with virtually no reference to any Arminian confessions. Instead, he refers repeatedly to a set of Arminian theologians—primarily Arminius, Simon Episcopius, Philip Limborch, John Wesley, Richard Watson, William Burton Pope, and John Miley, H. Orton Wiley, Thomas Oden, and Ray Dunning. While these are identifiably Arminian theologians, they disagree with each other at key points, and these works are the expression of only one individual theologian. Doctrinal confessions of denominations are, in contrast, consensus statements of thousands of persons and churches. Olson admits to being “wary” of doctrinal confessions defining “orthodoxy,” in *How to Be Evangelical without Being Conservative*.² Indeed, as a “postconservative evangelical,” Olson rejects the notion that doctrinal confessions should be utilized as a “bounded set” with “precise boundaries,” but merely as an ill-defined and vague “centered set.”³ Although this work purports to define Arminianism, the word “confession” doesn't even appear in the book's index! While Olson denies doctrinal confessions utilized as a standard for orthodoxy, in contrast, most classical Arminians utilized their confessions in this way. Arminius himself authored his “Declaration of Sentiments,” and then his immediate followers authored the “Five Articles of the Remonstrants” which provoked the response of the Synod of Dort. Other notable early doctrinal confessions in the Arminian tradition include the Arminian Confession of 1621 and the early General Baptist Standard Confession of 1660 (among others). Individual theologians within traditions often are not truly representative of the majority of persons in their own faith tradition. Therefore, Olson would have been better served to utilize consensus doctrinal confessions (as amplified by theologians) rather than almost entirely ignoring doctrinal confessions.

A second shortcoming is that Olson does not present a balanced presentation of the Arminian tradition. The theologians he cites lean almost exclusively to the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition,

¹Kenneth Stewart, *Ten Myths about Calvinism: Recovering the Breadth of the Reformed Tradition* See my two-part review in the SBC Today blog, August 3 and 4, 2011 (available online as [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)), or my earlier review in *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 8.2 (Fall 2011): 163–68, online a http://baptistcenter.net/journals/JBTM_8-2_Fall_2011.pdf#page=163.

²Roger E. Olson, *How to Be Evangelical Without Being Conservative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 29–36.

³Roger E. Olson, “Postconservative Evangelical,” in *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, ed. Andrew Naselli and Collin Hansen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 161–75.

almost to the exclusion of General and Free Will Baptists. For example, Olson goes to great pains to describe the theology of Philip Limborch, a liberal Remonstrant who by all accounts is in no way representative of Arminianism as a whole. On the other hand, major classical Arminians such as Thomas Grantham, Thomas Goodwin, Leroy Forlines, and Robert Picirilli⁴ receive brief mention or no mention at all. It is somewhat surprising that Olson, whose last place of service was at a historically Baptist university, would so completely ignore the Arminian stream within the Baptist tradition. However, Olson's own spiritual pilgrimage may explain this phenomenon. His upbringing was in the Open Bible Standard Church, a small Pentecostal denomination. His parents were pastors of his church, and he had uncles and aunts who served in various leadership positions within the denomination. He also graduated from Open Bible College in Des Moines, was licensed and ordained as a minister in the Open Bible Standard Church, and served such a church as a staff member. He then attended North American Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls and became a Baptist at the end of his college career. He completed his doctorate at Rice University, and while there served as a staff member at a Presbyterian (UPCUSA) church. His ordination was then recognized by the American Baptist Churches of the USA, and then by the Baptist General Conference. Most recently has been a member of a Baptist congregation associated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. He has served as a faculty member at Oral Roberts University, Bethel University, and George W. Truett Theological Seminary. So, while he has been all over the board denominationally, he still has a deep appreciation (but not uncritically so) for the Pentecostal/Full Gospel tradition. As he once wrote, "You can take the boy out of Pentecostalism but you can't take Pentecostalism out of the boy."⁵ So the Arminianism that Olson defends is much more a Wesleyan/Pentecostal/Holiness/Full Gospel type of Arminianism, not classical Arminianism, and this colors the Arminianism that he presents.

Third, it may be difficult for Olson to represent Arminianism adequately because he disagrees with some of the key tenets held by most classical Arminians. While Olson rejects fundamentalism and conservative evangelicalism, most classical Arminians would count themselves as being within either of these camps. Indeed, the Evangelical Theological Society, of which Olson is not a member, has study groups focusing on several strains of the Arminian tradition—Wesleyan, Holiness, Stone-Campbell, and others. In addition, Olson denies biblical inerrancy, but Arminius himself and many classical Arminians are inerrantists. Note the very high view of inspiration affirmed by Arminius himself, which fits within the definition of plenary verbal inspiration:

We declare, therefore, and we continue to repeat the declaration till the gates of hell re-echo the sound —that the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration holy men of God have spoken this word,

⁴See Thomas Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus* (London: Francis Smith, 1678); Thomas Goodwin, *Works of Thomas Goodwin: The Work of the Holy Spirit in Our Salvation* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1979); F. Leroy Forlines, *The Quest for Truth: Answering Life's Inescapable Questions* (Nashville: Randall House, 2001), and Forlines, *Classical Arminianism: A Theology of Salvation*, ed. J. Matthew Pinson (Nashville: Randall House, 2011); and Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will: Contrasting Views of Salvation – Calvinism and Arminianism* (Nashville: Randall House, 2002).

⁵Roger Olson, "The Dark Side of Pentecostalism," *The Christian Century* (March 7, 2006), 30.

and by whose impulse and guidance they have, as his amanuenses, consigned it to writing—that this Holy Spirit is the Author of that light by the aid of which we obtain a perception and an understanding of the divine meanings of the word, and is the Effector of that CERTAINTY by which we believe those meanings to be truly divine; and that He is *the necessary Author, the all-sufficient Effector*.”⁶

Even most of the major Openness of God advocates counted themselves as inerrantists and remained within the Evangelical Theological Society (whose confession requires a commitment to inerrancy). While I deeply appreciate Dr. Olson personally and respect his scholarship, one might justifiably wonder just how representative Olson is of classical Arminianism, rather than a postconservative version of it.

Having noted these concerns, let us examine the ten myths about Arminianism which Olson identifies:

- (1) Arminian theology is the opposite of Calvinist/Reformed theology;
- (2) A hybrid of Calvinism and Arminianism is possible;
- (3) Arminianism is not an orthodox evangelical option;
- (4) The heart of Arminianism is belief in free will;
- (5) Arminian theology denies the sovereignty of God;
- (6) Arminianism is a human-centered theology;
- (7) Arminianism is not a theology of grace;
- (8) Arminians do not believe in predestination;
- (9) Arminian theology denies justification by grace alone through faith alone.
- (10) All Arminians believe in the governmental theory of the atonement.

I believe that Olson is on target in nine out of ten of these misconceptions about Arminianism. Actually, the misconception which is mistaken is not actually about Arminians, but about Baptists and other evangelicals who count themselves neither fully Arminian nor Calvinist, and thus it seems out of place in a list of misconceptions about Arminianism proper. Space in this review does not permit more than a brief discussion of each of these ten alleged misconceptions. As I provide my evaluation of Olson’s “myths” in this survey, which are largely affirming, let me say again that I write not as an advocate of Arminian, which I am not, but simply in fairness to help clarify some theological confusions about classical Arminianism.

⁶James Arminius, “Oration III,” *The Works of James Arminius*, trans. James Nicols and William Nichols, 3 vols. (vol. 1—London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825; vol. 3—ed. W. R. Bagnall; Buffalo: Derby, Orton, and Mulligan, 1853), cited in Olson, 83.

(#1) Olson is correct that only poor scholarship would present Arminianism as the opposite of Calvinism. Arminius and his immediate followers were members of the Dutch Reformed Church, and Arminius studied under outstanding Calvinist teachers such as Theodore Beza in Geneva. At most, Arminius saw himself as recommending reform *within* Calvinism, not a break *from* Calvinism.

