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Editorial Introduction

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Adam Harwood, PhD

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 eight articles in this issue of the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* address the topics of baptism, preaching, theological interpretation of Scripture, Romans 9 and reprobation, Southern Baptist ecumenism, and spiritual warfare. The articles are followed by reviews of books in the fields of biblical studies and theology.

Rustin Umstattd is assistant professor of theology and director of the DEdMin program at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. In "Credo v. Certo Baptism: How Delaying Baptism May Change its Meaning from Profession of Faith to Evidence of Sanctification," Umstattd revisits the New Testament to ask whether churches today should look for a credible profession of faith prior to baptizing new believers or whether baptism itself should be regarded as the confession of faith. One's answer will guide a church's discipleship of new believers, administration of membership classes, and instruction on the meaning of baptism. In "George Beasley-Murray on the Meaning and Practice of Baptism," Justin Nalls, Next Generation Team Leader at Ingleside Baptist Church in Macon, Georgia, revisits an influential English Baptist's writings to suggest that baptism is an expression of faith and should be practiced as soon as a person believes in Christ. In "Form and Substance: Baptist Ecclesiology and the Regulative Principle," Scott Aniol, associate professor of worship ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, points to English Baptists' commitment to the regulative principle concerning baptism as an example for Baptists today on every matter of theology and practice in the church.

Larry Overstreet served as professor of New Testament at Corban University School of Ministry in Tacoma, Washington, and is now adjunct professor at Piedmont International University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. In "Hermeneutical Problem? Homiletical Opportunity!" Overstreet raises six types of interpretive problems that arise and suggests how each one can be addressed in a sermon. In "Pericope-by-Pericope: Transforming Disciples into Christ's Likeness through the Theological Interpretation of Scripture, Gregory K. Hollifield, Assistant Academic Dean and Registrar at Memphis Center for Urban Theological Studies in Memphis, Tennessee, explores the value of Theological Interpretation of Scripture for preaching for transformation.

Eric Hankins, pastor of First Baptist Fairhope in Fairhope, Alabama, presents a case in "Romans 9 and the Calvinist Doctrine of Reprobation" that Romans 9–11 is not about reprobation in service of God's justice but about Jewish unbelief in service of a great Jew and Gentile redemption. Ray Wilkins, pastor of Lebanon Baptist Church in Frisco, Texas, traces the history of inter-denominational cooperation in "Southern Baptist Openness to and Departure from Ecumenism." In "Spiritual Warfare: A Strategic Guide," Lance Beauchamp, director of Baptist Collegiate Ministries at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida, provides a primer for Christians on the topic of spiritual warfare.

May the Lord use this issue of JBTM to sharpen your mind and to deepen your love for God and others (Matt 22:36–40).

Credo v. Certo Baptism: How Delaying Baptism May Change its Meaning from Profession of Faith to Evidence of Sanctification

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There is a debate brewing within credo-baptist churches over the timing of baptism, and while this debate often revolves around whether or not to baptize children, this article will address the issue of delayed baptism for adults, and the impact a delay can potentially have regarding how baptism is understood. There are many voices who advocate delaying baptism so that the church can ascertain if the person is making a "valid" or "credible" profession of faith.[1] This became the practice of the church in the second and third century as the catechumenate, a period of instruction prior to baptism, reached three years.[2] The impetus behind this action is to reduce the number of "false baptisms" that are administered. Additionally, as baptism is often the final step a person takes before becoming a member of a church, the practice of seeking to ascertain if a person has made a "credible profession of faith" is done for the sake of safeguarding regenerate church membership.

In contrast, this article will argue that baptism is itself among the most critical items of evidence needed to ascertain if a person is making a credible profession of faith. Thus, using other criteria to determine if a person has made a credible profession of faith, and setting that investigation prior to baptism itself, risks changing baptism from a symbol of initial union with and confession of faith in Christ to a symbol of progressive sanctification. While this is not the intended consequence of a delay in baptism, it may well be the real-world impact that results from such a delay.

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[1]John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2005), 120–24. Capitol Hill Baptist Church, where Mark Dever is pastor, offers its reasoning for why it will delay baptism for children until they reach an age in which they assume adult responsibilities, approximately around the age of 18. This is not a fixed rule, but would be the normal practice of the church. This statement can be found at http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/ministries/children/baptism-of-children/. While this article is not addressing the issues of baptizing young children, it would assume that the practice of delaying baptism for teenagers could result in the same issues as delaying baptism for adults.

[2]Clinton E. Arnold, "Early Church Catechesis and New Christians' Classes in Contemporary Evangelicalism," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47.1 (2004): 39–54.

The article will lay out its argument by first showing that baptism is the biblically mandated means of professing one's faith to the community. While it is understood that a person must show a willingness to profess his faith and that this willingness could itself be construed as a profession, the New Testament emphasizes that it is in the waters of baptism that a person makes his appeal to God for a clear conscience (1 Peter 3:21).[3] Additionally, it will be shown that baptism is the initial evidence one should give of repenting from the sin of unbelief (John 16:9, Acts 2:38). Therefore, when a church demands a protracted period of time in which to observe behavioral evidence of repentance it weakens the symbolic power of baptism as the means whereby one visibly shows his change of allegiance from idolatry to the worship of Jesus. It also weakens Paul's admonition in Romans 6 for believers to look to their baptism as a motivational tool in resisting temptation.

At the ecclesiological level, this paper will apply the results of the biblical investigation to the question of the church's own role in governing baptism. Specifically, the argument given here is that delayed baptism, for evidentiary purposes, causes the church to abandon (*de facto*, if not *de jure*) the concept of credobaptism, in favor of what one might call "certo-baptism," this latter idea being defined as the baptism of someone whose *bona fides* have been underwritten officially by a local church. Again, this delay rests on good intentions: one wants to see a moral change in a person before he is baptized to have the assurance of repentance or in order to ascertain if he understands enough to make a genuine profession of faith. Likewise, it responds to a real challenge in modern American Christianity, viz., the fact that false professions of faith and spurious baptisms are common.[4] By delaying baptism to prevent this problem, the church potentially finds itself assuring a person that he is saved, while also denying to him the profession of his faith in baptism. Simply put, if a church is willing to say someone has professed faith in Christ, there is no basis to delay baptism.[5] There are also other means to protect church membership aside from a delay in baptism; consequently, the argument for delaying baptism and potentially changing the symbolism of baptism in practice, if not confessionally, is weakened. As Kevin Vanhoozer argues, doctrines are meant to be performed, and it is in the performance that much is taught.[6] We must be sure that we are performing baptism so as to retain its symbolism as the person's profession of faith and repentance and not a certification by the church that the person is now sanctified enough to be baptized.

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[3]The issues surrounding how to correctly interpret whether Peter is saying that a person appeals to God in baptism for a clean conscience or declares his allegiance to God from a clear conscience will be addressed later in the article.

[4]Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 110–14.

[5]The argument of this article though is that a church cannot completely say a person has professed faith in Christ apart from the evidence of baptism. To use some other method to ascertain this profession is to replace baptism with this other act.

[6]Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Apprpoach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

A Biblical Defense for Baptism as the Credible Profession of Faith

In order to determine the place of baptism in the Christian life, we must first determine its meaning and practice in the Bible. While baptism-like practices existed prior to the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus, we will not address them, as they are not crucial to the article's thesis.[7] In the New Testament, the first encounter with baptism is John's baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming Messiah. If a person wished to align himself with John's teaching, he would undergo baptism as his public proclamation of repentance from sin and allegiance to the coming Messiah. He was then expected to conform his life to his newly-expressed allegiance. This is evident in John's demand to the Pharisees to produce fruit in keeping with repentance in Luke 3:7–14. Likewise, he instructed the crowd, which included both tax collectors and soldiers how to produce good fruit. The implication was that this fruit was to be produced in light of the baptism for repentance of sins. Once someone had undergone John's baptism, he was to demonstrate his repentant expectation of the Messiah's arrival in his lifestyle.

It does not appear that they were required to show a period of time in which repentance had been effectively demonstrated prior to being baptized. Instead, the baptism was itself an evidentiary sign of repentance which was to be followed by moral change.[8] The very act of getting in the water with John was a repentant act. Merely doing the act, however, did not guarantee that a person was truly repentant as evidenced by John's call for ongoing moral change in the person's life. But to refuse John's baptism would be a sign that the individual was not repentant, as the act itself was the sign of commitment to the coming kingdom of God to be revealed in Jesus. While John offered a baptism of repentance in preparation for the Messiah's arrival, he was also sent to baptize the Messiah to inaugurate his ministry and fulfill all righteousness (Matt 3:13–15).

