Theology of Youth Ministry

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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.*

The theme of this issue of *JBTM*, "Theology of Youth Ministry," was the idea of Allen Jackson, Professor of Youth Education and Collegiate Ministry and Director of the Youth Ministry Institute at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition to his ministry in local churches, Jackson has trained youth leaders at NOBTS for more than twenty years. In January of 2015, he spoke with me about his vision for an issue of this journal dedicated to the theology of youth ministry which would be useful for readers in the seminary classroom as well among a wider audience in Baptist churches. We worked together to gather content which we hope will aid readers in constructing a solid theological foundation for youth ministry in the local church. This issue in the result of that work.

The first article was delivered as a convocation address at Golden Gate Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, California, by Paul G. Kelly, who serves as Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at the institution. Kelly constructs a biblical theology of the time of life known as youth, contrasts it with the American concept of adolescence, and considers the implications for ministry in the local church. In the second article, Richard Ross, Professor of Student Ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, suggests that Moral Therapeutic Deism is a problem for the entire church, not the teenagers only, and the solution is found in a higher and thoroughly biblical view of the person and work of Christ. In the third article, Walt Mueller, the founder and President of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, explains that engaging teenagers with the gospel necessarily entails engaging their culture and worldview. The fourth article is a reprint of a 1997 essay on theology and youth ministry by Allen Jackson which includes an update written almost two decades later. The fifth article provides the perspective of the recent youth ministry experience of a Millennial (one born in the early-80s to early-2000), James Franklin, with interaction by Allen Jackson. In the sixth article, I address the doctrines of conversion and baptism as well as the implications for young ministry among Baptist (and baptistic) churches. In the final article, Joyce Ann Mercer, Professor in Pastoral Theology at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia, surveys recent literature on youth and religions which have implications for youth ministry.

The articles are followed by reviews of books in the fields of apologetics, biblical studies, and theology. May the Lord use this issue of JBTM to strengthen the philosophy and practice of youth ministry in the local church.

The *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* is issuing a **Call for Papers** for the upcoming Centennial Issue, which will celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the founding of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1917. Contributors must either hold a terminal research degree or have made a significant contribution to their field.

Paper topics might include:
- The Evangelistic Impact of W. W. Hamilton
- Episodes of Providence and Prayer at NOBTS
- A Brief History of NOBTS Presidents
- The Contribution of Frank Stagg for New Testament Theology
- The History & Development of Christian Counseling in "the Big Easy"
- The Influence of New Orleans Jazz on Evangelical Worship

JBTM **Article Guidelines:**
- The target audience is Baptist pastors and scholars.
- The word count of articles is typically 3,000-5,000 words, but exceptions can be made.
- Please use Turabian Style and footnotes.
- Transliterate biblical words.
- Content should align theologically with the *Baptist Faith and Message*.

Article proposals should be emailed to: baptistcenter@nobts.edu.

The proposal deadline is April 1, 2016. The papers selected will be due January 15, 2017.

A Theology of Youth

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Paul G. Kelly, Ph.D.

Paul G. Kelly is Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, California.

Editorial Note: The following article was delivered as a convocation address at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, California, on September 10, 2015.

In 1904, G. Stanley Hall, an American educational psychologist and the founder of the American Psychological Association, published the seminal work in the field of adolescence, a two-volume set entitled *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*. Hall presented adolescence as a specific phase of life—neither childhood nor adulthood—characterized by "storm and stress."[1] While a number of factors contributed to the rise of adolescence as a unique field of study during the twentieth century, Hall set the stage for a new way to view young people between the time of puberty and the attainment of full adult responsibility.[2] Mark Senter described the progression of thought related to adolescence: "As far as young people were concerned, the twentieth century started with a formal statement of the nature of adolescence with the publication of G. Stanley Hall's *Adolescence* in 1904; morphed into the age of the 'teenager' following World War II; and was proclaimed a 'youth culture' as the century came to an end."[3]

The American church has developed strategies to address the spiritual needs of youth at least since the colonial period of the 1600s.[4] Even so, the shifts in culture and the new understanding of adolescence of the twentieth century led to the church formulating new responses to the spiritual needs of young people—modern youth ministry.[5] Youth ministry has grown into a multi-million dollar industry. A wide variety of publishers and non-

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[1]G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (New York: Appleton and Co., 1904), xiii.

[2]Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 5th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2013), 8.

[3]Mark H. Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 17–18.

[4]Prior to the late-nineteenth century, people typically referred to those in their teenage years and early twenties as youth. See Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 6; and Senter, *When God Shows Up*, 5–11.

[5]Senter, *When God Shows Up*, xii.

profit companies provide expensive and creative youth camps, Bible study and discipleship curriculum designed to meet the cognitive needs of adolescents, books for church leaders and parents on the complexities of adolescence, and college and seminary degrees designed to train men and women for the role of ministering to adolescents.[6]

Adolescence is not merely an American phenomenon, and the experience of adolescence varies with cultural context. Some similarities exist among adolescents around the world. For example, teenagers and young adults across cultural and ethnic groups show considerable agreement concerning their belief about when someone passes into adulthood. They list three markers: "accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent."[7] However, Thomas Hine suggests that the American understanding of adolescence is "the idea that youth is a time for experimentation and protracted preparation, usually in school."[8] And while this conception is counter-cultural in many places, Hine insists that Americans are exporting their youth culture around the world through movies, television, and music.[9]

Perhaps this has given rise to the globalization of youth ministry strategies. Terry Linhart and David Livermore describe it this way: "With the same determination that the western church displayed in response to the burgeoning youth culture after World War II, a similar international church-led movement has developed with the youth of the world in mind."[10] Given the desire of the church to reach young people, it should not be surprising that churches in far-flung corners of the world are borrowing western youth ministry strategies and developing strategies of their own.

The Problem

In America today, most accept the phase of life called "adolescence" as an axiom. Americans do not question the validity of the teenage years being a unique time of life. Individuals may refer to adolescents as teenagers, students, youth, or pubescent hooligans, but few challenge adolescence as a significant season.

But was G. Stanley Hall correct? Does puberty bring children into a season of "storm and stress" that marks the onset of a new stage of life? Are adolescents truly something different, neither child nor adult?

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[6]See Ed Trimmer, "Thinking Creatively: Beyond a Warehouse Mentality of Resources," in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry,* ed. Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties/Zondervan, 2001), 423–24.

[7]Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 14.

[8]Thomas Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (New York: Perennial, 2000), 7.

[9]Ibid., 44.

[10]Terry Linhart and David Livermore, *Global Youth Ministry: Reaching Adolescents around the World* (Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties/Zondervan, 2011), 28–29.

Robert Epstein argues that teens have been "treated like adults throughout most of human history. It's only recently that they've been infantilized."[11] He suggests American society has imposed considerable harm on young people by refusing to allow them to have the responsibility and authority given to adults.[12] Hine seems to agree. He believes the expectations Americans hold up for teenagers are not high enough,[13] and that prior to Hall, society would not have seen adolescents as a distinct group at all.[14] Hine argues, "Being a teenager is, in some respects, an unnatural act, an imposition of culture on biology."[15] His point is that a typical sixteen-year old has attained adult ability, but American culture insists he is not an adult.

Perhaps a larger question is, has the American church responded appropriately to young people? Is the church complicit in supporting an inappropriate cultural distinction when it comes to ministries targeting adolescents? Influential pastor and author Voddie Baucham believes exactly that. He argues, "There is no clear biblical mandate for the current approach [to youth ministry]."[16] According to Baucham, the American church has based its approach to youth ministry not on biblical truth but on "a cultural assumption that is readily accepted by everyone."[17] Oddly enough, Baucham argues from the opposite perspective of Epstein and Hine. Rather than arguing that youth are adults treated as children, Baucham sees high school students as children and insists the biblical model calls for their parents to teach them at home.[18]

Baucham is not alone in his objection to youth ministry. The documentary "Divided" suggests that youth ministry is unbiblical and is destroying the American church. In the documentary, Scott Brown, Director of the Center for Family-Integrated Churches, states, "Scripture has a lot to say about whether ministry should be age-segregated or not. . . . All the meetings of the church in the New Testament were age-integrated." Also, "The children were right there in the meeting of the church." And, "It's definitely not programmatic and it's absolutely not age-segregated."[19]

The church exists within human culture and must determine how best to present the message of the gospel within the cultural soup in which it exists. But, when it comes to the

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[11]Robert Epstein, *The Case Against Adolescence: Rediscovering the Adult in Every Teen* (Sanger, CA: Quill Driver Books, 2007), 2.

[12]Ibid., 3–5.

[13]Hine, *The Rise and Fall*, 7.

[14]Ibid., 159.

[15]Ibid., 21.

[16]Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters who Walk with God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 179.

[17]Ibid., 180.

[18]Ibid., 170.

[19]"Divided: Is Modern Youth Ministry Multiplying or Dividing the Church?," DVD Video (The Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2010).

understanding of youth, to what extent is the ministry of the church shaped by the cultural soup, and to what extent is it shaped by biblical teaching? Should the church engage in ministry to youth? Or does doing so, as some have suggested, merely follow a worldly model?

Research Question

In order to answer these difficult questions, the church will need a clear theological statement about youth. What does God say about youth? The Bible knows nothing of G. Stanley Hall and perhaps little of the season of life he proposed. However, the Bible is replete with instructions, commands, warnings, and examples of youth.

The question proposed for this study is: How does the biblical picture of youth compare with the American idea of adolescence, and what are the implications of the biblical picture of youth for church ministry?

Detailing the biblical teachings about youth is more difficult than it might appear. At least nine Hebrew words in the Old Testament could be translated as "youth." Likewise, the New Testament authors employed several Greek words that could mean "youth." Beyond that, the biblical view of youth is not clearly articulated in specific passages. Nevertheless, the following is an examination biblical texts describing and instructing young people. This study seeks to separate the discussion of childhood from that of people who have achieved puberty, though this at times may be an unnatural division as many of the words in the Bible which can be translated as "youth" can also be translated as "child." Based on the study, an attempt has been made to develop a biblical theology of youth.

Youth in the Old Testament

The Old Testament is replete with stories of and allusions to young people. Joseph is seventeen at the beginning of his story. David seems to be a teenager when he faces Goliath. Esther was likely not yet twenty when she was elevated to queen. Solomon seems adamant that youth must heed his warnings.

The primary words used in the Old Testament to refer to young people are ʿ*alma*, *betulah*, *bahur*, *yeled*, and *naʿar*. The words vary in meaning and usage. Most of the Old Testament stories that guide a biblical theology of youth use one or more of these words. Each word is treated below.

Naʿar

The most common word used to describe "youth" in the Old Testament is *naʿar*. The Book of Genesis calls Joseph a *naʿar* at the age of seventeen (Gen 37:2). Jeremiah described himself as a *naʿar* when objecting to God's call by claiming to be too young (Jer 1:6). Huey

writes, "Although his age is uncertain, [Jeremiah] probably was not quite twenty."[20] *Naʿar* does not signify a specific age range, but can refer to any young person from infancy to young adulthood. However, Hamilton notes, "There seems to be no case where a *naʿar* was married."[21]

First Samuel 17 details the story of the *naʿar* David defeating Goliath with a sling and stone. Jesse had sent his son, David, to the battle lines with food for his brothers. When David heard the challenges and threats from the Philistine giant, Goliath, David told the king he would kill the man. Bergen correctly writes, "David's words to the king express youthful idealism in its full flower."[22]

At first, King Saul refused David's proposal. "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him," Saul said, "for you are but a youth [*naʿar*], and he has been a man of war from his youth" (1 Sam 17:33).[23] In this case, *naʿar* probably indicates that David was a teenager, younger than the twenty years required for Hebrew men to enter military service (Num 1:3).[24]

The story of David and Goliath highlights several important observations about the word *naʿar* as it relates to youth. For example, as a *naʿar*, David held responsibility not typically assigned to a child. Beyond having the somewhat dangerous task of protecting sheep from lions and bears (1 Sam 17:36), David was tasked with traveling alone to carry food for his brothers to the battlefield (1 Sam 17:17–18), a journey of more than fifteen miles.[25]

Joseph had similar responsibility and authority as a *naʿar*. At the age of seventeen, his father sent him alone on a journey of thirty miles to check on his brothers (Gen 37:14). When Joseph discovered his brothers had moved on, he traveled an additional fourteen miles to find them (Gen 37:17).[26] Likewise, God gave the *naʿar* Jeremiah the responsibility and authority to confront the nations on His behalf (Jer 1:4–8).

The Old Testament appears to treat young women (*naʿara*) differently. For example, Numbers 30 details an interesting law concerning young women (*naʿara*):

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[20]F. B. Huey Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, New American Commentary, vol. 16 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 51.

[21]*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (*NIDOTTE*), s. v. "*naʿar*."

[22]Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, New American Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 193.

[23]Unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations are taken from the *English Standard Version*.

[24]Ibid. Cf. David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 457, who suggests Saul used the word *naʿar* to indicate David's lack of military training, rather than his age. According to Tsumura, David's response to Saul speaks to the issue of capability. He seems to argue that to believe otherwise would make it difficult to see David as Saul's armor bearer prior to this time.

[25]Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 192.

[26]Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 2 (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 353.

If a woman vows a vow to the Lᴏʀᴅ ᴀɴᴅ ʙɪɴᴅs ʜᴇʀsᴇʟꜰ ʙʏ ᴀ ᴘʟᴇᴅɢᴇ, ᴡʜɪʟᴇ ᴡɪᴛʜɪɴ ʜᴇʀ ꜰᴀᴛʜᴇʀ's ʜᴏᴜsᴇ ɪɴ ʜᴇʀ ʏᴏᴜᴛʜ, and her father hears of her vow and of her pledge by which she has bound herself and says nothing to her, then all her vows shall stand, and every pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand. But if her father opposes her on the day that he hears of it, no vow of hers, no pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand. And the Lᴏʀᴅ ᴡɪʟʟ ꜰᴏʀɢɪᴠᴇ ʜᴇʀ, ʙᴇᴄᴀᴜsᴇ ʜᴇʀ ꜰᴀᴛʜᴇʀ ᴏᴘᴘᴏsᴇᴅ ʜᴇʀ. (Num 30:3–5)

This law appears to limit the authority of a *na'ara*. Her father could simply nullify any vow she made.[27] However, the verses immediately following give the same privilege to a husband that this law gives to the father (Num 30:6–8). The limit of authority appears to be inherent in her gender rather than her age.

Another observation about the story of David and Goliath involves the accusation of youthful folly by David's brother (1 Sam 17:28–29). The hand of God was on David, and his courage is laudable, but a danger existed for David in his decision as an untrained soldier to enter battle with Goliath. Walton suggests, "Youth [ne'urim] can be a time of rebellion (Ps 25:7) and sin (Job 13:26)."[28] The story of David and Goliath does not show David to be rebellious, though youthful tendencies are evident. Still, as an older man David looked back on his youth and pleaded with God, "Remember not the sins of my youth [ne'ura] or my transgressions" (Psa 25:7). Peter Craigie comments, "When he prays for forgiveness . . . he specifically refers to the sins of his youth—not those of childhood, but those of early adulthood which were rashly committed and live on to haunt him in the middle years of life."[29]

While youthful folly can be illustrated in numerous ways, perhaps none is as graphic as the story of the *na'ar* Shechem the Hivite who fell in love with Jacob's daughter Dinah [*na'ara*]. Shechem raped her, then apparently held her captive while his father negotiated with Jacob and her brothers to make her Shechem's wife. The brothers of Dinah executed a devious plan to kill Shechem and every male in his household (Gen 34).

Finally, David displayed passionate faith. He took offense at Goliath giving offense to the armies of the living God (1 Sam 17:26). He showed great confidence in God; just as God had delivered David from lion and bear, He would deliver David from Goliath (1 Sam 17:37). He stood his ground against the giant placing all confidence in God (1 Sam 17:45). As much as David saw his days as a *na'ar* as days of folly, this story illustrates that they were days of passionate faith. Again in the Psalms, David said, "O God, from my youth [ne'uray] you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds" (Psa 71:17).

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[27]*NIDOTTE*, s. v. "*na'ar*," explains that rabbis limited this law to young women who had not attained puberty and taught a father lost this right when she attained puberty.

[28]*NIDOTTE*, s. v. "*ne'urim*."

[29]Peter C. Craigie, *Psalm 1–50,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19*,* 2nd ed. (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 219.

ʿAlma

John Walton states that when applied to males, ʿ*alma* connotes virility, the physical ability to father a child, "or, more neutrally, 'a strapping young man.'"[30] ʿ*Alma* is used in a similar manner when discussing young women. Genesis 24 tells of Abraham sending his servant to find a wife for his son, Isaac. The servant asked God to reveal the chosen woman in a specific way. "Let the virgin [ʿ*alma*] who comes out to draw water, to whom I shall say, 'Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,' and who will say to me, 'Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,' let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son" (Gen 24:43–44). Rebekah did exactly what the servant had prayed. People of Rebekah's culture would have assumed she was a virgin, but "virgin" is probably not the best translation of ʿ*alma*.[31] Walton writes that "the term refers to one who has not yet borne a child and as an abstraction refers to the adolescent expectation of motherhood."[32] An ʿ*alma*, then, is a young person who has passed puberty but has not yet become a parent.

The Old Testament appears to connect the term ʿ*alma* with youthful exuberance. In Psalm 68 the alumim are seen playing tambourines in the progression of faith (v. 25). Job uses ʿ*alma* to refer to a call for a renewal from a desperate man: "Let his flesh become fresh with youth [*naʾar*], Let him return to the days of his youthful [ʿ*alma*] vigor" (Job 33:25). An ʿ*alma* should be like Rebekah—eager to serve, able to work, and compassionate with other people.

Bethulah

The word *bethulah* is normally translated "virgin." While that may not be an exact translation, the word does seem to connote the idea. The rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 is useful in understanding the idea conveyed by the word. Tamar was the daughter of King David, the half-sister of Amnon. Amnon became obsessed with Tamar and lured her into his bedchambers, feigning illness. Despite her pleas, he raped her. Then, instead of taking her as a wife, as the law prescribed, he sent her away.

At the time of the incident, Tamar wore "a long robe with sleeves, for thus were the virgin daughters of the king dressed" (2 Sam 13:18). Bergen suggests David "rewarded his virgin daughters' sexual purity" by providing such a garment."[33] Keeping their virginity provided the best opportunities for marriage.

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[30]*NIDOTTE*, s. v. "*alumim*."

[31]The chapter uses several words to describe Rebekah. In addition to ʾ*alma*, she is described as a *naʿara* ("young woman") and a *betulah* ("maiden"). She is also called an *isha* ("woman"). Apparently, all of these terms applied to Rebekah.

[32]*NIDOTTE*, s. v. "*alumim*."

[33]Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 392.

Because of the rape, Tamar apparently lost her status as a *bethulah*.[34] This is evident as she tore her robe. Arnold reflects that her robe "signified her status as an unmarried princess (2 Sam 13:18). Once she tears it, the robe symbolizes the ruin of her life."[35] Finding a suitable husband would be difficult for her after losing her maidenhood. Even so, Walton does not believe "virgin" adequately represents what it meant by bethulah. He explains three criteria required for the label: age, marital status, and sexual status. The *bethulah* was a young woman past the age of puberty. While "adolescence" does not do justice to the Hebrew understanding, Walton suggests that it is the closest English equivalent to the idea of her age. A *bethulah* also was defined by her single status. A *bethulah* could be betrothed, but a married woman would normally not be referred to as a *bethulah*.[36]

Bethulah also suggested the sexual status of a girl. The word is not always used for a virgin. For example, Esther apparently is a *bethulah* even after her night with the king (Esther 2:19). She does not appear to lose her status as *bethulah* until the king takes her as his wife and makes her his queen. Nevertheless, as Walton notes, "at least certain types of sexual activity preclude one's being considered a *bethulah*." He suggests a girl's reputation may be more the point of the word.[37]

To be a *bethulah* implied purity and innocence. In the time of Judges, Jephthah made a vow that he would sacrifice to the Lord the first thing to come out of the door of his house. Tragically his daughter, a *bethulah*, ran out to greet him. She asked for two months to go to the mountains and mourn her maidenhood before her father carried out his vow (Judg 11:29–40). Job claimed that he had never looked upon a *bethulah* with lust (Job 31:1). Jeremiah metaphorically described Israel's years of *bethulah* as a time of unfaithfulness to Yahweh (Jer. 18:13–14; 31:21). He highlighted the tragedy of a young woman being unfaithful during her adolescent years.

Bahur

Jeremiah cried out that he was "weary" of holding in his message about the "wrath of the Lord" (Jer 6:11). God's answer to him was that he would pour the message out on all people, young and old: "the children in the street," "the gatherings of young men," "husband and wife," "elderly and very aged" (Jer. 6:11). The "gathering of young men" is the *bahurim*. *Bahur*

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[34]*NIDOTTE*, s. v. "*bethula*."

[35]Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 564.

[36]*NIDOTTE*, s. v. "*bethula*." In this entry, Walton further notes: "In Judg 21:11–12 a contrast is drawn between *nāšîm* (wives) who had had sexual relations and *bᵉtûlôt* who had not. One might then infer that a young girl who becomes an *ʾiššâ* (wife) ceases to be a *bᵉtûlâ*."

[37]*NIDOTTE*, s. v. "*bethula*."

describes a young man past puberty but not yet married. Walton suggests that "the *bahur* represents the most robust and energetic—the hope represented in the next generation."[38]

The Book of First Samuel calls young Saul a *bahur* when God chose him as king (9:2). *Bahur* is combined with the word tob [good], a phrase the ESV renders "a handsome young man" (1 Sam 9:2). Bergen suggests a more literal translation would be "chosen and good,"[39] and Tsumura prefers "young and good."[40] Tsumura finds this a description of Saul's nature and personality as much as his appearance.[41]

The Book of Ecclesiastes instructs the *bahur* to "rejoice, O young man [*bahur*], in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth [*bahurote*] (Eccl 11:9). Murphy cautions the reader not to misunderstand this as a "call to hedonism."[42] While the author of Ecclesiastes celebrates the blessings of youth, he calls the *bahur* to see it as a fleeting time, followed quickly by age and death.[43] That leads the author to call the *bahur* to "remember also your Creator in the days of your youth [*bahurote*], before the evil days come . . ." (Eccl 12:1). Appropriate life for the *bahur* involves giving careful attention to the creator.

In Saul, we see both the promise of *bahur* and the failure. The time of youth seems to be a time in which an intimate connection with God is both possible and required. It is also a time in which the danger of folly is significant.

Yeled

Like *naʿar*, *yeled* (or the feminine *yaldah*) can refer to a person from infancy to an unmarried young adult.[44] In certain instances, the Old Testament uses yeled to discuss youths. For example, Jewish exiles Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were *yeladim* (Dan 1:4). Young points out that Persian youths began their education at age fourteen.[45] Miller argues, "It is reasonable to assume that the Babylonians commenced the training of young people at about

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[38]*NIDOTTE*, s. v. "*bahur*."

[39]Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 120.

[40]Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 264.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Roland E. Murphy, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ecclesiastes,* vol. 23A, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 116.

[43]Ibid., 118.

[44]*NIDOTTE*, s. v. "*yeled*." The terms refers to an unmarried adult every time in the Old Testament except one. In Ruth 1:5, Naomi's two sons who were both married when they died are referred to as *yeladey.*

[45]Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 42. Note: Young references Plato, *Alcibiades* 1:121.

the same age."[46] Since Nebuchadnezzar wanted teachable youths, Miller concludes Daniel likely was about fourteen years of age.[47]

It is unclear why Nebuchadnezzar wanted the young Israelites trained for service. Goldingay suggests possible explanations such as discouraging rebellion, indoctrinating future leaders, or simply developing additional manpower.[48] Regardless, the Hebrew youths certainly passed all expectations. Daniel and his friends displayed remarkable spiritual maturity. Goldingay muses, "We wonder what will happen to Israelite youth and Israelite wisdom when it is thrust into exile and taught Chaldean. We hoped that the qualities of those young men would mean that things would turn out all right; now Daniel gives us the first concrete indication that it will indeed be so, showing himself to be a worthy member of this elite."[49] The Old Testament characterizes these *yeladim* as young men who were experiencing the presence and power of God (Dan 1:9, 17).

A contrary example of *yeled* occurs when Rehoboam succeeded his father Solomon to the throne of Israel. Rehoboam rejected the advice of his father's older counselors in favor of "the young men [*yeladim*] who had grown up with him (1 Kings 12:10a). Their advice was rash: "Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us,' thus shall you say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs. And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'" (1 Kgs 12:10b–11). Rehoboam followed the advice of the *yeladim*. The kingdom split in two, and Rehoboam lost the Northern tribes.

These *yeladim* were not likely teenagers. Even so, House noted, "Like Rehoboam, they are young, ambitious, proud, and insecure."[50] The story includes a clear warning against the folly of youth.

Youth in the New Testament

As with the Old Testament, the New Testament offers glimpses of a biblical understanding of youth. New Testament authors use several different words to describe the situation of being young. While the New Testament does not offer the breadth of discussion found in the Old Testament, a number of important concepts appear in the passages.

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[46]Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, New American Commentary, vol. 18 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 60.

[47]Ibid.

[48]John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 30 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 15.

[49]Ibid., 24.

[50]Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, New American Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 182.

Pais

The word *pais* is a general reference to a child, male or female,[51] and is used with some frequency in the New Testament.[52] Hippocrates suggested a child of up to fourteen years could be referred to as a *pais*, though how universally that standard applied is unclear.[53] A *pais* brought the five loaves and two fish to Jesus (John 6:9). Jesus called the twelve year old daughter of Jairus *pais* when he raised her from the dead (Luke 8:54).[54]

Twelve-year-old Jesus is also called *pais* (Luke 2:40,43). Luke presented Jesus as an infant, detailing his birth, presentation in the temple, and circumcision. But Luke has something different in mind as he describes the trip of Jesus with His family to Jerusalem for Passover. Bock said, "It is not an infancy account, since Jesus is on the edge of adulthood as far as the ancients are concerned."[55] While the custom of Bar Mitzvah began after the time of Jesus,[56] Stein claims, "At the age of thirteen a Jewish boy became obligated to observe the law.'"[57] Bock concurs, explaining that while twelve-year-old boys could receive instruction concerning vows, "they are not responsible for them until age thirteen."[58]

Through some confusion, Jesus was not with either of His parents when they began the voyage home, a fact they did not discover until they had traveled for a day. They immediately returned to Jerusalem, and, after some searching, found Him in the temple, listening to the teachers and responding to their questions (Luke 2:43–45). The custom of the time required a *pais* to be trained in such a way—by asking and answering questions.[59] However, Jesus' insights astounded those who heard Him. Apparently, the oversight of Jesus by His parents was because they were used to Jesus being where He was supposed to be.[60] They did not understand that the appropriate place for Jesus was in His Father's house (Luke 2:49).

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[51]*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (*NIDNTTE*), 2nd ed., s. v. "*pais*."

[52]The Greek word *teknon* is also translated "child" although generally used in a parent/child relationship. Paul also uses the word metaphorically to describe his relationship with Timothy, his true *teknon* in the faith (1 Tim 1:2). Jesus used the term to address a paralyzed man who came to him for healing (Matt 9:2), and when addressing His disciples (Mark 10:24). *NIDNTTE,* 2nd ed., s. v. "*teknon*."

[53]*NIDNTTE,* 2nd ed., s. v. "*pais*."

[54]Luke also calls her by the diminutive *paidos*—"little girl"—in 8:51.

[55]Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 259.

[56]Ibid., 264.

[57]Robert H. Stein, *Luke,* New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 121.

[58]Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50,* 264.

[59]Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 127.

[60]Ibid., 127.

Luke provides this one episode from Jesus' childhood to give readers a glimpse of Him as He prepared to become a Jewish man. In the closing words of the story, Luke wrote, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). Geldenhuys points out that this verse serves as a summary of Jesus' years as a young man.[61] Luke had presented Jesus as the perfect child. Here, he gives us an understanding of Jesus as He grew to manhood. As Geldenhuys wrote, "There is a big difference between the perfection of a child and that of an adult—the difference between perfect innocence and perfect holiness."[62]

Parthenos

At the close of his third missionary journey, Paul visited Philip, one of the seven, in Caesarea. Luke explains that Philip had four unmarried daughters with the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9). The girls were called *parthenia*—a word typically translated "virgins." However, in the ancient world *parathenos* was not exclusively used to refer to a virgin. A more exact translation might be something like "maiden."[63] Because virginity was prized in the ancient world, a young maiden would have been assumed to be a virgin. And, indeed, the word seemed to take on that implication. Hamilton points out, "*Parthenos* is derived from par ('past') and then ('growing'), that is, a young woman who has ceased to grow. She is, therefore, adult and marriageable."[64]

When the angel appeared to Mary to announce she would bear the Son of God, Mary is identified as a *parthenos* (Luke 1:34). Luke is clear that she was a virgin by employing the phrase "I have not known a man" (Luke 1:34).

Mary was probably a teenager at this time. Stein suggests she was no older than fifteen and likely closer to thirteen as this was "the normal age for betrothal."[65] God chose Mary for the honor of bearing His Son. One should not view Mary as being worthy of the honor God gave her. Nevertheless, Luke holds Mary up as an example of faith. Geldenhuys explains,

Mary submits herself completely to God's will . . . . This was no trivial matter to her . . . Mary was placed in an extremely difficult and even mortally dangerous position. For she clearly realized how radically it would influence her social position and especially her relation to Joseph if she should become pregnant before her marriage.[66]

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[61]Ibid., 129.

[62]Ibid.

[63]*NIDNTTE,* 2nd ed., s. v. "*parathenos.*"

[64]Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 355.

[65]Stein, *Luke*, 82.

[66]Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, 77–78.

Despite the risks, Mary submitted herself to God and praised Him for His goodness, not only in bestowing this honor on her, but also in sending the promised Messiah to redeem Israel (Luke 1:46–55).

Neaniskos

The word normally translated "youth" in the New Testament is *neaniskos*. *Neaniskos* is derived from the word neos, meaning "new" and usually means a youth or a young man. [67]

In Acts 20, a *neanias* named Eutychus fell asleep during one of Paul's long sermons. Bruce speculates, "Perhaps he had put in a hard day's work from dawn to sunset, and now in the stuffy atmosphere not even the words of an apostle could keep him from falling asleep."[68] He fell from the third story window. It appears Eutychus was killed, and Paul raised the *neanias* from the dead (Acts 20:9). He is referred to as a child [*paida*] later in the story (Acts 20:12), so it seems likely Eutychus was young, perhaps a young teenager.[69]

Mark wrote of a *neaniskos* who, on the night of Jesus' arrest, followed Jesus clad only in a linen cloth. Some of the church fathers believed the *neaniskos* was Mark himself.[70] When soldiers grabbed him, the *neaniskos* lost the cloth and ran away naked (Mark 14:51). Lane suggests that the language Mark used "designates young men who are exceptionally strong and valiant, or faithful and wise."[71] He identified this as a fulfillment of the prophecy in Amos 2:16: "And he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day" (ESV). Even the valiant young men were scattered the night of Jesus' arrest.

Paul uses a form of the word when he warns Timothy to "flee youthful [*neōterikos*] passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace . . ." (2 Tim 2:22). Mounce believes that while "youthful passions" could include "the sensual lusts of youth,"[72] the context better fits a "youthful temperament and the possible difficulty of avoiding arguments."[73] Such issues seem more easily associated with "faith, love, and peace" (2 Tim 2:22).