(#2) Olson makes the strange claim in the second “myth” that a hybrid of Arminianism and Calvinism is impossible. First of all, the second “myth” is an odd and illogical claim following on the heels of the first “myth,” in which Olson argues that Arminianism and Calvinism are not opposites (or, more technically, contraries). Which is it—are they opposite alternatives, or not? Olson seems to be claiming that they are both opposites and not opposites at the same time. If they are not opposites, then why can there not be a mediating position in the spectrum of views between high Calvinism and high Arminianism? Second, from a perspective of logic, Olson is committing what is called the “fallacy of false alternatives”—that is, setting up just two alternatives and denying that any other possible alternatives exist.⁷ For example, Democrats and Republicans represent two poles of thought in American politics. However, becoming ever more key in each election is a group who refuse to be identified with *either* group, but prefer the label “independents.” Likewise, if someone affirms two points of Calvinism and three points of Arminianism, and prefers to be labeled as either a Calvinist or an Arminian, it would be difficult to count them in either count with any integrity. Third, Olson’s determination of whether persons are counted as Arminians or Calvinists appears to be based solely on their affirmation or denial of the five points about soteriology flowing from the Reformed Synod of Dort. However, most Calvinists reject the notion that simply believing in the “five points” makes one a Calvinist. Furthermore, the “five points” are only one aspect of the Reformed doctrine of salvation, and an even smaller part of overall Calvinistic thought. So even if persons affirm all five points, that alone would not make them fully Calvinists. Fourth, Olson is perfectly aware of the existence of many “Calminians.” In fact, America’s largest Protestant denomination is overwhelmingly “Calminian,” and Olson served for many years surrounded by “Calminians” at a traditionally Southern Baptist school, Baylor University. My stance on this issue, and that of many other leading “Baptist identity” thinkers, is very clear on this issue, as made clear by our affirmation of the statement entitled “Neither Calvinist nor Arminian, But Baptist.”⁸ This second myth is thus a curious, unnecessary, and illogical sidetrack in an otherwise cogent presentation.

(#3) It should go without saying that many Arminians are orthodox evangelicals. The significant role that revivalistic Methodists, Free Will Baptists, and other Arminian denominations played in the evangelical Great Awakenings should be sufficient evidence for this claim.

⁷For more on this claim, see my article in the SBC Today blog, “Using Logic in Theology: The Fallacy of False Alternatives,” June 3, 2011, available online at <http://sbctoday.com/using-logic-in-theology-the-fallacy-of-false-alternatives/>.

⁸This statement by a group of Baptist theologians associated with the book *Whosoever Will: A Biblical and Theological Critique of Five Point Calvinism*, edited by David Allen and Steve Lemke, is available online at http://www.baptistcenter.net/papers/Neither_Calvinists_Nor_Arminians_But_Baptists.pdf.

(#4) The fourth “myth” is probably the most significant myth about Arminianism in Olson’s list. Arminians do not put free will on an altar and worship it, as some Calvinists allege. The primary concern of the Arminian perspective is to defend the character and goodness of God against Calvinist perspectives which appear to make God the author of evil. Human freedom is not the goal, but is rather the byproduct of Arminian theology. The goal is to maintain the character and goodness of God; the means to that end is to assign blame to fallen humans for the evils that come into this world. This is a crucial and important distinction, and Olson is right on point in highlighting this myth.

(#5) Olson challenges the myth that Arminians deny the sovereignty of God. While Openness of God theologians could be challenged on this issue, anyone who has read Arminius or the other classical Arminians cannot seriously suggest that Arminians do not hold to a high view of divine sovereignty. The difference between Calvinism and Arminianism at this point is not *whether* God is sovereign, but *how He exercises* His sovereignty.

(#6) The sixth myth, that Arminians are anthropocentric, is closely tied with myths four and five. Because Calvinists stereotype Arminians as having a low view of divine sovereignty and a primary allegiance to human freedom, they completely miss the theocentric nature of true Arminianism. Again, the primary motivation for Arminian theology is to defend the character and goodness of God. It is therefore clearly theocentric, not anthropocentric.

(#7, 8, and 9) These three myths (that Arminians do not affirm predestination, a theology of grace, or justification by faith alone through grace alone) are patently false, and a careful survey of classical Arminian confessions reveals the fact that these are mistaken notions and caricatures.

(#10) The tenth myth has an important qualifier—that “*all*” Arminians believe in a governmental theory of atonement. Clearly, *many* Arminians in the Wesleyan tradition do believe in the governmental theory of atonement rather than the substitutionary atonement, and that is unfortunate. However, as Olson details, classical Arminians such as Thomas Grantham did maintain Arminius’ affirmation of the substitutionary atonement.⁹

The additional myths about Arminianism that could have been included in Olson’s list would regard the charge that Arminians reject original sin (which most of them do not), or that they affirm Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism (which classical Arminians do not, though some in the broader Wesleyan tradition may come close to doing so). Olson does address these subjects at points in the book, but does not list them among the top ten myths.

Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities is a much-needed book, addressing many of the myths

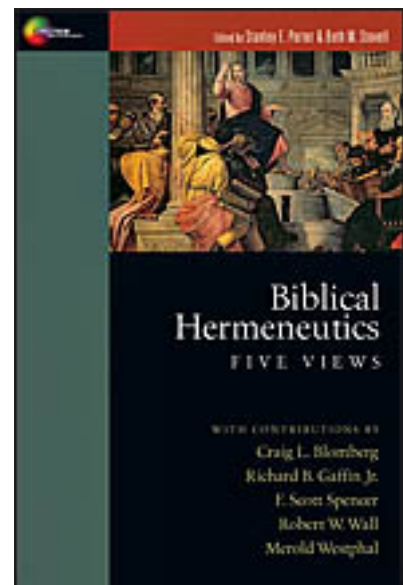
⁹See J. Matthew Pinson, “Thomas Grantham’s Theology of the Atonement and Justification,” *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 8.1 (Spring 2011), 7–39, available online at http://baptistcenter.net/journals/JBTM_8-1_Spring_2011.pdf#page=10.

and caricatures about Arminianism that plague and muddle many contemporary theological discussions. Whether we advocate a particular theological perspective or not, it is imperative that we as Christians describe other theological perspectives with integrity, fairly and accurately. Dr. Olson is to be complimented for this excellent contribution, and despite the few misgivings I have discussed, I highly recommend the book.

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Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views. By Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012. 224 pages. Softcover, \$20.

Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views is edited and compiled by Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell. Porter is the president and dean of McMaster Divinity College, where he also serves as a professor of New Testament. His publications are abundant, with the most recent works including *The Future of Biblical Interpretation: Responsible Plurality in Biblical Hermeneutics* and *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. Stovell is an assistant professor of biblical studies at St. Thomas University. She is the author of *Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel: John's Eternal King* and has contributed to numerous edited works.



Biblical Hermeneutics is intended to provide students and scholars with a greater understanding of the major issues and practical outcomes of different hermeneutical strategies. In order to accomplish their task, the editors enlist five prominent biblical scholars, Craig L. Blomberg, F. Scott Spencer, Merold Westphal, Richard B. Gaffin Jr, and Robert W. Wall. Each scholar contributes an essay describing the distinctives of his position, as well as a response essay to the approaches of the other scholars. Additionally, each scholar provides an analysis of Matt 2:7-15 to demonstrate his interpretive method. The editors themselves begin and end the book with a general discussion of key hermeneutical issues. Porter and Stovell desire that *Biblical Hermeneutics* will encourage even those firmly entrenched within one hermeneutical camp to rethink their approach.

The first of the essays is presented by Blomberg, who places emphasis on “studying the biblical text, or any other text, in its original historical context, and seeking the meaning its author(s) most likely intended for its audience(s)” (27). Historical-critical methods seek to determine the origin of a text, the nature of transmission, and the historicity of its content. While some

conservative scholars are reticent about using such forms of analysis, Blomberg asserts that “if our faith cannot withstand historical inquiry, it does not merit retention” (37).

The redemptive-historical view, presented by Gaffin, functions closely with the historical-critical method. However, Gaffin’s method places Christ as the primary subject matter and culmination of God’s revelation. Scripture itself sets limits upon what can be known of redemption history.

Spencer’s essay articulates the literary/postmodern view, which places emphasis on the texts and readers themselves. Spencer makes use of five “textual foci” to elucidate his methods and perform his analysis of Matt 2:7–15. The final text, cotext, intertext, context, and open text place emphasis on the text itself. Readers also bring personal experiences and perspectives to a text, often resulting in non-traditional interpretations. Spencer interestingly points out that open readings have given a voice to groups often deprived of or oppressed by ecclesiastical power structures. However, he guards against the risk of “anything goes” by saying that the text itself, as well as authorial intent, provide constraints for interpretation. Spencer concludes his essay by asserting that the literary/postmodern view can “happily coexist” with historical studies (68).