When Jesus arrived at the Jordan River to be baptized by John, it signaled the inauguration of his public ministry. Jesus was already the Son of God, but his baptism was the sign to the nation of Israel and to John that he was indeed the Messiah who would baptize his followers with the Holy Spirit and fire (John 1:33). Jesus did not come to John to repent of his sins, but to begin his public ministry. It was at his baptism that the Spirit came upon Jesus to empower him for his upcoming work of redemption. By undergoing John's baptism Jesus gave approval to the message that John had been conveying and gave support to the imagery of baptism as an act of repentance in which allegiance was being given to the coming Messiah. While there is some question as to what it meant for Jesus's baptism to fulfill all righteousness, in addition to endorsing John's baptism, this act also identified Jesus with those who had repented in baptism and were looking for the arrival

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[7]For an overview of washings prior to John see Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 60–82, and G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 1–30.

[8]Guy D. Nave Jr., *The Role and Function of Repentance in Luke-Acts*, Academia Biblica 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 146–59, and Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 93–94.

of the kingdom. This identification has parallels with Isaiah's suffering servant and his identification with God's people, especially as seen in Isaiah 53.[9]

At the end of Jesus's earthly ministry, he commanded his followers to go make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is no explanation from Jesus that this practice would be foreign to the disciples. This can be accounted for by noting that for at least part of his ministry, Jesus's disciples were baptizing at the same time as John (John 3:22–4:2). The baptism in the Great Commission was both a profession of faith by the one coming to Christ and recognition by the church that he was being accepted into Christ. It is worth noting here the significance that Jesus placed upon the external rite of baptism as a marker. Jesus not only commands his followers to proclaim the gospel but also instructs them to make disciples. To accomplish this task, they were to baptize and teach those who come to Christ. The order of baptizing and teaching is instructive here. It is after the declaration of one's faith and repentance in Christ through baptism that they were to be taught. Obviously, the person who comes to faith in Christ must understand the meaning of the gospel, but the Great Commission puts the weight of instruction as after baptism, not before.[10] Regarding baptism and teaching France writes, "The order in which these two participles occur differs from what has become common practice in subsequent Christian history, in that baptism is, in many Christian circles, administered only after a period of 'teaching,' to those who have already learned. It can become in such circles more a graduation ceremony than an initiation."[11]

The first manifestation of the practice of Christian baptism occurred at Pentecost in Acts 2. Once Jesus had ascended to the Father, he sent the Spirit to his disciples as he had promised. This led to the disciples declaring the mighty works of God in the languages of the people gathered in Jerusalem. Peter then commanded the attention of the crowd and explained to them how what they had witnessed was the fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2:28–32. After Peter had declared that Jesus was the Messiah and that the crowd had crucified him, they asked Peter what they must do. It is obvious that they were convinced that Peter's understanding of Jesus was correct and that they were now in the position of having rejected their promised Messiah. In Acts 2:38, Peter told them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:41 recounts that three thousand people received Peter's word and were baptized that same day.

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[9]R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 119–20.

[10]Very early the church abandoned this practice in favor of a delay in baptism for catechetical instruction that included both doctrine and ethics. In making this move, the post-apostolic church changed the symbolic meaning of baptism from confession of faith to endorsement of moral and intellectual accomplishment.

[11]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1114–16.

Regarding the issue of baptism as a profession of faith and sign of repentance, we must ask from what exactly Peter was asking them to repent? His concern was with one issue, namely their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. They did not believe in him and it was from that sin they were called to repent. This does not mean that in following Jesus they would not have to repent of other sins, but the issue at hand was belief in Jesus. This same idea is present in John 16:9 where Jesus declared that the Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The sin of which he will convict the world is that it has not believed in Jesus. Regarding the world's conviction in relation to its belief in Jesus, this verse can be understood in three ways. The first is that the Spirit will convict the world of wrong ideas of sin. The second is that he will convict the world because it does not believe and its unbelief is a classic illustration of their sin. The third option is to see unbelief in Jesus as the only sin under consideration. More than likely, John was not making a sharp distinction between any of the options. Instead, unbelief is the root of all sin.[12]

Throughout the Scriptures, the chief sin is idolatry, and from this sin all others spring.[13] It is for this reason that the first sin from which a person must repent is the sin of unbelief. In the Acts 2 narrative, it is baptism that serves as the outward sign of the inner repentance of unbelief. By stepping into the water on that Pentecost day, a person would have demonstrated his repentance from unbelief and his profession of faith in Jesus Christ.[14] Peter does not offer another option for how a person could make this declaration of allegiance, such as walking an aisle or praying a prayer. He only offered them the sign that Jesus has commanded before his ascension to the Father: baptism.

In Acts 9 Luke recounts the dramatic conversion of Paul to Jesus Christ. Paul was dispatched to Damascus to put down the Christian movement in that city, but as he approached the city, he encountered Jesus. Through this encounter, Paul was blinded and subsequently led into the city. Three days later he was approached by a believer named Ananias who had been sent to Paul by God. Luke recounts in 9:18 that after Paul regained his sight by the hands of Ananias that he got up and was baptized. Paul told this story when he was arrested in Jerusalem, and in that account, he sheds more light on his own baptism.

In Acts 22:16 Ananias instructed Paul after he had regained his eyesight to "rise and be baptized and wash away yours sins, calling on his name." Ananias was concerned about coming to Paul because Paul had been sent to persecute Christians. It is understandable

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[12]Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 618–19. See also John Aloisi, "The Paraclete's Ministry of Conviction: Another Look at John 16:8–11," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47.1 (2004): 55–69.

[13]G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 357–80.

[14]F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 69–71.

why Ananias would ask Paul not to delay in being baptized, as this would affirm to Ananias that Paul had become a follower of Jesus. It is at this point that Paul outwardly shows his repentance of rejecting Jesus and his profession of faith in Christ. Although Paul had been blind for three days since encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus, there is no direct indication that he was converted on the Damascus road. The Bible is silent as to what transpired in Paul's heart during those three days, but Ananias calls for him to make public what has happened to him through baptism. By getting in the water, Paul showed the believers in Damascus that he was now one of them and no longer their enemy.[15] This would have been no slight act for Paul, as aligning himself with Jesus would mean accepting Jesus's claims about himself. Paul would not undergo baptism simply to gain entrance into the community he was seeking to arrest since baptism would have been idolatry for Paul before he became a believer. Once he accepted Jesus, though, he could see that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promises.

Ananias's request that Paul call upon the name of Jesus in baptism is also echoed in James 2:7. James, referencing the rich who were dragging believers into court, writes, "Don't they blaspheme the good name that was invoked over you?" There is some debate regarding the designation of the honorable name, but the most likely option is that the name refers to Jesus and the time of the invoking refers to baptism. This is the option that the CSB adopts in its translation, and it is the option that best fits with the command to be baptized in the triune name which is then shorthanded into the name of Jesus in Acts. James's language here is reminiscent of his use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–17. In those texts, the Gentiles are described as those who are called by God's name. It is in baptism that a person calls upon Jesus as a profession of faith, and it is in baptism that the triune name is pronounced over the person by the church, through its appointed representative, to show that this person now belongs to God.[16]

Another example from Acts is in order. It involves Cornelius's reception of the Spirit. Peter was sent to Cornelius, a Gentile, to declare the saving gospel of Jesus. Upon his arrival, Peter began to present the gospel, and the Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his people with the evidence of speaking in other languages, as at Pentecost. The Jewish believers were amazed that the Spirit had been poured out upon Gentiles and the immediate reaction from Peter was to declare that no one could withhold water for baptizing them. In the following chapter, after Peter recounted his story to the gathered Jewish believers, they proclaimed in 11:18 that God had granted repentance to the Gentiles.

It is from the evidence of tongues that Peter declares that they must be baptized. This is the only place in Scripture in which evidence, apart from the person's declared desire

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[15]Bruce, *The Book of Acts,* 417–18.