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[67]The term can refer to young people of a wide variety of ages, from a child to the late twenties. *NIDNTTE,* 2nd ed., s. v. "*neos*."

[68]F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts,* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 385.

[69]I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 326.

[70]William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 527.

[71]Ibid.

[72]William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 533.

[73]Ibid.

John offers insight into the role and expectations of the *neaniskos* when he addresses the church as children, fathers, and young men in 1 John 2,

> I am writing to you, little children,[74] because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men [*neaniskoi*], because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children,[75] because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men [*neaniskoi*], because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (1 John 2:12–14).

Twice John repeated that the *neaniskoi* have "overcome the evil one" (vv. 13, 14). He casts the young men as warriors. Because they are forgiven, they can overcome the devil. Stott writes, "The forgiveness of past sins must be followed by deliverance from sin's present power, justification by sanctification. So in both messages to the young men it is asserted that they have overcome the evil one. Their conflict has become a conquest."[76]

In verse 14, John explains why the *neaniskoi* have overcome: they are "strong," and "the word of God abides" in them (1 John 2:14). Kruse indicates that the reason they are strong is because the word of God dwells in them.[77] He writes, "Believers' victory over the evil one [is] achieved because God himself abides in them and his Son, Jesus Christ, protects them, and as a result they are able to overcome the evil one through their faith in God."[78]

Paul told Timothy, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example…" (1 Tim. 4:12). Timothy was a young pastor when Paul wrote this to him, likely in his late twenties or early thirties.[79] Still, the instructions seem the appropriate biblical call to *neaniskoi*. They are to live as examples of faith.

Findings

This study has examined the language used in the Old and New Testaments to describe youth. While not exhaustive, the data covered the major terms, their typical meaning, and the implications for understanding youth. Given the data, what follows is an attempt to shape a theology of youth.

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[74] *Teknia*, the diminutive form of *teknion*.

[75] *Paidia.*

[76] John R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 102.

[77] Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 93.

[78] Ibid., 91.

[79] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 258.

First, the biblical understanding of youth does not seem to correspond to the American idea of adolescence. The terms used to describe youth are not precise as to the age to which they refer. In one sense, youth can be seen, not as a stage of life, but merely a general descriptor. A youth is one who is young. This certainly would fit the Hebrew words *naʿar* and *yeled*, and the Greek word *pais*. Nevertheless, a full study of the concepts can lead to a more exact biblical definition. Following concepts of the Hebrew words ʿ*alma*, *bethulah*, and *bahur*, and Greek words *parthenos* and *neaniskos*, youth can be thought of as a time beginning in puberty and reaching to marriage or around thirty years of age. The Bible shows little difference in the way it describes an unmarried fifteen-year-old and an unmarried twenty-five-year-old. Still, this definition is vague of necessity. But this second description of youth seems more helpful.

Second, from a biblical perspective youths are adults. They have the responsibility and authority of adults. David had the responsibility of taking food to his brothers on the battlefield (1 Sam 17:17–23). Rebecca chose to leave home to become the wife of Isaac (Gen 24:58–59). Saul became a king (1 Sam 10:1).

More than that, God appears to give adult responsibility to youths. He called Jeremiah to be His prophet (Jer 1:6–10). He chose Mary to bear the Messiah (Luke 1:30–31). At age twelve, Jesus was at the brink of adulthood and goes to the temple to prepare instead of leaving Jerusalem with His parents (Luke 2:46–49).

The fact that youth were viewed as adults does not indicate they were not subject to the authority of their parents or of the community. The fact that David's father sent him to his brothers (1 Sam 17:17–23) demonstrates his father's authority in David's life. Similarly, when Joseph went to find his brothers, he was doing the bidding of his father (Gen 37:12–14). Peter instructs the *neaniskoi* to submit to the elders in the church (1 Pet 5:5). The biblical idea of adulthood does not seem to be incompatible with authority.

Third, the Bible presents youth as particularly vulnerable to youthful folly. Youth certainly do not always act wisely or with restraint. For example, Shechem showed no restraint with his feelings toward Dinah (Gen 34:1–2). The *yeladim* who advised Rehoboam showed no wisdom (1 Kgs 12:10–11). While youth should be seen as adults, they are adults without experience. They are in need of the wisdom of the family and the community to guide them in life.

Paul instructed Timothy to "flee youthful passions" (2 Tim 2:22). David looked back on his younger days and begged God to forgive him for his sins of his youth (Psa 25:7). Youth may struggle with sexual temptation, anger, pride, aggression, and a host of other temptations. This is not to say that these temptations are unique to youth. Adults of all ages are certainly vulnerable to the lure of temptation. Nevertheless, the Bible presents youth as particularly in danger of life-destroying choices.

Finally, the Bible presents youth as those who should be full of passionate faith. Examples of youth who demonstrate this passion abound. Mary submitted to God to bear the Messiah (Luke 1:38). David killed a giant (1 Sam 17:48–51). Jeremiah became a young prophet (Jer 1:9–10). John described the neaniskoi of the first-century church as those who had overcome the devil (1 John 2:13–14). Youth is a time to look to your creator (Eccl 12:1), to allow the word of God to dwell in you (1 John 2:14), and to celebrate the goodness of God (Luke 1:46–55; Psa 68:25). Youth in the Bible are not incompetent children. They are not limited in their abilities. They are encouraged to let no one look down on them, but to be an example of faith (1 Tim 4:12). That is the biblical description of youth and that should form our theology of youth.

Implications for the Faith Community

To be relevant, theology must be integrated into culture. While a careful examination of the implications of the theology of youth is beyond the scope of this paper, some suggestions are in order. First, the faith community should begin to view adolescents in a more adult capacity. Culturally and legally, adolescents are minors and the church bears a greater responsibility for them than those of the legal age of majority. The church must anticipate risks and plan for a safe environment.[80] Even so, the faith community should begin to view adolescents differently. Greater expectations for participation and leadership will help adolescents to overcome the cultural stigma of being a grown adult with no adult authority or responsibility. Placing adolescents in a youth ministry ghetto with no interaction with other adults is unlikely to help them develop.

The faith community must view adolescents as part of a family unit and should include opportunities for families to worship, recreate, and study together. However, this must not preclude young adults from participating in the broader faith community, engaging with their peers, or investing in younger members of the congregation. Such experiences are both culturally important and helpful in developing them as adults of faith.

The faith community must provide youth with significant role models to aid them in gaining experience as adults. It should not be surprising that research has indicated that youth who have heart connections with at least five godly adults have the best opportunity to develop a mature faith.[81] Youth group leaders can certainly serve as these role models, but churches must be sure they are selecting youth leaders who are good examples of passionate Christian adulthood, rather than merely individuals who enjoy playing with kids.

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[80]Jack Crabtree, *Better Safe than Sued: Keeping Your Students and Ministry Alive* (Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties/Zondervan, 2009), 27–40.

[81]Kara E. Powell, Brad M. Griffin, and Cheryl A. Crawford, *Sticky Faith: Youth Worker Edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 57.

The faith community needs to address the challenge posed to adolescents and young adults by youthful folly. In a culture in which sexual promiscuity is expected, youth need help understanding the dangers of youthful folly. The faith community needs to offer real-life strategies for fleeing inappropriate passions—whether they relate to money, anger, sexuality, or pointless arguments. We need to help youth to pursue peace, purity, and life.

Finally, the faith community must call youth to passionate faith. The church must not be content with church attendance or simplistic answers. The faith community must raise the level of expectation of youth to be true examples of passionate faith.

The Youth Leader and King Jesus

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> "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything
> he might be preeminent."
> (Colossians 1:18)

The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) sent shock waves through the youth ministry world.[1] This in-depth and trustworthy research project discovered that the faith of most church teenagers can be described as Moral Therapeutic Deism. The core tenants of this belief system are:

- God exists.
- He is nice and He wants us to be nice.
- He is not relevant to my daily life, with one exception. Any time I have a need, He quickly shows up and takes care of that need. Then He goes back to being distant and irrelevant.

Teenagers invited to give a public testimony often say, "I just love Jesus. He's always there for me." By that they may mean Jesus is getting them through hard times at home or with friends. And of course, Jesus is very in touch with every life challenge they face and He is omnipotent in His ability to intervene in any situation.

But notice the primary focus of the teenage testimony: "He's always there for *me*." Many believing teenagers tend to know Jesus primarily as a friend who brings *them* good things.

Worst case, some teenagers may see Jesus as their little buddy who rides with them in their shirt pocket. He always is there in case they need to pull Him out to "poof" some difficulty

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[1]Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers (*New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

away. But the problem is, teenagers may believe He can be returned to their pocket—conveniently out of sight and out of mind until needed again.

Most teenagers are focused on the benefits of religion, but not desperately in love with Jesus. Youth ministry has its share of shortcomings, but this limited view of Christ may be the most important of all. Why? Because a limited view of Christ (and thus of God) has all the conditions necessary for Moral Therapeutic Deism to thrive and remain unchallenged.

Teenagers Mirror Adults

The NSYR study made a second discovery that is just as important. For the most part, teenagers do not reject the faith of parents and important adults in their lives. Instead, they almost perfectly mirror that faith. Christian Smith, architect of the NSYR, reports that teenagers "serve as a very accurate barometer of the condition of the culture and institutions of our larger society. Far from being alien creatures from another planet, American teenagers actually well reflect back to us the best and worst of our own adult condition and culture."[2]

If church teenagers are full of Moral Therapeutic Deism and teenagers tend to mirror the faith of mom and dad, then this is a church-wide issue. Most church teenagers have grown up surrounded by Christian adults who also embrace Christ for His benefits, a Christ who is too small.

Kenda Dean, one of the NSYR researchers, says it this way: "(The study) is significant because it reframes the issues of youth ministry as issues facing the twenty-first century church as a whole. Since the religious and spiritual choices of American teenagers echo, with astonishing clarity, the religious and spiritual choices of the adults who love them, lackadaisical faith is not the young people's issue, but ours."[3]

Dean goes on to say, "The (study) reveals a theological fault line running underneath American churches: an adherence to a do-good, feel-good spirituality that has little to do with the Triune God of Christian tradition and even less to do with loving Jesus Christ enough to follow him into the world."[4] Then she concludes, "Moral Therapeutic Deism is supplanting Christianity as the dominant religion in the United States."[5]

Dean summarizes this issue by noting that "the religiosity of American teenagers must be read primarily as a reflection of their parents' devotion (or lack thereof) and, by extension, that

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[2]Ibid., 191.
[3]Kenda Dean, *Almost Christian* (Oxford: University Press, 2010), 4.
[4]Ibid.
[5]Ibid., 14.

of their congregation."[6] Where Christ reigns, hope abounds. When the church embraces the supreme majesty of the Son of God, passion abounds. But hope is draining from the western church. In most places, passion is about gone. The anemia of many youth ministries and many churches proves there is a crisis in Christology.

High Christology and MTD

Because of the NSYR, youth ministries first revealed the presence of Moral Therapeutic Deism in the church. But this dark cloud can have a silver lining. Youth ministries also represent a way to first address this error and then to lead the entire church into a new way of believing and then to rear up a new generation of King Jesus followers.

The antidote to Moral Therapeutic Deism is a biblical understanding of the second member of the Trinity. Today, Triune God most clearly is revealing Himself through the Son (Heb 1:1–2) in the power of the Spirit. God is orchestrating the surrender of all things to the hold-nothing-back supreme lordship of Christ (Col 1:18). Young and old believers who grasp the Son begin to grasp God.

The higher Jesus is lifted, the greater the Father He reveals. A rising tide lifts all boats. A rising Christology lifts theology, discipleship, lordship, missiology, ecclesiology, and family ministry. A low Christology leaves room for low, vague, and uncompelling theology and church life.

At the moment of His second coming, Christ will appear, more majestic and powerful than believers can possibly imagine. He will split the heavens. All humanity will see Him for who He is. A youth leader might ask, Do our teenagers know that who Christ will be on that day is precisely who He is today?

What might happen if teenagers begin to grasp all this? Rather than seeing Jesus as a little buddy tucked down in their pocket, what if they begin to embrace His transcendence and His kingdom purposes? What if they discover new awe over the overwhelming glory of Triune God as He reveals Himself through the Son?

What if a true awakening to the Almighty begins in the youth group? Could teenagers and their parents and leaders then spark a similar awakening in the full church? Is such a possibility worthy of prayer-filled support?

A Christ Awakening

A growing number are praying for a full Christ awakening in the American church. A Christ awakening unfolds whenever God's Spirit uses God's word to reintroduce God's people

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[6]Ibid., 3–4.

to God's Son for all He is. "It is Christology (the exploration of the person, teachings and impact of Jesus Christ) that determines missiology (our purpose and function in the world), which in turn determines our ecclesiology (the forms and functions of the church)."[7]

The Youth Leader

A youth group awakening to Christ usually must begin with the youth leader. That leader might ask the Spirit for immersion in Scriptures, books, and prayer about the majesty of the Son. The youth leader's new vision of the enthroned Christ may well splash over on other staff ministers, parents, and youth leaders. Soon after, they may see their teenagers filled with wonder concerning King Jesus. Then maybe, just maybe, a Christ awakening will spill out of the youth room and will begin to flood the entire congregation. The fulfillment of every hope the leader has for the church begins when the Spirit awakens believers to the majesty of the Son for the glory of the Father.

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[7]Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *ReJesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 6.

Stirring the Cultural Soup

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Editorial Note: Walt Mueller has been a personal friend and cultural advisor to the Youth Ministry Institute at NOBTS for over 20 years. No other voice could contribute better than Walt to the discussion on youth ministry and theology as it relates to culture. When we contacted him about contributing to this issue of the journal, he suggested we draw from his book, Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture. *The following are excerpts from the book, pasted into a narrative on the soup of youth culture, what it means, and how it intersects with biblical truth and theology. We are grateful to Walt and to InterVarsity Press for allowing us to include his thoughts.*

Culture is what we believe, what we do, and how we live our lives from day to day. It binds us to those who think and live in a similar manner. John Stott describes culture as "a tapestry, intricate and often beautiful, which is woven by a given society to express its corporate identity."[1] Bill Romanowski offers a simpler and more direct definition: "culture refers to the way that we define and live in God's world." It is "a collection of ideals and beliefs, values and assumptions that makes up a kind of master plan for living and interpreting life."[2] For our purposes, culture is the "soup" the emerging generations swim in every day.[3]

As a child I loved to spend afternoons swimming in my friend Stuart's pool. Jumping out of the steamy summer air into the cool, clear water was heavenly. We'd swim for hours on end. When I'd head home for dinner, the effects of the pool were obvious. My body was dripping wet. My eyes were reddened from the pool's chlorine. And my fingertips were shriveled like raisins.

Swimming in the soup of today's postmodern culture isn't any different, except for the fact that our kids are in it twenty-four hours a day. To assume that culture has no influence or effect on them would be to misunderstand who they are and ultimately forfeit our ministry

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[1]John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 26.

[2]William D. Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001), 36, 42.

[3]For a more technical definition of culture, see Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 328.

effectiveness. Consequently, if we want to engage the young for the sake of the gospel, we'd better take the time to know what's in the soup.

In one of our local restaurants, the soup bar typically features three selections. I've watched how people choose their soup. As they arrive at the bar, they grab a bowl. Then they step back and scan the names of the soups in each of the large soup tureens. Before placing soup in their bowl, they lift the lid off the tureen, stir the soup, lift the ladle, and examine the soup's ingredients. If they like what they see, they fill their bowl.

If we are to effectively engage our children with the truths of the gospel, we must step up into their world, lift the lid, and look carefully at the unique and ever-changing mix of cultural elements they "swim" in. We can't escape the reality that those elements, as strange and frightening as they may seem, shape their worldview and govern their lives. We might even be tempted to close the lid because we don't like what we see. But if we hope to effectively communicate the good news, we can't avoid the ingredients of that culture.

As the missionary to the emerging generations stirs the soup, there are certain ingredients to look for. While they might seem small and insignificant, these ingredients offer us valuable insight into who young people are and how we can best reach them with the gospel.

Those who are older too often fail to look at the soup of the emerging generations and see that every ingredient has meaning. Because its meaning might not be obvious, we erroneously assume that it has no meaning at all. When we believe there's no meaning, we automatically fail to understand how it functions as a map, and we bypass our opportunity to use it as a mirror. In addition, we forfeit our opportunity to understand the very heart to which the gospel speaks.

Culture is never neutral. It was created by God as something good. But it is marred and polluted as a result of the Fall into sin. Paul tells us that creation joins humanity in "groaning" for liberation from its "bondage to decay" (Rom 8:18–23). Until that time, culture will be involved in a process of pushing and pulling as its various elements either bring glory to God or to the world, the flesh, and the devil. C. S. Lewis said there is "no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan."[4]

We must discern between those ingredients in the postmodern soup that are moving away from God's order and design, which must be challenged and renounced, and those that are

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[4]C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections,* ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 33.

worth celebrating, retaining, transforming, and enriching because they are moving in the direction of God's will for his world.[5]

What are the main characteristics of culture? First, we must understand that culture has been created by God and given to humanity to use and enjoy. In the Book of Genesis, we read that God made humans in his own image (Gen 1:26–27) and gave them the responsibility to enjoy, care for, and develop all that he had made (Gen 2:15).

In effect, "we are called to participate in the ongoing creational work of God, to be God's helper in executing to the end the blueprint for his masterpiece."[6] Our creativity results and is expressed in human culture. Culture is the good gift of God entrusted to us to develop as responsible stewards.

Second, culture is universal. While culture differs from place to place and time to time, everyone participates and shares in culture.[7] Where there are people, there is culture. Both the songwriter who prayerfully constructs her music to the glory of God *and* the unredeemed songwriter who brings glory to himself are making culture. Bill Romanowski says that "culture is our common human endeavor, a historical process carried on from generation to generation that binds us together in the community of humankind."[8]

Third, culture is shared as a system for living by those in a particular society.[9] The same is true for subcultures within a society. A visit to a local high school would reveal that while there is a general culture of students sharing values, attitudes, and behaviors, there are also unique subcultures: the band kids, the athletes, the scholars, the Goths, and the cowboys. Each particular group is marked by a unique mix of beliefs and behaviors that bind them together and distinguish them from the others. Each individual finds identity and security in a particular group.

Fourth, culture is learned. Missiologist David Hesselgrave points out that culture "is not biologically determined or restricted by race."[10] We unconsciously assimilate the culture that surrounds us. It becomes normal to us because "it's always been that way." But in the postmodern world of globalized media promoting numerous options, young people are consciously choosing to adopt cultures and subcultures that are marked differently from those

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[5]John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 122.

[6]Ibid., 38.

[7]David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 100.

[8]Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open*, 49.

[9]Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally,* 100.

[10]Ibid.

they've been raised in. There's the rural farm boy who's never set foot in an urban ghetto, but who talks, dresses, and lives like a hip-hop gangsta.

Fifth, culture is an integrated whole.[11] Like a living organism, culture's different parts are interrelated. Each part affects the others. If a culture places high value on human life, that will be reflected in its human relations, in its medical and business practices, and so on. If humanity is devalued, that will be reflected as well. In a postmodern world where contradictions aren't an issue or problem, culture is increasingly marked by the consistency of inconsistency. The responsibility of the cultural observer is to discover and understand each part of the cultural soup and how those parts combine as a whole.

Sixth, culture isn't static. Cultures evolve as the years go by. They develop new elements on their own, assimilate elements of other cultures, and discard those elements that are either outdated or no longer necessary. Consequently, those who desire to understand the culture of the emerging generations can never assume that their job is done. Every minute brings change.

In Other Words

Culture is a map. Developmentally, youth are living in a period marked by more earth-shaking change and uncertainty then they'll ever experience again. They wonder what is happening to them and where all the change is leading. Consequently, they are continually looking for a map to guide them along the way.

Unfolding before their eyes in today's world is the map of postmodernity. The map clearly guides them at both objective and subjective levels, effectively teaching them what to think and how to live in the world. The culture defines and shapes their reason for getting up in the morning, and guides decisions on how to spend their day once they're out of bed.[12] While culture's mapping influence is always strong, our current western cultural situation has created an environment where the volume has been turned up on culture's power to shape and teach the emerging generations. In today's world, music and media are stepping in and fulfilling the role increasingly abandoned by parents who are either physically absent by choice or circumstance from their children's lives, or emotionally or spiritually detached because they take little or no interest in the emotional and spiritual nurture of their kids.

By nature and developmental stage, children and teens are like sponges. This fact can be seen in Deuteronomy when God charges parents and the community to live out his commandments and to "impress them on your children" by talking about his commandments everywhere and at all times (Deut 6:4–9). But when parents and the community fail to keep

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[11]Ibid.

[12]For more on these basic principles, see Steven Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief & Behavior During the University Years* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

these "mapping" responsibilities in a deliberate and unified manner, the lessons about biblical worldview can't and won't be heard. Of course, even though the lessons are absent, young people continue to probe, question, and learn. They seek out maps and teachers who speak into their needs. George Gerbner has found in his ongoing analysis of media that its power to teach young people has increased vigorously in recent years. He says: "For the first time in human history, the stories are told not by parents, not by the school, not by the church, not by the community or tribe and in some cases not even by the native country but by a relatively small and shrinking group of global conglomerates with something to sell."[13] Not only are the conglomerates selling product, they are selling a worldview that will live on in the hearts and minds of young people long after the product has been used and forgotten.

One area where developing young people are looking for guidance is sexuality. Sadly, the family and the church have largely refused or forgotten to map out God's design for sexuality to the emerging generations. But that doesn't stop them from seeking answers.

The map of culture teaches a way of life. It is our responsibility as cross-cultural missionaries to deconstruct the map and understand how it guides the young. To know their map is to know them. Then, and only then, can we challenge the map's inaccuracies, affirm what's right, and correctly guide them with the map of a biblical world and life view.

Dennis Haack believes that one of the reasons Christians should be monitoring and understanding culture is because it can be "a window of insight into a worldview we do not share."[14] I like to picture myself standing behind young people as they look into the window, or mirror, of their culture. As I look over their shoulders at the reflection, I want to look at *their* music, magazines, movies, websites, and so on. What is reflected back helps me understand them at a deepened level.

Haack encourages us to seek out these "windows of insight" into cultures for two reasons. First, it will give us information about that worldview, about the ideas and values which it contains, and second it will help us to see life from the perspective of that worldview. If we are to understand those who don't share our deepest convictions, we must gain some comprehension of what they believe, why they believe it, and how those beliefs work out in daily life.[15]

Removing ourselves and our influence from the sinful order is disobedient to Christ's command to go into the world of people and culture as salt and light, albeit as sheep in the

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[13]George Gerbner, quoted in Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open,* 56.

[14]Denis Haack, "Discernment 202: Pop Culture: Why Bother?" *Ransom Fellowship*, available at http://www.ransomfellowship.org/articledetail.asp?AID=41&b=Denis%20Haack&TID=8.

[15]Ibid.

midst of wolves. An accurate understanding of the world is fully consistent with the will and way of father that Jesus prayed in John 17.

The objection to engaging culture is rooted in the idea that somehow our existence on earth is made up of two spheres, the sacred and secular. While the Bible is clear that spiritual warfare is a reality, it does not teach that there is a sacred-secular split.

Contrary to what many in the church believe, a dualistic approach to life is not God's plan or desire for his people. The Scriptures were written from the perspective of a Hebrew worldview that did not separate life into categories of things that were spiritual and things that were not. To them, all of the earth and its fullness were created by God. All of life was sacred. All of life was touched by the Fall. And all of life was therefore within the scope of God's redemptive activity.

It was this unity that lay beneath the Apostle Paul's instruction to the Corinthians: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). In the Scriptures, the differentiation between that which is sacred and that which is secular has nothing to do with the structure of everything God created, but with its direction (whether it is serving and bringing glory to God, or serving and glorifying the world, the flesh, and the devil).[16] We slip into dualistic thinking when we read the Scriptures without regard for its Hebrew perspective on reality, and we erroneously filter God's Word through the Greek worldview that separates the world into the spheres of sacred (spiritual) and secular (material), thereby imposing meanings and interpretations that were never intended.

It is easy to justify life in the bunker through the misuse of a few isolated Scripture passages. Over the years, I have been challenged with the same arsenal of passages to get "out of the world" of studying and working with the youth culture. Among other things, I have been told to "have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness. . . . For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret" (Eph 5:11–12). I have received advice to "avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess 5:22). And I have been admonished to think only about those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable (Phil 4:8). I agree with all of these imperatives. To do otherwise would be disobedient. However, the problem arises when we read something into these passages that was never intended.

When we do this, we engage in "selective exegesis," reading "one's own, completely foreign, ideas into a text and thereby make God's word say something other than what God really said."[17] Sadly, most of the texts strung together to make a case for staying in the bunker are

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[16]Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 49–52.

[17]Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 23–24.

lifted out of their context, leading to conclusions about Christians and culture that the biblical authors never intended. Here are just a few examples of how the Scriptures are misinterpreted to justify life in the bunker.

Paul's words in Ephesians 5 are often used to justify the bunker mentality. After listing several differences between those who live in light and those who live in darkness, Paul says, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible" (Eph 5:11–14). Does this mean that Christians are to avoid contact with darkness at all costs? Those who think so don't fully understand what Paul is saying here. Paul is telling us to avoid *doing* the "deeds of darkness." Like Jesus, we are to go as light in the world of those who are lost in darkness. However, like Jesus, we do not adopt standards and behaviors that are contrary to the will of the Father. Instead, we are to expose these things by letting the light—"goodness, righteousness and truth" (Eph 5:9)—of Christ shine in their midst. If we are going to be obedient and "live as children of light" (Eph 5:8), then we must not hide our light under a bunker but let it shine in the midst of the darkness.

Likewise, Paul's words to the Philippians are often used to justify a bunker mentality. Paul says, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Phil 4:8). Separatists say that infiltrating culture is disobedient because it forces us to think about evil things. Consequently, anything secular should be avoided, especially entertainment. Young people particularly should avoid exposure to the movies, music, and television shows that are so much a part of today's emerging adolescent culture. Instead, they should view only "Christian" alternatives that can be delivered to the safety of the bunker. Brian Godawa points out how "readers of Bible passages like this one often misunderstand the language to be expressing a 'hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil' approach to spirituality."[18]

But the bunker mentality is a practical impossibility. If it were to be followed consistently, those who hold to it would have to dispose of all parts of the Bible itself, those parts that refer to violence, sexuality, and all sorts of evil and immoral behaviors. Godawa says that "pointing out wrong is part of dwelling on what is right, exposing lies is part of dwelling on truth, revealing cowardice is part of dwelling on the honorable, and uncovering corruption is part of dwelling on the pure."[19]

But my main concern with this faulty view of Phil 4:8 (and related passages) is not primarily with its impracticality but its faulty exegesis and application. What Paul is telling us is to "think

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[18]Brian Godawa, *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom & Discernment* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 199.

[19]Ibid., 200.

about such things," which when properly translated means to "take into account," "ponder," and "reflect on" them. They are the values we are to treasure, continue to think about, and allow to shape our everyday conduct. Paul is not telling us to avoid looking at the world; he is instructing us to avoid *living the ways* of the world, that is, in opposition to the kingdom of God. John Fischer says, "Paul is not talking about what we are exposed to—what we encounter in the world—but rather, what we think about. What we see and what we think about are two very different things. This is not about our field of vision as much as it is about what occupies our mind."[20] To forget or forsake this latter aspect of God's redemptive activity is to step out of the will of the Father for his church. It is this very mistake that has limited the influence and presence of the church in the United States.

Still, we don't enter the culture without precaution and protection. While there, we must keep our hearts and minds centered on God's revelation of himself, thereby guarding against becoming accommodated to the world and the culture. We take our marching orders from our Master. But while we are in that world and culture, we need not live a life of alienated fear in the bunker. Why? Because God promises to keep his own safe and secure in Christ. Even now, Christ is at the right hand of the Father interceding for us (Eph 1:20; Heb 7:25).

Jesus offered insight to how he wants his followers in all times and places to live. First, Jesus tells us that we are to be "the salt of the earth" (Matt 5:13). Those who first heard Jesus knew that salt symbolizes the permanent covenant relationship between God and his people (Lev 2:13). They also knew salt was painstakingly rubbed into meat to preserve it from decay. And they use salt as a seasoning to bring flavor and life to bland food. As the salt of the earth in today's world, we function as God's people of the new covenant, united with him, and representing him by being a transforming presence that brings life where there is death, and seasoning where there is no flavor. To do so, we must be *in* the world. But if we become *of* the world, our saltiness is gone and we are "no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men" (Matt 5:13).

Second, Jesus tells us that we are to be "the light of the world" (Matt 5:14). We are to be where the world can see us—in the midst of darkness—ministering with mercy, grace, and compassion to the lost stumbling in the darkness.

Third, Jesus tells us that we are to be "sheep among wolves" (Matt 10:16). We are defenseless as sheep in the present sinful and fallen world. It's a world that is ready to pounce on us like hungry wolves. But the good Shepherd, who watches, protects, cares for, and lays down his life for his sheep is always with us (John 10:1–18), keeping us safe and secure as we convey his Word in the world.

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[20]John Fischer, *Finding God Where You Least Expect Him* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2003), 136.

The fact that infiltration and transformation in God's revealed will for us serves as reason enough for us to obediently live this approach to faith and culture without question. It needs no justification beyond that. But those who have followed the example of Christ and lived this type of life can attest to the fact that it is an approach that works. How?

First, going into the culture allows us to know about the culture and the individuals in it who are desperately in need of redemption. By infiltrating the culture, understanding will be generated and we will be able to get to know people at an intimate level. Then, and only then, can real and lasting connections be made.

Second, by going into the culture we are able to develop credibility. While not everyone believed Jesus, the needy and lost whose worlds he entered with grace and compassion were willing to listen to what he had to say. He listened to them. He took the time to understand them. He wept with those who wept and mourned with those who mourned. They knew that he felt their pain, hurt, hopelessness, and despair. As they became authentic and real to him, he became authentic and real to them.

Third, if we take an approach of accommodation or alienation, we forfeit our influence in disobedience. It is through our infiltration that God in his grace uses us as agents of transformation, both in individual lives and in cultural institutions. Nothing was left untouched by humankind's fall into sin. Individuals, culture, and God's world are fallen. Likewise, individuals, culture, and God's world are redeemable. "Jesus shed his blood to rescue creation from the curse of sin. And the cleansing blood of Christ must reach not only into the hearts and lives of individuals, but into every corner of the creation which the curse has affected."[21] The whole world is the theater of redemptive activity and we are the "actors" who manifest the way and the will of Christ, both to individuals *and* in every aspect of cultural life. As we fulfill our calling to move in and through the world as salt, light, and sheep in the midst of wolves, God uses us not only to proclaim good news to the captives, but liberation to the whole created order as we work to redeem the time, the culture, institutions, God's good earth, and everything in it. It is only when we infiltrate, or enter into, the culture that we become agents of transformation, used by God as he brings souls from death to life *and* as he redeems his creation.