Westphal presents the philosophical/theological view. Westphal begins the essay by describing what his view is not. Philosophical hermeneutics “is not just about interpreting the Bible,” and is not only applied to texts (70–71). The method can be applied to history, art, action, and understanding. Philosophical hermeneutics is more than a type of interpretation; it is more concerned with “the conditions in which understanding takes place” (71). The flexibility of an interpreter’s presuppositions leads to revisable conclusions, creating interpretations that are “plural, partial, and perspectival” (74).

Lastly, Wall presents the canonical approach. The canonical view encompasses a variety of methodologies, but emphasizes the final form of the Bible as well as its use in the church. Wall structures his essay around five “orienting concerns and related practices,” and concludes that the primary goal of an interpreter is facilitating biblical practices within the church (112).

In part two of the book, contributors respond to the essays of their co-contributors. Unfortunately, the response essays are less helpful than the essays in part one. Regrettable aspects include the repetition of points made previously in the book as well as a general sense of meandering. Perhaps an editorial synthesis of the more salient points in the response essays might have been more effective.

Nevertheless, each contributor does offer a few astute observations. Gaffin’s discussion of divine authorship is especially incisive. He criticizes other contributors for being unclear about their position on divine authorship and calls for “further consideration of these matters” (178). Also, Spencer’s comments on Blomberg’s interpretation of Hosea in Matthew are perceptive. In agreeing with Blomberg about not reading the NT into OT texts, he humorously says, “Like

most of the prophets, [Hosea] was a strange bird. It is hard enough to decide what he meant in his own context!" (148–49).

A minor weakness in *Biblical Hermeneutics* is the editors' designation of "behind the text," "within the text," and "in front of the text" in their introduction. The designations create more confusion than clarity. First, the contributors themselves rarely use the terminology. Second, not all of the five hermeneutical methods fall strictly into one category or another.

The conservative presentation of the more liberal hermeneutical practices is both a strength and a weakness. Conservative scholars are equipped to use methodologies that are at times deemed too subjective. Yet, by taking such a conservative view on the literary/postmodern view and the philosophical/theological view, Spencer and Westphal deprive readers of a fuller scholarly understanding of all that their views entail.

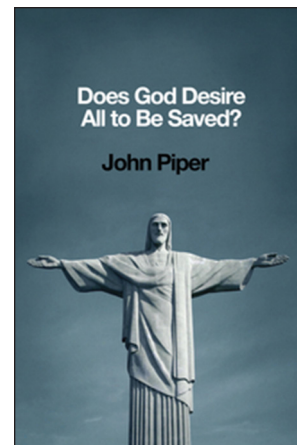
Overall, *Biblical Hermeneutics* is a welcome addition to the often labyrinthine discussion of biblical interpretation. Each essay is clearly and astutely written, and the congenial tone of the contributors is refreshing. Editors and contributors seek to offer clarity on different methodologies, and most succeed. As Westphal perceptively asserts, the various hermeneutical methods featured in this volume each shine a different light on the text, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the biblical texts.

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Does God Desire All to Be Saved? By John Piper. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 56 pages. Paperback, \$9.99.

Prior to being printed in this brief book, earlier versions of this essay appeared in three books and an online article.¹ John Piper, it seems, desires all to read this essay.

Piper explains his aim "is to show from Scripture that the simultaneous existence of God's will for all people to be saved and his will to choose some people for salvation unconditionally before creation is not a sign of divine schizophrenia or exegetical confusion" (13). Piper begins by labeling 1 Tim 2:4, 2 Peter 3:8–9, Ezekiel 18:23, 32, and Matt 23:37 as "perplexing texts" (13). He assumes as true the view that "God chooses unconditionally whom he will save" (15). Piper then deduces that



¹The essay appears in *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will*, edited by Tom Schreiner and Bruce Ware (Baker, 1995); *Still Sovereign*, also edited by Schreiner and Ware (Baker, 2000); *The Pleasures of God* (Multnomah, 2000); and as an essay titled "Are There Two Wills in God?" (Jan. 1, 1995), available at <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/articles/are-there-two-wills-in-god> (accessed November 29, 2013).

because God desires to save all but elects to save only some, “there are at least ‘two wills’ in God” (16). Known by various terms, these two wills in God are sometimes called God’s secret will and revealed will, or the will of decree and will of command.

Piper then illustrates the two wills in God by citing five biblical examples. First, the death of Christ demonstrates “God’s willing for sin to come to pass while at the same time disapproving the sin” (19). Second, in the war against the Lamb mentioned in Rev 17:16–17, “God wills (in one sense) to influence the hearts of the ten kings so that they will do what is against his will (in another sense)” (22). Third, God hardens the heart of Pharaoh. This demonstrates that “God wills to harden men’s hearts so that they become obstinate in sinful behavior that he disapproves” (23). Fourth, various texts are used to argue that God chooses “to use or not to use his right to restrain evil in the human heart” (27). In the case of Eli’s sons, it was the Lord’s will to put them to death (1 Sam 2:25). Coupled with claims in Ezekiel 18 and 32, Piper explains that “in one sense God may desire the death of the wicked and in another sense he may not” (29). Fifth, Deut 28:63 states God will “take delight in bringing ruin upon” Israel. Piper considers this to be an “apparent contradiction” which can be resolved by considering God’s sovereignty (30).

Chapter three argues briefly that God’s sovereignty involves “human hostilities and cruelties that God disapproves even as he wills that they occur” (32). New Testament verses which state “if the Lord wills” and “if God permits” should be interpreted according to this definition of sovereignty.

In chapter four, Piper concludes the book by addressing various objections to the view that there are two wills in God. Piper appeals to Jonathan Edwards to argue that God orders all things that occur, even sinful acts, without sinning because God does not will it “as an act of sin in himself” (38). Returning to 1 Tim 2:4, Piper concludes that this “controversial text” does not settle the issues raised by the title of his book. Why? Piper explains, “God wills not to save all, even though he ‘desires’ that all be saved, because there is something else that he wills or desires more” (39). He repeats, “God is committed to something even more valuable than saving all.” To what is God more committed than saving all people? Piper answers, “The answer the Reformed give is that the greater value is the manifestation of the full range of God’s glory in wrath and mercy (Rom 9:22–23) and the humbling of man so that he enjoys giving all credit to God for his salvation (1 Cor 2:9)” (39). Piper prefers this answer to the Arminian reply that what “restrains God from saving all” is “human self-determination” (39–40).

Also, God sometimes wills evil to occur through secondary causes. Piper supports this view by appealing to passages such as God sending an evil spirit in Judges 9, Satan leading Judas to do what God brings about (cf. Luke 22:3 and Acts 2:23), and God’s actions behind Satan stirring David to the sinful action of taking a census (cf. 1 Chron 21:1 and 2 Sam 24:1, 10). Piper paraphrases Edwards by describing God’s view of tragedy and sin through both narrow and wide angle lenses. God is grieved by the narrow view, but rejoices in the wide view (45).

Piper states, “God deemed it wise and good to elect unconditionally some to salvation and not others” (47). Piper then defends RL Dabney’s historical analogy about George Washington to argue that “God has a real and deep compassion for perishing sinners” (48). Drawing from Jer 3:32–33, Piper explains, “God *does* will the affliction that he causes, but he does *not* will it in the same way he wills compassion” (48, emphasis his).

Piper concludes by stating, “God is constrained by His passion for the display of the fullness of His glory” (53). Piper affirms that “God loves the world with a real and sincere compassion that desires the salvation of all men.” Even so, “God has chosen from before the foundation of the world those whom he will save from sin.” Piper argues that the reason all are not saved must be located in either the Arminian reply of “human self-determination” or the Reformed reply of “the glorification of the full range of his perfections” (53). Finally, “Christ invites everyone to come” and any who come were chosen from the foundation of the world to be saved (54).

The strength of this book is that it seeks to address an Achilles heel in Reformed theology, namely the charge that affirming unconditional election requires a denial of God’s desire to save all people. The weakness of the book is that it argues against biblical texts which teach explicitly that God desires to save all people by appealing to a theological framework of two wills in God, which is deduced then imported into one’s reading of the Scripture. The result is that Piper favors the two wills view (not explicitly stated in the Bible) over biblical texts which state clearly that God desires all to be saved.