[16]James B. Adamson, *The Epistle to James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 112–13.

to profess his faith in Christ, is offered before baptism that leads the church to baptize a person. In this case, the necessity of this evidence is predicated upon the gospel crossing the line between Jew and Gentile. It is also interesting to note that both Cornelius and Peter had been visited by angels who arranged the meeting. Furthermore, Peter's call for baptism shows the immense importance the apostle placed upon the outward sign as a demonstration of a person becoming a follower of Christ.[17]

There are several other instances of baptism in Acts, such as the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, Lydia in 16:15, the Philippian jailor in 16:33, and the Ephesian disciples in 19:5. Each of these passages supports the position that baptism was an immediate reaction to a person accepting the message of the gospel. The Ethiopian was baptized after Phillip explained Isaiah 53, and Lydia was baptized the same day, as was the Philippian jailor. In fact, Paul considered baptism so important that he baptized the jailer and his family in the dead of night, immediately after his wounds had been cleaned. Likewise, the Ephesian disciples were baptized the same day they came to know Christ. It needs to be granted that all of these encounters were in the early days of the spread of Christianity and the concerns that a church has today about someone's understanding of what it means to follow Christ were not concerns that these early Christians would have. Nonetheless, their practice of immediate baptism should cause us to consider our own practice to the timing of baptism.

After considering baptism in the book of Acts, it is now time to move to an investigation of the epistles, specifically of Paul. A key passage that relates to Paul's understanding of baptism and sanctification is Romans 6:1–12. For the sake of space, it will be assumed that this passage is about water baptism, as this is a well-established position.[18] In light of this, focus will be given to Paul's rhetorical use of baptism in Romans 6 in relation to sanctification. Paul, rejecting the idea that Christians should continue to sin so that grace may increase, argues that they have died to and therefore can no longer live in sin, both as an ontological state of bondage and as an experiential reality. The believer is ontologically freed from sin, and this should lead to his actions being progressively freer from sin. He must learn to live as who he truly is in Christ. To drive home his point, Paul refers the Romans to their baptism as the time in which they were buried with Christ in his death. Following the interpretation of Douglas Moo and others, a theological distinction between regeneration and baptism will be maintained, but it is also affirmed that in the New Testament conversion was a process with several parts, of which baptism was one.[19]

As far as we can tell from the New Testament, a person was baptized very soon after expressing a desire to follow Christ. It is for this reason that Paul can point the Romans to

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[17]Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 217–18.

[18]Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 359.

[19]Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* 353–95.

their baptism as the time in which they were buried with Jesus. There was not a significant gap between the desire to follow and the public profession of faith in baptism. Therefore, Paul uses baptism as the temporal marker to remind the people of whose and who they are. They are able to resist sin because they are in Christ. For Paul, the flesh was crucified in Christ's death, and the believer should be able to connect this inward event with the outward event of baptism. It is for this reason that baptism is not a symbol of progressive sanctification, but of the power by which someone can move forward in his sanctification. Baptism does not mark a certain stage of sanctification but is, in fact, the marker upon which a believer can look to understand that he can now live faithfully for Christ. Baptism is used here as a reminder that we are in Christ, not as a sign that we have progressed in our subsequent conformity to Christ.[20]

A final passage to be addressed is Peter's statement in 1 Peter 3:21 that "baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience." A key disagreement in this passage is the meaning of *eperōtēma*. Does it mean appeal (as translated by the ESV and NASB) or does it mean pledge (as translated by the HCSB, NIV, and NET)? For this article's thesis, either translation results in the same net effect for how baptism is understood in its symbolic function.

If one follows the ESV translation, then it is in baptism that a person makes his formal appeal to God for a good conscience. This is the path followed by Thomas Schreiner in his work on 1 Peter in which he argues convincingly that *eperōtēma* should be understood as "appeal." In an attempt to deal with the danger of baptism becoming the means whereby sins are forgiven, Schreiner hits upon the concern of how baptism is often portrayed. He writes, "Some might object that believers do not ask God to cleanse their consciences and forgive their sins at baptism since they are already forgiven and cleansed before baptism. But Peter did not attempt here to distinguish between the exact moment when sins were forgiven and baptism. Baptism, like "going forward" in many Baptist churches today, is portrayed as the time when sins are forgiven and one becomes a believer."[21]

Jamieson, following Schreiner's lead, writes that "baptism dramatizes the decision of faith—the faith by which we lay hold of Christ's new covenant promises. Baptism embodies an appeal to God that says, in effect, 'O Lord, accept me on the terms of your new covenant.'"[22] While we may be tempted in our culture to replace baptism with some other symbol, such as walking an aisle or praying a prayer while dry, this is not the prescribed place by which an appeal is made to God for a good conscience. Our modern practice of

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[20]A similar argument appears in Colossians 2:6–3:14 in which Paul basis temporal sanctification upon a person's being baptized into Christ.

[21]Thomas Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2003), 193–97.

[22]Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism is Required for Church Membership* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2015), 70.

coming forward at revivals or at a camp meeting in which the decision to follow Christ is made, but there is no direction about baptism has contributed to the reduction of the importance of baptism as the initial sign of repentance and faith.

In the parachurch environment of an evangelistic rally or youth camp, baptism is not practiced due to the varying positions of the churches present in regard to baptism. In this environment, a person can easily equate coming forward with the outward sign of commitment to Christ, especially given the emotional impact of the moment and the celebration that may ensue from those present who know the person. And while this event should have deep meaning for the person who has accepted the gospel, coming forward is not the action that the Bible requires. It is to their baptism that Peter points his readers to the place in which their appeal to God was made, and therefore, every effort must be made to allow the action of baptism to be the place where our churches understand that a person makes his appeal for salvation.

If, however, one follows the translation of the CSB and the NIV, then in baptism a person is making a pledge from a good conscience toward God. Since a person has come to faith in Christ and they have a good conscience, they can show this in baptism. Baptism is a person's response to God from the good conscience they have received. While this interpretation could allow for more time between coming to Christ and baptism, Peter's strong language about baptism saving you does not appear to leave room for a significant time gap. A person responds to God's gift of a good conscience by the resurrection of Jesus in baptism, and this shows to the community that the individual has come to Christ and is what is often described as the "first act of obedience" from the new believer.

While the phrase "first act of obedience" is not found in Scripture to describe baptism, it is a common phrase that is used in discussions among credo-baptists. This phrase becomes problematic though when other acts of obedience are required before baptism to validate that the person is ready to be baptized. Baptism, to retain the phrase "first act of obedience" and its proper meaning, must be both understood and practiced as the first act of obedience. How we perform our doctrines will shape how people understand them. Having looked at several passages that show that baptism is the event at which we are to demonstrate our repentance from unbelief and our allegiance to Jesus in faith, it is time to move to how this understanding of baptism should impact our modern practice of delaying baptism.

Contemporary Application

As we move from the Bible to contemporary practice, we must ask what impact our practice has upon the symbolic meaning of baptism. Following the path laid down by Vanhoozer in *The Drama of Doctrine*, it is my contention that a doctrine is not complete

until it is enacted in the local church.[23] The church is the place where doctrines come off the page and meet people. It is therefore critical to pay close attention to how we perform our doctrines, especially those like baptism that are experienced. We find that our people learn as much, or more, about baptism by how we do it, rather than what we say about it.

Those who find themselves in an academic setting such as a seminary are accustomed to the fine points of doctrinal debate and are ready and able to dissect the smallest nuance in wording, and it is right and good that they are able to do so. While the church needs this type of fine-toothed combing put to theology, the average pastor does not have the time to invest to reach this level of sophistication. They are called to many other activities, and it, therefore, behooves the academy to offer a counterbalance to the calls for a delay in baptism. While the majority of calls for delay in baptizing someone within the baptistic tradition come from a well-founded position, it is my fear that the reasoning offered for the delay could be lost in practice, and all that is seen at the local level is a delay in baptism, which can lead to a distortion of the meaning of baptism itself. Baptism is the place where a person "goes public" with his faith.[24] When baptism is delayed, the symbol can be shifted from one of "going public" to one in which baptism is viewed as a person earning the church's certification of approval upon completion of all the required work.

It is now possible to address two broad reasons often put forward for a delay in baptism and to show how these delays, while based upon a valid concern, can lead to a change in how people understand the meaning and purpose of baptism. The first reason is a desire to see a moral change in the person before baptism to ensure that he has made a "credible profession of faith." The church wants to see the evidence of repentance before baptism is administered to ensure that the person has genuinely put his faith in Christ. The second reason is to ensure that the person understands enough to be baptized. This reason for delay becomes problematic when the knowledge needed to be baptized is greater than that which is required for salvation.