Understanding culture is not merely an academic exercise. Rather, it's foundational to engaging and ministering to the emerging generations. But how does it all fit together? Those of us who long to reach the emerging generations must prayerfully employ this approach of infiltration and transformation to open doorways for effective evangelism in ministry. In addition, we must teach this approach in our discipleship efforts with young people so that they would grow up to function in God's world as he intends. By doing so, we can help them

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[21]Richard J. Mouw, *When the King Comes Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 110.

avoid the mistakes of accommodation and alienation the church has been making for far too long.

While consistent accommodation and consistent alienation are not options for engaging the world, there will be times and situations where our faithfulness to God and his Word will require a balance that employs one or the other as a matter of obedience. It is only through living this balance that we will bring honor and glory to the One who has sent us into the world and prayed for our protection while we're there.

Theology and Youth Ministry,
Then and Now

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Author's Note:

In 1997, I wrote an article for The Theological Educator, the previous version of the theological journal of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. I had recently turned forty years old and was in my third year as a seminary professor. As this current edition of JBTM is released, I am now fifty-eight years old, and have entered my twenty-second year in the seminary classroom.

In these two decades, some things have changed and some have stayed the same—even in theology. In 2015, as in 1997, I feel ill-equipped to do the heavy lifting of theological issues. However in the discipline of youth ministry, a dual awareness seems to have emerged. First, because of the (unfortunate) silo approach to youth ministry—rarely do age groups interact—the youth minister has become a primary theologian for many youth. Second, (fortunately) whether they are the primary theological voice or not, youth ministers are taking theology more seriously.

What follows is a reprint of the 1997 article followed by an update in 2015. As I completed the article and began to proofread my footnotes, it was apparent how far and fast online research had taken root, another possible commentary on theology. When one had to be vetted for publication, many more eyes and voices guided the thoughts that made it to the page. Now, a writer on theological matters has to weigh the credibility and originality of blogs that are often insightful but rarely peer-reviewed.

1997

Abstract

If theology means "a study of God" or, as Fisher Humphreys defined it, "thinking about God," then a theology of youth ministry means to think about God or to study God through the lens of work with teenagers. This article will propose that youth ministry is a discipline within which a study of God is imperative. The language may not be that of Louis Berkhof or Millard Erickson, but it is nonetheless "thinking about God." Benson and Wolfe suggested that

theology in the context of youth ministry is even more elementary. They observed that "your knowledge that Jesus is Lord makes you a theologian."[1]

Are Theology and Youth Ministry Mutually Exclusive?

When one hears the phrases "youth ministry" and "theology" in the same sentence, it is possible to conclude that the combination of the two constitutes an oxymoron. Theology in youth ministry can be assumed to be limited to the unanswerable questions asked by junior highers. Such deep inquiry could include (but is not necessarily limited to) issues like, "Did Adam have a navel?" and "Can God make a rock so big that he cannot move it?"

While it is obvious that such ramblings are oversimplification at best, it is nonetheless a wide assumption that youth ministry is a field inhabited by "preachers in waiting" who are merely learning about theology. In the past ten years or so, I have gratefully observed a breed of youth ministers who are serious about contemplating faith issues which relate to the discipline of youth ministry. Some of those issues are explored here, and some questions for future research are proposed.

As a student in "Introduction to Theology," I was privileged to have Fisher Humphreys define theology in a way that has continued to have meaning for a career youth minister. He used his definition to title his textbook: *Thinking About God*. He wrote:

> "Theology" is a word used in so many different ways that it is foolish to argue about how it ought to be used. People are entitled to use it in different ways if they wish. . . . What I can do is to tell you how I intend to use it. I use it to mean thinking about God. When we are thinking about God, we are doing theology.[2]

That youth and youth ministers think about God is a given. Typical questions asked by teenagers in youth groups involve curiosity about themselves, about God, about their families, about supernatural things, about the end times, and about humankind in general. Similar questions form the basis of what we call systematic theology. Just for fun, what if we took the table of contents from a theology text and phrased a question that a teenager might ask in each of those subjects? Youth ministers hear these or similar questions every day. Consider this sample:

theology	Can I believe in my own kind of God?
sovereignty of God	Is there anyone out there controlling the universe?

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[1] Dennis Benson and Bill Wolfe, "Theology of Youth Ministry," in *The Basic Encyclopedia for Youth Ministry* (Loveland, CO: Group Books, 1981), 311.

[2] Fisher Humphreys, *Thinking About God* (New Orleans, LA: Insight Press, 1974), 7.

revelation	How do we know the Bible is really from God?
God	Are all gods the same?
humanity	If there is life on other planets?
Jesus	Is he really more than a good man?
atonement	If Jesus did die, how can that help me?
the Holy Spirit	Is that like your conscience?
salvation	What are we saved from?
Christian living	Isn't God going to forgive me regardless of what I do?
Christian hope	Are you sure we do not just die and that is it?
the Trinity	How can God be all three at once?
last things	How will the world really end?

Some subjects have recognizable parallels with subjects that are typical in an introductory study of systematic theology.[3] Other questions are more difficult to categorize but are reflective of teenagers' "thinking about God." Among the most common theological questions are those which ask about God's nature in the face of adversity, tragedy, or pain: "How can a loving God allow people to suffer?" "Why did my friend die in a car wreck when she was such a good person?" "Why doesn't God help my dad get a job?"

Any Bible study or Christian education activity within the context of the local church youth ministry constitutes thinking about God. Whether in private conversations or in public forums, these types of questions are evidence that teenagers are deeply interested in "thinking about God." Youth ministers who are similarly engaged will continue to be challenged in their personal spiritual journey in at least three ways. First, they must continue to ask questions about God. Second, they must allow the sometimes bizarre questions asked by teenagers. Third, they must strike a balance between providing answers and encouraging students to arrive at their own answers.

Personal Theology of the Youth Minister

The ministry style of a church is reflective of the theological journey of its pastor. Similarly, in a youth ministry, the theological "personality" of the youth minister impacts the philosophy and flow of the work with teenagers. If a youth minister ever stops "thinking about God," he or she will surely dry up. The thinking that we do is a combination of our personal pilgrimage of faith, experiences we have, and anything that we read or learn. Tony Campolo has suggested most youth ministers came to know Christ in a relatively fundamental theological context. In *The Church and the American Teenager*, he wrote:

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[3]See also the *Baptist Faith and Message* (2000), available at http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp.

Most youth ministers come out of a fundamentalist ethos. They may ridicule it, condemn it, and negatively critique it, but if they're honest, most will admit they got their start there. This start may have come at a youth rally or a Bible conference. Perhaps it came at a Campus Life or Campus Crusade meeting. It may have come from the personal witness of some zealous Christian friend. Whatever the vehicle, the message probably came in the terms and vocabulary of fundamentalist Christianity.[4]

Campolo suggested many youth ministers tend to move to a more moderate stance as they assume ministry positions. Academic training, personal reflection, and conversations with peers may contribute. He also said this transition may have a psychological price, resulting in loss of zeal and potentially leading to burnout.[5]

Regardless of where a youth minister sees himself or herself on the theological continuum, the need for balance and careful reflection is more critical than in ministry with other age groups. Teenagers are easily influenced and should not be a testing ground for new ideas gleaned from recent reading. Youth ministers should adamantly express their convictions, especially concerning the Bible as God's truth, but airing newly acquired knowledge on their unsuspecting youth groups can be harmful. Such a balance is tricky but necessary.

Youth Ministry Programming and Theology

Theology is part of the programming responsibility within youth ministry. Just as theology is a food group in the diet of the total church ministry, teaching theology addresses specific needs of young people, which George Gallup identified as:

1. The need to believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose.
2. The need for a sense of community and deeper relationships.
3. The need to be appreciated and loved.
4. The need to be listened to—to be heard.
5. The need to feel that one is growing in faith.
6. The need for practical help in developing a mature faith.[6]

Most curriculum for youth ministry flows from similar identification of youth needs, including that published by the Baptist Sunday School Board. Clyde Hall, in the Youth Discipleship Section, has developed a taxonomy for youth discipleship to link curriculum with identification of youth needs.[7]

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[4]Tony Campolo, *The Church and the American Teenager* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 159.

[5]Ibid.

[6]George Gallup and Robert Bezilla, *The Religious Life of Young Americans* (Princeton, NJ: The George H. Gallup International Institute, 1992), 10.

[7]Clyde Hall, compiler, *DiscipleLife: Leading Youth Discipleship in a Church* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board, 1996), 6–10.

If a youth minister says to a group of young people, "Next week, we are going to have a study in theology," it is likely the crowd will be small. However, if the youth minister promotes a study on how God will end the world, the crowd will be significantly larger. The integration of theology and youth ministry programming is done effectively when needs of teenagers are intentionally and systematically filtered through "thinking about God" and addressed through programs and activities which are appropriate to the age group for whom they are intended.

In Southern Baptist life, the discipleship training program is the primary place where the teaching of theology is accomplished. Guiding youth to grow in spiritual maturity is a stated objective of discipleship training. Hall described one of the specific goals of youth discipleship:

> Through ongoing groups, short-term and individual studies, youth concentrate on: Christian Disciplines and Personal Ministry; Christian Theology and Baptist Doctrine; Christian Ethics; Christian History and Baptist Heritage; Church Life; Family Life; and Spiritual Gifts.[8]

Unfortunately, many churches and/or youth ministries no longer schedule a specific time of the week for discipleship training. Some churches no longer have Sunday night programming. Some churches which have difficulty staffing an additional program organization have ended discipleship training. Many youth ministers understand the importance of providing a forum where such questions can be asked and where genuine processing of possibilities is encouraged. In the absence of a scheduled discipleship time, they have used home study groups,[9] retreats, camps, and one-on-one mentoring to accomplish discipleship objectives.

Theology of Youth Ministry: A Model

Even before programming is inserted on calendar blanks and mailed out to teenagers to post on their refrigerators, some design elements are needed to include thinking about God as a driving element in youth ministry planning. The Bible is central in any philosophy, theology, or purpose statement in a youth ministry that is worth anything. The following are some of the biblical building blocks that assist in the teaching of theology in youth ministry.

Youth Ministry is Redemptive

Teenagers are created in God's image (Gen 1:26). When you consider the individual differences in appearance among teenagers (and even the daily differences in each individual!), you have to smile to think that there is a "God image" beneath the Gap styles and the multiple earrings. Herein lies one of the mysteries of theology within youth ministry. It is imperative

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[8]Ibid., 5.

[9]The *Disciple Youth Notebook* is an excellent resource for such groups as are the resources described as "Disciple Life Centers," published by the Youth Discipleship Section at the Baptist Sunday School Board. Centers are usually curriculum for short-term (4–6 weeks) study in a small group with an adult leader.

that we see the God-image in every teenager, no matter how aesthetically offended we might be.

Like all of us, youth have fallen. In addition to the Rom 3:23 universal sin, teenagers are constantly in the process of finding their way, experimenting with various roles. In the trial and error of deciding who they will be as adults, there is often more error than trial.

But Christ has redeemed them. It is often difficult to convince teenagers there are no sins outside of the boundaries of the atonement. Their egocentrism points an accusing finger in their direction that makes redemption seem out of reach. Our job is to help them live out that redemption. Youth volunteers and youth ministers assist in helping teenagers to strike a middle ground between the serious nature of their sin and the mercy of God extended through Jesus.

Youth Ministry is Developmental

To see the words "adolescent" and "change" in the same sentence is redundant. Fortunately, development (change) unfolds in a relatively predictable sequence. Although all teenagers do not develop exactly the same way or at the same rate, most of what they experience is common to teenagers in general. Luke 2:52 ("And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men") illustrates that God blessed development in every area in the life of his son.[10]

Teenagers are developing "in stature." The endocrine system is in overdrive, producing more physical changes during adolescence than at any other period of life except the first eighteen months. Raging hormones make focusing on God difficult, yet the truths of Psalm 139 remind teenagers that God also is thinking about them. Youth are developing intellectually. They are better able to understand abstract theological concepts as they grow older. The "Jesus loves me, this I know" of childhood is giving way to some of the questions mentioned previously. Teenagers are developing socially. At some point during the adolescent years, "cooties" are no longer dreaded and interaction with the opposite sex becomes fashionable. Unfortunately, one of the drivers of the teenage engine is the desire to be "in favor with men" or with peers. One of the roles of youth ministry is to lend a view of how thinking about God and his Word can lend counsel to the arena of peer pressure.

If teenagers are developing in other areas of their life, should we not expect them to develop spiritually with a similar sequence? A spiritually immature ninth grader may commit his or her life to foreign missions at camp, but it may be helpful for a youth minister to encourage the young person to continue to pray and seek God. Perhaps the Lord is not finished shaping that call to ministry. If well-meaning adults do not allow the teenager to revisit a decision made as a young adolescent, the guilt for the teenager can be damaging.

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[10]All biblical quotations in this article are from the *New International Version*.

Youth Ministers are Called

As a youth minister in a local church I often heard comments like, "I'm glad it's you and not me" (in reference to working with teenagers), or "It takes a special person to do this kind of ministry." While I agree that youth workers are special people, the best ones feel that they are called to work with adolescents. When asked, they are usually somewhat puzzled and respond, "I cannot imagine doing anything else." The minister and the ministry exist for a purpose bigger than themselves. God has worked through willing adults to foster change in the lives of teenagers. I am intrigued by the response of Peter and John in Acts 4:18–20:

> Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

When threatened with horrible punishment if they continued to talk about Jesus, they responded (and I paraphrase in teenage terms), "Take your best shot. The truth is we cannot imagine not speaking about Jesus." Facing junior highers may not be the same as facing death, but the sense of calling is just as intense. The motivation behind such a calling is similar to the one Paul described to the Thessalonians: "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us" (1 Thess 2:8).

Youth Ministry is Incarnational

Jesus is God incarnate. One of the most descriptive passages dealing with the Incarnation is the Christ hymn that Paul included in the letter to the Philippians:

> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:5–11)

In a very real sense, persons who work with youth (whether paid or volunteer) model the theological truth that we call incarnation. Jesus came into our world and became one of us. Similarly, adults who work with youth must enter their world. Jim Rayburn, the founder of Young Life, was one of the first to emphasize the incarnational ministry of Jesus as a foundation in youth ministry. Warren Benson, describing Rayburn's methodology, wrote:

> Wise youth workers go where high school people are, as Jesus did. The incarnational nomenclature projects an analogy of what God accomplished in the person of His Son. In Jesus,

God came down to us, became one of us, and identified with us, even though we were separated from Him because of the impasse of our sin. Christ's substitutionary atonement made it possible for us to be reconciled with the Father and have the impasse removed.[11]

The analogy cannot be taken too far. Adults can be only the messengers of redemption, not the providers of atonement. The analogy also breaks down if we try to insist that adults need to be youth. Far too many adults look foolish trying to imitate adolescence. Nonetheless, ministry with youth means being in their world and in their lives. Benson and Wolfe summarized:

> To understand young people, we do not have to "lower ourselves to their level." We are called simply to match our humanity with theirs. We are all seeking the fullness of our God as people in the world. The immature or lost teen is embraced, not judged. In that person, there go I.[12]

Conclusion

Other biblical building blocks could be identified. Youth ministry should be balanced. Relationships are balanced with programs. Leadership in the ministry is balanced between that of the youth minister with involvement of adults and youth in the ministry. Ephesians 4:11–13 suggests that giftedness of some is balanced with abilities of others.

Youth ministry is dynamic, always changing. The motivation remains the same, the message remains the same, but the methodology is adapted to a particular time and group of young people. Youth ministry is mentoring and modeling. Even as Paul urged his readers to imitate him, adolescents imitate the adults who are significant in their formative years.

Theology and youth ministry are inseparable. Persons who work with youth bring their personal theology to the table. Youth workers must decide how they will communicate their convictions to the youth with whom they have been entrusted. My conviction stands that only a careful attention to the study of Scripture will allow a youth worker to achieve balance in ministry, continue to grow personally, and answer the difficult "thinking about God" questions posed by members of their youth group.

Future questions for discussion and research could include:

- If churches discontinue the traditional Sunday night discipleship training schedule, then what other avenues for teaching theology can be utilized?
- In an ever-increasing information age, will basic biblical doctrines be lost in the flood of material on popular topics (which are sometimes easier to teach and "sell" to youth)?

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[11]Warren Benson, "A Theology of Youth Ministry," in *The Complete Book of Youth Ministry* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 20.

[12]Benson and Wolfe, "Theology of Youth Ministry," 313.

- How will the influence of postmodernism affect the curriculum needed to teach theology in youth ministry?

2015

Some Things Have Remained the Same

The focus of youth ministry programming still directs the conversation about theology. A model of youth ministry that is redemptive, developmentally aware, called, and incarnational is still appropriate. Youth ministry that is contemplative, pondering the intersection between current social issues and biblical truth was and is more than simply trying to draw a crowd with pranks and entertainment (and never leaving the pranks and entertainment to move to something more meaningful).

Youth Ministry is Inherently Theological

Theology and youth ministry are not mutually exclusive, as teenagers in the second decade of the twenty-first century are possibly more inquisitive than teenagers of recent generations about how God works in the world. Andrew Root explains, "Theology at its most basic (and its most profound) is passionate reflection on God's action, on God's own ministry. This means *ministry actually makes theology possible*."[13] Youth ministry is the incubator for critical thought when it facilitates small groups of teenagers discussing biblical truths in juxtaposition with cultural situations.

For decades, authentic discussion in youth ministry has circled around theological issues as they impact or reflect cultural ones. In the 1960s, young people experienced revival even as they debated the war in Vietnam. In the 1970s, students wondered if the rapture would come and they would be "left behind." In the 1980s, AIDS and HIV were discussed as to whether or not God's judgment was being meted out. In the 1990s, ecology and earth care were discussed as stewardship responsibilities. In the first decade of the new millennium, natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina caused the subject of God's judgment and protection to again rise to the forefront. In this present decade, homosexuality (genetic or chosen, gay marriage), racism, and poverty are topics of discussion in youth ministry circles. In 2009, at a conference of youth ministry educators, Bert Roebben presented a paper in which he summarized:

Not only liberation theology but also other theological constructions are debated in the discourse community of youth ministers. One could say that every kind of theological

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[13]Andrew Root, *Taking Theology to Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2012), 55.

position has also been tested in youth work. Different options in christology, soteriology and eschatology are dealt with in respect to the lives of young people.[14]

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The Personal Theology of the Youth Minister and/or
Volunteer Leaders is Highly Relevant

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The personal theology of the youth minister, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is revealed in Bible study, public comments, and written communication. The authors that youth ministers choose to read, the podcasts to which they listen, and the conferences they attend all reflect their personal theology. Collin Hansen, editorial director for *The Gospel Coalition* summarized,

> We expect a certain level of theological sophistication from our preaching pastors. They must at least know church history, systematic theology, and hopefully some Greek and Hebrew so they can properly interpret and apply the biblical text. We're confident that when we approach them with questions about the canonization of Scripture, the implications of the incarnation, and the doctrine of the body and sexuality, their learning will aid us in responding faithfully to such pressing questions in our culture. If anything the world bears down with even greater ferocity on the fledgling faith of Christian youth. So why should we expect less theological rigor from our youth pastors who serve them through teaching, counseling, and more? Every youth minister needs to be a theologian, whether formally or informally equipped to handle God's Word with integrity and care.[15]

A section on cultural dynamics straddles the "changed/not changed" categories. Youth leaders have always had a need to exegete culture and, like the sons of Issachar, understand the times and know what to do (1 Chron 12:32). Dean Borgman, in one of the best available discussions of youth, theology, and culture, wrote:

> Openness to young people and their leaders in worldwide cultures contributes to practical theology and the effectiveness of your ministry. Like Ezra, you want to be knowledgeable and efficient in practice. Like Joseph, Daniel and Esther, you'll seek to understand contemporary culture, and with Paul, you must practice self-discernment. Above all, youth leaders strive for Christ's wisdom and grace.[16]

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[14]Bert Roebben, "Youth, Culture and Theology in Plural: Presenting the Work of the International Association for the Study of Youth Ministry," Paper Presented at the Conference of the Association of Youth Ministry Educators, Louisville, Kentucky (October 17, 2009), 5.

[15]Collin Hansen, "Why Youth Ministers Need to be Theologians," *The Gospel Coalition*, May 14, 2014, available at http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-youth-ministers-need-to-be-theologians.

[16]Dean Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 13. Borgman's book is a comprehensive integration of youth ministry, theology, and culture. Chapter 4, "Basic Theology for Youth Ministers," is particularly helpful.

The need for youth ministry persons to wrestle with contemporary cultural issues in a biblical way has not changed. The nature and type of those cultural issues is ever-changing.

Some Things Have Changed

The Starting Line Has Changed

I envision a day in the 1940s when the term "teenager" first entered the popular vernacular where white-frame or red-brick protestant churches bearing some denominational identification were plentiful and often clustered on Church Street in both small and not-so-small towns in America. The assumption was if a person attended one of these, and possibly even Catholic or Jewish congregations, they would ascribe to a Judeo-Christian ethic which was largely Bible-centered, membership-oriented, and characterized by good manners.

As Russell Moore playfully stated, "Baptism was a Bible Belt Bar Mitzvah—you needed a Christian identity to be part of the culture. The culture has changed and we are no longer at the center."[17] Beginning in the 1960s and picking up steam through the 1990s, institutional loyalty crumbled and authority was disdained (numerous sources from diverse disciplines affirm the perceived loss of value for institutions, including academic, government, and religion). The result was the non-belief of postmodernity and the rise of the "nones."[18]

The Cultural Landscape Has Changed

If the theological assumption for America used to be the Judeo-Christian narrative, a person was Catholic, Protestant (few realized that Baptists actually protested the Protestants!), or perhaps Jewish. Few distinctions were made between Presbyterians (except that it was suspected they used real wine at communion) and Baptists (who most certainly did not). Atheists, pluralists, and deists kept quiet about their beliefs, as their views would prohibit them from running for office and, for the most part, owning a business. Even though Thomas Jefferson (with his cut-and-paste Bible) was a deist, such beliefs were not expressed on Main Street. No longer can such presumptions be accepted. Christian Smith and his team at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that 90 percent of professing Christian teenagers held to a worldview that they labeled Moral Therapeutic Deism.[19]

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[17]Dave Miller, "Dr. Russell Moore, (Updated) #SBC15," *SBC Voices*, June 14, 2015, account provided by Miller of Moore's SBC Pastor's Conference sermon, available at http://sbcvoices.com/dr-russell-moore/. No transcript of Moore's comments could be located to verify Miller's account.

[18]See for example, James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014).

[19]See Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul-Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). The article by Walt Mueller in this issue sheds light on the integration of theology, youth ministry, and youth culture.

The Speed of Religio-Political Change Has Modified
the Conversation Regarding Social Justice

As schools, youth groups, and youth culture in general have become more diverse and tolerant—often much more so than the adults who oversee them—a face has been put on people or behavior that was formerly considered sinful. Students know someone who is gay, married to a same-sex partner (inspired by recent Supreme Court rulings that have accelerated the speed of change), cohabitating couples who do not value marriage, immigrants who may or may not be in the country legally, and so forth. The segment of the culture considered left or liberal on social issues has claimed the label progressive, which seems to leave regressive as the moniker for conservative beliefs. As students personally know someone who might embrace a lifestyle that was formerly alternative, such lifestyles are increasingly mainstream. Biblical theology is debated as incomplete, and theologians are not in agreement as to the biblical mandate on such issues. Regardless of where one stands on the continuum of liberal to conservative theology, a generation of teenagers has embraced social justice, with heightened concern for adoption, human trafficking, poverty, and hunger.

More Than Ever, Developmental Considerations
Influence Theological Receptivity

The ability of teenagers to comprehend theology is still influenced by development. However, one can see development from a passing statement in my 1997 article has moved to the forefront in understanding the impulsive action and reaction of adolescents. Scholarly, credible research has suggested the teen brain is still developing in the third decade of life, with the ability to reason and discern among the last to mature. Borgman wrote, "Teenagers, then, do not have *full capacity* of executive functions of the prefrontal cortex: reasoning, discrimination of emotions in themselves and others, planning, impulse control, delayed gratification, awareness of future consequences of immediate actions, determining clear paths to future goals."[20] The developing brain functions necessary for deep, theological consideration, critical thinking skills, and wisdom are in motion but far from fully formed in the teenage brain. Youth workers seeking to engage youth in theological dialogue and should expect the process to take years. A dedicated youth minister or volunteer succeeds when they incorporate information gleaned from brain research into theological discussion with teenagers.

Emotional responses in the teen brain appear to be fully engaged. Parts of the brain that control or regulate such emotional responses do not appear to have awakened. Research suggest the age for full maturity is in the mid-twenties. Youth ministers have observed a willingness on the part of adolescents to act impulsively, commit to causes indiscriminately, and to enjoy risky

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[20]Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry*, 90.

behavior. Such intuition is validated in the literature.[21] The emotions of teenagers can push them closer to a correct theological understanding of God or drive them toward false theology. The theologically engaged youth worker navigates the emotional upheaval of teenagers by patiently and lovingly guiding teenagers to theological truth in discussion, with repetition, and always with the attitude of Christ.[22]

Concluding Thoughts

At the 2015 Pastor's Conference sermon in Columbus, Ohio, Russell Moore offered insightful comments concerning and a possible response to present culture wars:

> If you frantically feel as though you are losing; if you frantically feel as though the culture is leaving you behind, then the problem is that we will become just like the culture that we are critiquing: who's up, and who's down, and who's in charge, and who's not. God is not surprised by whatever is happening right now in the world around you, in your community, or in the world at large. And maybe God is interested right now not so much in getting America in line with the church, as God is interested in getting the church out of step with America. He says to His disciples, "You are different. You have a distinctive calling. You have a distinctive witness. You have a distinctive future. We have a different way."[23]

Youth ministry as a discipline must take an introspective look and understand that theology with both depth and practicality is needed for students. Andrew Root insightfully summarized a response, if not a resolution:

> Youth ministry has often been criticized for lacking theological depth. . . .Youth ministry, as it has become more professional and academic, has even given a great deal of attention to how a youth pastor or volunteer should act in ministry. But because it has not given the same attention to understanding God's action, it has lacked theological depth, justifying its action through bullet-pointed Bible verses or discussions of social-scientific literature regarding adolescent development as opposed to seeking the mystery of the burning bush.[24]

A final word would be the intersection of sound biblical theology (not "nice theology"[25])

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[21]*National Institute of Mental Health,* "The Teen Brain: Still Under Construction," booklet, NIH Publication No. 114929 (Jan. 2011); Sara B. Johnson, Robert W. Blum, Jay N. Giedd, "Adolescent Maturity and the Brain: The Promise and Pitfalls of Neuroscience Research in Adolescent Health Policy," *Journal of Adolescent Health Care* 45.3 (Sept. 2009): 216–21; Barbara Strauch, *The Primal Teen: What the New Discoveries about the Teenage Brain Tell Us About Our Kids* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003).

[22]Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry*, 98.

[23]Russell Moore, Pastor's Conference sermon, cited by Rod Dreher, "Benedict Option Baptists," *The American Conservative*, June 17, 2015, available at http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/benedict-option-southern-baptists/.

[24]Root, *Taking Theology to Youth Ministry*, 58–59.

[25]Borgman wrote, "'Nice theology' tries to slide past the biblical doctrine of evil. Secular unbelievers

with the demands of culture in a way that is authentic. Borgman writes, "Realistic youth ministry honestly portrays our continued efforts to shortcut God's long-range plan. Young hearts want the real story, just as those who are ill long for true diagnosis."[26] Students today have a heightened ability to identify the attempts to insult their intelligence with statements like, "We don't understand all of it, so you will just have to take it by faith."

While it is true that some of the mysteries surrounding the journey as a Christ-follower remain mysteries, it is not true that students have to sacrifice the curiosity and critical thinking that sharpens their faith through asking of hard questions. The job of the youth minister/theologian/apologist/pragmatist is to answer those questions with sound teaching as well as experiential learning—the pragmatic leadership of students into environments where they can test their faith and find it trustworthy.

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attempt to treat constant reminders of evil as mere, sad aberrations" (*Foundations for Youth Ministry*, 57).
    [26]Ibid.

Youth Ministry: A View from the Ground

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James Franklin & R. Allen Jackson, Ph.D.

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Editorial Note: The following article was written by James Franklin (JF) and includes interaction by R. Allen Jackson (RAJ).

JF: Student ministry holds an interesting place in the work of the church. A group that focuses on meeting the needs of the extremely ecletic group we call "adolescents" has become a necessity. While much can be said regarding the validity or biblical modeling of such a ministry, it is beyond the scope of this particular essay. The needs of this group of Christians are real and require the church to respond to them. Student ministry does this by being sensitive to the development of cognitive faculties and spiritual needs of teengaers. The unique time frame of this ministry has interesting effects on the methodology and teaching content employed by the leaders. Students are not often challenged theologically or spiritually. Rather, they are sometimes considered to be the oldest members of a larger, non-adult ministry. The result of this unspoken belief is a praxis that caters to entertainment over substance and lowered expectations over vision and possibilities. The local church ends up with a ministry that functions more like a community center and which results in theologically-shallow teenagers, who grow to theologically-shallow adults.

RAJ: While theology as a "talking point" in youth is a relatively recent development, the partnership between families and community of faith in discipleship is not. Some people would like to roll back the clock to a simpler time without the autonomy and distraction of the manic youth culture of the twenty-first century. However, that train has left the station, and theologians and youth ministers are left to navigate the biblical command to make disciples while repairing a faulty youth ministry model that separates students from their parents for most religious instruction.

JF: Theology is often considered to be a discipline reserved for the academic elite. Typical church members understand that theology is important, but they do not understand why this is the case. Neither do they see the need for pursuing theological education. The concept of the pastor as

the resident theologian is embracecd due to the spiritual leadership the office entails. The church body expects their shepherd to digest Scripture, filter teaching through his theological mesh, and deliver to them what they need to know. While this may fit within an American, evangelical understanding of church life, this is not the intention of God for Christians.

John records in his Gospel these words of Jesus, describing eternal life: "Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). The fundamental message of the gospel, the starting point of the salvation process for every person, is beginning a relationship with their Creator and Savior. Theology is the study of the God the Christian knows personally through faith. To make a statement about God is to make a theological statement. Therefore, "To be a Christian at all is to be a theologian. There are no exceptions." When Christians take it upon themselves to study God, they are embarking upon a journey to learn more about the Triune God. Since salvation is fundamentally a relationship and theology is a means by which knowledge of the God with whom we are in relationship, the study of theology should be the personal responsibility of every believer. When we grasp this truth, we see that theology is inseparable from Christian maturation.

For youth pastors, this truth has deep implications. As we look at a typical group of students, we should be profoundly disturbed. Most students see little to no need to study theology at all. In the best case scenario, they understsand theological study to be a kind of "ivory tower" discipline, set apart for intellectual or pastors. Such lofty pursuits are either beyond their reach or so far removed in relevance that that they see no need to pursue it. What we often fail to realize is that theology is inescapable in the life of any churchgoer, especially teenagers. She concludes that American teens are being taught that Christianity is Moral Therapeutic Deism.