Piper is right to raise the biblical texts which provide the strongest objections to his viewpoint. But he waves them off too quickly. For example, Piper cites John Gill’s exposition of 1 Tim 2:4 to suggest “it is possible” that God does not desire to save all people but “all *sorts* of people” (14). Does Piper want to pin his objection to 1 Tim 2:4 on the conclusion of a man that Michael Haykin called the “the doyen of eighteenth-century hyper-Calvinism”?²

Following Jonathan Edwards (17, 38), Piper wrongly creates a false dilemma by portraying only three theological options, five-point Calvinism, Arminianism, or Open Theism (15, 39, 40, 42, 43, 53). Where does this leave advocates of fewer points of Calvinism or those who identify with a theological tradition which is neither Calvinist nor Arminian—all of whom rightly reject Open Theism?³

²Michael A. G. Haykin, “Hyper-Calvinism and the Theology of John Gill,” 6. Available at: <http://www.andrewfullercenter.org/files/hyper-calvinism-and-the-theology-of-john-gill.pdf> (accessed November 23, 2013). Haykin concludes, 16, “Gill’s theology did hamper passionate evangelism and outreach.”

³See, as examples, David Allen, et. al, “Neither Calvinists Nor Arminians but Baptists,” The Center for Theological Research, White Paper 36, available at <http://www.baptisttheology.org/baptisttheology/assets/File/NeitherCalvinistsNorArminiansButBaptists.pdf> (accessed November 29, 2013), and Eric Hankins, “Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism: Toward a Baptist Soteriology,” *Journal of Baptist Theology and Ministry* 8.1 (Spring 2011): 87–100, available at http://baptistcenter.net/journals/JBTM_8-1_Spring_2011.pdf#page=90 (accessed November 29, 2013).

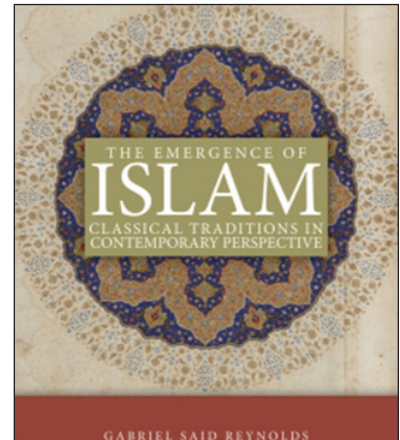
Piper's appeal to the idea of two wills in God, which is central to his argument, has been embraced by some Southern Baptists, such as Tom Schreiner and Bruce Ware,⁴ but rejected by others, such as David Allen, Steve Lemke, Bruce Little, and Ken Keathley.⁵ Piper commits the error D. A. Carson specifically warned against in his dissertation, pointing to a hidden will to negate God's revealed will.⁶

For readers who seek to reconcile unconditional election to salvation with God's desire to save all people, Piper's brief treatment provides an argument which may prove satisfying to the already convinced. But readers looking for an unambiguous answer of "yes" to the question in the title of the book are advised to look elsewhere.

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The Emergence of Islam: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective. By Gabriel Said Reynolds. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012. 208 pages + glossary and index. Softcover, \$35.

In this concise volume, Gabriel Said Reynolds introduces readers to the variegated conversation on the work of the prophet of Islam, his context and the community which emerged. The author brings a vast array of personal study and academic tools to his task. Through the book he addresses the broad spectrum of those who answer the questions about Islamic origins. Reynolds seeks to compare two methodologies without completely rejecting either. The traditional Muslim method is largely drawn from late medieval Islamic sources and the other



⁴Piper's appeal to two wills in God appears in these volumes edited by Schreiner and Ware, *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will* (Baker, 1995) and *Still Sovereign* (Baker, 2000). See also Ware's appeal to two wills in God in his article "Divine Election to Salvation," in *Perspectives on Election: Five Views*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville: B&H, 2006).

⁵David L. Allen, "The Atonement: Limited or Universal?" in *Whosoever Will: A Biblical and Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, ed. Allen and Lemke (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 92; Steve W. Lemke, "A Biblical and Theological Critique of Irresistible Grace," in *Whosoever Will*, 145; Bruce A. Little, "Evil and God's Sovereignty," in *Whosoever Will*, 293–4; Kenneth Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 52–58. Keathley, 58–62, affirms a different, non-Reformed version of the two-wills paradigm, which he calls antecedent/consequent wills. He writes, "God desires the salvation of all, although He requires the response of faith on the part of the hearer. This antecedent/consequent wills approach sees no conflict between the two wills of God. God antecedently wills all to be saved. But for those who refuse to repent and believe, He consequently wills that they should be condemned" (58).

⁶D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 214, in Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty*, 55.

is based on material drawn directly from the Qur'an itself and dating from the seventh century. The author seeks to present both of these narratives objectively, although it is clear that he finds the latter method to be more credible (ix-x). However, Reynolds contends that his readers and non-Muslims must understand the Islamic community's devotion to the former narrative just as surely as all right-thinking people need to evaluate both stories in light of known facts.

Reynolds seeks to answer two questions. First, what can be known about the context of the birth and emergence of Islam and how can sources be evaluated and trusted? Second, how do devout Muslims view Islamic origins, and how is this understanding integrated into contemporary religious practice? He explores the first question in two parts. In Part one, he considers traditional Islamic understandings of early Islamic history. In Part two, he addresses critical understandings drawn from the Qur'an itself of Islamic beginnings. In Part three, which is also his research conclusion, he explores the second question. Each section of the book is introduced and summarized by the author. Also, each chapter concludes with study questions focused on central elements of the chapter.

The author, while demonstrating a broad awareness of Islamic sources, consistently cites the most conservative sources. While the documentation is fairly sparse beyond the Qur'an, it is very helpful and consistent with the author's thesis. Throughout the book, the author provides strategic side-bars, biographical summaries, charts, and illustrations to help his readers explore the argument of the book. He provides a useful index and a concise glossary so that even the beginning student can follow his thinking and enter into the debate. The bibliography and list for further reading extends the readers' access to the author's sources.

Part one (chs. 1-3) presents, with some critique, the traditional story of the founding of Islam and the first five leaders (Muhammad and the four rightly guided Khalifs). The author recognizes that most in the Muslim world accept this narrative as factual, regardless of conflicts with other facts and internal evidence of the Qur'an itself. The problems identified by Reynolds concerning the traditional view include: the lack of non-Islamic historical support for the pagan religious role described in the traditional narrative, non-Islamic historical evidence for the presence of Christianity among Arab tribes from the fifth century, Qur'anic content centered around the christological debate contemporary in the region, and the sparse reference to pagan issues in the Qur'an in comparison with the interaction with Christian doctrinal discussions.

One of strengths of this section is Reynolds' familiarity with a broad range of Sunni and Shi'ite writing on the subject. This allows him to present the broad-stroke agreement across the Islamic world on the questions of the setting and context for the work of Muhammad and the birth of Muslim community. From this position, Muhammad was raised in a pagan setting in which the teaching of the biblical God was virtually absent.

The traditional story is built from medieval sources (Qur'anic commentaries, biographies of Muhammad and collections of hadith) which provide a context for the text of the Qur'an,

whereas in Part two the enquiry into the origins of Islam and story of Muhammad and the Khalifs is conducted within the pages of the Qur'an. Part two of the book provides a synthesis of modern non-Muslim scholarship with Muslims of the "Qur'anic" tradition. The heart of Reynolds' work is presented in chapters 4-7 of Part two. His contention that medieval sources for the traditional account of the emergence of Islam were composed to close gaps and answer questions created by the Qur'anic text rather than historic reports is drawn from the central thesis of authors such as Abraham Geiger and John Wansbrough. While not going as far as the modern Oriental school in developing conclusions, the author employs their method to support his view that the text of the Qur'an itself is the most secure source for a narrative of the emergence of Islam. Moving behind the medieval authors and their attempt to validate the founders of Islam, Reynolds seeks to construct a narrative of the emergence of Islam based on the Qur'an.

Chapter four lays open the Qur'an to the view of non-Arabic speakers in a unique fashion. The sweep and scope of this book of Islamic revelation is revealed through examining several facets and themes of the Qur'an. The content of the book presents a context of theological and christological debate around the emerging Islamic community. Chapter five compares the Bible and the Qur'an. The conversation between Christian literature and the Qur'anic text is discussed at length. The frequent allusions and commonly held stories demonstrate an oral presence of the Bible in the land of the Arabs before the emergence of Islam. In chapter six, the author asks the implied questions which lie behind all of the preceding. "What if that biography was itself written by early Muslim scholars as a way of explaining the Qur'an?" (136). Reynolds is not fully asserting conclusions but asking questions and proposing courses of study. In so doing, he points out several problems in the traditional story of Islam. He examines each of these and seeks unifying conclusions. In chapter seven, Reynolds seeks to establish the actual context for the birth of the Qur'an. The absence of Arabic scriptures for both biblical testaments and the presence of Christian and Jewish worship in other languages is presented to the reader to help understand the Qur'anic emphasis on the Arabic nature of the Qur'an. Arabs as descendants of Abraham needed their own revelation especially in the presence of the disabling quarrels within Christianity of the day.