Let us examine the issue of delaying baptism in order to ascertain if someone's repentance from sin is valid. A case study might help to focus our thinking about the issue. A young woman has been attending your church for several months. She lives with her three kids and her boyfriend, who is the father of the kids. She has been convicted by your clear gospel preaching and one day she expresses that she wants to give her life to Christ and follow him. Since you have taught clearly that baptism is a person's profession of faith, she knows that she is to be baptized to confess her faith in Christ to the world. It is the place where she will "go public" with her decision. She also tells you that she knows that living with her boyfriend is contrary to God's will and that she is also repenting of that. She wants to get out of that situation, either (hopefully) through marriage, or by complete separation.

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[23]Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine,* 15–25.
[24]Jamieson, *Going Public,* 35–53.

She has nowhere to go immediately so she will start finding a solution to the situation, but it might take several weeks or months to resolve the issue. In the meantime, she says she will no longer sleep in the same bed with her boyfriend; instead, one of them will sleep on the couch. She asks if she can be baptized the next Sunday to let the church know that she desires to follow Christ and join the church. The question before you is will you baptize her this Sunday or will you wait until she has found a different living arrangement?

If a church were to say she that must wait until she resolves her living arrangement, then she could perceive baptism as a certification by the church that she is now holy enough to profess faith in Christ. Baptism would no longer be understood as a marker she can look back to as she struggles to live faithfully, as Paul uses it in Romans 6. Instead, baptism would be seen as a badge of honor that she has overcome sin. Additionally, in this scenario, baptism is no longer understood as an act of repentance in and of itself. The church would be looking for some other action that would demonstrate her inner repentance, which would validate to them that she has indeed given a "credible profession of faith," and therefore it is acceptable to baptize her. In the New Testament, however, baptism is the act a person does to show the world that he or she has repented of sin, the primary sin being unbelief in Jesus. Baptism, by its very nature, is a visible demonstration of a person's change of allegiance from Satan/sin/self to Christ. Apart from this act, a church cannot know that this allegiance change has taken place, and apart from baptism, a church will remain unsure of the person's repentance.

A person can repent of living with her boyfriend, but still not repent of unbelief in Jesus. There are countless unbelievers who have repented of sinful actions but have failed to repent from the main sin of unbelief. Baptism is not primarily a sign that someone intends to live a moral life but is rather a sign that he has changed his citizenship from one kingdom to another. This kingdom change will undoubtedly involve a change in behavior as he conforms himself to the laws and customs of the new kingdom, but that is not the focus in baptism.

Just as a delay in baptism can occur for moral reasons, so a delay in baptism can also occur for intellectual reasons. There are many churches that have new membership classes that can stretch from one meeting to several months depending on the church. If baptism is attached to the completion of this class, then it becomes likely that as the process is lengthened that a person will come to equate baptism with the completion of a training regimen that includes much more than is required for someone to repent and profess faith in Christ. This problem is compounded if during the course the person is being called a believer by the church. This was the situation encountered in the early church.

For example, Billy comes to church and desires to follow Christ. The church is convinced that Billy understands the gospel and is sincere. They inform Billy that he will need to go through an eight-week new members' class before he will be baptized into

membership. This class covers everything from the gospel to the greeting team. Billy will learn much more in this class than the church believes is needed for a person to come to faith in Christ. The chance that Billy will understand baptism as a certification for the successful completion of the course increases when Billy is baptized after completing the class. This will also be true for those people in the church who have been affirming Billy's pre-baptismal profession of faith. The shift in the meaning of baptism may be subtle, but Billy will not as easily and naturally equate his baptism as his "going public" moment if for two months he is treated like and called by the titles of a believer. Again, the desire of the new member's class is admirable, but the delay in baptism changes the act's referential power from repentance/faith to a certification by the church that Billy has learned enough extra-conversion knowledge to be baptized.

Suggestions Going Forward

It is the contention of this article that the phrase "credible profession of faith" often used when discussing baptism, especially when discussing the reason a baptism might be delayed, can potentially bring about a misunderstanding of baptism. Baptism is the credible profession of faith in the New Testament, and the church must work diligently to guard that meaning. It cannot replace baptism as the action of repentance with some other action or moral improvement. While a follower of Christ must repent from lying, cheating, and stealing, the first thing from which he must repent is unbelief; and the evidence of the repentance from unbelief is baptism, not the absence of lying, cheating, and stealing.

Similarly, the church must be conscientious in the language it uses for those people who are going through a membership class in which more information is given than is needed for salvation so that it does not inadvertently give them the title of a believer while denying them the initial expression that the church must see to call someone a believer. It would be a good thing for the church to reinstate a rigorous catechumenate for new believers, but this should start immediately *after* someone is baptized, not *prior* to baptism.

In closing, a suggested word change in the phrase "credible profession of faith" within the discussion of baptism is offered. First, since baptism is the credible profession of faith, that wording should be reserved for baptism itself. For those people who have expressed a desire to follow Christ and repent of their sins, we should instead say that before we baptize someone, we must see that they have shown a credible desire to profess their faith in Christ in baptism. This leaves room for the necessary investigative time to determine if someone understands the gospel. While this investigation is proceeding, we should say that we are seeking to determine if the person's desire to profess faith in Christ in baptism is credible. But until they have been through the waters of baptism, the church has no objective evidence by which to judge whether they have accepted Christ, and we should not offer a different means of ascertaining that faith than by their profession of faith in baptism.

George Beasley-Murray on the Meaning and Practice of Baptism

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In 1963, George Beasley-Murray (1916–2000) published *Baptism in the New Testament*.[1] The book, in which he argues that baptism in the New Testament period was a means of divine grace, was neither his first nor his last on the subject. However, it was quickly recognized as a significant contribution in the area of baptismal theology. In a review of the book in 1963, Dale Moody wrote,

> There is little doubt that the publication of Baptism in the New Testament by G. R. Beasley-Murray, Principal of Spurgeon's College in London, will mark a new stage in discussions that relate to baptism. This will be especially true among Baptists, who for the most part came late to the debate, but world Christianity is not likely to ignore a work so genuinely ecumenical and so scholarly composed. Southern Baptists, among whom much of this material was presented, are sure to profit as much as they may be amazed by a book of this type.[2]

Five years later, Moody referred to *Baptism in the New Testament* as "the best one volume on New Testament baptism."[3] That same year, William Hull referred to it as a "bombshell in the baptistery."[4]

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[1]George Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1963).

[2]Dale Moody, "Baptism in the New Testament," *Review and Expositor* 60 (1963): 232.

[3]Dale Moody, "Baptism in Recent Research," *Review and Expositor* 65 (1968): 21.

[4]William Hull, "Baptism in the New Testament: a Hermeneutical Critique," *Review and Expositor* 65 (1968): 3.

Though a number of Baptist scholars, including some Southern Baptist scholars, have affirmed much of Beasley-Murray's view of the meaning of baptism, and even more have recognized the significance of his work, not all have agreed with him. His contention that in the New Testament God worked in the act of baptism to unite the baptized person to Christ continues to be controversial. Nevertheless, his emphasis on baptism as an expression of faith in response to the gospel should be a point that Southern Baptists can agree on. It should also encourage Southern Baptists to affirm the importance of being baptized as soon as possible after believing the gospel.

Union With Christ Attributed to Both Faith and Baptism in Scripture

The first key to unlocking Beasley-Murray's baptismal thought is to understand that in his view, faith and baptism should be held together. Beasley-Murray arrived at this conclusion primarily by examining the Scriptures. A number of passages attribute a person's position in Christ, and all the resulting benefits of that position, to faith. Other passages attribute a person's position in Christ, and the exact same benefits, to baptism. This fact led Beasley-Murray to conclude that there is a more intimate and necessary relationship between faith and baptism than is often thought, either by paedobaptists or Baptists. A brief examination of some of the relevant passages will demonstrate this point.[5]

Several passages claim that people are united to Christ through their faith in him. Ephesians 3:17a says, "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."[6] Colossians 2:12b claims that Christians "were also raised with [Christ] through faith in the powerful working of God." Other passages claim that people are united to Christ through baptism. Colossians 2:12a reads, "having been buried with [Christ] in baptism." While Galatians 3:26 states, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith," verse 27 continues, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ Jesus have put on Christ."