RAJ: The problem is much larger than a lack of theological hunger perceived among students. Many hiring decisions regarding youth ministers do not factor in seminary education. Since the youth minister is viewed as a subordinate and often secondary staff position, little thought is given to whether the candidate knows the difference between Barth and Barna. If an observer notes that the amount of time teenagers spent at church is heavily tilted towards being with peers and being with youth workers, he should be very afraid if the youth ministry has either a podcast-inspired theological vison or no vision at all. It is no wonder youth ministry is still perceived as a venture that is designed to keep students "too busy to sin."

JF: Ham and Beemer discuss why most teenagers leave the church as soon as they move away from home. Most students grow to believe that either the Bible or the church are irrelevant. In the face of such research, it must be asked why so many American teens are ambivalent toward real religious commitment. Even as I write these words, a group of students are in my living room discussing the mystery of the gospel. The teachers are attempting to lead them to the reality that it is trust in Christ that brings salvation. The message is constantly overshadowed in their minds by actions perceived as "wrong," and what they need to do differently. The message of salvation by grace through faith is lost on them. We can certainly attribute the blindness to

the sinful condition of man, but we must also ask ourselves why the teenage vocabulary lacks concepts of grace, mercy, and unconditional love. If our students cannot articulate the truths of the gospel, necessarily they either have not heard the message or have not understood it. In its place is a thinly veiled religion of earned righteousness, grasped by obedience to parents and making decent grades. It is this reality that brings us to the role of the youth pastor as theologian.

Before anything else, youth pastors must accept responsibility for their own theology. Too often, youth pastors and adult leaders are indifferent to theological study. Many wrongly think they are staff leaders who are only teaching students basic truths of Scripture, leading them to faith in Christ, and equipping them to be upstanding and effective church members. But the youth pastor's role extends beyond those important issues. Student ministers find themselves with a group of people whose development uniquely positions them for theological inquiry. They seek relationships and ask difficult questions, both of themselves and others. These years will be etched in the minds of these yound people for the rest of their lives. Youth pastors must accept the weight of leading students meaningfully by guiding them through the theological musings that come so naturally to them.

RAJ: Louie Giglio used to say, "You don't have to teach people how to worship; you just have to help them understand who to worship." The same could be said of theology. The current youth culture is full of people who would advise students spiritually. If the definition of theology is "thinking about God," then students do theology all the time. They do not have to be encouraged to think about God, but they do need someone to guide them in the process to avoid the temptation to substitue anything or anybody for a relationship with the true and living God. One glance at a music awards show (like the VMAs) gives ample evidence that guidance is needed in order to have a framework for weighing cultural trends against biblical instruction.

JF: Admittedly, this is easier for some than for others. Some are theologically-minded. Some enjoy rigorous intellectual discussion and seek to be rational and discerning people. Others tend toward a creative mentality, wherein they may more readily appreciate beauty but not see the value in theological study. God has certainly created each of us differently. Aquinas reminds us:

> The beautiful is the same as the good, and they differ in aspect only. For since good is what all seek, the notion of good is that which calms the desire; while the notion of the beautiful is that which calms the desire, by being seen or known. Consequently those senses chiefly regard the beautiful, which are the most cognitive, viz., sight and hearing, as ministering to reason; for we speak of beautiful sights and beautiful sounds. . . . Thus it is evident that beauty adds to goodness a relation to the cognitive faculty: so that good means that which simply pleases the appetite; while the beautiful is something pleasant to apprehend.

Aquinas is addressing here the chief source of our desire. The inquiry is to whether or not goodness is the only cause of love. Aquinas responds that it is goodness that pleases our desire and beauty is that which we are pleased to behold. The study of theology puts before us a God who is supremely good and devastatingly beautiful.

As difficult as it may be, we must shoulder a heavier burden. We may need to remind ourselves that not everyone should aspire to be teachers (James 3:1). Youth pastors must take not only responsibility for their own theology, they must also assume the responsibility of shaping the theology of their students. Shaping does not mean creating carbon copies of the minister. Rather, shaping means helping in developing a love for theology and giving them the tools necessary to formulate their conclusions. The last thing the church needs is more Christians who cannot think deeply about God. Neither do we want to create a system where all theological teaching is valued equally. Rather, we want to equip students to delineate between orthodoxy and heresy. Youth pastors must not only provide the means for students to grow theologically, but must also assume the position of a shepherd protecting their flock from harmful doctrine. Youth ministers walk a fine line between providing a place of freedom to develop personal beliefs and setting hard lines on central theological issues. The task is daunting, and will require a total surrender of the self if they are to succeed.

Moving toward such an end begins when the student minister accepts such a responsibility. From the moment this decision is made, the ministry begins to change. The next step on the journey is change the mentality of the parents and adult volunteers. The church culture has largely discounted teenagers as able Christians. If students are not considered serious Christians, then they will not be expected to think critically about theological issues. This mindset has resulted in the typical "keep them out of the way" mentality that many churches seem to expect from their student ministries. As the shepherd of these believers it is the youth pastor's responsibility to work toward changing that mentality. This begins with addressing any instance of this attitude in the parents or volunteers. The minister cannot manage a ministry alone. He or she cannot bring about a radical change in the attitude of the flock without support.

Changing the minds of volunteers naturally leads to a change in the mind of the students. Ministry leaders establish the values of a ministry. Christian students who are continually challenged to study theology will be more likely to value the discipline. Without this support, the ministry is less likely to embrace the endeavor as a whole. When the environment constantly reinforces a love for the study of God and seeks to embrace a Christianity shaped by this knowledge, students who mature in this environment are more likely to appreciate theological study.

RAJ: I once heard Tony Campolo say, "It is sometimes easier to act your way into believing (the Gospel) than to believe your way into acting." More than a nugget of truth emerges in that statement. If an environment of thoughtful theological nurture exists and is fostered by volunteers who have given careful to the foundation stones of theology, then students have been given a place to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). I like the New Living Translation, which renders the verse, "Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear." Show the results of your salvation (teachers) and students will have a model, a mentor, and a sounding board to work out theirs.

JF: After accepting personal responsibility for our theology and leading our adults to appreciate and love the discipline, we arrive at dealing with the students and themselves. Many adults, and some student ministers, do not feel that theological study is sometimes that students are capable of doing. Some, often correctly, also assume that students do not have any interest in theological work. I would like to deal with these objections in order.

First, students can and should engage in theological study. This is true for at least two reasons. The first is a reality that we have already discussed. Age does not excuse a Christian teenager from the role of a theologian. When Christian teenagers make statements about God, they are speaking authoritatively about their faith and the nature of the God they serve. The statements they make to unbelievers will shape how those unbelievers view Christianity. The truth value of those statements are significant because those statements impact the teenage audience. Thus, teenagers also bear the burden of speaking accurately about God and the faith of Christianity. Their age does not and cannot absolve them of this role.

Second, students are capable of doing theology. The mentality that students are unable to engage in rigorous study of God has been the primary reason that they, for the most part, do not do so. Students tend to rise to the expectations of their teachers and leaders. The school system knows this and challenges students to excel academically. Many teenagers study mathematics that some college students never touch. If the school system expects students to successfully grasp and use calculus, we cannot rationally believe that theological study is only for the adults in our congregations.

In this article, I have discussed the role of theology in student ministry, the role of the youth minister as theologian, and steps that can be implemented to foster an environment that values the study of God in a student ministry. Throughout my years as a student minister, I have seen students that have both loved and hated theology. We cannot make every student love the study of God, but we can lead them to see how important theology is to their lives. Ashford and Whitfield write, "As theologians, we have the great privilege of studying God's Word and, in so doing, tasting and seeing that the Lord is good (Ps 34:8), delighting ourselves in the Lord (Ps 37:4), seeking him early in the morning (Ps 63:1), and savoring his words (Ps 119:103). There is nothing more wonderful than attending closely to what our most loved One is saying to us and then speaking it back to him and telling others what he has told us." I pray we each may grow in our love for God, our understanding of his Word, and our love for others as we train students under our care to be faithful theologians.

Conversion and Baptism in a Baptist (or baptistic) Youth Ministry

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The goal of this article is to address the doctrines of conversion and baptism and the implications for ministry among Baptist and baptistic students in 6–12 grades. The word baptistic refers to Christian groups, regardless of their denominational name, who believe that the only proper candidates for baptism are individuals who have confessed Jesus Christ as Lord.

What is Conversion?
A Biblical-Theological Explanation

Introduction

In Christian theology, conversion refers to the human act of repenting of sin and trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation. This definition presupposes that those who convert will first understand their sinful and needful condition before they can respond to the good news of the gospel. Those who convert will have received God's provision for forgiveness through the atoning work of Christ on the cross. In the moment they first repent of sin and believe in Jesus, they will (among other biblical images): be united with Christ, have peace with God, and be indwelt by His Holy Spirit.

Conversion in Biblical Theology

English Bibles rarely mention conversion, but it appears both in word and concept in the Old and the New Testaments. The Old Testament refers to people either turning or failing to turn to the Lord (e.g., Isa 6:10; 31:6; Jer 3:10, 12, 14, 22; Amos 4:6, 8, 10; Zech 1:2–4). Isaiah announces, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near" (Isa 55:6).[1]

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[1]All biblical references in this article are from the *English Standard Version*.

In the next verse, the prophet says of the wicked person: "let him **return to** the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7b).[2]

Conversion also appears in the New Testament. Epaenetus is identified as "the first **convert** to Christ in Asia" (Rom 16:5). Similarly, Paul mentions in 1 Cor 16:15 that "the household of Stephanas were the first **converts** in Achaia." Acts 15:3 notes "the **conversion** of the Gentiles." When providing guidelines for the "overseer" in 1 Tim 3:6, Paul warns, "He must not be a recent **convert**, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil." Darrell Bock writes, "In the New Testament conversion seems to summarize the call of the church in response to Jesus' commission to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all the nations, as the Old Testament called for (Luke 24:43–47). In sum, **conversion is a turning to embrace God**."[3]

In Acts 3:19 and 26:20, the language of repenting of sin is included with language of turning to God.[4] In other cases in the book of Acts, repenting and turning are present in *concept* but not explicitly. Examples of the *concept* of repenting and turning include: Paul's experience on the road to Damascus (ch. 9), Cornelius (ch. 10), Lydia (16:11–15), and the Philippian jailer (16:25–34). Based on both the concept and words in the Bible, Christian converts can be defined as people who repent of their sin and turn to God through believing in Jesus Christ.

Conversion in Systematic Theology

Christian theologians in general and Southern Baptist theologians in particular define conversion as repentance of sin and faith in Christ. Consider these examples:

Augustus H. Strong writes, "Conversion is that voluntary change in the mind of the sinner, in which he turns, on the one hand, from sin, and on the other hand, to Christ. The former or negative element in conversion, namely, the turning from sin, we denominate repentance. The latter or positive element in conversion, namely, the turning to Christ, we denominate faith."[5] More succinctly, Louis Berkhof writes that "conversion includes both faith and repentance."[6]

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[2]Emphasis mine.

[3]Darrell Bock, "Conversion," *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), accessed by Logos Bible Software. Emphasis mine.

[4]For a recent and comprehensive biblical theology of repentance, see Mark J. Boda, *"Return to Me": A Biblical Theology of Repentance*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015).

[5]Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 829. Strong explains, "Conversion is the human side or aspect of that fundamental spiritual change which, as viewed from the divine side, we call regeneration" (Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 829).

[6]Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 481.

Wayne Grudem states, "Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation."[7]

If conversion is comprised of both repentance of sin and faith in Christ, then how should the terms repentance and faith be defined? Strong offers this definition: "Repentance is that voluntary change in the mind of the sinner in which he turns from sin."[8] Also, repentance has three elements: intellectual, emotional, and voluntary.[9] Kenneth Keathley identifies genuine repentance of the whole person (mind, body, and will) in the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–24). The younger son evidenced a change in his thinking (v. 17), his emotions (v. 19), and his will (v. 18).[10]

What is faith? William W. Stevens notes that in his Gospel and three letters, John never uses the noun (*pistis*, "faith"), only the verb (*pisteuein*, "to believe"). Stevens explains, "Therefore to have faith is simply to believe."[11] Similar to the explanations of repentance noted above, Stevens suggests that faith involves three elements: intellectual, emotional, and volitional. Specifically, he clarifies how faith encompasses the entire spiritual and psychological being as follows:

Intellectual: Acceptance of the truth about Christ—"It is recognizing God's provision for salvation in Christ and his atoning work."
Emotional: Assent to the person of Christ—"Convicted of his sin and of his need for a Saviour, the penitent one finds in Christ the answer to it all."
Volitional: Submission to the will of Christ—"It is to trust in Christ as Saviour and Lord, with the surrender of one's whole being to the commands and expectations of Christ."[12]

The Bible reveals that there exists a kind of faith/belief which does not save. Mental assent *only* to theological truths does not save. Consider, as examples, that demons believe (*pisteuein*, "to believe") that there is one God (James 2:19), and demons address Jesus as Son of the Most High God (Mark 5:7). Those statements of theological truth were uttered by demons who were not and will never be converted. The requirement for conversion is both repentance and a kind of faith that involves more than only stating theological truth. That type of faith required is *saving* faith. Keathley explains,

Saving faith is being convinced that God's promises are true to the point that one places his trust

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[7]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 709. Italicized in the original.
[8]Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 832.
[9]Ibid., 832–34. Similarly, Berkhof states that repentance has three elements: intellectual, emotional, and volitional (*Systematic Theology*, 486).
[10]Kenneth Keathley, "The Work of God in Salvation," in *A Theology for the Church*, rev. ed., ed. Daniel L. Akin, Bruce Riley Ashford, and Kenneth Keathley (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014), 575–76.
[11]William W. Stevens, *Doctrines of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 224.
[12]Ibid., 224–25. Similarly, Keathley catalogues the many theologians who refer to faith as: knowledge, assent, and appropriation ("The Work of God in Salvation," 578).

in Jesus Christ for salvation (e.g., John 3:16, 36; 11:25–26; Acts 16:30–31; Rom 4:3). Thus defined, faith has two components—an intellectual element ("being convinced") and a volitional element ("placing trust"). When we are persuaded by God's Spirit of the truthfulness of the gospel, we then act on that confidence by relying on Jesus Christ and the work he accomplished through his death, burial, and resurrection.[13]

"Faith is the instrument by which we accept salvation," Keathley explains.[14]

Is conversion the work of God or the work of people? Berkhof clarifies that God is the author, but man "co-operates in conversion." He writes, "Dr. Kuyper calls attention to the fact that in the Old Testament *shubh* is used 74 times of conversion as a deed of man, and only 15 times, of conversion as a gracious act of God; and that the New Testament represents conversion as a deed of man 26 times, and speaks of it only 2 or 3 times as an act of God."[15] Keathley explains, "Though conversion is a graciously enabled action, it still is a decision made by the hearer of the gospel." Also, "Repentance and faith are gifts from God, and a person converts only by his grace, but God does not repent and believe for us. Conversion is something we do."[16]

In this section, we have seen that conversion involves both repenting of sin and believing in Jesus. Repenting of sin entails a sinner changing his mind and turning from sin. Belief in Jesus involves both accepting the truth about Christ and our sinful condition as well as placing trust in Christ in order to be saved from sin and to have peace with God. Conversion results when anyone calls on the name of the Lord (Rom 10:13).

Converts Confess Christ through Baptism

Converts should confess their faith in Christ by identifying publicly with His death, burial, and resurrection through water baptism by immersion. From the time of the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:36–41), Christian converts have identified themselves publicly with Christ through the act of baptism. Some Christian traditions practice other modes of baptism (such as sprinkling or pouring) and baptize for different reasons (for salvation or as a sign of God's covenant). Many of those traditions baptize infants. Baptists, however, see a different pattern in the New Testament for the conversion of individuals and their subsequent baptism. Following Pentecost, the model is simple: a group of people hear the word of God, some of those people are converted (they repent and believe in Jesus), *then* those people who are converted identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus through

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[13]Keathley, "The Work of God in Salvation," 576–77.

[14]Ibid., 577.

[15]Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 490.

[16]Keathley, "The Work of God in Salvation," 574. Keathley clarifies that regeneration is a work of God, but he does not consider regeneration to be a condition for salvation (573–74, 582–86).

water baptism by immersion (Acts 2:36–41; 8:4–12; 8:26–38; 10:44–48; 16:13–15; 16:25–34; and other texts).[17]

Implications for Youth Ministry

Conversion

Every student's greatest need is to be converted to Christ. All students are sinful and separated from relationship with the holy, loving God because of their sin. Although this is difficult news for youth pastors to deliver and it can be discomforting for the listeners, it is necessary that students hear the bad news of their sinful condition before the holy God. It is only when confronted with their hopeless and helpless condition that they can truly appreciate God's gracious provision in Christ.

It is important for youth pastors to know that God desires to save every student. He loves every student in such a way that He desires their salvation, not damnation (John 3:17; 1 Tim 2:3–4; 2 Peter 3:9). Christ died for every person (Heb 2:9; 1 Tim 4:10; 1 John 2:2), including every teenager within the reach of your youth ministry. God offers to receive and forgive any student who will call on Him (Rom 10:13). Tragically, many students will hear the message of the gospel and refuse to repent and believe, and other students will never hear the message of the gospel. Even so, God loves every one of them.[18]

Youth ministers should faithfully declare the message of the gospel and call students to repent of their sin and believe in Jesus. Also, youth ministers should understand that their proclamations of the message of the gospel fall on four different types of soil, according to Jesus' parable in Matt 13:1–23 (see also the parallel texts in Mark 4:1–20 and Luke 8:4–15). The word of God will be snatched away from some hearers by Satan. Others will receive it with joy, but trials will reveal that the word of God never took root in their lives. A third group will hear the word of God but worldly desires will choke it out of their lives. Thankfully, a fourth group of students will hear the word of God, accept it, and bear fruit. Because only God knows the type of soil which comprises each person's heart, youth pastors must faithfully proclaim God's word to all students, trusting God with the results of their seed-sowing.

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[17]For a classic and historic defense of believer's baptism, see Balthasar Hubmaier, *On the Christian Baptism of Believers* in *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism,* trans. and ed. H. Wayne Pikpin and John H. Yoder. Vol. 5 of Classics of the Radical Reformation (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 95–149.

[18]To explore the assertions in this paragraph, see my article, "Is the Gospel for All People or Only for Some People?" *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 11.2 (Fall 2014): 16–33, available at http://baptist-center.net/journals/JBTM_11-2_Fall_2014.pdf.

Some students were raised in Christian homes. Positively, this can result in those students being sheltered from certain negative influences and pain. Negatively, being raised in a Christian home can result in children who have become calloused to the message of the gospel. Also, many of those students might consider themselves to be Christians only on the basis of their parents' faith. Students need to understand that it is necessary for them to be converted. Although there are benefits and blessings to being raised in a Christian home, repentance and faith cannot be passed from parents to their children. Students must genuinely recognize their sinful, lost condition before God and personally repent of their sin and place their faith in Jesus.

Baptism and Rebaptism

Because Christian converts should confess their faith in Christ by submitting to water baptism, churches that are reaching teenagers will baptize teenagers. However, an unhealthy practice can occur. Churches and youth ministries which faithfully proclaim the message of the gospel sometimes yield a student who, by the time of high school graduation, has been baptized multiple times. What are the reasons for multiple baptisms, and what can be done to address the issue?

In some cases, a second baptism is warranted because the first baptism was administered when the student was an infant. Baptists do not consider such infant baptism to be biblical baptism, because infants are unable to follow the New Testament model of making a confession of faith. In those cases, a *second* baptism (after conversion) might actually be considered the student's *first* biblical baptism.

More frequently, though, the first of multiple baptisms occurs in early childhood. Churches which present the message of the gospel in weekly children's ministry classes as well as special events such as summer camp and Vacation Bible School will encounter children as young as 5–7 years old who recognize their sin and need for salvation. Parents, children's ministers, and pastors should affirm these child-like confessions of faith in Christ. However, great caution should be exercised in whether to baptize young children.[19]

If young children are baptized, then will they be considered full members of the church? If so, can these young children handle the responsibilities of church membership? For example, church members should hold one another accountable and be able to confront matters of sin among the members (Matt 18:15–20; 1 Cor 5). Also, church members should be able to make decisions such as selecting deacons (Acts 6:1–6) as well as selecting and sending out mis-

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[19]For more on theology and ministry with children, see my chapter, "The Baptist (& baptistic) View of Infants and Children in the Church," in *Five Views on Infants and Children in the Church*, ed. Harwood and Kevin Lawson (Nashville: B&H Academic, forthcoming, 2017). A video of this presentation is available at https://youtu.be/RkZx6jiGILg.

sionaries (Acts 13:1–3). Although Jesus welcomed the little children (Matt 19:13–15; Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17), He did not baptize them and He did not place adult demands on the children. For all of these reasons, Baptist churches often distinguish between members who are children and those who are adults. Only members who are 18 years old, for example, can vote on church matters. Other churches require children (or children and parents) to complete a multi-week course which addresses issues such as salvation, baptism, and membership. The purpose for these practices is to balance the interests of both affirming the child's confession of faith in Christ as well as reserving adult responsibilities in the local church for adults.

Some children who were baptized at a young age will find themselves neglecting their relationship with God during their early-teen years. During a summer camp or discipleship weekend, some of those students will be confronted with the reality that they are not living for Christ. When convicted of their sin, they might interpret their need to recommit themselves to Christ as the need to be converted. It is at this point that Christian leaders and youth pastors occupy a vital role in helping youth understand how God works in a person's life and how to respond appropriately. Those students will say something like this: "I prayed a prayer when I was young, but I don't think I understood all that was involved in being a Christian. Now I really want to trust Christ and make sure that I am saved."

Youth leaders should not encourage teens to find assurance of their salvation simply because they prayed a prayer as a child. However, every young child who has genuinely called on the Lord has done so by praying some type of prayer. This creates a dilemma. If the youth leader counsels these teens that they were *genuinely saved* as young children, the leader risks providing false assurance to some who might not have genuinely repented of their sin and trusted Christ. Instead, they only repeated the words of a prayer as a child. However, if the youth leader affirms that the teens were *not saved* as young children, this discards their genuine, child-like confession of faith. What these teens need is discipleship and assurance of salvation, rather than being led in another prayer and being baptized after "nailing down" their salvation. This cycle of doubt followed by salvation prayers and subsequent baptism can repeat itself several times, which is unhealthy for the teenager and for the local church.

Perhaps the frequency of multiple baptisms described above could be minimized by youth ministers implementing a couple of practices. First, regularly teach students the New Testament model of conversion and baptism as well as holy living and confession of sin. If students understand that conversion involves repentance and faith rather than sinless living, then perhaps they will better distinguish between the need for Christians to repent of unholy living and doubting one's union with Christ. Second, discourage and delay re-baptism until it seems clear to you and the student (in consultation with the senior pastor) that there has been a genuine change in the student; he or she seems to be a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). If the student seems to have

been born again (John 3:3), then it is right to baptize the student after conversion—even if the student has already experienced water baptism by immersion.[20]

Conclusion

Youth pastors have a high calling. They are to faithfully point teenagers to a relationship with Jesus Christ and train them to follow Him. It is not possible for youth pastors and adult leaders to know what is in the heart of the teens under their care. They can never know with certainty who among them have been converted. However, leaders can regularly declare God's Word and pray for God's Spirit to work in the hearts of their youth so that some will be converted. Youth leaders have the responsibility of making disciples, which includes declaring the gospel and baptizing those who repent of their sin and trust in Christ, as well as teaching these teenage converts to observe all that He has commanded (Matt 28:18–20). May the Lord bless and guide our efforts to follow His Great Commission.

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[20]For a helpful resource on assurance of salvation, see J. D. Greear, *Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart: How to Know for Sure You Are Saved* (Nashville: B&H, 2013), esp. 113–15, which addresses pre-conversion water baptism from a Baptist (and baptistic) perspective. Pat Findley, Student Pastor at Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Springfield, Missouri, provided feedback on a previous version of this article and directed my attention to Greear's book.

Emerging Scholarship on Youth and Religion: Resources for a New Generation of Youth Ministry

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The story of American Christianity includes a longstanding concern for the religious lives of young people. Particularly in the mid-twentieth century, as the idea solidified of adolescence as a separate life stage with its own unique characteristics and needs, scholars and church leaders in search of resources for understanding and working with youth began to utilize studies from psychology, sociology, or education. An important turn, moving into the twenty-first century, can be in an emerging body of research and literature that makes theology, spirituality and faith formation central to such inquiries about youth. This essay reviews a selection of books, edited volumes, and articles by scholars working at the intersections of youth and religion whose work has significant implications for the practice of youth ministry.

The resources under consideration here divide into three categories according to the type of project in which they originated: (1) reports on the findings of research studies; (2) writings arising from the various programs for high school youth; and, (3) works from other projects which, although not primarily about young people, include youth as a key constituency or focus of attention.

I. Writings from Research Projects on Youth and Youth Ministry

Among the thirteen works considered in this essay, two (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn, 2001; Martinson, Black, and Roberto, 2010) are book-length reports detailing the findings of studies specifically aimed at enhancing and supporting the work of youth ministry in the churches. Two others (Powell, Shelley, and O'Brien, 2009; and Powell, King, and Clark, 2005) offer article-length accounts of the preliminary findings of two additional studies.

Together these writings illustrate a growing trend in practical theology toward empirical research in which social science research methods are employed in the service of learning for youth ministry. This trend toward research-based writings represents a particularly significant turn in the scholarship of youth ministry, away from theoretical, anecdotal, or prescriptive work of an earlier era, toward a literature grounded in qualitative and quantitative research studies that takes youth religion as its subject matter and thus expands the range of constructions of youth and youth ministries.

The challenge with this empirical turn, of course, is that many of the practitioners and some scholars of youth ministry who constitute the audience for this literature lack a social science education that would allow them to helpfully engage and make use of such research for their work. Writers working from empirical studies thus find themselves caught in the conundrum of needing to write for a non-technical readership of youth ministry workers and scholars, without either "talking down" to those readers or so diluting the research that its significance for researcher-scholars is diminished.

Merton Strommen, Karen Jones and Dave Rahn. *Youth Ministry that Transforms: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Hopes, Frustrations, and Effectiveness of Today's Youth Workers.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2001.

The authors of *Youth Ministry That Transforms* attempt to straddle just this boundary, as they move between reporting on the findings of survey research in a manner that makes the data transparent, while also offering a narrative interpretation of use to those readers whose chief concern lies not in the percentage of respondents to a particular survey item but rather in the meanings and implications of the findings for ministry with youth. What is most unique about their research is its focus: this study is about youth ministry as seen through the work of youth *ministers*. In contrast to other recent, large- scale studies in which the primary research questions concern the religious beliefs and practices of young people (e.g., Smith and Denton, 2005), Strommen, Jones, and Rahn seek to get inside the worlds of those who work with young people in the churches and para-church organizations, in search of changes necessary for youth ministry in the twenty-first century.

This project's research team developed a survey instrument based on input from 2,130 attendees to the 1996 Youth Leadership Conference in Atlanta, sponsored by the National Network of Youth Ministries. The resulting 243-item questionnaire was then administered by mail to full time youth ministers across several denominations, and 2,416 responses became the material for analyzing youth ministry from the point of view of those engaged in it.

The study highlights and explores "Six Concerns Troubling Youth Ministers" (p. 20):

- Time conflicts between personal/family demands and those of the job

- Difficulties balancing time for administrative work with time for face-to-face contact with youth
- Lack of connection between youth and the church to which they belong
- Youth group apathy
- Financial issues, including youth ministry salaries and budgets
- Status issues, described in the report as a lack of respect or personal support for the position of youth minister

The central claim echoed across the book's chapters is that transformational youth ministry happens when "congregational initiative" (an engaged congregation that has "shared owner-ship" for youth ministry and makes both tangible and spiritual investments in supporting its youth) meets the inner resources and capacities brought by the youth minister her/himself. They offer a model for transformative youth ministry based on clarity of mission, volunteer training, congregational ownership of the ministry, and the prioritizing of youth spiritual de-velopment.

Subsequent chapters evaluate how well churches and their youth ministers are able to carry out this model, as the authors report detailed responses to particular questions and data clus-ters, ranging from how well various youth ministries achieve the desired outcome of involving youth in service activities (higher among Episcopal, Presbyterian, and United Methodists; low-er among Southern Baptists and para-church organizations Young Life and Youth for Christ), to "public witness" defined in terms of evangelistic faith sharing (highest among Assembly of God and Southern Baptists; lowest among Presbyterians and Lutherans). Data analysis allows correlations to be made between the various questions and factors such as a youth worker's tenure as a youth minister, denominational affiliation, gender, education, youth group size, etc. For example, the study finds that a correlation exists between the age of the youth minister and her/his ability to relate to parent of youth. But years of experience as a youth minister (tenure) trumps age when it comes to relating to parents (pp. 231–33).

The most helpful chapters for youth ministers probably are the final three dealing with min-istry goals, getting organizational support, and training/education for youth ministry. These chapters move from the more descriptive arena identifying specific findings of the study to make recommendations about what is needed for youth ministers to prosper. For example, the chapters addressing goals suggest concrete ways that youth workers may modify their personal and professional goals toward greater job satisfaction. The final chapter on training for youth ministry identifies the desires of youth workers to be better equipped for their work, particu-larly in work-immersive ways that do not require them to enroll in expensive or time-intensive degree programs focused more on "why" questions than "how" questions. The book concludes with a suggested curriculum for training that fits the approach to youth ministry advocated by the authors, with considerable similarity to the findings of Powell, et al. (2005), addressed below.

Roland Martinson, Wes Black and John Roberto. *The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry: Leading Congregations Toward Exemplary Youth Ministry.* **St. Paul, MN: EYM Publishing, 2010.**

The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry similarly takes youth ministry as the focus of attention, but from a rather different point of view, that of the congregation. Is it possible to identify characteristics of congregations that attract and nurture committed Christian young people? The book explores this question as it reports the research findings of the Study of Exemplary Congregations in Youth Ministry (hereafter, EYM), a study of effective youth ministry as seen through the lens of 131 "exemplary congregations" practicing it. In contrast to *Youth Ministry that Transforms*' focus on the work of youth ministers, the EYM project sought to discover specifically congregational factors contributing to "vital Christian faith" in youth.

Situated within Luther Seminary's Children, Youth, and Family Ministries program under the direction of veteran youth ministry specialist Roland Martinson, researchers used existing studies on youth ministry (Strommen's 1974/1988 Five Cries of Youth; Peter Benson and Carolyn Elkin's 1990 report, *Effective Christian Education*) to determine characteristics of "vital Christian faith" in young people. They then sought out (through the nominations of denominational officials) congregations within which "committed Christian youth" were members. The research explores these congregations and their role in nurturing and developing such faith commitments in young people. The EYM research project included both qualitative and quantitative modalities involving surveys, interviews, and site visits to 131congregations across seven denominations.

Out of this extensive database, researchers identify forty four "faith assets" of congregational cultures that support the faith of young people. They present these in relation to four different aspects affecting youth ministry, which they name in separate chapters as (1) congregational faith and qualities, (2) youth ministry qualities, (3) family and household faith, and (4) leadership in the congregation. Under the category of congregational faith, for example, the following assets describe a congregation's "capacities to influence the faith and lives of young people" (p. 260):

- Experiences God's living presence.
- Makes faith central.
- Emphasizes prayer.
- Focuses on discipleship.
- Emphasizes scripture.
- Makes mission central.