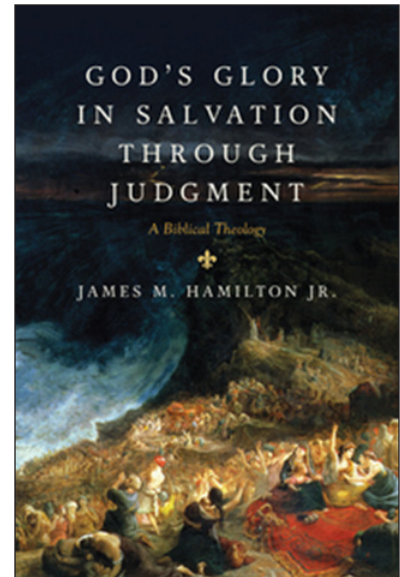
Part three addresses the internal Islamic conflict between tradition and approaches which place greater emphasis on the Qur'anic text in evolving Islamic religious expression. He explores the conflict of ideals and moralities demonstrated in various schools of Islamic thinkers and writers in the twentieth century. Surprisingly, these disparate strands find the Qur'an as their source and Muhammad as their exemplar. Reynolds reserves hope for the reform of Islam based in the method of the Qur'anists.

Reynolds's work gives Western readers a lucid explanation for the emergence of Islam within a context which is documented externally while respecting the ongoing debate among practicing Muslims. It provides popular and academic readers an introduction to this important field of Islamic study.

- Michael H. Edens, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA

God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology.
By James M. Hamilton Jr. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. 639
Pages. Hardcover, \$40.00.

Jim Hamilton is Associate Professor of Biblical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. His book, *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment* (hereafter, GGISTJ), reveals its thesis in its title. Hamilton states, "In this book, I am putting forth the theory that the glory of God in salvation through judgment is the center of biblical theology" (41). Hamilton's method is to propose his thesis (ch. 1), look for this central theme throughout a survey of the Bible (chs. 2–7), then conclude by considering objections to (ch. 8) and pastoral application (ch. 9) of his thesis.



There are many things for which to commend GGISTJ. First, relatively few scholars have attempted to identify a unifying center in a whole-Bible theology. For his work on this book, Hamilton has joined an exclusive club which includes members such as G. K. Beale, Walt Kaiser, Tom Schreiner, Geerhardus Vos, and Christopher Wright. Second, Hamilton surprises and delights by highlighting various literary structures observed in the biblical text, such as: the bilateral symmetry of the Tanak (60), a thematic-chaistic structure in the former prophets (187), words and themes linking the minor prophets (230), a literary-numerical structure of Ecclesiastes (313–14), a chiastic structure of Daniel (325), and Blomberg's chiasm of Luke-Acts (394). Third, some of Hamilton's summaries of biblical sections provide unusually crisp and finely distilled presentations of their content. Examples of these outstanding summaries include the single-paragraph synopsis of the book of the Twelve (229), the typological pattern observed in Stephen's speech (429–30), and his overview of the Gospels and Acts (359–61).

A few questions arise when reading GGISTJ. First, the thesis of the book depends on the view that the "ultimate end" of God's creation is God's glory, a presupposition which is explicitly identified as originating with Edwards and later appropriated by Piper (48–49). Is it possible that this Edwardsian concern has distorted slightly Hamilton's view of the biblical text? As examples, this focus on glory leads to repeated statements that God's displays of justice and judgment reflect a love for himself (54, 182, 310). Is such a view drawn from or read into the pages of the Bible? Also, the table of "Old Testament Prayers Appealing to God's Concern for His Own Glory" is constructed to support appeals to God's glory (352–53). But only one of the twenty biblical citations provided actually mentions "glory." It could be argued that references to God's "name" are synonymous. But it is also possible that this is another subtle instance of mistaking a theme in Scripture for a variation of that theme which is not actually in the text.

Second, does the thesis accurately portray the relationship in Scripture between salvation

and judgment? The thesis/title of the book is that God saves *through* judgment. The statement is repeated literally hundreds of times in the book; there is no missing its meaning. Hamilton writes, for example, that Jesus “has condemned the world in order to save it” (386). Does not God save *from* judgment? It is true that judgment is *from* God. But what is salvation, if not God rescuing a person *from* judgment?

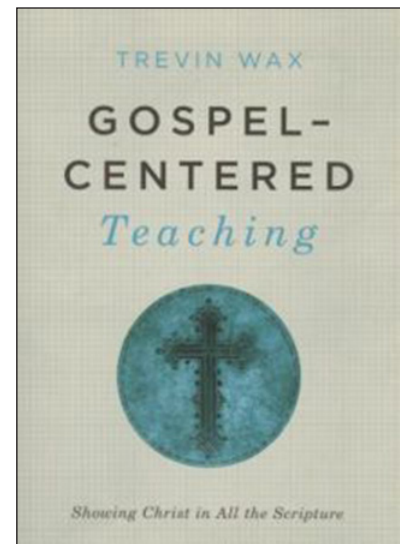
Third, there were points at which problematic theological statements were made. Did Hamilton mean to affirm that physical death was a gift of God (78)? At this point, Hamilton seems to confuse eternal life with the wages of sin. Also, Hamilton rightly affirms Yahweh’s control over evil (298). But did Hamilton intend to affirm that Yahweh brought “evil” upon Jerusalem and Judah (185–86), and that “Yahweh created evil” (204–5)? In both of those instances, Hamilton prefers his own translation of the Hebrew over the nearly-unanimous chorus of English translations which prefer other terms in those texts such as “disaster” and “calamity.” The notion that God created evil does not bring “comfort,” as the author suggests, but concern.

Even with these reservations, Hamilton’s book provided hours of intellectual stimulation, engagement with the biblical text, and fruitful reflection on the center of biblical theology.

– Adam Harwood, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA*

Gospel-Centered Teaching: Showing Christ in All the Scripture.
By Trevin Wax. Nashville: B&H, 2013. 111 pages. Softcover,
\$12.99.

Trevin Wax is managing editor of The Gospel Project at LifeWay Christian Resources, contributor to *Christianity Today*, blogger at *The Gospel Coalition*, and author of several books. The purpose of *Gospel-Centered Teaching* is to affirm “a Christ-focused approach to the Bible” (xi). Despite its title, this is *not* a teaching book. Wax explains that “this book is not about technique” (7). Rather, this text emphasizes a Christ-centered message. He opines, “Get the message right, and God will work through a variety of methods” (7). The point of the text is “being Gospel-centered in our teaching” (xii), not about the process of teaching. Wax draws his material from the core values and key worldview questions produced by The Gospel Project (67).



The book consists of five chapters. Chapter one (“Something’s Missing”) discusses concerns of small group leaders “from all ages and different backgrounds” across the country. These concerns are a lack of outward focus (“missional apathy”), a lack of Bible knowledge, and

shallow, wandering discussions (3–4). These problems stem from a lack of “depth of message” (7–9). This depth, however, is neither Bible information nor Bible application (10–16). We can embrace information and application but still be missing something. Wax states, “Actually, the right question isn’t ‘What’s missing?’ but ‘Who’s missing?’” (16). The who is Jesus. This leads to the quintessential question of the text: “Where is Jesus in your Bible study?” (17). Wax uses the remainder of the text to unwrap the gospel-centered message (ch. 2) and address three diagnostic questions to guide the proper transmission of that message (chs. 3–5).

Chapter two (“Back to Basics”) defines the meaning of gospel as three-fold: the “announcement of Jesus” (*Gospel Proper*), the “story line of the Bible” (*Gospel Context*), and “the creation and mission of the Church” (*Gospel Purpose*) (38–40). The *Gospel Proper* is the announcement that Jesus, the Son of God, lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death, rose from the grave, and reigns as King. This evangelistic declaration calls for repentance and faith. The *Gospel Context* is the story line of the Bible. It exists in “four movements: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration.” The *Gospel Purpose* is the creation of communities that live out the Gospel. Despite the circular reasoning, we might say that “the Gospel” consists of actions which communities who know and love Jesus live out in obedience to Him. The chapter ends with the introduction of three diagnostic questions that we should ask “of every lesson you prepare, sermon you preach, or discussion time you facilitate” (42).