The same is true of the benefits that result from being in Christ. For example, some passages associate forgiveness of sins with faith. Acts 15:9 says that "God cleansed their hearts through faith." First John 1:9 indicates that God will forgive sins if people confess, with no mention of baptism. Acts 2:38, however, associates forgiveness with baptism: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." Acts 22:16 reads, "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name."

Similarly, some passages associate the inheritance of the kingdom of God with faith. John 3:15, which is in the context of Jesus teaching about entering the kingdom, says that whoever believes in the Son of Man will have eternal life. Mark 10:15 records

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[5]Beasley-Murray considers these passages in *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 27–36.

[6]All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

Jesus's statement, "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." Considering the absence of any mention of baptism, this reception most likely refers to faith. Other passages associate the inheritance of the kingdom of God with baptism. In John 3:5 Jesus states, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."[7]

Some passages attribute justification to faith. Romans 3:28 says, "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." Other passages associate justification with baptism. First Corinthians 6:11 claims, "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

The same pattern can be seen concerning the reception of the Holy Spirit. Some passages associate the giving of the Holy Spirit with faith. Galatians 3:2 asks rhetorically, "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?" Galatians 3:4 provides the answer to that question: "...so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." Other passages associate the reception of the Holy Spirit with baptism. Acts 2:38 says, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

In *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* Beasley-Murray provides some background concerning this insight. He was part of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches that produced a work called *One Lord, One Baptism*.[8] He recounts that he was

> assigned the task . . . to investigate the relation of baptism to faith (a dangerous assignment to hand a Baptist!). Apart from the obvious necessity of evaluating afresh statements in which faith and baptism were directly related in the New Testament, it occurred to me that it might be profitable to tabulate the associations of baptism in the New Testament writings and those of faith, and see to what extent there was a correlation between the two.[9]

One Lord, One Baptism summarizes Beasley-Murray's findings, stating, "Baptism and faith are inseparably joined in the New Testament. The full range of salvation is on the one hand promised to faith *sine qua non*, and on the other hand is associated with baptism."[10]

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[7]Beasley-Murray acknowledged that some respected theologians deny that John 3:5 refers to water-baptism. He, however, was confident that the mention of water was a reference to water-baptism.

[8]Paul Beasley-Murray, https://www.paulbeasleymurray.com/family/gbm/.

[9]Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 27.

[10]World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, *One Lord One Baptism* (London: SCM Press, 1961), 61.

Faith and Baptism Should Not be Separated

Beasley-Murray is well aware that one set of passages attributes union with Christ to faith, and another set of passages attributes it to baptism. He recognizes the need, therefore, to offer a credible explanation of this fact. He puts his conclusion mildly by stating, "It would seem that baptism and faith turning to the Lord are the exterior and interior of one reality."[11] His position is put more directly and more clearly in his claim that faith in Jesus as Lord and baptism in the name of the Lord are viewed as one in the New Testament.[12] In other words, to be baptized is to respond to the gospel in faith. To put it the other way around, the proper response to the gospel is baptism, which is the expression of faith in Christ. The two should not be separated.

A number of passages appear to support this view directly. Acts 2:38 clearly links faith and baptism. Galatians 3:26–27 uses faith and baptism almost interchangeably. Colossians 2:12 also seems to use faith and baptism interchangeably. Beasley-Murray sees in these passages evidence that the expression of faith and the experience of baptism are one and the same.[13]

Once this principle is in place, the meaning of other passages can be seen more clearly. First Corinthians 6:11, for example, suggests that justification, consecration by the Spirit, and baptism all occur at the same time, forming a "coincidental action."[14] Beasley-Murray acknowledges that Paul may be using those terms loosely, but contends that even if such is the case, this verse still shows that baptism and faith are more closely related than is often thought.[15] In a similar way, he argues that John 3 presents the confession of faith, the gift of Christ, the work of the Spirit, and baptism as "one complex event."[16] He even sees the same idea at work in Paul's statement, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). Beasley-Murray contends that rebirth which makes this life of faith possible began in baptism.[17] Once again, faith and baptism cannot be separated. It is in this light that Beasley-Murray suggests using the term "conversion—baptism."[18] He argues that in the New Testament, "the spiritual realities of conversion and baptism are merged together, for in that context they do fall together."[19] In a lecture delivered in 1970 he stated,

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[11]Beasley-Murray, "The Authority and Justification for Believers' Baptism," *Review and Expositor* 77 (1980): 66.

[12]Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 54.

[13]Beasley-Murray, "Faith in the New Testament: A Baptist Perspective," *American Baptist Quarterly* 1 (1982): 141.

[14]Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 164.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Beasley-Murray, "John 3:3–5, Baptism, Spirit, and Kingdom," *Expository Times* 97 (1986): 169.

[17]Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 141.

[18]Beasley-Murray, "The Holy Spirit," *Baptist Union Christian Training Program* (London: Baptist Union), 39. Also Beasley-Murray, "The Holy Spirit, Baptism and the Body of Christ," 180.

[19]Beasley-Murray, "Second Chapter of Colossians," *Review and Expositor* 70 (1973): 476.

> The descriptions of baptism in the New Testament, and the indications of the apostolic teaching on its meaning, make it plain that the early church viewed baptism as the completion of conversion to God. The baptism of John the Baptist is described by Mark as a "repentance baptism" (Mark 1:4), and scholars are agreed that in this context repentance means "turning to God"; i.e., what we mean by conversion. This way of viewing baptism became normative in the Christian church, whatever else was attached to the significance of the rite.[20]

Since in the New Testament baptism and conversion were "inseparable," the blessings of salvation are associated with both baptism and conversion.[21]

Baptism as a Confession of Faith

The precise relationship of faith to baptism is expressed in a number of ways. First, the baptismal event is said to be a confession of faith. Beasley-Murray got this idea primarily from 1 Peter 3:21: "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." For Beasley-Murray, the key to a correct interpretation of this verse is the word translated "appeal" by ESV, which can mean "promise" or "appeal." Beasley-Murray comments, "Here the essential feature of baptism is represented not as the washing of the body, but as a spiritual transaction in which the baptized one makes an appeal to God in faith and prayer (*or in which he makes a declaration of faith*) and experiences the power of the risen Lord to save" (italics mine).[22]

In another place, he makes a similar comment on the same passage. "The cleansing in baptism is gained not through the application of water to flesh, but through *the pledge of faith* and obedience therein given to God, upon which the resurrection of Jesus Christ becomes a saving power to the individual concerned" (italics mine).[23] It is for this reason that Beasley-Murray can refer to baptism as "repentance-baptism."[24] In baptism, a person turns from sin toward his new Lord, Jesus.

He understands Acts 2:38 to also indicate that baptism is an expression of faith. For the Jews in Acts 2:38, baptism involved confessing Jesus as their Messiah and Lord. "Never was the significance of Christian baptism so plain as in the day it was first administered!"[25]

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[20]Beasley-Murray, "Worship and the Sacraments," The Second Holdsworth-Grigg Memorial Lecture, Whitley College, 1970.

[21]Beasley-Murray, "Worship and the Sacraments."

[22]Beasley-Murray, "Authority," 65.

[23]Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 262.

[24]Beasley-Murray, "I Still Find Infant Baptism Difficult," 232.

[25]Beasley-Murray, "The Holy Spirit," 31.

Baptism as an Appeal

The second way in which Beasley-Murray understands the relationship between faith and baptism is to see baptism as faith making an appeal to God for forgiveness and acceptance. It is not only a confession of what one believes but is also a prayer asking God to act. Beasley-Murray raises the question, if God gives life through the preached word, what does baptism have to do with new life? His answer is that in baptism a person appeals, or prays, to God for a clear conscience and forgiveness.[26]

This understanding is also rooted primarily in 1 Peter 3:21. Once again, his commentary on that verse is insightful. "Here the essential feature of baptism is represented not as the washing of the body, but as a spiritual transaction in which *the baptized one makes an appeal to God in faith* and prayer (or in which he makes a declaration of faith) and experiences the power of the risen Lord to save" (italics mine).[27] "The crucial feature in baptism," he states, "is not its being a washing in water, but its aspect as "an appeal to God for a clear conscience" and its relating of the believer to the resurrection of Christ."[28] Baptism itself is the appeal for forgiveness.[29] A person hears the gospel preached, believes that God will forgive him, and goes to the waters of baptism to make that request.