Similarly, faith assets related to the qualities of a congregation's *youth ministry* that matter for influencing the faith of young people include (p. 262):

- Establishes a caring environment.
- Develops quality relationships.
- Focuses on Jesus Christ.
- Considers life issues.
- Uses many approaches
- Is well organized and planned.

The authors underscore that their list of faith assets is not intended to be prescriptive. Rather, they are describing features found in churches with vital youth ministries that leaders may use as guidelines for assessing their own contexts.

The central claim of this book is that the nurture of vital Christian faith in young people is not the product of any single activity or characteristic of youth ministry, but instead is influenced by the culture of the whole church, which these writers term a "culture of the Spirit." At the same time, they extrapolate from the data a number of specific practices under each of the above four categories that contribute to the congregation's overall nurture of young people's faith, for example coming up with nine youth ministry practices visible in virtually all of the congregations to some degree or another. They include, for example, having a on young people outside of the faith community as well as those within it; and "equip[ping] young people for leadership within the congregation and for following Christ in the world" (p 136). These nine elements, assert the authors, form a pattern of youth ministry that moves through a process of "welcoming, instructing, equipping and sending" (p. 136).

The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry identifies a single goal behind the youth ministries of every one of its exemplary congregations: the forming of disciples (p. 254). The authors define youth discipleship as "deepening their relationship with Jesus, helping them understand the Christian faith better, applying their faith to daily life and serious life choices, and sharing their faith with others" (p. 254).

The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry's other findings serve to underscore and amplify claims about youth ministry made by various authors across decades of writing on youth work and young people in the churches Thus they offer a helpful empirical basis to a number of taken-for-granted assertions about church work with youth. For instance, the EYM study points to the presence of a significant web of strong, high-quality, multi-generational relationships informed by faith as the distinctive congregational context in which young people of vital faith are immersed. This finding underscores a long-held characterization of good youth ministry as relational at its heart, a claim made by scholars and practitioners alike for the better part of the twentieth century (cf. Root, 2007; Senter, 2010). Similarly, the EYM research highlights the importance of family and parents, identifying congregational support for family ministries as crucial to the thriving of the faith of young people. This too is a theme appearing across other youth ministry literature of the past two decades (cf. DeVries, 1994, 2004; Clark, 1997). The EYM study also names youth ministry as a "team effort" involving youth, parents, youth

ministers, other adults, and church leadership including pastors, offering a somewhat new twist on a theme that first appeared in youth ministry literature in the early 1980's as an antidote to so-called "lone ranger" models of youth work (cf. Holderness 1981, 1997).

The Spirit and Cultural of Youth Ministry intersperses reporting on the research data and its analysis with narrative case examples drawn from interviews and congregational observation. Tables detailing various dimensions of congregational faith appear alongside numerous "application tools," or resources by which a congregation might map dimensions of its own culture or evaluate its existing faith assets. In this way, the authors intend their book as "a roadmap for promoting youth of vibrant, committed Christian faith for years to come" (p. 17), to contribute to the development of youth ministry in congregations. In its provision of such resources, this work bears some resemblance to the National Initiative for Adolescent Catechesis' web-based Catholic youth ministry revitalization project, which draws on analysis of the National Study of Youth and Religion's Sample of Catholic youth and young adults and provides parishes with tools to assess the strengths and challenges of their ministries with youth (http://adolescentcatechesis.org/research/completed-research).

The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry is a significant contribution to the theory and practice of youth ministry. It takes congregations seriously as a primary context for youth ministry. It acknowledges the importance of convergence between the mission and goals of youth ministry with those of the wider congregation. And by offering congregations and their leaders a language and set of tools for assessing and taking steps to transform the congregational culture in which a particular youth ministry is situated, this work unlike many research-based reports provides concrete pathways for action.

Kara Powell, Pamela Ebstyne King, and Chap Clark, "The Needs of Youth Ministry at the Turn of the Century: Hearing the Voice of the People." *Journal of Youth Ministry* 4, no. 1 (September 1, 2005): 85–98.

Kara Powell, Marshall Shelley, and Brandon O'Brien, "Is the Era of Age Segregation Over? After 50 years of student ministry, a researcher argues that the future will require brining the generations together." *Leadership* 30, no. 3 (June 1, 2009): 43–47.

Authors of a 2005 article in the *Journal of Youth Ministry*, Kara Powell, Pamela King, and Chap Clark all serve on the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary, where Powell also directs Fuller's Center for Youth and Family Ministry. Powell, King, and Clark's article reports on research focused on identifying the perceived needs for training within the field of evangelical youth and family ministries (p. 88). Toward this end, these collaborators borrow their methodology from the business and marketing arena, utilizing "Voice of the Customer" (VOC) research, reported as an effective and efficient means of identifying perceived needs of constituents. Through VOC, they queried thirty-four "experts in the field of faith based youth work"

(six educators and twenty eight practitioners) nominated by seminary professors as nationally recognized leaders in the field of youth ministry.

Powell and her collaborators identified specific topical foci as primary training needs in the perceptions of youth ministry professionals, drawn into five categories: a theological and spiritual foundation for ministry; psychological understandings of youth development; family dynamics; the emerging global culture of youth ministry; and multicultural perspectives (p. 94). The authors' strongest interest lies in the implications of these finding for faculty teaching in certificate programs and other modes of training/theological education for youth ministry. Of particular note is their discussion of "the need for creative and innovative delivery systems in academic education" (p. 96) with youth workers who want to be better equipped for their work but face limits of time, money, and geography.

"Is the Era of Age Segregation Over?" is the title of an interview (conducted by Marshall Shelley and Brandon O'Brien) with Kara Powell about her ongoing College Transition Project, a 3-year study of 222 high school seniors and their transition from high school youth group to college settings. The interview, which appears in an issue of the evangelically-oriented journal *Leadership*, describes the research as a study to "understand how parents, churches, and youth ministries can set students on a trajectory of lifelong faith and service" (p. 44).

Preliminary findings highlight the importance of youth participation in a congregation's life prior to graduation from high school, especially its intergenerational worship. This runs counter to the recent American history of youth ministry in which youth activities often take place separately from those of the rest of the congregation. Powell asserts that such age segregation has run its course, arguing from the responses of high school seniors in her study that churches have underestimated the capacities and needs of youth: "Adults underestimate how much kids want to be with us. Kids are far more interested in talking to caring, trustworthy adults than we think they are" (p. 47).

II. Writings Arising from Theological Programs for High School Youth

Fred Edie. *Book, Bath, Table and Time: Christian Worship as a Source and Resource for Youth Ministry*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 2007.

Edie teaches youth ministry at Duke Divinity School and directs the Duke Youth Academy (DYA). He wrote *Book, Bath, Table, and Time* out of his deep love for liturgy and his experience leading a youth academy that structures its daily rhythm around the *ordo*—the church's patterned, liturgical worship tradition through "holy things" of bath (baptism), book (scriptures), table (Eucharist) and time ("the patterning of temporal rhythms in light of the triune God") (p. 7).

The book asserts three themes about young people and youth ministry across its chapters. The three themes are laced throughout the book but are spelled out in the book's concluding "postscript"):

1. Youth ministry rightly conceives of adolescents not only as objects of ministry but as agents of ministry.
2. Youth ministry rightly conceives of ministry in theological terms.
3. Youth ministry understands church as an ecological configuration.

Critiquing current practices of youth ministry as individualistic, market-driven and entertainment oriented, Edie offers as medicine for youth ministry's ills not some outside remedy imported into the church, but rather the church's own communal worship practices. Edie looks to the *ordo* and a way of life shaped by participation in its embodied practice of worship as key to the renewal of youth ministry. Edie suggests that youth ministry thus may be reconceived through practicing the ordo as a way for young people to experience the presence of the living God, a revelation of God's identity and a invitation to vocational discernment (p. 12). This assertion is possible because, he notes, there is a deep connection between how Christians worship and how we live our lives in the world and before God.

Edit offers experiences from the Duke Youth Academy as a "case study" in worship's generative power for youth ministry. Alongside a strong (and beautifully written) dose of liturgical theology throughout these chapters, Edie also scatters numerous resources for pedagogy and practice in youth ministry. He argues for the formational power of frequent participation in the Eucharist, for example, and provides clues for those who work with youth in churches to reflectively engage their community's Eucharistic practices at a deeper level. Each chapter, in fact, ends with a brief section on implications for youth ministry.

The book's discussion of aesthetic-artistic forms of knowing and the religious imagination of youth provides a much needed alternative to those parts of the youth ministry canon that continue to overly rely on cognitive articulations of belief as the primary evidence of faith. It is Edie's contention that "worship becomes a school for the body and the emotions" (p. 86) not only (or even primarily) through the explicitly stated content of its various elements, but through its embodied aesthetics.

Edie proposes a narrative approach to scripture ("the bible as story") that he sees as already present in lectionary-based worship, as a pedagogical strategy for biblical literacy among youth. Baptism becomes a curriculum for teaching theological reflection. Finally Edie offers DYA's practices of communal daily prayer as an example of how this worship can form persons into patterns that shape the whole of life as prayerful by structuring the rhythms of time. The book's latter chapters consider two practices Edie terms *ordo*-nary practices—housekeeping and gardening—as extra liturgical practices of everyday life that are organically related to liturgical

practices—e.g., "…the hospitality of our worshiping is purposefully linked with other practices of sharing and receiving hospitality" (p. 210).

Where does all of this finally land? Significantly, Edie ends with a retrieval of Christian baptism's ties to vocation as the theological grounds for the vocational discernment of youth. Baptism invites young people to "become who they are in Christ," and to discern God's call to them into the future, amid a culture adrift in distorted notions of freedom and choice.

David White. *Practicing Discernment with Youth: A Transformative Youth Ministry Approach.* Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 2005.

David White worked with two of the Endowment's programs for high school youth and religion. From the vantage point of these two programs and his own scholarship on contemporary culture and the faith of young people, White advocates for youth ministry oriented around spiritual practices of discernment as a way to redress what he calls the crisis in youth ministry. This crisis principally involves the fragmentation, distortion, and isolation experienced by youth as their lives are constructed toward distraction by a culture that is hostile to them. Evoking the words of Jesus' Great Commandment, White speaks of discernment as a practice of the heart (the place of compassion and intuition), mind (the place of reasoned analysis), and soul (the place of contemplation and imagination, remembering and dreaming), as well as with one's strength (the place of action). All three are held together because "*the healing needed among youth demands that we introduce them to practices of discernment that engage their whole selves*" (p. 84–85, italics in original).

White's book teaches a simple discernment practice involving four steps, each of which is keyed to this definition.

- Listening, or ortho-pathos, involves loving God with one's heart;
- Understanding, or ortho-optomai, is a way of loving God with one's mind;
- Remembering/dreaming, or ortho-doxy, concerns loving God with one's soul; and
- Acting, or ortho-praxis, embodies loving God with one's strength.

White explores each of these facets of the discernment process, offering practical approaches for building youth ministry around them. For example, in the chapter on listening, White suggests a small group discussion process to encourage listening to the stories of youth in congregations and youth groups, as well as theatre games and improvisation, body sculptures, and journaling, videos, and contemplative prayer practices like Centering Prayer and the Examen. White's book, even more than most under consideration in this essay, lays out a clear program of activities by which his ideas may be enacted in a local congregation and its youth ministry.

Dori Grinenko Baker and Joyce Ann Mercer. *Lives to Offer: Accompanying Youth on Their Vocational Quests.* Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 2007.

Baker and Mercer, both research fellows with Youth Theological Initiative at the time they wrote this book together, started out working separately to analyze several years of interviews with youth scholars of YTI. In conversations they discovered they each were drawn to the theme of vocation surfacing repeatedly across these interviews. So they began a lively collaboration resulting in *Lives to Offer*.

What if youth ministry focused on equipping young people to walk in the way of Jesus, and accompanying them in their processes of vocational discovery? The book proposes as the central task of youth ministry accompanying youth on their vocational quests, or walking alongside them as they seek paths for offering their lives and gifts in service. The book then proceeds to consider some ways youth ministry can be responsive to these in relation to youth constructions of gender identity using film; practices of "holy listening;" immersions in nature; and story telling circles.

Baker and Mercer retrieve theological understandings of vocation that seek to uncouple it from its contemporary U.S. associations with paid labor alone. They find within the Christian tradition an alternative "curriculum of vocation" to the wider culture's consumption- and affluence-oriented, competition-driven vocational trajectory. This alternative curriculum includes counter-narratives for vocation that instead are concerned with care for the earth, curiosity about other religions and about diversity within one's own faith, reconciliation of violent conflict, and compassion for all living things (p. 26).

One theme addressed in this book that does not receive strong attention in many of the other works under consideration here is the construction of gender. Baker and Mercer consider the role of gender in opening and constraining the vocational imaginations of youth. They offer clues about ways youth ministry can pay better attention to this dynamic of identity that participates in shaping the vocational quests of young people. The book ends with an epilogue in which the authors interview James W. Fowler (who participated in the early development of YTI's interview research) on the topic of youth and vocation.

Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, ed. *Keep It Real: Working with Today's Black Youth*. **Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005.**

The Youth Hope-Builders Academy is theological program for black high school youth directed by Anne Streaty Wimberly at Atlanta's Interdenominational Theological Center. *Keep It Real*, a volume edited by Wimberly, contains chapters written by adult scholars who have held leadership roles at the Academy, for adults involved in the lives of youth. Wimberly leads off with the volume's prologue about the realities faced by the present generation of black adolescents: " 'Keeping it real' is a term used to indicate an engaged form of Christian youth ministry that intentionally brings to the forefront the concrete life experiences and concerns of youth," writes Wimberly. In contrast to some of the earlier research surveyed in the present essay— some of which seems to turn a blind eye to the complex and varied realities of family circum-

stances, income groups, peer groups, neighborhoods, church experiences, and other contexts forming youth and their faith which are not uniformly positive or helpful—Wimberly insists that youth ministry with black teenagers must "keep it real." It does so by acknowledging these realities and bringing them into connection with the message of the gospel. She includes among the complexities of black youths' lives the images of youth constructed by media, and subsequent negative perceptions of youth by many adults. Wimberly calls for youth ministry to be "village environments that counter adults' devaluation of youth" (p. xvi). She names five specific actions necessary on the part of black churches:

- embracing adolescence as a gift;
- making room for a process outlined as "youth-context-story";
- a response of gratitude by adults for youths' critique;
- intentional mentoring in and modeling of Christian faith; and
- including parental figures in ministry with youth.

These called for actions also identify the themes of the subsequent chapters. Taken as a whole, these chapters offer a framework for contemporary youth ministry seen as a "village of hope" for black adolescents.

III. Literature from Other Projects of the Youth and Religion Initiative of the Lilly Endowment

Mark Yaconelli. *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

In *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, Mark Yaconelli offers an approach to working with youth grounded in contemplative prayer practices by ***adult leaders*** in youth ministry. A veteran of evangelical youth ministry in the tradition of his late father Mike's "Youth Specialties" organization, Mark Yaconelli recounts his experience of finding himself ineffective and "burned out" in his youth work, as he gradually came to the realization that much of the frenetic activity in traditional approaches to youth ministry comes from anxiety rather than love that cultivates young people's relationships with God.

Introduced to contemplative prayer practices, Yaconelli began to refashion his ministry with youth around the idea of young people's desire to be with spiritually grounded adults, utilizing contemplative prayer as life-giving practices to get youth leaders focused on the presence and love of God as the source of ministry. The Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project (YMSP), which he directed at San Francisco Theological Seminary from 1996–2004, invited youth leaders (and through their leadership, their congregations) from a diverse group of Christian denominations across the U.S. to experiment with putting covenanted, intentional practices of contemplative prayer at the center of their youth ministries.

Contemplative Youth Ministry thus offers a way out of anxiety-based, program-centered youth ministry. Like Kara Powell and other authors in this review, Yaconelli suggests that the popular notion that youth do not want to be with adults is patently false. Youth want relationships with adults. But, says, Yaconelli, "what youth need most are people who know how to be present to God and present to one another" (p. 24).

The main spiritual questions young people have for adults concern young peoples' longings to be fully alive: "They're not looking for safe activities. What they're seeking is the companionship of adults who embody a different way of being…They are looking for adults who know how to live lives of love" (p. 68). Yaconelli's approach to youth ministry therefore calls for adults who work with youth to engage in contemplative prayer practices such as Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, and the Examen, as practices that can school them in graceful, authentic, and loving lives.

The book outlines and teaches these processes, as it illustrates their impact on youth ministries through examples and quotations from youth ministers participating in YMSP.

The book includes questions for reflection and ideas for reframing even the everyday nuts-and-bolts aspects of youth ministries through a contemplative approach. For example, volunteer recruitment gets turned on its head from being a labor of coercion or even manipulation to being a practice of congregational calling and discernment. A slightly more recent companion volume, *Growing Souls: Experiments in Contemplative Youth Ministry* (2007), profiles four congregations engaged in contemplative youth ministry practices, and offers stores, experiences, and interviews with participants in YMSP.

Don Richter. *Mission Trips that Matter: Embodied Faith for the Sake of the World*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2008.

Richter's book, with its introduction by Dorothy Bass (with whom Richter is a frequent collaborator through the Valparaiso "Practices" project), comes as a welcome resource amid the proliferation of "canned mission trip" experiences marketed to youth leaders. He challenges facile, consumer-oriented, and colonialist approaches to mission experiences by retrieving from Christian theology the practice of *pilgrimage* as the orienting framework to shape participation in mission trips.

The book offers an approach through which leaders can "mine the meaning of mission trip experiences," (p. 19), helping groups to engage in reflective practices that promote ongoing transformation. Toward that end, Richter engages the *body* as both a concrete reality requiring attention on mission trips and a metaphor for various aspects of mission-trip experience meriting reflection. He writes,

Bodies are not incidental to the mission-trip experience… Life in the body lies at the heart of Christian faith. We don't have religious or spiritual experiences apart from our bodies. So we need to pay careful attention to what our own body and the bodies of others are teaching us as we undertake mission trips (p. 18–19).

The body and its various parts becomes the metaphorical device through which Richter explores the multiple dimensions of mission trips and their formative power for participants, through a series of meditations and prayers on parts of the body.

Chapter titles—attentive eyes, attuned ears, sturdy backs, beautiful feet, open hands, courageous lips, conspiring noses—locate in the body various theological and pragmatic matters germane to mission-trip experiences. In the meditation on "beautiful feet," for example, Richter explores what it means to accompany others, walking with them in faith. The chapter begins with a prayer and a story of a young person volunteering in the foot clinic of her church's homeless ministry, caring for persons by washing and caring for their feet. He develops the notion of mission trip work as standing with others: "With respect to framing mission trips, 'standing with others' and 'walking with others' avoid the problematic image of 'fishing for others," (p. 98), a metaphor often used for extending the call to discipleship to others on mission trips. Richter explores this and other problematic scriptural allusions often used to frame mission trip experiences in ways that disrespect and objectify the people in these settings to which church groups go to serve. He suggests instead activities that help mission trip participants reflect on:

- how they want to walk with others;
- what kind of (ecological) footprint they will leave;
- what can be learned from close attention to the feet of others (Do they have shoes? What is the condition of their feet?); and
- what metaphorical "shoes" trip participants might need to remove in order to stand on holy ground in this place of the mission trip.

The book's final section on "building the body for mission" looks at mission-trip experiences from the perspective of the relationships between so called sending and receiving bodies. He suggests ways for churches in the context of inequalities to engage in mission through partnerships with local groups/churches in the trip locations. Throughout the book Richter emphasizes participation in faith practices as key to participants' ongoing transformation after the trip is completed. The final chapters offer concrete suggestions for practices by congregations, along with additional resources and prayers for use by trip leaders.

Richter's book, beautifully written and accessible, throughout its pages invites consideration of many difficult issues embedded in mission trip experiences (e.g., income disparities, power relations, paternalistic mission history, etc.). It does so in a way that simultaneously challenges problematic practices and respects readers' differing starting points in engaging such matters.

Dorothy Bass and Don Richter, eds. *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2002.

Bass and Richter teamed up to produce a unique collaborative work extending the insights of the earlier edited volume edited by Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, with and for youth. The project underlying *Way to Live* paired youth and adults together, to think and write about 18 different faith practices rendered in plain language. For example, the chapter on practices of stewarding possessions by Mark Yaconelli and Alexx Campbell is entitled "Stuff," while Joyce Hollyday and Kaitlyn Filar's chapter on practicing hospitality is called, simply, "Welcome."

Practices included in this volume mirror many of the same ones addressed in *Practicing Our Faith*. But with its youth orientation, *Way to Live* emphasizes dimensions of these practices more significant in the lives of youth and adds practices situated in the particular needs and concerns of young people. For example, the chapter on "grieving" parallels the earlier volume's practice, named "dying well," with its focus on holding together lament and hope. But here, the grieving chapter opens with a young person's articulation of the pain, confusion, and struggle to make sense of massive suffering and death in the world, and of personal suffering in the face of individual loss. Writers Cheryl Kirk-Duggan and Tatiana Wilson then introduce the Christian practice of lament as a way to grieve losses:

> The practice of lament gives you time and permission to vent your pent-up anger, your deep sadness, and your self-blame. You allow yourself to grieve in a way that leads to healing and renewal. As you pour out your grief and loss, pain, and anger in the presence of God, you discover that God hears your cries of anguish and comforts you (p. 251).

Among other practices particularly situated in the everyday life-worlds of youth addressed in *Way to Live* are friendship, listening to music, embodiment/caring for bodies, and playing. There is an interactive web based companion resource (www.waytolive.org) for use by youth and/or youth ministry leaders, which includes ideas for reflection, discussion, and active engagement of the book's practices.

Dorothy Bass and Susan Briehl, eds. *On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2010.

On Our Way further extends the work of the Valparaiso "Practices" Project headed up by Dorothy Bass. In another edited volume exploring faith practices of everyday life, this time the practices are oriented toward young people entering young adulthood. This book provides a resource for reflection on particular faith practices, which Bass sets within the overarching faith agenda of "living a whole life attentively…together…in the real world…for the good of all… in response to God." These five characteristics are the volume's working definition of practicing faith, and they become the rubrics of organizing and ordering the various chapters on particular practices:

- "attentive" (practices of study and discernment);
- "together" (community, friendship and intimacy, singing);
- "in the real world" (creation care; desire, need, and money; honoring the body);
- "for the good of all" (knowing and loving neighbors of other faiths; peacemaking and non-violence; doing justice); and
- "in response to God" (living in the presence of God).

Particularly noteworthy in relation to the intended readership for this book, namely emerging adults who possibly are making the transition from student life to fulltime work, is the chapter by Douglas Hicks called "making a good living." This practice, defined by the author as "the practice of using one's economic values, choices, and behaviors, to shape a life focused on those goods that really do matter" (p. 118), uncouples the Christian theological notion of abundance from material prosperity.

One striking feature across the chapters of *On Our Way* is the authenticity and beauty of the stories told by these authors to make real these practices in the minds and hearts of readers. For instance, Evelyn Parker, writing on honoring the body, tells a beautifully moving story about bathing her father and dressing him in the last moments of his life, to underscore the holiness and significance of practices that honor human embodiment. Co-editor Briehl's concluding chapter provides a theological summary of what it means to "live in the presence of God," through the engagement of practices that together constitute a way of life. On the "Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith" website www.practicingourfaith leaders of ministry for emerging adults can also access video conversations with the book's various authors and a related PDF study guide with discussion questions, related scripture passages, and prayers for each author-video (see http://practicingour-faith.org/OOW_video_conversations) .

John Roberto, "The Center for Ministry Development: Promoting Innovative Ministry With Adolescents, Young Adults, And Families," *Journal of Family Ministry* 13, no. 2 (June 1, 1999): 59–68.

John Roberto, "Weaving Together Liturgy, Justice, And Catechesis," in *Liturgy and Justice*, edited by Anne Y. Koester, pp. 139–46. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002.

Roberto, now editor of the journal *Lifelong Faith* and founder of an organization called LifelongFaith Associates, was director and co-founder of the Center for Ministry Development (CMD). This organization, established in the late 1970's to equip youth ministries in Catholic parishes and dioceses, developed one of the earliest certificate training programs in youth ministry studies. Over the years, the CMD has expanded its foci to include ministry with families, emerging adults, and lifelong intergenerational faith formation, conducting research and offering training programs in all of these areas.

In his 1999 article, Roberto discusses the Center's approach to nurturing faith in families as two-fold, involving both the development of family-friendly congregations and support for family faith nurture in the home. Roberto first spells out in great detail the set of guiding beliefs behind the Center's work with congregations, offering a vision of the family as the domestic church, and laying out a strength-promoting approach to working with families. The guiding beliefs articulate "the need to respect individual and cultural differences among families," (p. 61), and the importance of flexible outreach to families whose structures vary from past times, and whose priorities and commitments call for varied activities and programs to reach families. Roberto identifies the Center's belief that "ministry with families needs to treat families as partners in ministry" (p. 61) alongside the assertion that "ministry with families needs to work collaboratively with the wider community on behalf of families. Congregations need to work in partnership with other congregations and community organizations" (p. 61).

Roberto names the Center's four strategies for helping congregations become more family friendly and for promoting family faith at home, including ideas for how to implement the strategy and reflection questions that congregational leaders may use to assess the "family friendliness" of their own contexts (pp. 62–62):

1. Incorporate a family perspective into existing congregational programs or activities, making them more family-friendly or family-sensitive.
2. Design and implement congregational programs or activities for families.
3. Design and implement in-home family activities.
4. Focus congregational programs and ministries around key themes or church events that partner the home and congregation in a common faith formation effort.

Roberto concludes with four pages of "ideas for becoming family friendly." These include such suggestions as developing a regular family newsletter, or incorporating parent education into existing programing and activities. One of the developing areas of youth ministry continues to be family ministry. Roberto's background of guiding beliefs about family ministry, along with his strategies and ideas, could be valuable especially for youth ministers seeking help to envision the intersections between youth and family ministries.

Roberto's 2002 chapter in a multi-authored volume by Catholic writers on liturgy and justice argues for a seamless integration of liturgy, justice, and catechesis for parish-wide faith formation. Roberto shares as an example the story of St. Vincent de Paul parish's practice of making their justice and service commitment during the month of February ("House the Homeless; Feed the Hungry"). This is the focus of liturgy, preaching, scripture study, and prayer across all age groups throughout the parish.

Using language parallel to Charles Foster's "event-ful religious education" (Foster, 1994), Roberto outlines the features of such an approach as one developed around events in the life of the faith community and emergent from the Church's life that comprehensively connects

home and *parish*. Furthermore it is experiential learning that prepares persons across all genera-
tions to participate in the church and bring faith practices and understandings to bear on their
everyday lives, bringing people of all ages to "know-how, know-what, know-why" (p. 144).

Some Concluding Reflections: Implications for Youth Ministry

Across the various writings surveyed in this essay some common themes surface that are
particularly suggestive for contemporary ministries with youth. ***First, a number of these writ-
ers point out the important role of congregations in shaping the faith of young people.*** This
theme presents a strong critique to models of youth ministry that separate young people from
the life and work of their congregations. These scholars make clear that youth ministry no
longer means constructing a parallel church experience for youth that operates separately and
independently of the work, worship, education, and service going on in the rest of the congre-
gation. The corollary point, of course, is that if a new generation of youth ministry highlights
young people's engagement in the congregation, then the rest of the congregation must also
come to understand itself as including young people also are the church. Several of the works
in this new body of literature indicate both of these as realities in many parts of the church.

***Second, the significance of family in the faith formation of young people appears as a
theme scattered across these writings***. The idea that family play a crucial role in forming the
faith of young people goes against the grain of earlier youth ministry models that situate the
peer group and (usually) young adult youth ministers as the key influences. This family theme
gains even more prominence when seen in relation to some other recent studies on youth and
religion which further underscore its importance (cf. National Initiative for Adolescent Cate-
chesis, 2012; Mercer, 2008; Daloz et al., 1996). An important implication concerns the variety
of family types and experiences in which young people today are situated: much of the exist-
ing youth ministry literature continues to assume a construct of family life from another social
era. If family truly is important in the faith formation of youth, an unavoidable implication
for youth ministry is the need more knowledge about working with youth from diverse family
types and structures.

***Third, nearly all of the writers of the books and articles explored in this overview essay
presume the formative power of practice***. An important implication for a new generation of
youth ministry is that when practice becomes such a central category for formation, the skill of
theological reflection on practice also moves into a more central place in formation curricula.
Many of the scholars whose works are cited above engage in the work of retrieval from Chris-
tian tradition of sometimes-ancient faith practices, along with the utilization of explicitly *theo-
logical and spiritual* frameworks for youth ministry, as the core of their ministries with young
people. This represents a shift from a previous generation's focus on developmental psychology
and group dynamics as key to understanding and working with youth. Youth ministers and
other church leaders today certainly are not asked to leave behind the substantive forms of
knowledge about young people that come from the study of education, psychology and sociol-

ogy. But the explicit turn toward spirituality, theology, and religion represented by this body of literature suggests that to work faithfully and effectively with youth in the churches, a new generation of youth ministers will need to become even "more fluent" in the practices, language, and thought world of the Christian tradition into which they seek to form disciples.

Fourth, throughout these works, authors lift up the challenges to living whole and faithful lives presented by contemporary U.S. consumer culture and North American affluence in the culturally diverse, global environment where youth ministry is situated. Some authors address the issue of how to take human embodiment and materiality seriously without fostering materialism, in global contexts of tremendous inequities. Some lift up the role of digital technologies in reshaping ministries with youth. Still others identify the seductiveness of consumerism and its power to distort young people's abilities to discern the vocations to which God calls them. These are different aspects of the same concern about the broader social context in which young people live and are formed as Christians today. What most of these authors have in common as they talk about this matter, however, is the inclusion of consumer culture as a key part in their diagnosis of the problems faced by youth today. This suggests that in the current new generation of youth ministries, the importance of equipping and inviting young people to critical consciousness about their own social positioning and that of others from the perspectives of Christian theology becomes ever more significant.

Finally, this group of scholars writing books and articles for use by a new generation of youth ministers collectively express an extraordinary optimism about young people and the church. These resources view young people as active agents in the world, as people with skills and gifts to contribute, and as reasons for hope. They similarly portray congregations as spaces where people across generations interact and participate with each other. On the one hand, such portraits are undoubtedly somewhat simplistic: in a book or article about youth mission trips or catechesis a full-blown and realistic critique of congregational life, much less the limitations and difficulties of adolescents and those who work with them, is not necessarily on the agenda. Other research on religion and young people helpfully fills out some of the important rough edges and underscore the brokenness present in different degrees in all congregations and their failures to support the faith formation of youth (cf. Dean, 2010; Smith, 2009). It is true that the optimistic picture of youth and congregations offered across the scholars' works reviewed here is only a partial portrait. But on the other hand, perhaps the optimistic tone of these writings is proleptic, pointing toward qualities and opportunities for youth and congregations in a new century that can flourish with leadership attentive to the implications of this body of scholarship for ministry with youth.

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Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian. By Paul Brewster. Studies in Baptist Thought and Life. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010. 208 pages. Softcover, $24.99.