Chapter three (“Connect the Dots and Tell the Story”) addresses question one: “How does this topic or passage fit into the big story of Scripture?” Alluding to *Gospel Context*, this chapter directs readers to connect each study or sermon to the Bible as a whole. Wax suggests, “Show your group how the Bible fits together” (45). The Gospel Project committee began their work by summarizing the entire Bible into a story line of 300 words (49–51). This story line helps us “gain a biblical worldview,” “recognize and reject false worldviews,” “rightly understand the Gospel,” and “keep our focus on Christ” (51–56). The remainder of the chapter provides examples of how to “connect the dots” between a given passage and the *Gospel Context*.

Chapter four (“Ground Your Application in the Gospel”) addresses question two: “What is distinctively Christian about the way I am addressing this topic or passage?” (75). Alluding to the *Gospel Proper*, chapter four defines “Christian” by contrasting biblical interpretations acceptable to Christians (focusing on Jesus’ death and resurrection) with Jews (Old Testament), Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses (New Testament), or unbelievers. Wax warns, “Failure to point to Jesus in your lesson means that your message is not distinctively Christian” (79). The chapter concludes with four examples demonstrating the “difference between morality and the gospel” (84).

Chapter five (“Overflow with Passion for God’s Mission”) addresses question three: “How does this truth equip God’s church to live on mission?” (95). Alluding to *Gospel Purpose*, chapter five declares, “A gospel-centered teacher isn’t satisfied to see the group learn truths about God. A gospel-centered [teacher] wants the group to feel those truths” (105). But this is not enough. “At some point, the head and the heart must move the hands into service and the feet into mission”

(96). This mission “mirrors God ... a Shepherd who seeks and saves the one lost sheep” (97).

The call to make Christ the center of biblical teaching is essential. *Gospel-Centered Teaching* explains this call. Learning the Bible for its own sake is not enough. The Scripture points us to Jesus, and living in union with Jesus changes us inwardly (godly character) and outwardly (godly mission). Unfortunately, two problems diminish this text. First, the repeated use of extremes creates confusion. For example, Wax incorrectly reduces Bible knowledge to information (e.g., “about an obscure archeological dig”) and declares it insufficient (11). Two pages later he declares, “We never need to apologize for giving people information as we study the Bible” (13). The second problem is its casual style, at times bordering on slang. This makes for difficult reading and pleads for revision. Look beyond the noise of straw men and slang, and you will find in *Gospel-Centered Teaching* the essence of transformational teaching, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

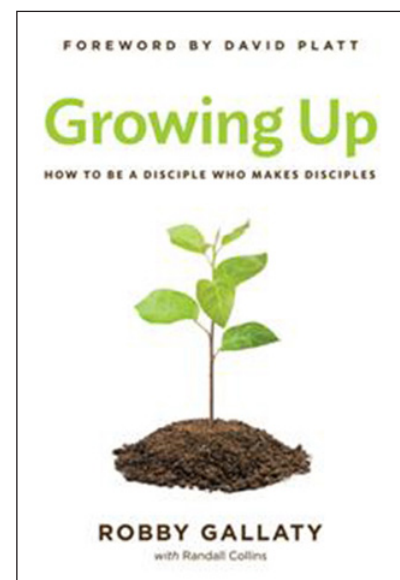
—William R. Yount, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA*

Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples. By Robby Gallaty with Randall Collins. Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2013. 248 pages. Softcover, \$14.99.

Robby Gallaty serves as Senior Pastor of Brainerd Baptist Church in Chattanooga, TN. Gallaty is a speaker and author who emphasizes discipleship in the local church. He holds two advanced degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is the founder of Replicate Ministries, which is designed to equip disciples to make disciples.

Gallaty divides *Growing Up: How To Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples* into two sections. Section one tells the story of how he came to Christ from a background of drug addiction (1). God saved him from this way of life and set him on a path of discipleship that changed his life. Learning from men such as David Platt and others, Gallaty’s life was radically changed by the Holy Spirit using godly men to mentor him in the principles of personal discipleship. This plan for discipleship emerged from his ministry experience and education. Gallaty espouses D-groups (Discipleship Groups) made up of no more than 3-5 members for the purpose of personal discipleship (47). These groups will then release its members to replicate themselves by taking on people into which they can invest themselves. Thus the process is about multiplication and replication.

Section two examines a path to personal discipleship using the acronym CLOSER. First, communicate with God through prayer. Second, learn by employing a systematic study process of the Bible. Third, obey by following Christ and obeying His commands. Fourth, store God’s



word in the heart by memorizing Scripture. Fifth, evangelize by telling others what Jesus has done for you. Sixth, renew by hearing from God. These are all great steps to a closer personal walk with the Lord (65-153).

Gallaty achieves his purpose to “help you become a disciple who makes disciples.” The process Gallaty sets forth is modeled after the Lord’s model in the Gospels. Jesus took his disciples from where they were to where He wanted them to be. He had the end in mind while training them along the way. He used teachings, experiences, questions, and “teachable moments” to propel His disciples along the path toward the day He would release them to do what He had called them to do. The group of twelve disciples was never meant to be a group that lasted forever. Jesus called them to send them out. He trained them then released them to do ministry. Gallaty also makes reference to this fact. His D-groups are not meant to be permanent groups. People are invited to be a part of a D-group with the understanding that one day each member will lead his own group. Gallaty explains that one point where the church has failed is in discipleship. Groups tend to become focused inwardly; unless there is an understanding that the group is not permanent, it will eventually turn inward.

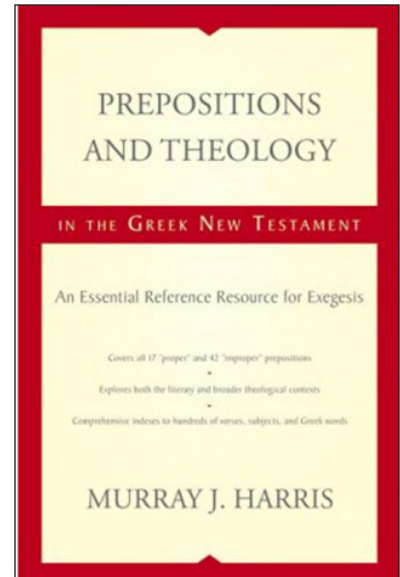
Gallaty answers the “when” question. When is the right time to release people from the group to start their own group? Even with it is understood that the group is temporary, it is necessary to consider when another group should begin. This question is answered briefly in the “Commonly Asked Discipleship Questions” (Appendix 9). Because the “when” question is one of the more important questions, a more complete book on discipleship should include a chapter on this issue. Also, such a chapter could discuss the importance of releasing group members, described the pitfalls of not releasing group members, and expand on the time frame of releasing group members.

Gallaty’s work is excellent. He lays out a clear path for discipleship and takes it a step further in lining out the specifics for the groups he espouses churches to formulate. Churches have long been interested in discipleship, and Gallaty’s book gives a clear picture of discipleship and a roadmap to get people moving in the right direction. This book is a recommended resource for pastors and their members.

—Joel Brister, church consultant, Kingsport, TN

Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis. By Murray J. Harris. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 293 pages. Hardcover, \$42.99.

Murray J. Harris, professor emeritus of New Testament Exegesis and Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is well known for developing resources to help those desiring to better understand their Greek New Testament. He has authored several books dealing with the grammar of the Greek New Testament and is general editor of the *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* series. He has already contributed to the study of Greek prepositions in an appendix to Colin Brown's *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.



Wading through prepositions is a difficult task that many language students routinely ignore since these “little” words seem unimportant in comparison to the “big” theological terms. Thus, many beginning students focus their attention on the “big” words to the exclusion of the “little” words that are the glue that express relationships between words and ideas. Prepositions are some of the “little” words that one learns early but continues to learn about throughout one’s study. If one has to look up a word that is already known, it is most likely a preposition. Because prepositions have uses that vary from context to context, to translate them well, one needs to be aware of not only how a preposition works in the source language but also how the corresponding prepositions work in the receptor language. Harris’s volume is a resource that can help one navigate these confusing waters.

In chapters 1–3, Harris introduces foundational concepts necessary for understanding Greek prepositions, such as the historical development of prepositions, common terms used to describe prepositions, the Semitic influence on Greek prepositions, and possible pitfalls when studying and interpreting prepositions.