Not *ex opere operato*

To some, this view of baptism may appear to be mechanical, as though the water itself inevitably guarantees salvation.[30] Beasley-Murray acknowledged that many Baptists have resisted his view of baptism for this exact reason, rightly wanting to emphasize the need for personal faith.[31] In response, Beasley-Murray points out that the New Testament stresses throughout that it is the name of Christ, his resurrection, the Spirit, or the Word of God that makes the baptized person new, not the water itself.[32]

The necessity of faith, which rules out the possibility of an *ex opere operato* understanding of baptism,[33] is seen clearly in his discussion of Colossians 2. His

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[26]Beasley-Murray, *The General Epistles: James, 1 Peter, Jude, 2 Peter* (London: Lutterworth, 1965), 53–54.

[27]Beasley-Murray, "Authority," 65.

[28]Beasley-Murray, *The General Epistles,* 49.

[29]Beasley-Murray, "Faith," 141.

[30]In fact, this was one of the criticisms of the sacramental resurgence, which will be discussed below.

[31]Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow,* 83.

[32]Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament,* 265. Beasley-Murray admits that Hebrews 10:22 is an exception to this rule.

[33]Beasley-Murray identifies an *ex opere operato* interpretation of baptism with a "magical" understanding of the rite. "Any sacrament which confers grace *ex opere operato* (i.e. purely by virtue

understanding of that passage is governed by the phrase "through faith." It is not baptism *per se* that unites us to Christ and saves. It is God who saves. Baptism depicts the saving acts of God in Christ and objectifies the faith of the one trusting in Christ for salvation.[34] In fact, for Beasley-Murray, baptism is presented in the New Testament in a way that only makes sense if it involves the faith of the one baptized.[35]

In his view, 1 Peter 3:21 is further evidence that baptism should not be understood as mechanical. That verse attests in the plainest manner that baptism in the primitive Church was not efficacious by its simple performance. On the contrary, the external element of baptism is diminished in significance here. The act of baptism is effective by virtue of its being the supreme moment when God, through Christ the Mediator, deals with a man who comes to Him on the basis of the redemptive acts of Christ the Mediator.[36] Beasley-Murray's position then is that "neither the action nor the water is primarily what matters, it is rather the unity by faith with the Christ who died and rose again."[37]

An Account of New Testament Baptism

If the first key to unlocking Beasley-Murray's baptismal thought is a proper understanding of faith-baptism, the second, and equally important, key is the recognition that Beasley-Murray's intention was to describe the meaning of baptism as it was understood and practiced in the New Testament. His goal was not to explain the meaning of baptism as it was practiced in his own day, which was, in his view, significantly different from the way it was practiced in the early church.

In an article published in the *Baptist Times*, Beasley-Murray wrote,

> But if the question was put, "Do you believe that baptism is a means of grace?" I would answer: "Yes, and more than is generally meant by that expression. In the Church of the Apostles (*please note the limitation*) the whole height and depth of grace is bound up with the experience of baptism. For *to the New Testament writers* baptism was nothing less than the climax of God's dealings with the penitent seeker and of the convert's return to God (italics mine).[38]

He emphasized the same limitation when discussing Acts 2:38. He claims, "For Peter was an Apostle of Christ, not a modern preacher anxious to put baptism in its place, as it were."[39]

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of its administration and apart from faith in the recipient) is magical." ("The Church and the Child," 10).

[34]Beasley-Murray, "Second Chapter of Colossians," 477.

[35]Beasley-Murray, "Authority," 64.

[36]Beasley-Murray, *The General Epistles*, Bible Guides, ed. William Barclay and F. F. Bruce (London: Lutterworth, 1965), 55.

[37]Beasley-Murray, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (London: Oliphants, 1964), 25.

[38]Beasley-Murray, "The Spirit is There," 8.

[39]Ibid.

Some of the critics of the sacramental resurgence failed to make this distinction and rejected his claims because they seemed inconsistent with modern-day experience. Beasley-Murray pointed out the misunderstanding and reminded the critics that his concern was to put forth his understanding of baptism in the New Testament:

> The teaching of these scriptures seems to me to be unambiguous. It militates unreservedly against the reduced baptism championed of late by so many correspondents in this paper. I would ask, however, for it to be carefully observed that this teaching relates to baptism in the apostolic Church, not to baptism in the average modern Baptist church. Where baptism is sundered from conversion on the one hand, and from entry into the church on the other, this language cannot be applied to it; such a baptism is a reduced baptism. The objectors to the views that some of us have sought to expound have transferred the theology applying to apostolic baptism to that which they have known and still foster in their churches and hence have charged us with rabid sacramentarianism. This is an unfortunate misunderstanding. My concern, along with my colleagues, is to put before Baptists the picture of ideal baptism, as it is portrayed in the apostolic writers, in the hope that we may strive to recover it or get somewhere near it. To insist on keeping our impoverished version of baptism would be a tragedy among a people who pride themselves on being a people of the New Testament.[40]

This distinction was important when some people understood him to imply that those who separated baptism from conversion, such as paedobaptists and many modern-day Baptists, could not be saved. Beasley-Murray responded by asking,

> Need I point out that an exposition of what God has willed baptism to be says not a word as to what God does when baptism is misapplied or absent? That the Churches have lost immeasurably and suffered corruption through the loss of believer's baptism cannot be denied. . . . Yet the Spirit is undeniably there, in those Churches, as well as in a Church that practices believer's baptism, and we rejoice in their true riches.[41]

In other words, conversion-baptism is the biblical norm. Yet God is free to save graciously even when conversion-baptism is not practiced.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article is not to affirm all that Beasley-Murray says about baptism. However, he has made a strong case that in the New Testament baptism is considered to be an expression of faith in response to the gospel. In light of that, Baptists should be encouraged to baptize a person as soon as possible once he believes the gospel. To be sure, in a modern-day context it is usually best to baptize a person when the local church is gathered, and in most cases, once a pastor has had an opportunity to talk to the person desiring baptism, even if those factors delay baptism for a time. Nevertheless, by pointing us again and again to Scripture, perhaps Beasley-Murray's work will continue to help Baptists more closely associate baptism with conversion, both temporally and conceptually.

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[40]Ibid.

[41]Beasley-Murray, "Baptism and the Sacramental View," 9.

Form and Substance: Baptist Ecclesiology and the Regulative Principle

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The regulative principle has long been associated with Reformed traditions that trace their heritage to John Calvin and the Swiss Reformation. This principle, which states that for church practice, whatever is not prescribed in Scripture is forbidden, contrasts with the Lutheran and Anglican normative principle, which holds that whatever is not forbidden in Scripture is permitted.[1] Traditionally, the Reformed regulative principle has differentiated between the substance of worship, which must have clear biblical warrant, and the forms or circumstances of worship, which "must be decided upon in the absence of specific biblical direction," and thus are more flexible.[2] This essay will show that, in contrast to the Reformed understanding of the regulative principle, Baptists have historically and theologically insisted upon New Testament warrant for both the substance *and* forms of church practice.

The Reformed Regulative Principle

The Reformed regulative principle finds its roots historically in the worship reforms of John Calvin (1509–1564), who interpreted the second commandment as God defining "lawful worship, that is, a spiritual worship established by himself."[3] He insisted upon "the rejection of any mode of worship that is not sanctioned by the command of God."[4] The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) later codified this principle when it asked (Q. 96), "What does God require in the second commandment?" The catechism answered, "That we in no wise make any image of God, nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded."

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[1]See Michael A. Farley, "What Is 'Biblical' Worship? Biblical Hermeneutics and Evangelical Theologies of Worship," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51.3 (September 2008): 590–613.

[2]See Phillip Graham Ryken, Derek W. H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan III, eds., *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship, Celebrating the Legacy of James Montgomery Boice* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011), 24.

[3]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 2.8.17.

[4]John Calvin, "On the Necessity of Reforming the Church," in *Selected Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 133.