Paul Brewster received his Ph.D. from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and has most recently served as senior pastor of Ryker's Ridge Baptist Church in Madison, Indiana. Writing as both a pastor and a scholar, he argues that Andrew Fuller, an eighteenth-century Particular Baptist minister, serves as a model pastor-theologian. He demonstrates this point by surveying three aspects of Fuller's ministry, "his theological method, his leadership during a critical soteriological controversy, and his manner of relating doctrine and practice" (6). Brewster offers this work with the hope that the model set by Fuller will stimulate a new generation of pastor-theologians.

In terms of theological method, Fuller was what Brewster labels a conservative innovator. Fuller recognized the importance of having a clear theological system and composed a lengthy confession of faith before his installment at his church at Kettering. Also, he believed in the accountability provided by his local church body and by other ministers. However, because he held to a high view of Scripture's authority, when the hyper-Calvinist theology he received from his youth appeared to contradict Scripture, he eschewed it and developed his own theology, a theology expressed in his seminal work, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation.* Developed in light of the Evangelical Revival, this theology sought an experimental religion, one that emphasized one's relationship with God and the need for personal conversion. For Brewster, these four attributes of Fuller's theological method—confessional, accountable, biblical, and experimental—hold the most value for contemporary pastors.

Fuller's willingness to offer a new theological framework gave him the opportunity to exercise leadership during the hyper-Calvinism debate, one of the most important soteriological controversies in Baptist history. At the time of his ministry, many Particular Baptist congregations were beholden to a rigid form of Calvinism that denied the free offer of the gospel to sinners. Fuller sought to chart a new course away from this dangerous theology.

Though many theological convictions received attention during the debate over hyper-Calvinism, Brewster focuses his attention on two aspects of the discussion—human depravity and the nature of the atonement. Fuller made use of the Edwardsian distinction between natural and moral inability to explain how depraved people can maintain a moral obligation to respond to the gospel, and he employed certain aspects of the governmental theory of the atonement to explain how Particular Baptists could offer the gospel to all people in a meaningful way.

For Fuller, this debate was not simply an academic exercise. As Brewster notes in the book's first chapter, the church of Fuller's youth—which, interestingly, was also the first church he pastored—was given to hyper-Calvinism. This fact meant that Fuller developed his theology in the context of a local church and for the benefit of a local church. For Fuller, pastoral work

became chiefly a theological undertaking; he was a minister offering substantive advice on the theological issues facing a local church body.

In terms of Fuller's ability to wed doctrine and practice, Brewster highlights Fuller's work as the leader of the Baptist Missionary Society, as a local church pastor, and as an apologist. Throughout all of these endeavors, he displayed a passion for the gospel and great integrity, two qualities which Brewster connects to his careful attention to theology. One can hardly envision Fuller having a successful ministry in the midst of all of these undertakings had he not been so theologically grounded.

Baptists are presently seeing a renewed interest in Fuller. In the past several years, many new research projects on the Kettering pastor have emerged. Brewster's work stands as a worthy contribution to this literature. It explores an important aspect of Fuller's ministry, his work as a pastor-theologian, and successfully demonstrates that Fuller indeed serves as a model for aspiring pastor-theologians today.

Those conducting research on Fuller will doubtlessly benefit from Brewster's work, particularly the chapter outlining Fuller's evangelical theology. However, this book should be read more even more widely. It would benefit most pastors, some of whom perhaps need to be challenged to become more theologically concerned, and others who have an interest in theology but who are searching for a healthy role model. In Fuller, as Brewster makes clear, they will find such a model.

–David Mark Rathel, St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews

Beyond Bultmann: Reckoning a New Testament Theology. Edited by Bruce W. Longenecker and Mikeal C. Parsons. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014. 382 pages. Softcover, $39.95.

Bruce W. Longenecker and Mikeal C. Parsons, both of Baylor University, edited the thirteen essays that comprise *Beyond Bultmann: Reckoning a New Testament Theology*. Each of the essay contributors interact with a single chapter of Rudolf Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*, though for Bultmann's chapter on Johannine theology, two contributors offered complementary essays. The final two essays of the book do not correspond to a chapter within Bultmann's *Theology*, but address the socio-historical context within which Bultmann operated and probe the broad scope of Bultmann's theological synthesis. Thus, according to the editors, "What we have in this collection of essays is a group of first-rate veteran scholars who offer their own reflections on the questions Bultmann was exploring, on the answers he gave, and on the way ahead in relation to both" (ix).

The contributions to this volume include: "The Message of Jesus," by Samuel Byrskog; "The Kerygma of the Earliest Church," by C. Kavin Rowe; "The Kerygma of the Hellenistic Church Aside from Paul," by Udo Schnelle; "Humanity Prior to the Revelation of Faith," by Richard B. Hays; "Humanity under Faith," by John M. G. Barclay; "Johannine Christology and Eschatology," by Jörg Frey; "Dualism and Soteriology in Johannine Theology," by Richard Bauckham; "The Rise of Church Order," by Luke Timothy Johnson; "The Development of Doctrine," by James D. G. Dunn; "Christology and Soteriology," by Larry W. Hurtado; "The Problem of Christian Living," by Wayne Meeks; "Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* in Context," by Angela Standhartinger; and "Bultmann and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture," by Francis Watson.

This list of contributors represents a well-known and well-respected set of scholars in theological, biblical, and historical studies. For a volume proposing to build upon and move beyond Bultmann, though, the list of contributors surprisingly lacks diversity. Given Bultmann's socio-historical context—including the rigors of World War II and the male-dominated tradition of Western Protestant scholarship—and the negative reflection of the majority world within Bultmann's demythologizing project, readers would have benefited from the insights of more than one woman (Angela Standhartinger) and the insights of emerging scholars outside the Western world (none of whom are included). Interestingly, Standhartinger's essay makes the strongest case for how Bultmann's theological project provides the groundwork for diversity within historical and religious scholarship.

While the contributors are not particularly diverse in terms of gender or geography, the contributors did enjoy theological and functional freedom from the editors. The contributors were not asked to follow a particular pattern, and they did not arrive at uniform conclusions regarding Bultmann's work or its impact. This flexibility offered by the editors proved to be a strength and weakness of the book. As a strength, the flexibility allowed the authors to focus on their personal fields of study and read Bultmann within the context of these personal disciplines. For example, Samuel Byrskog interacted with Bultmann's work on the historical Jesus in light of critical realism and philosophical hermeneutics. Or, as another example, Wayne Meeks ably analyzed Bultmann's work in light of social movements and ethical reading. As a weakness, the flexibility provided by the editors meant many of the essays were so different in terms of structure and goal that the reader is unable to gain any momentum and unable to establish a framework from which to assess the work as a whole.

Though interaction with all thirteen essays is not viable here, I would like to note a few themes and ideas that emerged from the work as a whole. First, the contributors consistently forgave Bultmann for his exaggeration of Gnostic influence on the New Testament and for his very traditional view of first-century Judaism. The contributors acknowledged their own confinement to a socio-historical context, which future scholars similarly will be able to criticize because of new evidence and ways of thinking. Second, the contributors noted the centrality of John and Paul within Bultmann's project, which limited and even controlled

Bultmann's interaction with other New Testament and extra-canonical sources. Third, the contributors were uniformly in awe at the breadth of Bultmann's work and his ability to engage and sustain a thesis over such a vast project. As scholars interact with Bultmann today, they must be willing to engage with his thesis and project as a whole, not just criticize a single element or interpretation.

Despite some of the critical notes provided earlier, *Beyond Bultmann* is an important work, and I would recommend it on several levels. First, clergy will benefit from understanding how Bultmann dealt academically, personally, and pastorally with life in pre- and post-war Germany. Each of us must develop and communicate theological reflections in the midst of a changing world, and the chapters by Meeks and Standhartinger are especially helpful in this regard. Second, this book, while too advanced for lower-level theology and New Testament courses, would make an ideal text for upper-level contemporary theology classes or doctoral reading lists. Finally, the contributors' interaction with Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* as a primary source will remind all readers of the importance of engaging seminal works, not just taking about them. Students, especially, should not find themselves with this book in one hand unless they have Bultmann's *Theology* in the other. While *Beyond Bultmann* might not provide as much direction forward as anticipated by the title, the book does inspire readers to engage with the immensity of Bultmann's theological project and explore the implications of his work for a new generation of scholarship.

—Owen Nease, Emmaus Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan. By Oren R. Martin. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015. 208 Pages. Softcover, $22.00.

Oren R. Martin is Assistant Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Boyce College in Louisville, Kentucky. In chapter 1, on page 17, Martin writes, "The aim of the present study is to demonstrate that the land promised to Abraham advances the place of the kingdom that was lost in Eden and serves as a type throughout Israel's history that anticipates the even greater land—prepared for all of God's people throughout history—that will come as a result of the person and work of Christ." In short, he states, "The land and its blessings find their fulfillment in the new heaven and new earth won by Christ" (17). Methodologically, Martin employs biblical theology in a diachronic fashion to prove his thesis. The rest of the chapters (2–9) survey the relevant biblical text before concluding in chapter 10 with a brief theological reflection upon the implications of the study.

Having outlined the aim and trajectory of the book in chapter 1, Martin argues for a particular understanding of the relationship between the land promises of the Old Testament and the kingdom. In brief, Martin understands the kingdom of God to consist of "three important components: king/rule, people and place" (33). The rest of the chapter provides an investiga-

tion into the role the land plays in each of the biblical covenants, which Martin understands as one of the key ways that "God re-establishes his kingdom" (42). Martin believes that the biblical covenants "form the backbone of Scripture and are crucial for understanding its overarching story, from creation to new creation" (42). With each covenant, the land (or place) figures prominently into Martin's concept of kingdom. Martin concludes, stating, "From a canonical perspective, the kingdom of God is a central theme in the Lord's redemptive plan of establishing his kingdom on the earth. That is, the beginning, middle and end of the biblical story describe the teleological design of God's people in his place under his rule" (58). "Moreover," he states, "the biblical-theological structure of the covenants as they unfold across the canon shows how his divinely ordained means will reach his divinely ordained end" (59).

In chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6, Martin surveys the Old Testament's teaching on the land promise. He begins with Genesis, and shows how "the promise of land in the Abrahamic covenant should be understood in the light of what preceded it, namely Eden as the prototypical place of the kingdom" (75). This is one of the most important aspects of Martin's argument for his thesis. In addition to the relationship between the two lands, Martin stresses the importance of understanding how "the patriarchal promise of land anticipates something greater," (75) which includes a global occupation by Abraham's seed. Martin teases out how the rest of the Old Testament advances and even partially demonstrates fulfillment of the land promise in chapters 4–6. However, Martin concludes his Old Testament section by stating, "Every fulfillment is followed by failure and, although the promise is fulfilled at various points, it anticipates a greater and final fulfillment. That is, the fulfillments under Joshua, David, Solomon and the return from exile demonstrate that, although Israel enjoyed blessing and rest at each point, there still remained a greater fulfillment and final rest for the people of God" (115).

In chapters 7, 8, and 9, Martin traces the inauguration of the fulfillment of the land promise through the Gospels, the Epistles, and Revelation. Martin concludes, "The New Testament contends that what was promised in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New" (159). Specifically, he states that as Jesus arrives "on the scene," the kingdom is inaugurated. "Thus the themes associated with land in the Old Testament are now connected to Jesus, fulfilled in the light of him and, as seen in John, enjoyed in relation to him" (159). Martin continues,

> Though Old Testament believers looked through the land of promise to God's greater eschatological rest and city, by virtue of Christ and his work, new covenant believers now look to Jesus and confidently await their arrival in the new Jerusalem, homeland, unshakable kingdom and abiding city that is to come, which is described in the letters of Peter and revelation as the new heaven and new earth. (159)

Martin concludes, "In short, the land, which served as a type of this greater reality, now reaches its *telos*. And the covenant relationship for which we were created is realized in the new heaven and new earth, where our glorious triune God will dwell

with us, and we will be his people, and God himself will be with us as our God" (159, emphasis his).

In chapter 10, Martin concludes the book with a brief account of the theological implications of his biblical-theological study of the land promise. Specifically, Martin's implications address the supposed hermeneutical missteps of both dispensationalism and covenant theology in regards to the land promise. Martin builds upon the work of scholars like Gentry and Wellum by "comprehensively developing the land theme across the Old Testament, both in its historical and epochal horizons" (168). Martin writes, "When this process is accomplished, the New Testament demonstrates both *when* and *how* the Old Testament is brought to fulfillment in Christ, though in a way that does not reinterpret, spiritualized or contravene the earlier text" (168, emphasis his). This comprehensive approach critiques covenant theology's tendency to flatten out the discontinuities between the testaments while also devastating dispensationalism's isolated reading of Old Testament prophecy from New Testament fulfillment in Christ.

This book is a tremendous example of a diachronic, biblical-theological study of the Bible. Martin does a wonderful job surveying the biblical landscape while incorporating a broad range of opinions from contemporary scholarship. He argues his case clearly and convincingly without being overly polemical. He does not overstate his position, and shows great respect for those with whom he disagrees. Specifically, Martin makes a strong case for understanding the land promises of the Old Testament in light of their typological relationship to the Edenic land of Genesis 1–2 and their subsequent fulfillment in the New Testament. Any serious attempt to argue for the future, literal fulfillment of land promises to a national Israel must interact with Martin's biblical-theological argument. Martin's argument is too comprehensive and coherent to be disregarded. I recommend it to all who would dare to have their presuppositions challenged and minds sharpened.

–*Casey Hough, First Baptist Church of Camden, Arkansas*

Covenant and Commandment: Works, Obedience and Faithfulness in the Christian Life. By Bradley G. Green. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. 185 pages. Softcover, $22.00.

Bradley G. Green is Associate Professor of Christian Studies at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. As the thirty-third volume of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series, Bradley G. Green's *Covenant and Commandment: Works, Obedience and Faithfulness in the Christian Life* tackles the question of the significance of Christian obedience in salvation. Green begins by outlining the debate, stating, "While evangelicals can generally agree that one enters into a covenant relationship with the God of the Bible by grace (even solely by grace) apart from works, there is often much more disagreement over how to construe the nature of works, or

obedience, inside this covenantal relationship" (17). He continues, "My argument is that in the new covenant, works are a God-elicited and necessary part of the life of the converted person, a constant theme in the New Testament. In short, works are necessary for salvation because part of the newness of the new covenant is actual, grace-induced and grace-elicited obedience by true members of the new covenant" (17). Throughout the rest of the book, Green argues persuasively for the importance of works, obedience, and faithfulness for salvation in the Christian life.

In chapter 1, Green begins by stating, "It is an inescapable fact that works, obedience and faithfulness are central in the life of the believer" (23). The rest of the chapter is dedicated to explicating fourteen key groups of texts that demonstrate this inescapable fact. Without attempting "to work out all the details," Green provides a thoroughly biblical basis for his premise. In chapter 2, Green looks at the overarching theme of the Bible regarding works, obedience, and faithfulness. He accomplishes this by focusing on "two key Old Testament prophetic books—Jeremiah and Ezekiel," which reveal "a pattern in which a future day is coming, a day that will see Spirit-induced, God-caused obedience from the heart" (54). With these key Old Testament books affirming a coming new covenant era, Green demonstrates how New Testament authors saw this future era breaking "into history through the ministry of Jesus" in the first century (54). In chapter 3, Green broaches the topic of continuity and discontinuity between the old covenant and new covenant in the history of redemption. Green concludes that while there are certainly aspects of discontinuity between the covenants, there is also continuity regarding both salvation by grace and the place of works in salvation. In chapter 4, Green turns his attention to the cross. He grounds the Christian's forgiveness "beyond question" in the cross work of Jesus Christ (91). Furthermore, he argues that human transformation, which includes works, obedience, and faithfulness, is grounded in the work of Christ. As such, according to Green, "*Jesus* poured out his life and set in motion the cleansing and transformation of the bride who will one day be presented to him" (91, emphasis his).

In chapter 5, Green moves from grounding the Christian's forgiveness and transformation in the work of Christ to explaining how such events occur and relate to works. Here, Green articulates what he believes to be "the key to understanding how one can affirm a traditional Protestant understanding of justification by faith apart from works and the centrality and necessity of works, obedience and faithfulness in the lives of the new covenant believers" (103). Green continues, "Our lives are in a very crucial sense our own. But we truly become ourselves only by being in Christ. The reign and rule of Christ in our lives does not diminish our personality and individuality. Rather, it is only in Christ that any man or woman can become his or her truest self. And we engage in works, obedience and faithfulness only through a faith-alone union with Christ" (103). In chapter 6, Green attempts to address the necessity of works in the matter of justification at the final judgment. This chapter reserves a good deal of space for interacting with both historical and contemporary scholars on the issue with an additional excursus provided on N. T. Wright's contribution to the debate. Recognizing both a quantitative and qualitative difference between the old covenant and the new covenant, Green concludes,

"There is no reason for evangelicals to gloss over passages that speak of a judgment according to works at a future aspect or component of justification" (142). However, he understands the works that will be judged at the judgment to be the result of union with Christ as opposed to the basis of one's righteous standing before God. Green writes compellingly,

> We must never forget the thoroughgoing importance of union with Christ, and that our future judgment is always bound up with who we are as persons who are in Christ, or in him, or in the beloved, and so on. Our future is bound up with our union with Christ, and there is no reason somehow to sequester future judgment from our identity in Christ. There is a balance here. We will be judged, but we are judged in Christ. Our true identity as individuals is not lost by being in Christ, but rather only really comes to be because we are in Christ. (144)

In chapter 7, Green attempts to bring the book to a close by tying together "various strands *from previous chapters* into a coherent whole" (147, emphasis his). Essentially, he addresses the themes of headship, obedience, and inaugurated eschatology as they contribute to a better understanding of the necessity of works in the Christian life. In short, Green understands Adam's disobedience and Jesus' obedience, as federal heads, to in no way negate the personal obedience of those represented. Therefore, even though Christ himself was "the obedient one on our behalf," our obedience is still meaningful and necessary. Green writes, "Our works, obedience and faithfulness are imperfect, riddled with impure motives and all the rest. Nonetheless, Christ is being formed in his people, and thus we should expect to see works, obedience and faithfulness in the people of God" (163). All of this, according to Green, is rooted in an inaugurated eschatology, which is resulted from the Christ event that began the conformity of the people of God to the image of the Son. The book concludes with a brief epilogue, which summarizes its fundamental argument.

As with the other works in the series, the book is very well-written, clear, and free from distracting details. Green argues thoroughly and persuasively for his thesis. And while I am not convinced that the language of covenant theology in places like chapter 7 is necessary or particular helpful, Green's approach does not depend upon the adoption of any particular theological system of interpretation. This book is a welcomed addition to the ongoing debate of the relationship between faith and works in the Christian life, even though it is a little disappointing that Green was not able to interact with N.T. Wright's latest work on this subject in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, due to it being published later in 2014.

–Casey Hough, First Baptist Church of Camden, Arkansas

Developing a Biblical Worldview: Seeing Things God's Way. By C. Fred Smith. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. 191 pages. Softcover, $19.99.

C. Fred Smith received his Ph.D. in Philosophy of Religion (Apologetics) at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. His dissertation is titled "An Evangelical Evaluation of Key Elements in Leslie Newbigin's Apologetics." He presently serves as Associate Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies at Liberty University School of Divinity in Lynchburg, Virginia. In addition to *Developing a Biblical Worldview*, his publications include articles on Open Theism, Apologetics, and the Inerrancy of the Bible, as well as numerous reviews and articles on a variety of theological and apologetic topics.

The typical person encounters a multiplicity of worldviews in the span of a normal lifetime. Understanding the divergent perceptions of reality of the various worldviews is vital to successful interaction with the individuals holding those worldviews. In addition, individuals who claim to hold to a Christian worldview need to have a clear understanding of the biblical teachings concerning the principles of a biblical worldview and the practical application of those principles in life. *Developing A Biblical Worldview* is a book that deals with such issues.

Smith bases his material on two foundational concepts. The first foundational concept is that "everyone has a worldview, a comprehensive picture of reality, which affects everything they do" (1). The second foundational concept is that Christians need to demonstrate an accurate biblical worldview in all areas of life (understanding of reality, formation and application of values, establishment of priorities, belief system, and interaction with others) (2–3).

In the first four chapters of the book, the author discusses a four-question rubric that can be used to evaluate any worldview encountered. In each chapter, Smith addresses one of the worldview questions proposed by his rubric. Chapter one addresses the first worldview question: "Who are we?" The author aptly points out that the disciple of Christ will propose different answers than will non-Christian individuals—especially those who accept an evolutionary viewpoint of human origins. He emphasizes the critical ways in which the answers to this first worldview question will impact core perceptions of reality for the individual. In particular, Smith explains how the dynamics of being made in God's image potentially can impact an individual's perception of his own personal value and dignity. He then explains the impact of sin, redemption, regeneration, and the indwelling Holy Spirit on the answer given to the first worldview question for the Christian (13–33).

In chapter two, Smith answers the second question: "Where are we?" Once a person understands who she is, she must come to grips with her surroundings. The question of situation is answered in terms of understanding the world as a whole, as God created it and how it has become as a result of the fall. It is important that the Christian understands the world and her community, if she is to know how to properly relate to both (35–54).

Given the biblical answers to the first two worldview questions, the progression to the question in chapter three logically follows: "What is wrong?" Smith discusses the impact of sin upon the world, the community, and the church. He also points out the ways in which an incorrect worldview have led to some devastating consequences in all three areas. It is only when the believer has an accurate understanding of the answers to questions one, two, and three, that he can properly address the final worldview question (55–74).

Chapter four, "What is the Answer?" moves the Christian from understanding into action. Smith underscores the biblical answers to the problems created by sin and incorrect worldviews. He also elucidates the practical implications of biblical solutions on the life of the Christian who aspires to be a true disciple of Christ. The crux of the issue raised by question four is how believers will choose to respond to be a part of administering the answer to the problem plaguing the world (75–86).

Chapter five contains some practical examples of applying the four worldview questions to biblical narratives. Smith approaches the biographical studies of Noah, Moses, and David, by answering the questions from the scriptural record. He demonstrates the practical nature of extracting a biblical character's worldview from the text, and perceiving the impact that the worldview had upon the person's actions (87–102).

In chapters six and seven, Smith summarizes the progressive development of what may be termed the American worldview. He traces the formation of the contemporary secular American worldview in its development from the early decades of the republic through the post-Civil War era, the twentieth century, and to the present. Smith uses the four-question worldview rubric to uncover the changes in worldview evidenced in each stage of history. The current, popular-culture worldview progression is examined through some key popular entertainment mediums, such as television programs, sports, news broadcasts, and movies. The four worldview questions are used to guide the discussion in each case (103–48).

Chapters eight and nine deal with the barriers to developing a biblical worldview, the need to develop a biblical worldview, and the steps needed to aid in the development of a biblical worldview. Smith points out that developing an accurate, life-changing, biblical worldview is not an overnight project. The Christian disciple must overcome obstacles such as personal inertia and societal pressure that lead to spiritual compromise and mediocrity. The disciple must intentionally employ specific spiritual disciplines and practices to bring about the core changes needed for the development of a correct biblical worldview (149–79).

While all of the principles in the developmental process are not covered exhaustively, the author gives ample explanation and illustration to provide a practical guide for the reader in developing a biblical worldview. Smith achieves his stated purpose of giving the reader the tools needed to critically engage unfamiliar worldviews and to equip the reader for "a lifetime of developing and refining" a biblical worldview (179). The book provides excellent fodder for

academic discussion—specifically in worldview or discipleship courses—to help equip church leaders. The material is also an excellent resource for Christian leaders to aid youth and adults in honing their own biblical worldview.

–_George Bannister, Steel Valley Baptist Association, Warren, Ohio_

Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God. By John F. Kilner. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. 402 pages. Softcover, $35.00.

Dignity and Destiny is John Kilner's comprehensive and thorough treatment of the concept of the image of God in human beings. Kilner (Ph.D., Harvard University) occupies the Forman Chair of Christian Ethics and Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Kilner's purpose in this book is simply to "clarify what the Bible itself teaches about humanity being in God's image" (3). Faithful to his task, the author provides thick yet appropriate exegetical treatment of the biblical texts associated with this concept.

Anyone who has even minimal interest in the concept of God's image in humanity, or _imago Dei_, knows that the Bible is notoriously silent when it comes to providing a full explanation of the image. That void of biblical information has resulted in a dizzying array of theological explanations down the years regarding the _imago_. Consequently, Kilner begins his treatment at this point in the discussion.

The first of the book's three parts is a dramatic survey of multiple historical examples of wrong-headed definitions of God's image in humans, most of which attempt to answer the question, How are people like God? Too many of the answers have resulted in abuse, persecution, and even death for many people. If a certain social group (say, African Americans or women) was perceived by those in power not to have a full measure of the _imago_, then oppression or worse (justification for slavery or gender discrimination) became easy. Kilner also provides evidence of positive social effects rendered by concepts of the _imago_, but the list of negative ones predominates to chilling effect. His point is that an individual or a group's understanding of God's image in human beings has serious implications for relationships with other humans and God, too.

Kilner's critique of _imago_ misunderstandings is grounded in his belief that the image of God should _not_ be conceived as how people are like God. It is not "one or more details about humanity—capabilities, traits, capacities, etc.—that define the image" (43). Locating the _imago Dei_ in humans' ability to reason or relate or rule is patently unbiblical. In fact, the absence of specific biblical linkage of God's image and human attributes—that void of pertinent biblical information—is one reason why Kilner breaks with most commentators on this subject.

Rather, the author does careful and thorough biblical exegesis, beginning with the New Testament and not Genesis, to posit that God's true and full image is seen only in Jesus. Christ is the starting point of a true biblical understanding of the *imago*; He is the "Enabler and Standard of God's Image" (69ff.). Consequently, "Christ's identity is humanity's destiny" (78). Humans can only begin to display the *imago Dei* through redemption and relationship with God through Jesus Christ. At present, and because of sin, the *imago* in humans is mostly something potential, to be seen only slowly and gradually in redeemed persons who are being "conformed into the image of [God's] Son" (Rom 8:29, HCSB).

Two big ideas for Kilner are that the *imago* is both connecting and reflecting. The image of God in humans is a connecting point between them and God—evidence that all humans individually and collectively have a special relationship with Him. The *imago Dei* is also meant to be a reflector of God's glory in humans, such that the image truly displays the attributes of God and "not the damaged attributes of fallen people" (135). Again, only through the redeeming work of Christ can a human being begin to reflect God.

Another significant component of Kilner's argument is his repeated assertion about the effect of the fall upon the *imago* and humans. To wit, the author regards the *imago* as totally undamaged by the fall; sin messed up people but not God's image. This makes sense given how Kilner sees the *imago* as God's standard for people, a latent but very real human potential realized only via redemption. In essence he is saying that God's standard in this case is unharmed by sin just as His standards of holiness and righteousness and justice also remain unharmed by sin. He still expects people to realize fully their potential in regard to His image.

The author addresses and teases out a good sampling of attendant issues. Among them the relationship between "image" and "glory" as well as the one between "likeness" and "image" (Gen 1:26) are discussed. The difference a preposition makes, between "made *in* God's image" (humans) versus "being God's image" (Jesus Christ), is an interesting and well-developed conversation.

This is an excellent, well-developed, and thoughtful book. But I do have a concern. One of the positive effects of even the wrong-headed views of the *imago* has been their affirmation of basic human dignity. Whether located as the ability to reason or rule or whatever else makes us like God, His image provides humans with intrinsic worth due simply to our having been created in it. As much as Kilner's view resonates with me, it nevertheless creates a bit of unease, coming off as a weaker and somewhat shakier foundation for affirming basic human value. The author continually affirms that human dignity is indeed a key component of his *imago Dei* theology, such dignity being grounded in the "special connection" people have with God via His resident image (140–41). But that "special connection" just seems too vaguely defined by Kilner. Essentially, he is stating that basic human dignity is grounded on the *potential* of individuals and groups of people to experience salvation, to "being en route to a glorious destiny as God's image in Christ" (133). I also understand that Kilner yearns to move as far away as

he can from *imago Dei* theologies which are keyed to certain God-like human attributes. His big concern here, rightfully so, is that those theologies have unwittingly created false levels of human valuation by *de*valuing groups of people who lack the full measure of that key attribute. I just wonder then if linking basic human value so closely to redemption may have the same practical effect as produced by those problematic theologies: The redeemed, being on the way to full conformation to God's image, should be more highly valued as humans than the unregenerate.

That will be the new temptation for Christ followers who adopt Kilner's thesis, namely resisting the urge to view non-believers as not quite as intrinsically valuable as brothers and sisters in Christ. Or perhaps the proper response to Kilner's retooling of the *imago* is for Christians to re-establish our view of human dignity on loving people as fully and completely as Jesus commanded and the Holy Spirit enables, rather than trying to dignify them by looking for that attribute which we believe makes us look like God.

–Earl Waggoner, Colorado Christian University, Lakewood, Colorado

Everyday Evangelism. By Matt Queen. Fort Worth: Seminary Hill Press, 2014. 67 pages. Softcover, $4.99.

Matt Queen's book, *Everyday Evangelism*, is a practical introduction to how evangelism can and should be lived out in every person's daily life. Queen, Assistant Professor of Evangelism and the L. R. Scarborough Chair of Evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has penned a most helpful guide to encourage and inspire all who read it to share the gospel with great urgency to the lost world around them. *Everyday Evangelism* is broken down into nine short chapters, each addressing common issues that a person encounters when practicing evangelism. The first chapter of the book describes the incorrect approaches to evangelism and also provides the definition of true evangelism. Queen defines true evangelism as follows:

> Evangelism is *that Spirit-empowered activity, in which the disciples of Jesus Christ give complete and intentional witness to the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, calling unbelievers to become disciples of Jesus Christ by repenting of their sins and placing their faith in Jesus Christ alone.* (15, italics in the original)

Queen encourages his readers to adopt a simplified approach to evangelism through six easy steps: pray, identify and use transition points, articulate a transition statement, present the gospel, encourage questions for clarification, and invite your hearers to receive Christ (16–18).

Chapter 2 expresses the urgency of evangelism. Queen refers to Jesus' harvest analogy to describe the need and urgency of seeking out the lost that they might be saved. Since the harvest is ready and ripe, the desire to seek and save the lost should be at the forefront of the believer's

mind, constantly propelling them to go and make disciples. In chapter 3, Queen answers the question in the chapter's title: "Is it Biblical to Pray for the Salvation of Unbelievers?" Queen masterfully leans upon the Scripture to show how praying for the lost is essential and foundational for the evangelist. He concludes, "Therefore, in order to lead godly and reverent lives in peace and to please God with their supplication, prayers, and intercession, believers are instructed to pray for the salvation of all people, great and small" (28).

Chapter 4 encourages believers to share the gospel even when receptivity appears to be low. Although some may be hesitant to share the gospel when people seem closed to the idea or the soil seems to be hardened, Queen makes the point that the evangelist should be more concerned with sharing the gospel than testing the soil. The fifth chapter addresses directly the fear in sharing the gospel by outlining the role that fear plays by holding Christians back from sharing the gospel. Queen does not tarry in providing the solution for fear in the sixth chapter by rightly proclaiming that the true, powerful confidence of the evangelist in not produced from an inner dependency but through consistent reliance on Christ.