Harris’s discussion of the history and development of the Greek preposition is engaging, but the most practical section of this book is found when he examines the uses of the individual prepositions as they occur in the New Testament. In chapters 4–20, Harris examines each of the 17 proper prepositions (those that can be prefixes on compound words). After providing a brief history of how the preposition developed from its original spatial meaning to its more abstract meanings, he discusses the various contextual uses of each word by amply illustrating each category from the Greek New Testament and providing translations (making this work more accessible to those with limited Greek skills). When relevant, he discusses how the preposition overlaps in usage with other similar prepositions.

In chapters 21–24, Harris examines prepositions that are used with the words *baptizō*, *pisteuō*, and *pistis*. He then concludes his survey with an examination of the 42 “improper” prepositions used in the Greek New Testament.

One of the most insightful features of Harris’s work is the examination of debatable examples in which he lists alternative readings found in grammars, lexicons, and translations and then proceeds to offer arguments for and against the different possibilities. Reading through these sections demonstrates for the reader how to evaluate and analyze grammatical arguments. From these discussions, the reader will begin to realize how understanding prepositions can significantly enhance or possibly change an interpretation and translation.

Because many will find this reference work daunting if they read it straight through, a good strategy should be developed for utilizing the material. One suggestion is to read the first three chapters where Harris discusses prepositions in general and then read chapter 23 where Harris introduces “improper” prepositions. Later, on an as needed basis, the reader may look up the passage being studied by using either the “Index of Biblical References” or the preposition being studied in the table of contents. The first time a chapter is encountered, the whole chapter should be read to develop a general sense of how the preposition can be used. On subsequent readings, users can either review the entire chapter or just examine the material relevant to the passage—making the reading more applicable, interesting, and memorable.

Individuals who have completed more than one year of Greek study and who understand basic Greek syntax will find this to be a useful reference (basic syntax terms are not defined). Those writing exegesis papers in seminary or in college and those who are preparing sermons and Bible studies will find the Scripture index helpful in leading them to relevant passages. This notable work is more thorough than most intermediate level grammars, which often do not cover prepositions in detail, and less difficult than some of the more exhaustive grammars like BDF and Robertson. While readers could find much of the same information in BDAG, they would miss Harris’s analysis of how others have translated the various passages. For those familiar with Zondervan’s *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, this work will prove to be a useful supplement to Wallace’s “modest” treatment on the subject.

Over all, this is an excellent volume for those who wish to increase their Greek translation skills and their ability to understand the New Testament. While this book must be studied and not just read, those who do take the time to study it will reap the reward of an improved understanding of the Greek language and the Bible.

– Samuel R. Pelletier, *Truett-McConnell College, Cleveland, GA*

Salvation By Grace: The Case for Effectual Calling and Regeneration. By Matthew Barrett. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013. 388 pages. Softcover, \$24.99.

Salvation By Grace is Matthew Barrett's defense of effectual calling and regeneration, two theological concepts mentioned multiple times in his book as the collective linchpin of Calvinistic theology. Barrett (PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) teaches at California Baptist University and serves as executive editor for *Credo* magazine.

The book's thesis is clear, arguing that "the biblical view is that God's saving grace is monergistic—meaning that God acts alone to *effectually* call and *monergistically* regenerate the depraved sinner..." (xxvi; author's emphasis). Therefore, these two divine actions "causally precede conversion in the *ordo salutis*, thereby ensuring that all of the glory in salvation belongs to God not man" (xxvi). These quotes illuminate multiple, important ideas at the heart of this book.

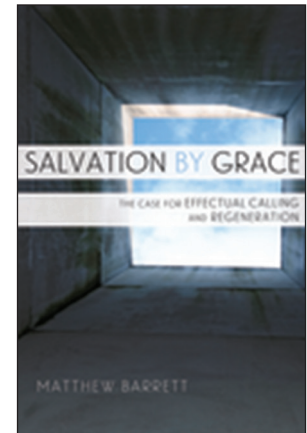
By monergism, the author means the Calvinistic concept that God works singly, alone, in the salvation of human beings. This idea is contrasted in the book with synergism, a concept inherent to Arminian thought whereby salvation is accomplished by God and the individual human being; it's a collaborative process.

The *ordo salutis*—or "order of salvation"—is mentioned throughout the book. In fact, the author states early on that his entire work "assumes the legitimacy of the *ordo salutis* as a theological category" (xxviii, n. 27).

Finally, in terms of the important thesis ideas noted above, the author makes much of the idea that all glory for salvation must go to God. To posit any degree of human initiative in the salvation process—especially if it is "who makes the final decision" (315)—is to shunt some of God's glory to humans and propose an understanding of redemption which is decidedly unbiblical. It is for God's glory that the author thus declares his proposal as "*the* biblical view" (my emphasis). And to that end, the author pulls no punches in his attack on Arminianism.

Barrett introduces his book with eleven pages on "The Contemporary Debate" (xix-xxix), giving the reader a clear picture of the topography of Calvinistic and Arminian terminology, categories, current concerns, and clashes. Though this is an old debate (400-plus years), Barrett wants it settled. "This project...is a call to evangelicals to reject the temptation of synergism in its various forms [i.e., Arminianism] and return to the traditional Calvinist position, which is most faithful to Scripture" (xxvii).

The book proceeds by providing a thorough and well-organized presentation of the Calvinist argument. "Monergism in the Calvinist Tradition" is chapter one, with a discussion of the



concepts of total depravity and bondage of the will following as chapter two. Moving from a focus on theologians to one on Scripture, Barrett provides the biblical support for the concepts of effectual calling (chapter three) and monergistic regeneration (chapter four). The essence of his argument is that God extends a general, gospel call to all humans but an effectual, regenerating call (Barrett equates the effectual call and regeneration) to the elect. Being thus regenerated by solely divine action, humans then experience conversion, justification, and sanctification, in that order.

His argument presented, the author then addresses “Arminian Synergism in Theological Perspective” (chapter five) and follows with a discourse of its inadequacies (chapter six). The seventh and final chapter addresses failed—in the author’s view—attempts at compromise, *via medias* between Calvinistic monergism and Arminian synergism. Theological treatments by Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, Millard Erickson, and Kenneth Keathley are scrutinized and found wanting.

The fact that this book is a version of Barrett’s Ph.D. dissertation contributes to its thoroughness. It provides an excellent presentation of the Calvinist case, addressing broad issues, focusing on critical ones, drawing from a vast array of Reformed thinkers, and providing extensive scriptural support. There is even a companion e-book, presumably drawn from the dissertation material, which provides even more information and discussion.

Barrett presents an argument for Calvinism that is practically unassailable. Yet that fact points to its deficiency. The author’s case is built with blocks of historic, multiple, well-practiced, Calvinistic concepts, utilizing the mortar of Scripture to hold it together. He is clear and honest about his Calvinistic intentions from the start. However, *to begin* with those theological concepts and *to build* the structure with those multiple components, results in a narrow, Calvinistically-determined, biblical hermeneutic. A prime example is the concept of *ordo salutis*, which organizes biblical, arguably synonymous terms referring to salvation into a theological contagion of cause-and-effect concepts. Scripture—functioning only as the mortar of the structure—is selected, read, and interpreted according to that hermeneutic. Consequently, the Calvinist system in its systemic strength goes further and presents more detail than Scripture. To be fair, Arminians make their case, utilizing many of the same Bible verses, by approaching Holy Writ in the same, theologically-determinative way. Such an approach results in Scripture serving theology, not the other way around.

The biblical-yet-mysterious facts remain: God in His sovereignty initiates, undertakes, and guarantees the salvation of the elect, *and* He also, somehow, factors in real, legitimate human choice in the process. It is found in the relationship between Romans 9 and 10, in which Paul affirms both divine and human action but never tries to propose *how* they fit together.

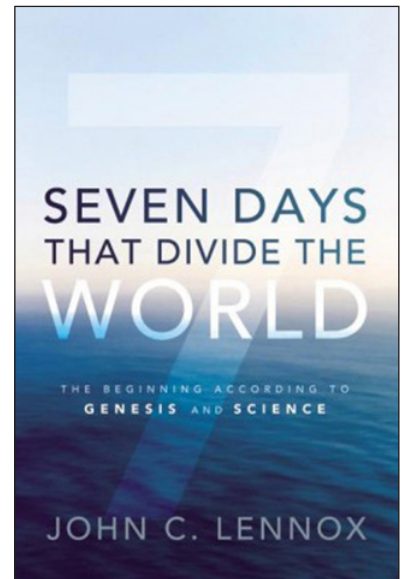
This book is a curiosity. Its tone suggests a naïve hope that if only Arminians would read it, then they would see the error of their ways and return home to Calvinism. I suspect they will not. The 400-year divide between Calvinists and Arminians will never be resolved. Barrett

is correct in identifying the failures of compromise attempts; there is no middle way between these two incompatible systems. Therefore, the best hope for anything close to resolution will be found only when evangelicals abandon the preconceptions and multi-layered categories of both systems and let Scripture determine the contours and limits of our understanding of the salvation process.