The principle spread to England largely through the influence of John Knox (1513–1572) and those with him who spent time with Calvin in Geneva during the reign of Mary I ("Bloody Mary"). Knox reflected Calvin's thought when he argued, "All worshiping, honoring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without his own express commandment is idolatry."[5] After Mary died and Elizabeth I came to the English throne in 1558, the regulative principle became characteristic of the Reformed clergy who returned from Geneva and formed the Puritan faction of the Church of England, they who "regarded the Reformation as incomplete and wished to model English church worship and government according to the Word of God."[6] They later formulated their convictions regarding the principle in the Confession of Faith produced by the Westminster Assembly (1643–1660). Like Calvin and Knox before them, the Westminster divines rooted their regulative principle in their doctrine of Scripture:

> The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. (WCF 1.6)

Their bibliology would not allow for any additions to worship beyond what God had prescribed in his Word:

> But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture. (WCF 22.1)

The regulative principle of Calvin, Knox, and the Puritans found its rationale not only in logical extension of the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, but also in the conviction that church authority was limited by clear scriptural precepts and had no right to constrain the free consciences of individual Christians. As the Westminster Confession explained,

> God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also. (WCF 20.2)

The Reformed regulative principle has traditionally distinguished between the elements of worship, which require explicit biblical warrant, and the forms or circumstances of worship, "which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according

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[5]John Knox, "A Notable Sermon or Confession Made by John Knox, April 4, 1550: Wherein Is Evidently Proved That the Mass Is, and Always Has Been, Abominable Before God, and to Be Idolatry," in *Writings of the Rev. John Knox* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1842), 166.
[6]Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Westminster: Dacre, 1948), 1.

to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed" (WCF 1.6). Charles Hodge (1797–1878) later employed this distinction when he noted, "The Scriptures, therefore . . . do not prescribe any *form* of words to be used in the worship of God."[7] Thus while a church, according to the Reformed regulative principle, must have clear biblical justification for the elements found in its worship, it has more liberty concerning the forms those elements take.

Baptists and the Regulative Principle

Early English Baptists articulated a regulative principle similar to other Separatist and Puritan groups. This fact of history is most clearly evident in the similarity of language concerning biblical authority between the London Baptist Confession (LBC) of 1689 and the 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). Early English Baptists clearly insisted, like their Presbyterian counterparts, "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself" (LBC 22.1 parallel to WCF 21.1).

Furthermore, many of the early English Baptist leaders explicitly articulated a clearly defined regulative principle. For example, John Spilsbury (1593–1668) declared, "The holy Scripture is the only place where any ordinance of God in the case aforesaid is to be found, they being the fountain-head, containing all the instituted Rules of both of Church and ordinances."[8] John Gill (1697–1771) later proclaimed, "Now for an act of religious worship there must be a command of God. God is a jealous God, and will not suffer anything to be admitted into the worship of him, but what is according to his word and will."[9] These Baptists were not simply articulating the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* or emphasizing the authority of Scripture upon church practice, as any good Protestant would. Rather, they were insisting that the practices of the church be limited to what Scripture—specifically, the New Testament—commanded, and as William Kiffin (1616–1701) noted, "that where a rule and express law is prescribed to men, that very prescription, is an express prohibition of the contrary."[10] This concern among Baptists continued well into the early nineteenth century, as seen by John Fawcett's (1739–1817) very direct assertion,

> No acts of worship can properly be called holy, but such as the Almighty has enjoined. No man, nor any body of men have any authority to invent rites and ceremonies of worship; to change the ordinances which he has established; or to invent new ones. . . . The divine Word is the only safe directory in what relates to his own immediate service. The question is not what we may think becoming, decent or proper, but what our gracious Master has authorized as such. In matters of religion, nothing bears the stamp of holiness but what God has ordained.[11]

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[7]Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1878), 158.

[8]John Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme* (London: n.p., 1643), 89.

[9]John Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity: Or a System of Practical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures* (Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2001), 899.

[10]William Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church Communion* (Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2006), 28–29.

[11]John Fawcett, *The Holiness Which Becometh the House of the Lord* (Halifax: Holden and Dawson,

Notably, these Baptists believed that their application of the regulative principle was more consistent than that of other groups, a matter that will be explored below. Matthew Ward summarizes well the Baptist position, in contrast to both the normative principle of the Anglicans and what Baptists considered the inconsistent regulative principle of the Presbyterians:

> The same Anglicans who had rejected the popish practices of crucifixes, beads, praying to the Saints, icons, and pilgrimages had retained bowing at the name of Jesus, signing the cross in baptism, wearing the surplice in preaching, and kneeling at the Lord's Supper. The same Presbyterians who had rejected those latter practices had retained the church hierarchy, a directory of worship, infant baptism, and compulsory church attendance and tithes. The Baptists saw inconsistency therein and wanted to practice a consistent application of Scripture in their worship because they desired true reverence for God and true humility before him.[12]

Ecclesiological Issues Affected by the Regulative Principle

Baptist commitment to the regulative principle is seen not only in the express statements of early Baptists but also particularly in their practice. Several key ecclesiological issues in Baptist practice reveal a strong allegiance to this principle.

Baptism

The central Baptist distinctive of believer's baptism by immersion perhaps most clearly reveals commitment to the regulative principle. Since their inception, Baptists have been concerned not simply that baptism take place or only that baptismal regeneration be rejected but also that baptism be performed in exactly the way the New Testament prescribes. For example, Cox, Knollys, and Kiffin wrote in 1645 the following in response to Edmond Calamy's defense of infant baptism: "But your infant baptism is a religious worship, for which there is no command, nor any example, written in the Scripture of truth."[13] Likewise, Hercules Collins (1646–1702) noted about infant baptism, "We have neither precept nor example for that practice in all the Book of God."[14] In their 1688 *Confession*, London Baptists argued against infant baptism on the basis that it was not prescribed in Scripture.[15]

1808), 25.

[12] Matthew Ward, *Pure Worship: The Early English Baptist Distinctive* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 141.

[13] Benjamin Cox, Hanserd Knollys, and William Kiffin, *A Declaration Concerning The Publike Dispute Which Should Have Been in the Publike Meetinghouse of Alderman-Bury* (London: n.p., 1645), 10, 11.

[14] Hercules Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion Contained in the Law and Gospel* (London: n.p., 1680), 26–27.

[15] "As for those our Christian-Brethren, who do ground their Arguments for Infants Baptism, upon a presumed Federal Holiness, or Church Membership; we conceive they are deficient in this, that albeit this Covenant-Holiness and Membership should be as is supposed, in reference unto the Infants of Believers; yet no Command for Infant-Baptism does immediately and directly result from such a

Furthermore, these Baptists' commitment to the mode of immersion sprang from their conviction that this is exactly what the New Testament prescribed. John Norcott (1621–1676), for example, rejected the mode of sprinkling, because "God is a jealous God, and stands upon small things in matters of Worship."[16]

For the purposes of this essay, what is particularly important to recognize in the baptism debate is that these early Baptists extended the regulative principle not simply to the *element* of baptism, as even Presbyterian proponents of the principle did; they also applied the principle to the *form* in which the element was practiced. They believed that regulating even the form of baptism by the New Testament was a more consistent practice of the regulative principle. As Steve Weaver states, "Given their understanding of the meaning of the word *baptizo*, they sought to apply the regulative principle more thoroughly than had Calvin or Burroughs and the Reformed/Puritan tradition which they represented." He continues,

> For seventeenth-century Baptists, both the mode and the recipients of baptism were vitally important. Their defense of the practice of believer's baptism by immersion was driven by their commitment to the regulative principle of worship. Infant baptism simply could not be found in Scripture, and therefore must be rejected at any cost. Believer's baptism by immersion, however, was "the plain testimony of Scripture" and was therefore to be defended at any cost.[17]

Thus, the 1644 London Confession articulated the "way and manner" of baptism and defined it as "dipping or plunging under water," and the 1689 Confession insisted that "immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance."[18] A consistent application of the regulative principle, Baptists believed, necessarily informed both the mode and subject of baptism and therefore led to a credobaptist conviction. Fred Malone summarizes:

> It is the credobaptist position that maintains a consistent regulative principle concerning the subjects of baptism, disciples alone, as compared to the paedobaptist position that permits infant baptism by a misuse of "good and necessary inference." The sacraments (ordinances) and their subjects are to be positively instituted by precept according to the regulative principle of worship. . . . Only a credobaptist position is consistent with the Reformed regulative principle of worship. The paedobaptist position, based on inference instead of stated institution, is a violation of the regulative principle.[19]

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quality, or relation. All Instituted Worship receives its Sanction from the Precept, and is thereby governed in all the necessary circumstances thereof" (*A Confession of Faith, Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren Of Many Congregations of Christians, (Baptized upon Profession of Their Faith) in London and the Country* [London: n.p., 1688], 114–15).