The seventh chapter examines the practical side of evangelism through identifying several common approaches to evangelism and explaining both their strengths and weaknesses. Queen's intentions through this examination are to provide the evangelist the opportunity to evaluate their current approach and improve or adjust it to be more effective in reaching the lost. Queen transitions to consulting with the Scripture to form the foundation of evangelism and the evangelistic approach. Through this interaction with the Bible, Queen presents an appeal for the Scripture to mold the evangelist. God's word ought to infiltrate and affect everything the evangelist does—from the urgency of the evangelist to the gospel message that is presented, as well as the call of salvation through repentance and faith. For Queen, the Commission of Christ in Matthew 28:18–20 must be performed by the guidelines provided in the whole of Scripture.

The final chapter explains the practical approach to evangelism adopted by Southwestern Seminary. Queen urges his readers to build an evangelistic ministry into their home church. He does this by offering Southwestern Seminary's evangelistic initiative to reach every home within a distance radius of the campus as a model. Queen is under no false assumptions that such a model is an easy effort; he claims the opposite. He understands the difficulties of developing an evangelism-based outreach program in a church, and so he offers the assistance of the seminary to help create a culture of everyday evangelism in your church.

Everyday Evangelism is a compact powerhouse of evangelistic instruction. Although this book does not plumb the theological depths of the original languages or theology of evangelism, there are many nuggets of biblical truth and wisdom tucked inside for all who read it. Because this book was written to inspire and encourage typical believers to practice everyday evangelism, it is understandable for Queen to hold back on the more technical aspects of his field. Even so, both scholar in evangelism and lay church leaders appreciate the easy reading

style of *Everyday Evangelism* and will find themselves eager to begin a lifestyle of *Everyday Evangelism*.

One concern of the book is found in its flow, which was rather choppy as the chapters progressed. The book covered the major topics, but the chapters did not build upon one another, as one would expect. No doubt, if Queen were to write a fully-developed guide to evangelism it would transition evenly from chapter to chapter. Another concern regarding *Everyday Evangelism* was the development of application. For example, after reading the third chapter on praying for the lost, there was no real model or guidelines for interceding for those who do not know Christ. Some may find it helpful for Queen to provide more in-depth instruction on implementing this practice in their everyday lives. Reader would benefit from insight and advice Queen could offer in this discipline.

Despite those minor concerns, *Everyday Evangelism* is a vital resource for every Christian's personal library and every church's strategy for reaching the lost. It would be an exceptional resource for pastors to study with their congregations to educate and encourage their church members to incorporate evangelism into their daily routine. Queen's engaging and simple approach to evangelism makes this resource accessible to and appropriate for a wide readership.

–Anthony Svajda, First Baptist Church of Jewett, Texas

Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither?: Three Views on the Bible's Earliest Chapters. Edited by Charles Halton. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015. 173 pages. Softcover, $16.99.

The dedication in the front matter of *Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither* sets the tone for what follows. Charles Halton, the text's editor, devotes the book "To those who, like Jacob, wrestle with God and man" (5). Indeed, the purpose of the text is to reflect the ongoing debate over Genesis 1–11. Three divergent views on historicity, genre, and interpretative methodologies are presented. The book is not intended to provide a solution to the debate, but to enable readers to engage in informed discussions on the earliest chapters of Scripture.

Halton enlists three contributors: James K. Hoffmeier, Gordon J. Wenham, and Kenton L. Sparks. All profess to be evangelical Christians and are eminent scholars in the field of Old Testament studies. Hoffmeier, who was born and raised in Egypt, is well-known for his expertise in ancient Near Eastern history and archaeology. Wenham is less versed in ancient Near Eastern backgrounds, but is an eminent Pentateuchal scholar, having produced one of the quintessential commentaries on Genesis in the field.[1] Sparks is also a skilled scholar and professor. His

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[1] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis* (2 vols.; WBC; Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1987–1994).

Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible (Baker Academic, 2005) is an excellent resource for students of ancient Near Eastern literature.

The standard point/counterpoint format is followed in the book. Each contributor provides an essay, which is then critiqued by his fellow scholars. Four elements are addressed in each essay: (1) the genre of Genesis 1–11, (2) a rationale for the proposed genre, (3) the implications of the proposed genre for biblical interpretation, and (4) an interpretation of three passages based upon the prior proposals. The three passages are that of the Nephilim (6:1–4), Noah and the flood (6:9–9:26), and the Tower of Babel (11:1–9).

The first essay is provided by Hoffmeier, who identifies Genesis 1–11 as a historical narrative. He provides an excellent synopsis of parallel ancient Near Eastern material to argue that the biblical text offers an authoritative version of common memories and events. He points to specific geographical markers in the biblical narratives to bolster his case for authenticity. Hoffmeier also argues that the similarities between the genealogies in Genesis and in other ancient Near Eastern genealogical texts further support the historical accuracy of Genesis (31). Hoffmeier does add a qualification to his argument, however, asserting that ancient historians were not bound by the same level of precision and accuracy as modern historians.

The second essay, provided by Wenham, regards Genesis 1–11 as protohistory. Wenham argues for a core of historicity that describes "past realities and the lessons that should be drawn from them" (87). The history is "proto" in the sense that it describes origins, but also in the sense that it describes fundamental ways in which God interacts with people. Wenham provides descriptive imagery to illustrate, explaining that if actual history can be regarded as a photograph, protohistory can be likened to a painting—a representation of the real world. Wenham further classifies Genesis 1–11 as an "expanded linear genealogy" (95). He regards the genealogical lists as the backbone to which additional comments and accounts were added. Such narratives were linked to past events but also addressed present realities, which, explains Wenham, is an essential feature of protohistory.

The third essay, contributed by Sparks, will be the most challenging for conservative readers. Sparks argues forcefully against the historicity of Genesis 1–11 and maintains that modern Christians should strive "to understand how God speaks through a narrative that is no longer the literal history that our Christian forebears often assumed it to be" (111). He further develops his position by stating that accepting the Bible as the word of God does not place limits on its "range of generic possibilities" (116). Like the other contributors Sparks examines parallel ancient Near Eastern literature, but comes to somewhat different conclusions. He finds that the remarkable number of similarities actually indicate that biblical authors fully participated in ancient literary conventions, which were not expected to convey factual history. Lest conservatives take offence at Sparks' argumentation and dismiss his views without consideration, readers should be reminded that Sparks, an ordained Baptist pastor, regards Scripture as the inspired

word of God and affirms the doctrine of salvation through Christ. He asserts that "Gen 1–11, when read well, points us to [Jesus Christ]" (139).

The volume concludes with an editorial response to the foregoing essays in which Halton concisely and objectively summarizes the arguments of the three contributors. He exhorts readers to wrestle with God's word in a spirit of grace, accepting those who might hold different views. Certainly the contributors are amicable toward one another, although the response essays are often spirited.

In other volumes of a similar format, one essay often emerges as stronger or weaker than the others. Such is not the case here. Readers will likely side with the contributor that is closest to his or her own ideological viewpoint as each scholar argues for his position convincingly. As a result, the greatest strength of the text is the presentation of the range of argumentation surrounding the nature of Gen 1–11.

Nevertheless, a few points of critique for each author are in order. Hoffmeier argues that specificity in geography supports the historicity of Genesis 1–11, but many works of fiction, both ancient and modern, contain specific historical details. Moreover, the scholar fails to address issues of geology, biology, and archaeology that are often used to refute historicity. Such prominent issues at least bear mention. As for Wenham, his middle ground between history and fiction is a tempting alternative to the two extreme ends of the spectrum. However, he is vague on what details might actually be historical, and minimizes the importance of determining such. Clearly, the matter is of importance or the entire volume would be unnecessary! Sparks' comments are especially apt as he proposes, "I would guess that [Wenham's] essay is designed rhetorically to satisfy two different audiences, namely, those who know Genesis cannot be historical and those who believe it must be history" (105). Finally, Sparks himself bears criticism for his over-willingness to accept all scientific claims. Modern science disagrees in many ways with the opening chapters of Genesis, but as Hoffmeier points out, Sparks seems to consistently favor scientific interpretations of history over biblical ones. However, scientific theories are constantly evolving, and while modern exegetes should be sensitive to the interplay between science and biblical texts, Sparks' presentation of this interplay lacks balance.

Students of the Bible in both the academy and the church will find much of value in this text. Lay readers may find the level of detail challenging, particularly with regard to ancient Near Eastern literature. However, the responses that follow each of the three primary essays recapitulate main points and draw attention to the primary arguments of each contributor. Moreover, the editorial conclusion is written so clearly that almost any educated lay person will be able to grasp the highlights of each viewpoint.

–Andrea L. Robinson, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana

Illustrated Life of Paul. By Charles L. Quarles. Nashville: B&H, 2014. 292 pages. Softcover, $29.99.

Charles L. Quarles is Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, where he has served on faculty since 2013. He previously served at the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention as well as Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, the Bucharest Baptist Theological Seminary, the University of Bucharest, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and Louisiana College. Quarles received a Ph.D. from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and is the author or co-author of a number of books related to the New Testament, such as: *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: A Comprehensive New Testament Introduction* (B&H Academic, 2009); and *The Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ's Message to the Modern Church Introduction* (B&H Academic, 2011).

Over the last two millennia much has been revealed about the Apostle Paul with respect to his biology, his chronology, and his theology. Quarles' hope is that the reader will be changed after engaging the Apostle Paul between the pages of this present book. His desire is to match love for Paul with love for truth and to introduce readers to Paul and his story. One easily senses the excitement of Quarles and his personal experience with the apostle. Though the title of the work, *Illustrated Life of Paul*, is not clearly explained, it is definitely understood. The title may suggest the book is about the historical perception of Paul within the world of art. The title may also suggest that the book is filled with various images of people, places, and things related to Paul's life. Whatever is meant by the title, at the conclusion of the book, the reader realizes that Paul's Christian life was truly illustrative of and pointed to the life of Christ.

Quarles provides a brief introduction highlighting the significant contribution of Paul to the church and to the New Testament, noting Paul's influence is second only to that of Jesus. Paul's writings account for about one-fourth of the New Testament; and along with Luke's description of him in Acts, focus on Paul accounts for about one-third of the New Testament. I would suggest the influence is greater when one considers Paul's relationship with Luke and Luke's "universal" gospel. Using biblical verses as headings, Quarles offers an insightful review of Paul's life both pre- and post-conversion. The bulk of the book covers Paul's missionary journeys found in Acts and his letters.

Quarles' most significant contributions are his exegetical suggestions, which are scattered throughout the book, fill in many of the gaps left in Acts, and are often prefixed with the word "perhaps." For example, in discussing the absence of Timothy from Philippi and Thessalonica, Quarles elucidates, "Perhaps Timothy was present with the team in both cities but played a minor role in the ministry and was overlooked by the persecutors." The book is replete with various images, including maps and archaeological ruins of places Paul visited, and chronological markers in Paul's life. Quarles also provides the reader with the mileage between the various cities to which Paul traveled. When combined, these data truly provide a grand perspective of

the amount of territory the apostle covered, and they also give the reader a great appreciation for Paul's personal strength and God's ultimate provision for him. Though the book is well-written, more editing could be done with respect to the images used in the book. There was really no consistency with the sources used for maps. For example, some of the maps were simply satellite images with no geographical labels.

While much of the book is simply a description of the events found in Acts, Quarles does a masterful job weaving in overviews of Paul's writings within the context of his movements as described in both Acts and his letters. Through his description of Paul's movements and writings in the main section of the book, Quarles provides the reader with a chronology of Paul's life, which he supports with the latest archaeological evidence. Perhaps Quarles might consider the addition of a chronological chart of Paul's life, which would be a great asset to a book on Paul's life.

Quarles provides great detail on a number of issues such as historical background of cities Paul visited, significant Greco-Roman deities and mythology associated with Paul's travels, and ancient Near Eastern customs related to the various forms of capital punishment that Paul often faced. Quarles offers his perspective of Pauline theology in a few places, such as his overview of the doctrine of justification within the section covering Antioch in Pisidia. Overall, the book was a great reminder of how God specifically groomed and used Paul to spread the gospel, and how Paul was completely reliant on the Lord. The reader can easily concur with Quarles, as one is left in awe of the Apostle Paul's humility and his enthusiasm for leading others to Jesus.

Overall, this is a well-written book that would benefit many within the church setting. Those who have never studied Paul in great detail will truly have their eyes opened to his life and his world. The book could also serve as a basic introduction to Paul in a biblical classroom at the undergraduate level. All can benefit from reading about a man whose life truly illustrated the life we must all imitate.

–David Champagne, Mississippi College, Clinton, Mississippi

Invitation to James: Persevering Through Trials to Win the Crown. By Donald R. Sunukjian. Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014. 136 pages. Softcover, $14.99.

Donald Sunukjian's book *Invitation to James* is part of a series that intends to be an aid to pastors and laymen as they study, prepare, and share God's word in a relevant way. Sunukjian holds a Ph.D. from The University of California, Los Angeles, in Speech Communications and a Th.D. in Bible Exposition from Dallas Theological Seminary. He teaches at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University as Professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership. In addition to

teaching for several years, he has also pastored for over a decade. These qualifications prove he is more than able to instruct on this subject.

Invitation to James is part of the series Biblical Preaching for the Contemporary Church. Along with *Invitation to James*, two other works help comprise the current series, *Invitation to Philippians* and *Invitation to the Life of Jacob*. Readers may recognize Sunukjian as the author of the textbook, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching* (Kregeal Academic, 2007). According to the series preface, "The purpose of this series is to offer models of the principles presented in the textbook" (xi).

The book offers fourteen sermons from the Epistle of James that, though slightly edited, still retain the "oral flavor" of the originals (xi). Sunukjian weaves the content and structure of the sermons together in a masterful way. The sermon titles offer appeal with names like, "A Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day" and "Not Thy Will but Mine Be Done." He recognizes the original context of James, that the Jewish audience was enduring trial and affliction. He clearly conveys this context in each sermon. With every sermon, he begins with an effective introduction that appeals to the listener and prompts him or her to listen to the message. Excellent teaching, illustration, and application follow each introduction. Frequently, as he begins a new sermon, he reviews where the series has been and he forecasts where it is heading. The author exudes ethos with his candid confessions to his audience, providing yet another positive quality to his sermons.

The precise examples, illustrations, and applications of the sermons are their greatest strength. The observant Sunukjian has a good understanding of how people think and act. This allows him to be a skillful diagnostician within his sermons. For instance, in his sermon on James 3:13–18 entitled "Wise or Otherwise," he explains that those who are quick to offer advice during trials often lack humility. He offers precise clues to spotting this type of individual by explaining:

> We can usually spot such ego-involvement in two ways—the person will harbor bitter envy and have a selfish ambition. Such people are envious of others. Their own lives have not been successful: their children have not turned out well; their marriages have not flourished; they didn't attend the school they wanted, or achieve the grades they needed. And out of this bitter envy, people are quick to give advice which justifies themselves—shifting the blame for their failures onto others (70).

As he presents the truth of the passage, he often verbalizes questions that listeners are grappling with and then provides answers for their inquiries. An example of this is found in the sermon on James 1:1–4. He lists trials that make life challenging, follows this list with questions sufferers ask, and uses the remainder of the sermon to answer these questions and explain God's purposes within such difficulties (7ff.).

Sunukjian's conclusions to his sermons are their greatest weakness. In practically every instance, his sermons appear to end abruptly. The sermon "He Gives More Grace" provides the best example of this when it quickly moves to the conclusion by ending with the sentence, "Praise God for his conquering grace" (79). This might be a product of the sermon's redaction, a part lost from the oral original to the written page. As he is detailed in his application within the sermons, a detailed conclusion would have helped to improve the sermons.

Sunukjian explains, "A sermon comes alive when it is true to the biblical author's flow of thought, clear in its unfolding, interesting to listen to, and connected to contemporary life" (xi). The sermons presented in this book exude vibrancy, clarity, and applicable content. No doubt this was an exciting sermon series to listen to in person. I find the book to be a practical resource to assist preachers and students in their understanding of James and how to proclaim the word to a contemporary audience. This volume has inspired me to purchase Sunukjian's *Invitation to the Life of Jacob* (Weaver, 2014) to aid my sermon preparation in my current preaching series in the Book of Genesis.

–Michael Baker, Sharon Baptist Church, Mayfield, Kentucky

Joshua 1–12. By Trent C. Butler. Word Biblical Commentary 7A. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 576 pages. Hardcover, $54.99.

Joshua 13–24. By Trent C. Butler. Word Biblical Commentary 7B. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 368 pages. Hardcover, $49.99.

The Word Biblical Commentary's (WBC) revised commentary on Joshua is the work of Trent C. Butler, the author of the original Joshua commentary for the WBC. Butler currently servers as a freelance author and editor, previously serving on the faculty of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüschlikon, Switzerland, and as the editorial director for LifeWay and Holman Bible Publishers. Butler is the author of the Judges commentary in the WBC as well as multiple commentaries in the Holman Old Testament and New Testament Commentary series.

The second edition of the Joshua commentary is no small update. The original 350-page single volume has been expanded to two volumes totaling more than 900 pages. Butler's initial publication of his Joshua commentary sent tremors through evangelical scholastic circles due to the commentary's use of critical methodologies to examine the text and message of Joshua. The second edition has changed little in this regard. If anything, Butler heralds the methodology employed in the commentary as a healthy balance between traditional conservative approaches and critical approaches to the Book of Joshua. He highlights the fact that his approach is more cautious than that of most critical commentaries in the preface to the second edition, "My view

of the development of the present text of Joshua is quite simple, far too simple for the dedicated redaction critics of today" (7A, 10).

Butler's introduction is the greatest strength of his work. The more than 150 pages of introduction and bibliographic material provide an invaluable resource for those studying Joshua. In the introduction, Butler's understanding of Joshua's composition takes shape. Butler submits that Joshua was compiled by a scribe or scribes in the Solomonic period who used as their source stories about Joshua and the conquest of Canaan. These stories were likely preserved in the Benjamite sanctuary of Gilgal (7A, 67–72). Such an understanding of the composition of Joshua comes from Butler's "common-sense approach to the growth of literature stemming in great part from text-critical results" (7A, 83).

The textual work of Butler's commentary undergirds his critical approach to the composition of Joshua. Butler highlights the significant differences between the Septuagint and Masoretic texts of Joshua noting that the choice to translate and interpret the MT over the LXX is an "arbitrary choice" (7A, 40). Butler's textual work sets his commentary apart from other critical commentaries on the Book of Joshua. While many critical scholars examine the biblical text through application of redaction, form, and tradition criticism ad nauseam, Butler's use of redaction, form, and tradition criticism are rooted in the manuscript history of Joshua. Such an approach grounds Butler's use of critical methods in the text.

The format of the WBC provides for Butler's "common sense" critical approach to be applied to individual passages within Joshua.[1] Butler includes copious notes on his translations and extended discussions of the form, structure, and setting of each passage. By addressing the majority of the grammatical/textual notes and literary, tradition, and form-critical issues outside of the comments section, Butler keeps his comments concise and helpful.

The updated version of the Joshua commentary reflects the recent change in format of the WBC. The revised format of the commentary is a welcome change from previous editions. The editors of the WBC have done a commendable job of removing the cumbersome parenthetical notes, which once plagued the WBC, replacing them with easier to access footnotes.

The WBC, already a bastion of evangelical scholarship, continues to improve with the revised edition of the Joshua commentary. Butler's work is a model of serious scholarship that utilizes methodologies of the broader field of biblical studies, yet does not fall outside the bounds of a consistent evangelical position. The reader will find on every page substantial information for the study of the book of Joshua. Scholars will find the work a multi-faceted blessing. Not only does Butler provide a wealth of information, but his substantial bibliographies and thorough survey of recent research makes this commentary invaluable to those who

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[1]The updated edition follows the format of previous WBC volumes by examining individual passages of Scripture by providing dedicated sections on bibliography, translation, notes (on the translation), the form/structure/setting of the passage, comment, and explanation.

wish to do further research on the Book of Joshua. Pastors who are seeking commentary on the text of Joshua will find the comments section accessible, whether or not they choose to wade through the discussions of textual and grammatical notes and Butler's critical analysis of the text.

The weakest area of Butler's commentary is his theological analysis. Butler's explanation of the meaning of Joshua lacks the thorough nature of other areas of his commentary. Butler makes little effort to trace a consistent theological theme or themes in his examination of Joshua's message. The lack of theological material is due largely to Butler's primary focus on textual/historical issues and secondary focus on the theological message of Joshua. This is not to say that his theological insights are not substantial. For example, Butler's statement concerning the importance of the covenant challenge of Joshua 24 drips with theological importance, "The words of Joshua now join the words of Jesus in calling forth in all nations for people who will . . . take upon themselves the commitment to serve the God and Father of Jesus Christ in all circumstances" (7B, 332). Butler's work is a strong addition to the WBC and to the study of the book of Joshua.

   –Cory R. Barnes, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana

Mark. By Mark L. Strauss. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 784 pages. Hardcover, $42.99.

   Mark Strauss (Ph.D., Aberdeen) serves as Professor of New Testament at Bethel Seminary in San Diego, is an associate editor for the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series—the series in which the present volume is a part—and is currently a member of the Committee on Bible Translation, a fact that is readily apparent as he brings his skills as a Bible translator to bear on his fresh translation and interpretation of Mark's Gospel.

   Strauss's commentary includes a series introduction, an introduction to the Gospel of Mark, sixty-three chapters that represent the respective pericopes of Mark, and two appendices, the first entitled "The Endings of Mark" and the second "The Theology of Mark." Each of the sixty-three chapters include seven subsections: Literary Context, Main Idea, Translation, Structure, Exegetical Outline, Explanation of the Text, and Theology in Application. All these sections are strategically designed to assist the reader in her understanding and application of the text. For instance, the literary context section not only provides an explanation for the contextual factors necessary for interpreting the pericope in view, it also includes an outline to orient the reader around what came before and what to expect in subsequent pericopes. Teachers and preachers will find the exegetical outlines to be helpful lesson or sermon starters that are anchored to the biblical text. Strauss's fresh translation of Mark shows great skill as he: strategically eliminates Mark's characteristic use of *kai* ("and"), opting instead for the English prefer-

ence of asyndeton; provides contextual renderings of words like *euthys* ("immediately"); and offers idiomatic English renderings instead of retaining awkward syntax or uncritically carrying over Greek idioms that would not be immediately understood.

Within the introduction, Strauss discusses standard issues related to the interpretation of ancient texts, such as authorship, date, provenance and destination, audience, occasion and purpose, and the literary features of the text. Readers will not be surprised by any of the positions he takes on these matters as he opts for those common among evangelical commentators: John Mark, writing from Rome (37) to a persecuted church (20), was most likely the author (31) of the first of our four Gospels (21–22). Strauss also, in line with the majority of scholars, believes that the longer ending of Mark was a later interpolation, not an original part of the composition.

One's methodology largely shapes both the form and content of a commentary. It is altogether typical of Gospel commentaries to focus heavily, if not primarily, on form and redaction criticism, providing readers with insight into why Mark includes certain material according to the *Sitz im Leben* of his audience and how later Gospel writers have appropriated and modified that material. While Strauss certainly incorporates these insights where necessary, the commentary addresses concerns pertaining to narrative criticism. This is, in part, due to the subjective nature of any conclusion based on form and source criticism because of the text's dependence upon supposed sources. This commentary, therefore, aims at providing "a holistic narrative analysis of Mark's themes and theology" (26).

In this vein, Strauss contends that the Gospel is organized around two themes: (1) Jesus is the mighty messiah and Son of God who has authority, evokes awe, and sparks opposition and (2) he is also the Suffering Servant who submits himself to suffering and humiliation ultimately to die for the sins of his people. The first gives form and meaning to the later. Strauss writes, "Though Jesus is indeed the mighty Messiah and Son of God, his role is not to conquer the Romans. It is to suffer and die as a payment for sins. . . . Those who would be his disciples must follow in his path, taking up their own cross and following him in a life of self-sacrificial service—living for the kingdom and for others rather than themselves" (19). In a book thoroughly concerned with discipleship, one might find it odd that all the disciples repeatedly fail and look, at certain crucial junctures (especially when compared to other characters within the narrative), like anti-disciples. However, this theme only reinforces Mark's overall portrait of Jesus as the only perfect disciple on whom all disciples should model themselves (42–43).

The commentary, as a whole, has several strengths. By focusing on a holistic narrative analysis instead of attempting to incorporate extended discussions of redaction, form, and textual criticism on every pericope, the commentary becomes streamlined. Coupled with Strauss's prose, the reader will have little trouble reading this volume from cover to cover. Furthermore, while no part of the commentary is uninformed by the Greek text, readers can navigate its contents unencumbered because technical terms are defined, translations are consistently offered,

and detailed discussions are strategically placed within the footnotes. When he does discuss Greek grammar, Strauss consistently references Wallace's *Beyond the Basics*, thus providing readers with a consistent vocabulary and one with which most anyone who has studied biblical Greek would be familiar. Finally, the commentary—as mentioned before—is designed from beginning to end with the communicator in mind. This results in: numerous outlines; a fresh, idiomatic translation; insight into the structure of the original Greek text; and detailed application are available and easily accessed.

There are, however, some drawbacks to this commentary, most of which are the byproducts of its success. Strauss's commentary will not be a one-stop shop for interpreting the Gospel of Mark. It does not contain the detailed cultural and historical, form and redaction critical discussions one finds in other commentaries on this book. Furthermore, where Strauss does appeal to redaction, it is to aid in understanding of a literary or thematic difficulty within the text instead of allowing the text speak for itself. For instance, though Strauss recognizes that Mark's use of intercalation links the "two family scenes (vv. 20–22, 31–35) with the Beelzebul controversy (vv. 23–30)," thus emphasizing the opposition Jesus receives from his own people (171). But he does not permit this observation to have its full narrative import, explaining in the Theology in Application section, "Yet he is also careful not to directly connect Mary of Jesus' brothers to the charge of insanity. . . . Mark's readers would almost certainly be aware that Mary and Jesus' brothers became active members of the early church" (173).

Finally, there were a number of sections that were bogged down by unnecessary verbal classifications according to Wallace's grammar. Though it may certainly be correct to claim that a specific verb is best understood as ingressive, futuristic, or consummate there have been a number of developments within linguistics in general and discourse analysis in particular that are helpful in these matters. It seems like it might be of greater relevance to discuss what effect verb tense and aspect have on background and foreground information within the narrative and how that shapes the message communicated than providing the standard grammatical designations present in Wallace's grammar.

Despite these minor quibbles, the translation and outlines alone are worth the price of the volume and should be on the shelf of anyone who plans to teach through the book. Readers will benefit from Strauss' extensive work and will learn to read the Gospel according to its own emphases and along its narrative lines.

–Jacob N. Cerone, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina

Perspectives on Israel and the Church: 4 Views. Edited by Chad O. Brand. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. 329 pages. Softcover, $29.99.

Who are the people of God? Are the people of Israel still the people of God, or did the church replace Israel? Answers to these questions have influenced American foreign policy; especially the rationale that God will "bless" (Gen 12:3) or "prosper" (Psa 122:6) nations that side with the modern state of Israel. Answers to these questions reflect one's hermeneutic: for example, how Christians appropriate prophecies about Ancient Israel. Answers to these questions integrate soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology.

Four answers appear in *Perspectives on Israel and the Church*. Its editor, Chad Owen Brand, is also one of its contributors. He has been a professor (North Greenville College and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) and a pastor (Texas and Kentucky). He is an editor (e.g., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* and *The Apologetics Study Bible*) and a writer (e.g., *Flourishing Faith: A Baptist Primer on Work, Economics, and Civic Stewardship* and *A Guide to Evangelism*).

Broadman and Holman has published fourteen books in its series titled "Perspectives." *Perspectives on Israel and the Church* is the fifth book that involves Brand: see *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity* (editor), *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism* (contributor), *Perspectives on Election* (editor), and *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: Three Views of Romans 7* (contributor). Like its predecessors, *Perspectives on Israel and the Church* is a dialogue. Each contributor presents his perspective on the assigned topic (50–54 pages), a pressing issue in ministry or biblical studies; immediately following, the other contributors briefly respond (4–9 pages).

After an eighteen-page introduction by Brand, Robert L. Reymond represents the Traditional Covenant View.[1] He highlights its main points: since Genesis 3:15, a continuity of redemptive history (no dispensations); a unity of covenant (grace) and oneness of God's people (the elect); and one plan of salvation, namely, conscious faith in the sacrificial work (anticipated or accomplished) of the promised Messiah. Reymond's essay reveals that discerning this unity or continuity requires spiritualizing God's covenant with Abraham. The promise of land "actually had both its *origin* and its antitypical *fulfillment* in the heavenly, eternal reality that lay still in the future" (44, emphasis in the original). The promise of seed refers to all who belong to Christ (Gal 3:29), not ethnic Israel.

Regarding ethnic Israel, Reymond cites the parable of the wicked farmers, particularly Matthew 21:43.[2] He then comments, "*Here is a biblical 'replacement theology,'* and it is Jesus him-

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[1]Robert L. Reymond (1932–2013) taught theology at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, and at Knox Theological Seminary in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

[2]Reymond additionally quoted Gal 6:16; Phil 3:3; 1 Thess 2:15–16; and 1 Pet 2:9–10.

self who enunciated it: *National* Israel, except for its elect remnant, would be judged, and the special standing that it had enjoyed during the old dispensation would be transferred to the already existing and growing *international* church of Jesus Christ" (49, emphasis in the original).

Robert L. Thomas represents the Traditional Dispensational View.[3] A literal reading of God's covenant with Abraham launches his essay; a covenant that became "more specific" (88) as God cut subsequent covenants with Abraham's seed: i.e., Land/Palestinian Covenant, Davidic Covenant, and New Covenant. For Thomas, the promise of land unites the testaments.[4] He tracked it from the Pentateuch to the Prophets before tackling the New Testament, where he shows that Jesus and the apostles could have but did not rescind any of the promises to Abraham. Thomas concludes, "The only question is, which group of living Israelites will receive those promises?" (95). The last section of Thomas' essay focuses on Revelation. Interpreting its content literally,[5] he detects a future for Abraham's progeny. Christ, at his Second Advent, will restore the kingdom to Israel with New Jerusalem as its center (phase one). After a millennium, the kingdom's location shall shift to the new heavens and new earth (phase two). During phase one, ethnic Israel will finally fulfill its mission, playing a special role that God assigns (Rev 21:12). The church presently fills the void created when Israel rejected Christ at his First Advent.

Robert L. Saucy represents the Progressive Dispensational View.[6] He explains, "Progressive dispensationalism sees a distinction between Israel and the church. But, contrary to other dispensational views, [it] views this distinction within the unified historical program of the *messianic* kingdom of Old Testament prophecy" (155, emphasis in the original). Saucy uses "already" and "not yet" adjectivally to clarify his position. Christ, during his First Advent ("already"), established the messianic kingdom, a partial fulfillment of eschatological salvation. Consequently, Gentiles alongside a Jewish remnant now constitute the church (not New Israel).[7] At his Second Advent ("not yet"), Christ's reign will transform every aspect of society, the final fulfillment of eschatological salvation. God's glory shall radiate from national Israel to all nations.

Chad O. Brand and Tom Pratt Jr.[8] represent the Progressive Covenant View. Their essay divides into five emphases: the oneness of God demands one people; the people of God are his by

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[3]Robert L. Thomas is Professor of New Testament emeritus at The Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, California.

[4]The promise of land anticipates a future, earthly kingdom.