— Earl Waggoner, *Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern California Campus*

Seven Days that Divide the World: the Beginning according to Genesis and Science. By John C. Lennox. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 187 pages. Hardcover, \$16.99.

John Lennox is Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford, Fellow in Mathematics and the Philosophy of Science, and Pastoral Advisor at Green Templeton College. Some old-earth creationists concede that a *prima facie* reading of the Genesis creation account indicates a young earth, yet they believe that the empirical natural evidence compels them to embrace an ancient universe. Other old-earth creationists argue that an old-earth interpretation is at least plausible, particularly those interpretations that understand the seven days of Genesis 1 as a literary construct. John Lennox makes the bolder claim that a close examination of the biblical text warrants reading the text in an analogical, rather than literal, way. The analogical day interpretation reconciles easily with an old-earth view.



In this little book (though a hardcover, the book is only 4.5 by 5 inches), Lennox makes his case in five brief chapters that are supplemented with five equally brief appendices. In the first two chapters he presents the historical example of how Christians either handled or mishandled Copernicus' heliocentric model of the world. The Roman Catholic Church used the Inquisition to muzzle Galileo's advocacy of the heliocentric view. Lennox argues we should learn from that debacle and apply the lessons to the present controversy surrounding the age of the earth. Many well-meaning Christians believed that the Bible taught that the earth did not move, and thus felt compelled to oppose Copernicus and Galileo. Later believers realized that the heliocentric model posed no threat to the gospel or biblical authority. Is it possible, suggests Lennox, that young-earth creationists are making a similar mistake concerning the age of the earth?

Chapter three surveys the various approaches to interpreting the seven days of Creation in Genesis one. The primary views presented are the 24-hour view, the day-age view, the framework view, and the analogical day view (as argued by C. John Collins, professor of Old Testament at Covenant Seminary) with Lennox advocating the analogical day position. Lennox contends that

a close reading of the creation account reveals that the days of creation are analogous to literal 24-hour days, but not identical. In addition, the analogical day view is compatible with the scientific evidence for an ancient earth. Such an approach “does not compromise the authority and primacy of Scripture,” and at the same time “takes into account our increased knowledge of the universe, as Scripture itself suggests we should (Rom. 1:19–20)” (62).

In chapter four, Lennox addresses the theological issues raised by the old-earth position, particularly the issue of human origins. He rejects theories that posit that God may have used evolutionary means to bring about Adam and Eve, and he specifically critiques the model advocated by evolutionary creationist Denis Alexander. Concerning the matter of animal death before the Fall of Adam, Lennox argues that the Bible teaches that Adam’s sin resulted in death passing on to humanity, and that predation pre-dated the Fall. Since the current scientific evidence points to an ancient earth; since significant young-earth proponents admit their position is implausible on purely scientific grounds; since an old-earth interpretation of the Genesis account is at least as plausible as the young-earth interpretation; and since the humility to change one’s mind is a Christian virtue, Lennox urges young-earth creationists to reconsider their position.

The fifth chapter presents a theology of Creation as revealed by Genesis 1: God is, He is personal, and He purposefully created the world *ex nihilo* as distinct from Himself. As such the doctrine of Creation provides the foundation for the metanarrative of Scripture and for the biblical worldview. God created through his Word. Lennox concludes the chapter by presenting Jesus Christ as the living Word who rules over His Creation. The five appendices cover a number of issues, including the background to Genesis, the Big Bang theory, theistic evolution, and the God-of-the-gaps objection.

Few writers communicate about contentious issues as winsomely as does Lennox. He has a knack for succinctly summarizing a position without leaving out the salient points. Young-earth proponents are not likely to be convinced by Lennox’s arguments, but they are not his primary audience. The book is intended for students and busy pastors, for those who affirm the authority of Scripture but find the young-earth position problematic. In addition, the book would serve well as an apologetic tool for witnessing to skeptics who are put off by young-earth creationism. *Seven Days that Divide the World* is an excellent introduction to old-earth creationism.

– Ken Keathley, *Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC*

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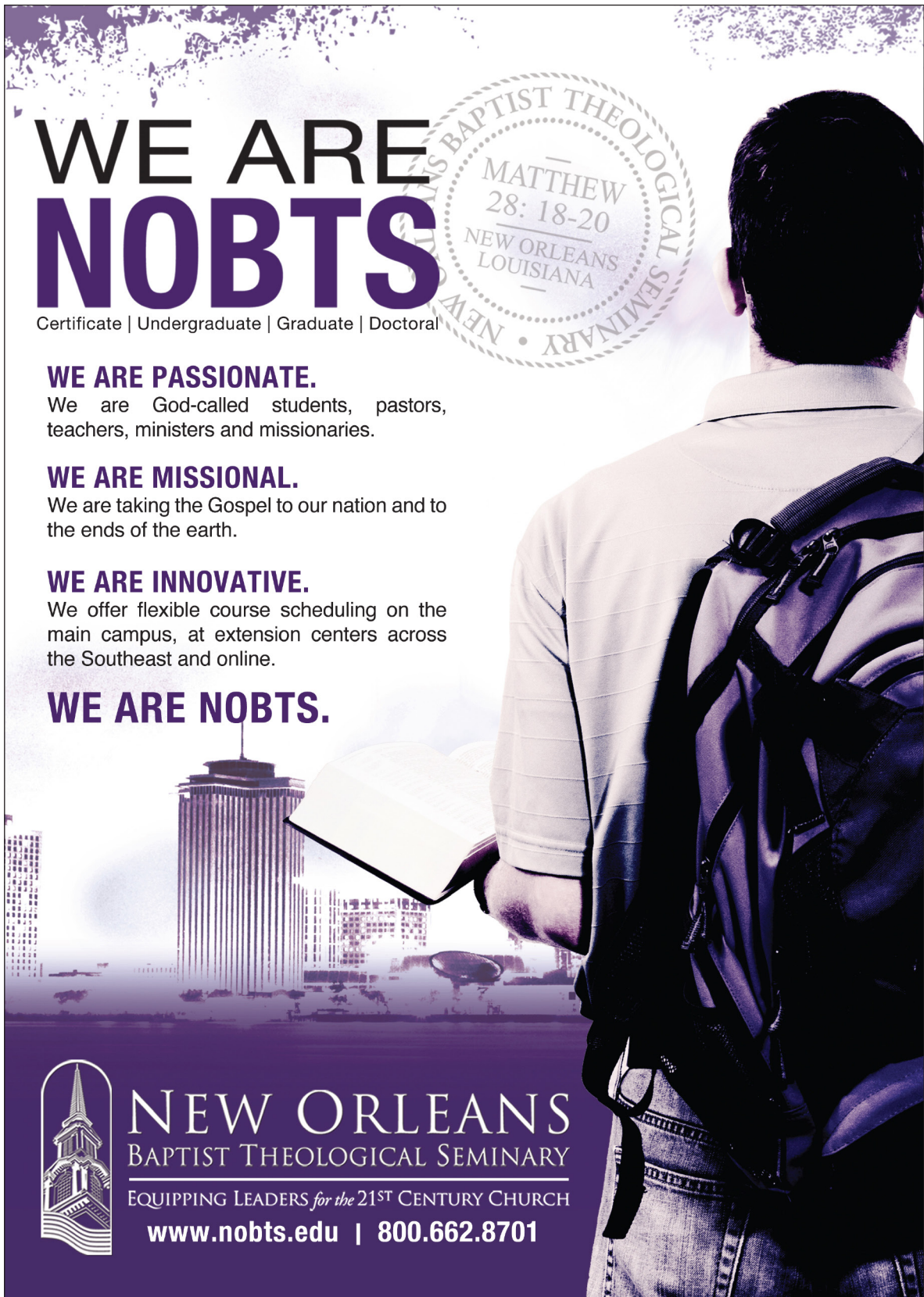
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