[5]Especially 7:1–8; 11:1–12; 12:1–17; 14:1–5; 16:12–16; 19:11–20:10; 21:1–14. To validate his interpretation, Thomas sparred with Greg Beale, David Aune, and Grant Osborne. Their views appeared to me to be more similar than different. Consulting at least one commentary on Revelation older than ten years (e.g., George Eldon Ladd, Ray Summers, Ray Frank Robbins) would have been better.

[6]Robert L. Saucy (1930–2015) served as Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology at Talbot School of Theology at Biola University in La Mirada, California.

[7]Saucy cites Eph 2:11–22.

[8]Tom Pratt Jr. is President of Eagle Rock Ministries, Bible teacher, preacher, and a freelance writer.

divine election and spiritual birth; the people of God arise from the supporting root of historic Israel; the marker of the people is the internal presence of the Holy Spirit; and the people of God are the body of Christ. Brand and Pratt reject the premise that the church replaced Israel (Traditional Covenant View) as well as any distinction between Israel and the church after Christ returns (Traditional Dispensational View).

The format of *Perspectives on Israel and the Church* limited how much contributors could write (a point that each made), but responding to one another allowed them to elaborate. Their being succinct benefits us. Specifically, one can read one book but learn four viewpoints, each of which has been the sole focus of other books. "Why these views?" and "Why not more?" are fair questions, but one cannot deny the relevance of these four views.

The content of *Perspectives on Israel and the Church* provides variety: five writing styles, all readable and persuasive. Reymond was the most argumentative, presenting his perspective by disputation, attacking Dispensationalism. Thomas alone opted for an exegetical approach. His argument, that Jesus and the apostles *could have* but did not rescind the promises to Abraham, synthesizes sixteen scriptural occasions, but anything subjunctive is inherently weak. Brand and Pratt actually cited the most Scripture.[9] Their explanation of Revelation, however, was murky.

[9]Scripture Index, 305–17.

–*Ivan Parke, Mississippi College, Clinton, Mississippi*

Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement: 3 Views. Edited by Andrew David Naselli and Mark A. Snoeberger. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. 256 pages. Softcover, $24.99.

The New Testament discloses that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), one of his relative attributes. Hence, he loves the "world" (John 3:16), "sinners" (Rom 5:8), and "Church" (Eph 5:25). Theologians and biblical scholars debate how much he loves: the extent as well as the effect. *Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement* presents three views.

Broadman and Holman has published fourteen books in its series titled "Perspectives." They all follow a "point-counterpoint format [that] allows readers to see the strengths and weaknesses of each position" (145). *Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement* involves two editors and three contributors. After Carl R. Trueman, Grant R. Osborne, and John S. Hammett each presented his perspective on the assigned topic (43–52 pages), the other contributors responded (6–12 pages).[1]

[1]Due to health issues, Osborne could not submit written responses to Trueman or Hammett. Thomas H. McCall, a colleague at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, submitted them on his behalf.

Andrew David Naselli and Mark A. Snoeberger served as editors. Naselli, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology, teaches at Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is also an author (e.g., *From Typology to Doxology: Paul's Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34–35*). Snoeberger, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, teaches at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary in Allen Park, Michigan. He wrote the seventeen-page introduction that identifies the book's focus: "For whom was Christ a substitute?" (6). Naselli wrote the fifteen-page conclusion that divulges the book's objective: "to help Christians better understand this controversial issue and consequently disagree with their brothers and sisters in Christ in a God-glorifying way" (214).

Carl R. Trueman, Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary in Glenside, Pennsylvania, presents the Definite Atonement View. His essay divides into two parts: "The Particularity of Intention in Christ's Saving Mission" and "The Objective Efficacy of Christ's Work." The atonement's efficacy implies that it is particular; few are saved. In part one, Trueman cites nine supporting Scriptures, all New Testament texts: Matt 1:21; 20:28; 26:28; John 6:37–40; 10:1–42; 17:1–26; Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25–27; and Titus 2:14. In part two, Jesus' role as high priest was the focal point. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest sacrificed one goat, exclusively for Israelites, not indiscriminately for the world. He then entered the holy of holies to sprinkle blood as an act of intercession on behalf of the same people. Such particularity characterized the crucifixion, an "antitype to the Old Testament typical sacrifices" (31). If Jesus had sacrificed himself and interceded on behalf of all people (not just the elect), then: 1) his will would have conflicted with the Father's will (John 17:6–10); 2) his effectiveness as an intercessor could not inspire confidence; and 3) penal substitution loses its meaning.

The parallels that Trueman draws ignore key parts of the Old Testament story. First, the high priests sacrificed for and interceded on behalf of Israel indiscriminately. They, unlike Paul, did not distinguish between physical Israel and spiritual Israel (Rom 9:6). Second, Gentiles like Job, Jethro, Naaman, and Ninevites somehow connected with God without the aid of high priests. The parallels that Trueman drew also ignore three points that Hebrews makes. First, Jesus is a high priest of the superior order of Melchizedek (5:1–10; 6:17–7:28). Second, the Levitical priesthood, being men, could represent Israel, but they, being sinful, could not please God (5:1–4; 7:26–28). Third, the Levitical sacrifices could not take away sins (10:1–18). Animals cannot represent humans.

Grant R. Osborne, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, presents the General Atonement View. His expertise in biblical studies led him to examine more scripture than Trueman or Hammett—thirty-two passages[2] that favor

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[2]Matt 1:21; 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10; John 6:37–44; 10:1–42; 15:13; 17:9; Acts 20:28; Rom 1:7; 5:10; 8:28–29, 32; 9:13, 23; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 1:4, 15; 3:13–14; Eph 1:3–7; 2:8; 5:25–27; Phil 1:29; Col 1:14; 2:14; 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13–14; 2 Tim 1:9–10; Heb 7:25.

particular redemption and thirty-six passages[3] that favor universal atonement, an "impressive and thorough compilation of relevant texts," according to Trueman (128). After a charitable consideration of definite atonement, Osborne concludes, "A formidable array of biblical material supports the doctrine of limited atonement, and while several passages can be explained another way, the cumulative evidence gives strong validity to the Reformed position. . . . I appreciate this view more than I ever thought possible" (104).

Osborne did not lay out his own position until the last four pages of his essay. He reduced his exegesis to four cogent points.

(1) "God loves the world 'so much' (John 3:16) that his salvific will extends to all humankind, and therefore 'all' the 'world' is the focus of Jesus' atoning death, attested in a wide range of passages."

(2) "People for whom Christ died and made atonement can suffer eternal damnation, meaning that Christ did atone for unbelievers."

(3) "Passages on the commission of the church to witness to the whole world show Christ's atoning work is available to all humankind."

(4) "The NT sees unbelief as a result of choice, and the judgment that results points to that choice. . . . Christ died for all people, not just the elect." (123)

And though sufficient for unbelievers, Christ's death is efficient only for believers. However, the Spirit convicts everyone (prevenient grace).

Throughout his essay, Osborne repeatedly advises readers to withhold judgment until the end. One wonders, however, how patient they will be. The essay develops quite slowly because Osborne is conscientious. Being fair and balanced, he even makes a convincing case for the Definite Atonement View.[4]

John S. Hammett, Professor of Systematic Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, presents the Multiple-Intentions View of the Atonement. His essay tackles a broader question, namely "What did God intend to accomplish by Christ's death?" (148). He gives three answers.

(1) Universal: Objective Provision – One intention of God was to provide forgiveness of sins for all. Christ removed every obstacle to fellowship with God.

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[3]Isa 53:6; Ezek 33:11; Matt 11:28; 24:14; 28:18–20; John 1:4, 7, 9, 29; 3:16–18; 4:42; 6:51; 8:12; 11:48; 12:32, 47; Acts 1:8; 17:30; Rom 2:4; 5:8, 18; 10:11–13; 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11; 2 Cor 5:14–15, 19; 2 Thess 2:10–12; 1 Tim 2:3–4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb 2:9; 10:29; 2 Pet 2:1; 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:8–10; 5:10–11.

[4]Osborne admitted, "Calvinism and Arminianism are logically viable and defensible. Both are coherent systems. What we must decide is not so much which has stronger logic (I believe they are virtually equal on that score) but rather which is more biblically viable" (123–24).

(2) Particular: Subjective Application – Another intention of God in sending Christ was to secure the salvation of some. The Spirit works on behalf of the elect, thus making their faith possible.

(3) Cosmic: Reconciliation and Victory – Christ, by the cross, defeated the enemies of humanity: e.g., Satan, sin, and death.

Hammett realizes the advantage of his view. Specifically, he can claim every Scripture that Calvinists and Arminians cite as proof. He explains, "It allows for the most natural exegesis both to universal and to particular texts" (183). His view, however, cannot explain why God would purchase atonement for all but deny it to most. Hammett deflects well the charge of "unfair," but hides behind the reality of "mystery" (182).

Each view appearing in *Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement* is biblical. Their differences are hermeneutical. As a result, readers of *Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement* can see firsthand how serious handlings of the Scripture often produce conflicting positions. The issue is not who loves the Bible more.

Each contributor models how to dialogue succinctly and to disagree properly. Consequently, *Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement* equips readers to be both knowledgeable and gracious. Wrestling with weighty subjects may not resolve every question, but the struggle makes us better.

–*Ivan Parke, Mississippi College, Clinton, Mississippi*

The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus. By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 408 pages. Softcover, $30.00.

Michael F. Bird is Lecturer in Theology at Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia. His works include *Are You the One Who Is to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Baker Academic, 2009); *Jesus is the Christ: The Messianic Testimony of the Gospels* (IVP, 2012); and *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Zondervan, 2013).

In *The Gospel of the Lord*, Bird seeks to examine and discuss the composition and nature of the canonical Gospels. The book is composed of six chapters, each concluding with an excursus on a related topic. In the first chapter, Bird discusses the relationship of the historical Jesus to the Gospels. This chapter includes an excursus on the relationship between the oral and written Gospel. The second chapter discusses the purpose and preservation of the Jesus tradition, and concludes with an excursus on an evangelical-critical approach to the study of the Gospels. In the third chapter, Bird analyzes the formation of the Jesus tradition. He concludes with an excursus on the failure of New Testament form criticism. The fourth, and longest, chapter of

the book discusses the literary genetics of the Gospels. He analyzes this regarding the Synoptic Problem and the Johannine question. This chapter's excursus is a compilation of Patristic quotations on the order of the Gospels. In the fifth chapter, Bird analyzes the goal and genre of the Gospels. The excursus concluding this chapter provides a discussion of the non-canonical Gospels. The sixth, and final, chapter of the book discusses the four-fold gospel. It concludes with an excursus on the text of the Gospels in the second century.

The work at hand deserves praise in many ways. First, Bird has provided a fine example of how one can approach the Gospels in a critical way and remain faithful to the convictions of an Evangelical theologian, specifically maintaining a high view of Scripture. In much of modern critical Gospel scholarship, there is often a false dichotomy forged between critical scholarship and theological conviction. The critical study of the Gospels, for many, means a rejection of a high view of Scripture and vice versa. Bird shows how one can maintain a high view of Scripture and simultaneously pursue serious critical scholarship. Not only does he exemplify this in the book, he also provides a normative approach to this task in the helpful excursus at the end of the second chapter (67–73). He refers to this approach as a "believing criticism" (68).

Bird rightly argues that the Christological proclamation found in the Gospels cannot be separated from the Jesus of history. He shows that the material found in the Gospels is most similar to the genre of Greco-Roman biography (235–40). Though the genre of the Gospels is most similar to Greco-Roman biography, they are still unique in their presentation of their material. Bird acknowledges that the Gospels function not only as a biography of Jesus, but as the kerygma of primitive Christianity as well. He hence refers to the Gospels as biographical kerygma (270–72). One need not create a false dichotomy between the Jesus of history and the Christ of the kerygma, as Bultmann did.

Another strength of *The Gospel of the Lord* is the charts that Bird provides in the chapter on the literary genetics of the Gospels. In this chapter, Bird carefully analyzes the similarities and dissimilarities between the Synoptic Gospels in regards to wording, outline and order, parenthetical and redactional material, and citation of Old Testament material. He provides charts that show the evangelists' parallel accounts of Jesus tradition material in corresponding columns for both the English translation (NRSV) and the Greek text (UBS[4]). These charts, following the chart legend that Bird provides, allow the reader to see where Mark and Matthew, Mark and Luke, Matthew and Luke, and all three mirror and differ from one another. Not only do these charts allow the reader to visualize what Bird is discussing, but they also strengthen Bird's argument that the Synoptic Gospels share a literary-genetic relationship with one another.

Bird's position on the Synoptic Problem deserves attention as well. After presenting the different solutions posed to the Synoptic Problem to date, Bird takes up what he calls the "Holtzmann-Gundry hypothesis" (156–60). This position is similar to the two- (four-) source hypothesis in that it affirms Markan priority and the existence of Q. The Holtzmann-Gundry

hypothesis claims the following: "(1) Markan priority; (2) Matthew used Mark and Q; (3) Luke used Mark and Q; and (4) at a later point, Luke incorporated Matthew into his own work" (156). Though many may doubt the existence of Q, Bird rightly argues that the existence of Q allows one to more strongly affirm a literary-genetic relationship "between Matthew and Luke that is indirect enough to explain their varied order and divergent utilization of the double tradition" (187). Though he affirms the existence of Q, Bird does not, like many Q scholars, engage in the speculation of the *Sitz im Leben*, layers, and redactions of Q material (165–66). Though there will be those who disagree with him, Bird makes a cogent case for the Holtzmann-Gundry hypothesis as a solution to the Synoptic Problem.

Michael Bird's *The Gospel of the Lord* provides an outstanding contribution to the field of Gospel scholarship. The book is well written and accessible to most readers. One will quickly notice that Bird is not only a critical writer, but a humorous one as well. Though it may not find much use in a Sunday School class or a small-group Bible study, *The Gospel of the Lord* would find much use in undergraduate and graduate New Testament courses. It provides one with a great introduction to multiple issues and debates in modern Gospel scholarship, as well as provides one with well-formed arguments for adopting the author's positions. I recommend this book for pastors and biblical/theological students, as well as scholars and professors.

–Andrew Hollingsworth, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana

Theology's Epistemological Dilemma: How Karl Barth and Alvin Plantinga Provide a Unified Response. By Kevin Diller. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014. 326 pages. Softcover, $34.00.

Kevin Diller is Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religion at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana. He holds degrees from Calvin Theological Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary, the University of Notre Dame, and the University of St. Andrews. He was awarded the Frederick J. Crosson Fellowship from the Notre Dame Center for Philosophy of Religion while there for his postdoctoral work. *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma* (*TED)* began as his Ph.D. thesis.

In the work at hand, Kevin Diller seeks to provide a solution to what he terms the epistemological dilemma of Christian theology. He intends to do this by combining the contributions of Karl Barth on revelation and Alvin Plantinga on warranted Christian belief into a coherent response. Diller begins *TED* by first discussing the nature of the epistemic problem of theology. He claims that the epistemological dilemma that theology faces has nothing to do with the possibility of the knowledge of God, but "with the criteria, conditions, content and nature of something that *is* a real possibility" (31–32, emphasis original). He follows a line of thinkers, namely Alvin Plantinga, who hold that knowledge should be defined as warranted true belief,[1]

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[1]Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4.

and holds to a correspondence theory of truth, i.e. something is true if it corresponds to reality. By combining insights from Karl Barth's theology of revelation and Alvin Plantinga's epistemology of Christian belief, Diller seeks to develop an adequate response to the dilemma discussed above.

Diller begins the development of his response by discussing Barth's theology of revelation, which is "exclusively focused on the knowledge of God as the gift of God" (44). He notes that for Barth, the knowledge of God is "personal, cognitive, participative knowing" (44). The knowledge of God arises only from God's initiative (57). Humans are incapable of achieving knowledge of God on their own and must rely on God's revelation to them. God communicates the knowledge of himself indirectly through creaturely means, "but in such a way that the divine content does not become the creaturely form" (56). Also, knowing God is reconciliation with him and personal transformation (61). In short, knowledge of God is only possible when God chooses in his transcendence and freedom to reveal himself to the knowing subject, and this revealed self-knowledge transforms and reconciles the knowing subject to God as well enlightens her intellect. Since this knowledge comes from outside the knowing subject, it is an objective knowledge. After discussing Barth's theology of revelation, Diller discusses Barth's engagement with philosophy. He argues that, contrary to many Barth interpreters, Barth was not opposed to using philosophy as long as it aided theology. What Barth rejected was the claim that theology must play by philosophy's rules (69–70).

Diller next discusses Alvin Plantinga's epistemology of Christian belief. He looks intently at what Plantinga says concerning epistemic warrant. According to Plantinga, epistemic justification fails as sufficient criteria for establishing a belief as knowledge. He argues that the notion of warrant is more successful in meeting the epistemic criteria, writing: "What warrants our beliefs is that they are formed properly according to this designed connection to truth. We are dependent on both an environment and cognitive faculties oriented toward and functioning in accordance with this plan" (117). Diller then takes note of Plantinga's notion that belief in God is properly basic. Assuming that one's cognitive faculties are functioning properly in their proper environment, all of which is according to their design, one is warranted in their belief in God in the same way that they are warranted in their belief that other minds exist; it is a properly basic belief (122). Diller notes throughout this section that Plantinga is not trying to show the truth-value of Christian beliefs. Instead, he is trying to show how if said beliefs hold positive truth-value, they can be said to have merited epistemic warrant. Diller then discusses Plantinga's Aquinas/Calvin (A/C) model of theistic belief (137). This model draws from what Calvin referred to as the *sensus divinitatis*. The *sensus divnitatis* is a natural cognitive function of the human mind that is designed by God to receive the knowledge of himself. Diller notes that Plantinga also discusses what he calls the extended A/C model of theistic belief (142). The extended model takes into account the damaged nature of the *sensus divinitatis* that is a result of the fall of man into sin. This can only be repaired by the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit (153). Once the *sensus divinitatis* has been repaired, then one can properly receive God's self-revelation.

Diller summarizes his unified response in chapter six of *TED*. The primary components of this model are the gift of knowledge of God from the Holy Spirit, its foundation in revelation, the transformational nature of revelation, the corporate nature of this knowledge, the role of grace in the giving of it, its personal and cognitive nature, its mediation, its only secure grounding being in communion with God, the model's concern with theological epistemology instead of prolegomena, and the warrant and coherence of the knowledge of God (167–73). Diller shows how Barth's theology of revelation and Plantinga's epistemology of Christian belief actually fit well together. Diller spends the rest of the book responding to different epistemological issues that confront theology.

There are multiple aspects of the work at hand that deserve praise. First, Diller has sought to tackle a philosophical problem that has long plagued theology. Theology has dealt with the aftermath of the attacks of Hume and Kant for too long, and Diller has provided it with a strong defense. By combining Barth's theology of revelation with Plantinga's Christian epistemology, Diller has provided theology with a strong argument that will serve it well.

Second, Diller does a remarkable job unifying the thought of two Christian thinkers that many would see as incompatible with each other. He shows how, contrary to popular belief, Barth was not opposed to using philosophy as the handmaid of theology. What he opposed was requiring theology to play by the same rules of philosophy. Diller shows the similarities between Barth's theology of revelation and what Plantinga calls the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. Both thinkers understand the knowledge of God as something that is received by the thinking subject from God himself. This is the only way knowledge of God is possible, according to both Barth and Plantinga.

Another strength of *TED* is its readability. Diller writes in a way that is easily comprehended and does not require much re-reading. He does well in that he does not presume a plethora of knowledge on behalf of the reader and provides many helpful definitions and clarifying footnotes throughout the work. *TED* is a must-read for those interested in the discussion of theological epistemology. Not only will it provide the scholar with new concepts and paradigms to consider, it also provides the pastor and layperson with tools that aid them in their own understanding of the relationship between knowledge and faith. *TED* meets academic, ministerial, and apologetic needs.

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For Whom Did Christ Die? The Extent of the Atonement in Paul's Theology, Paternoster Biblical Monographs. By Jarvis Williams. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012. 267 pages. Softcover, $29.99.

Christ Died for Our Sins: Representation and Substitution in Romans and Their Jewish Martyrological Background. By Jarvis Williams. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015. 246 pages. Softcover, $28.00.

Editorial Note: The following essay is drawn from David L. Allen, *The Extent of the Atonement: History and Critique* (Nashville: B&H Academic, forthcoming, 2016).

Jarvis Williams is Associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His *For Whom Did Christ Die? The Extent of the Atonement in Paul's Theology*[1] (2012) is an attempt to support limited atonement by discerning connections from material from Second Temple Judaism in comparison with Paul's letters.

This is a very uneven work. Material dealing with Second Temple Judaism is sometimes helpful. Material dealing with the extent of the atonement is historically and exegetically weak. The section dealing with the extent question is almost totally dependent on secondary sources. Williams failed to deal with or even acknowledge the exegetical and theological work of the many Calvinists such as Davenant, Baxter, Charles Hodge, Shedd, Dabney, etc., who opposed limited atonement, many writing significant works against it. He shows no awareness of G. Michael Thomas's *The Extent of the Atonement: A Dilemma for Reformed Theology*, a crucial work on the historical issues surrounding the question of extent within Reformed theology. Williams wrongly attributes the moniker of Arminianism to Ken Keathley's *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach*.

He spends most of his time surveying Romans, with a section on divine and human agency in early Judaism, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.[2] While this is interesting and helpful at times, there is little if any connection with the extent of the atonement. In fact, it appears as though he tries to force his preconceived thesis of limited atonement to Second Temple texts; a classic case of eisegesis. Most of the early Jewish works that he discusses have nothing to do with the extent question.

Conversely, when it comes to those texts that actually speak, albeit indirectly, to his question, Williams seems unaware of their relevancy. For example, on the question of divine and human agency, he devotes only one paragraph to *1 Enoch*, fails to mention the relevant passages, and neglects some of the secondary source scholarship on the issue.[3]

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[1]Jarvis Williams, *For Whom Did Christ Die? The Extent of the Atonement in Paul's Theology*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012).

[2]Ibid., 33–187.

[3]*First Enoch* is a composite work, as Williams acknowledged. What he seems to be unaware of is the

The dearth of footnotes in the early Judaism portions of the book would seem to suggest that Williams consulted only a small number of the scholarly works on the literature. Given that he discusses the theology of one work (*4 Ezra*) twice in the same chapter, the conclusion seems unavoidable that he does not realize that this work appears in two collections (Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha) under two different names.[4] Although he is correct in his contention that the martyrs in *2 Maccabees* and *4 Maccabees* are said to atone for Israel's sins, I fail to see how that supports limited atonement.[5]

Williams covers "the purpose and benefits of Jesus' death" in chapter 4, of which the first several pages deal with animal sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible and human sacrifice in early Judaism, before even getting to Paul.[6] Pages 200–214 are a very limited study of seven key Pauline passages, most of which do not address the extent of the atonement directly. He fails to deal with those that do: Rom 5:18–19; 1 Cor 15:3, 1 Tim 2:3–6; and 1 Tim 4:10, to mention four. His treatment of 2 Cor 5:14–21 is limited to two pages and offers no exegesis whatsoever. There is no treatment of 1 Cor 15:1–11 which indicates Paul's understanding of the gospel to

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fact that scholars have written much about the issue of divine and human agency in the works that make up this corpus. See especially P. Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and its History* (JSPSup 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 83–83, 146, whose ideas are followed in expanded/modified fashion by G. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 72–74, 133–35. In short, according to some scholars, the *Book of Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1–36) teaches that sin is beyond human control and God must act to deliver humans from the evils they cannot help but commit, whereas the *Epistle of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 92–105) emphasizes that humans are completely to blame for sin. While I think even this understanding of *1 Enoch* is somewhat simplistic, it is an important discussion relating at least indirectly to Williams's argument that he should engage if he is arguing that Jews believed "divine agency surrounds human agency," whatever he means by that.

[4]In one case, he discussed a book of the so-called "Apocrypha," *2 Esdras*, chapters 3–14 of which is a pseudepigraphon called *4 Ezra*. In his treatment of the "Pseudepigrapha," however, he has a separate discussion of *4 Ezra*. He does acknowledge in a footnote in the case of *2 Esdras* that chapters 3–14 are known as *4 Ezra*, but he seems completely unaware of the fact that this is the same *4 Ezra* that he discussed in the following section of the chapter. He does not explain why he would deal with it twice or even refer the reader in a footnote to the other discussion. On the contrary, according to footnotes 7 and 19, he refers the reader to one translation of the work in one case and another translation in the other. Interestingly, his two discussions of the same work are quite different, which illustrates the highly subjective nature of his interpretation since not even he interprets the same text the same way twice.

[5]There is simply no connection between *2 and 4 Maccabees* and the doctrine of limited atonement. The martyrs died on behalf of Israel only (not all the nations), but Israel is conceived corporately. These works do not seem to imply that the martyrs died only on behalf of certain individual members of Israel. While one may correctly contrast Paul's belief that Jesus died for the world with that of 2 and 4 Maccabees that Jesus dies only for Israel, there is nothing that supports the idea of limited atonement in the Jewish texts or in Paul.

[6]Williams, *For Whom did Christ Die?*, 188–214.

include the fact that his custom was to preach "Christ died for our sins" to his unregenerate audiences, as he did in Corinth.[7]

This is all the more problematic in light of Williams's stated purpose: "to offer a detailed, exegetical investigation of selected texts in Paul and in early Judaism that shed light on Paul's view of the extent of Jesus' death,"[8] and his claim that his work is, to his knowledge, "the only monograph that concerns itself exclusively with arguing in favor of particular atonement from the Pauline letters by means of *exegetical rigor*."[9]

Williams's *Christ Died for Our Sins: Representation and Substitution in Romans and Their Jewish Martyrological Background* was published in 2015.[10] Williams continues his trajectory of limited atonement, but in more subdued tones. In the preface, Williams acknowledges criticism of his previous work and has refined his thesis to a more modest proposal that martyr theology was one of several traditions influencing Paul's conception and presentation of the death of Christ (x–xi; 184–88). Among his summary conclusions are the following three statements:

> In Romans, Paul suggests that Jesus, a Torah-observant Jew, innocently died for non-Torah-observant Jewish and Gentile sinners so that they would experience soteriological benefits, both as a result of his death for them and as a result of their identification with him by faith.[11]

> Paul's use of the Jewish martyrological traditions in Romans was an intentional missiological move on his part to contextualize the death of Jesus for Jewish and Gentile sinners to highlight the efficacious nature of Jesus' death for them.[12]

> While the Jewish martyrological narratives present Torah-observant Jews exclusively dying as substitutes for and as representatives of Jewish sinners, Paul uses the Jewish martyrological narratives to present Jesus, a Torah-observant Jew, as dying inclusively for Jewish *and Gentile* sinners who believe. According to Paul, Israel's God is the God of Jews and Gentiles (Rom 3:29–30), because "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for our sins" (Rom 5:8).[13]

In the first statement, Williams seems to intend a limited atonement since Jesus died so that Jewish and Gentile sinners "would experience soteriological benefits. . . ." It appears the

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[7]James Morison discusses this text as evidence for unlimited atonement in his *The Extent of the Propitiation, or, the Question, For Whom did Christ Die? Answered* (London: J. Davie/ Kilmarnock: Thomas Ward & Co., Paternoster Row, 1842), 14–16, 94. Morison cited several Church Fathers who took the same interpretation.

[8]Williams, *For Whom did Christ Die*?, 1.

[9]Ibid., 2. (Emphasis mine)

[10]Jarvis Williams, *Christ Died for Our Sins: Representation and Substitution in Romans and Their Jewish Martyrological Background* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015).

[11]Ibid., 186.

[12]Ibid., 187.

[13]Ibid., 188.

"would" is invested with the meaning of "will." If the latter compound clause—"both as a result of his death for them and as a result of their identification with him by faith"—is intended to convey limitation in both parts, then Williams is interpreting Paul as affirming a limited atonement.

In the second statement, I presume Williams intends to convey the notion of limitation in the death of Christ, though the statement as worded does not necessarily convey that meaning. Paul is addressing believers in Romans. When Paul talks about the efficacious nature of the atonement for and to those who are already believers, logically he is not committing himself to a strictly limited atonement in terms of the actual *provision* of the atonement, but is speaking of the actually *application* of the atonement to them, which is, in fact, efficacious. Williams, however, appears to convey the meaning of strict limitation by his use of "efficacious."

In Williams's third statement, his position on limited atonement is clear: "Jesus died inclusively for Jewish *and Gentile* sinners who believe." "Inclusively" refers to Jewish and Gentile sinners; "who believe" delimits the category of sinners for whom Jesus died: *exclusively* for those who believe.

The problem here is that there is nothing within Williams's treatment of the martyrological tradition, Isaiah 53, or Romans that justifies, let alone mandates, this interpretation. Williams is likely operating from a commercialistic understanding of the atonement such that all those for whom Jesus substituted *must* have the atonement applied to them. This is simply not what Paul says in Romans, or anywhere else in his letters.

Finally, Williams makes no reference of Jintae Kim's Ph.D. dissertation, "The Concept of Atonement in 1 John: A Redevelopment of the Second Temple Concept of Atonement."[14] Kim demonstrates that 1 John, building upon the Jewish traditions of forgiveness and cultic atonement in the OT and the Second Temple writings, combines these two traditions in its theology of atonement and forgiveness of sin. Despite the similarities between 1 John and these Second Temple and rabbinic traditions, including martyrological traditions, there are still decisive differences between them. The Second Temple writings and the later rabbinic traditions were particularistic in their focus (centered on Israel).

According to Kim, 1 John thoroughly universalizes and individualizes the national and corporate hopes of Israel by tying the two Jewish traditions (vicarious sacrifice and new covenant forgiveness) to Jesus' unique death and forgiveness of sin, and extending the scope of efficacy of Christ's atonement to include the whole world. This is most clearly expressed in 1 John 2:2. The application of the term "Savior of the world" to Jesus in 1 John 4:14 emphasizes the universal efficacy of Christ's atoning death in connection with his role as "atoning sacrifice" in 1

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[14]Jintae Kim, "The Concept of Atonement in 1 John: A Redevelopment of the Second Temple Concept of Atonement" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2003).

John 4:10. Furthermore, in John's gospel, John 1:29 points to the coming death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world, which will be more fully explained in John 3:14–17.
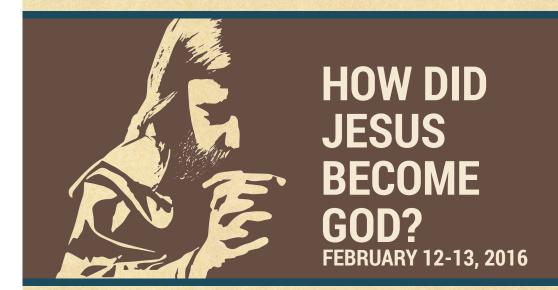
The manner in which 1 John fuses these two Jewish traditional elements is unique, compared to both the Second Temple writings and rabbinic writings. Like 1 John, Romans and Hebrews also apply these universalizing of Jewish hopes to the atoning death of Jesus.[15] From the same Second Temple literature and martyrological traditions, Kim apparently came to the opposite conclusion from Williams concerning the extent of the atonement in Romans, as well as 1 John.

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[15]Ibid., 200, 279, 292–93, 297.

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