[16]John Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly & Faithfully, According to the Word of God, new edition* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1878), 31.

[17]Steve Weaver, "'The Plain Testimony of Scripture': How the Early English Baptists Employed the Regulative Principle to Argue for Believer's Baptism," *The Gospel Witness*, January 2012, 13–15.

[18]William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, second revised ed., ed. Bill J. Leonard (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 6, 291.

[19]Fred A. Malone, "The Subjects of Baptism," *The Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 2.1 (2005):

While it is certainly true that believer's baptism is the distinctive likely most identified with Baptists—it is part of the movement's name, after all—it is because they held such a high view of Scripture as their sole authority over both the substance and form of the ordinance that Baptists came to their understanding of baptism in the first place.

The Lord's Supper

Baptists have also applied the regulative principle to the practice of the Lord's Supper. Baptists, like other Protestants, considered transubstantiation, the idea of the mass as a sacrifice, and other aspects of Roman Catholic eucharistic theology to be outside what Scripture taught. At very least, Baptists observed the Supper because they believed, as John Ryland (1753–1825) noted, "Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two positive institutions of the New Testament."[20]

Yet as with baptism, Baptists did not limit their application of the regulative principle to the *substance* of the Table alone; they applied it also to the *form* in which the Table was observed. As Kiffin noted, "to leave (they say) the Practice of Christ and his Apostles in the manner of receiving the Sacrament, and to follow the Practice of Men, in a posture Invented by Men is not safe."[21] Likewise, Collins suggested that a key difference between himself and a conformist consisted largely in whether observance of the Table followed Christ's example or not:

> Christ and his Apostles sat at Supper, you kneel (and impose it); they did it most probably often, yet seldom they did Communicate in the Evening, you at Noon; they break the Bread, you cut it, you License Men to Administer Sacraments, that have no Gift to preach, instead whereof, read only a Homily, we have no Command nor president [sic] for such a Practice.[22]

Along with Collins, other Baptists often concerned themselves with how best to follow the New Testament example in their celebration of the Lord's Supper. Sitting rather than kneeling, meeting in the evening rather than noon, and breaking the bread rather than cutting it were only a few of the matters concerning the Table that Baptists considered important.[23] They were not as successful in reaching consensus on many issues related to the Lord's Table as they had been on the matter of baptism, however.

One particular question about the Lord's Supper Baptists also debated was whether believer's baptism by immersion was a prerequisite for participation in the Table, again appealing to clear biblical prescription and example for defense of various answers to the

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62, 64.

[20]Cited by Ernest A. Payne, *The Fellowship of Believers* (London: Carey Kings-gate Press, 1952), 66.

[21]Kiffin, *Sober Discourse*, 121.

[22]Hercules Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation from the Communion of the Church of England* (London: How, 1682), 13.

[23]See Ward, *Pure Worship*, 127–31.

question. This was a significant point of contention, for instance, between Kiffin and John Bunyan (1628–1688). While Bunyan insisted that proper baptism was not necessary for church membership and Table observance,[24] Kiffin defended the claim that true baptism was necessary. It was as part of this debate over an issue of form that Kiffin articulated one of the most direct Baptist statements of the regulative principle:

> I have no other design, but the preserving the ordinances of Christ, in their purity and order as they are left unto us in the holy Scriptures of truth; and to warn the Churches to keep close to the rule, least they begin found not to worship the Lord according to his prescribed order he make a breach among them.[25]

This debate continued among various Baptist groups for years to come.

Singing

Baptists' emphasis on singing psalms and even non-inspired hymnody in corporate worship, led first by the efforts of Benjamin Keach,[26] may appear to be evidence of a more normative approach to biblical authority. On the contrary, it was exactly on the basis of the regulative principle that Keach and others argued in favor of singing hymns in addition to psalms. Keach considered the lack of congregational singing in Baptist worship a "breach" in church practice that needed to be "repaired." He believed singing in worship to be "so clear an Ordinance in God's Word" and declared, "The holy Ghost doth injoin [sic] the Gospel-Churches to sing *Psalms*, as well as *Hymns*, and *spiritual Songs*. Will you take upon you to countermand God's holy Precept?"[27] In particular, he first introduced the singing of hymns to his congregation at the end of their Lord's Supper observance because of the biblical example of Christ and his disciples at the end of the Last Supper (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26).[28] He inquired,

> Did not Christ sing an Hymn after the Supper? Would he have left that as a Pattern to us, and annexed it to such a pure Gospel-Ordinance, had it been a Ceremony, and only belonging to the Jewish Worship?[29]

Baptists who opposed congregational singing also based their arguments upon what they claimed to be the rule of biblical prescription, insisting that lack of clear NT command to sing hymns prohibited the practice.[30] This simply reveals that the regulative principle was

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[24]See John Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith, And a Reason of My Practice* (London: n.p., 1672).

[25]Kiffin, *Sober Discourse*, 16.

[26]Thomas R. McKibbens, Jr., "Our Baptist Heritage in Worship," *Review and Expositor* 80.1 (Winter 1983): 58–60.

[27]Benjamin Keach, *The Breach Repaired in God's Worship* (London: Hancock, 1691), 99, 129.

[28]Incidentally, the "hymn" Jesus and his disciples sang was very likely a Hallel Psalm (Psalm 113–118), often sung as part of a Passover meal (See Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, "Hallel," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* [Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015]). Nevertheless, Keach used this NT reference to singing a hymn as support for his own practice.

[29]Keach, *The Breach Repaired*, 73.

[30]For example, see Isaac Marlow, *Prelimited Forms of Praising God, Vocally Sung by All the Church*

the accepted governing presupposition for Baptists through which all controversies were required to pass.

Polity

For Baptists, polity derives also from a more strict application of the regulative principle than for other groups, even those who ascribe to some form of the principle. Instructive is the fact that the LBC contains several more articles in its chapter on the church than does the WCF, including this statement on the organization of a church:

> A particular church, gathered and completely organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members; and the officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the church (so called and gathered), for the peculiar administration of ordinances, and execution of power or duty, which he entrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the world, are bishops or elders, and deacons. (LBC 26.8)

The WCF contains no such statement on how a church should be organized. The LBC furthermore eliminated the chapter "Of Synods and Councils" (WCF 31) since Baptists did not find New Testament warrant for such. Church autonomy, congregational government, and the limiting of church offices to elders and deacons each illustrates these Baptists' concern that their polity be governed by explicit New Testament prescription.

Substance *and* Form

Early English Baptists clearly ascribed to the regulative principle, but as the foregoing discussion has shown, Baptists have applied the principle not only to the *elements* of worship, as did their Puritan counterparts, but they have also applied it to the *forms* of those elements. Among Baptists, debates concerning baptism, the Lord's Supper, singing, and polity each occurred within the understood, and often explicitly stated, assumption that every practice of gospel churches must have clear New Testament prescription. Thus the regulative principle was the hub from which the Baptists' views of baptism, corporate worship practices, and church polity found their source, and Baptists were far more consistent in their application of biblical authority to worship than those of the Reformed tradition who are often more associated with the regulative principle than Baptists.

One of the clearest examples of the difference between the Reformed regulative principle and that of the Baptists is in the comparison between their two confessions. As was shown earlier, the 1689 London Baptist Confession is almost identical to the Westminster Confession in its articulation of the regulative principle. Yet in one very important change, the LBC reveals a stricter application of the principle than that of the WCF. Baptists changed the statement "or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture" in WCF 1.6 to "or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture" in

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Together, Proved to Be No Gospel-Ordinance, In a Sober Discourse Concerning Singing (London: n.p., 1691).

LBC 1.6. Puritans demanded that the elements of worship have clear biblical warrant but were willing to be flexible as to the forms those elements took as long as those forms "by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture." Baptist, on the other hand, insisted that all aspects of church practice be "expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture." As Malone notes, "Our Baptist forefathers wanted to make sure that the containment of Scripture (i.e., the analogy of faith) limits what may be called 'good and necessary consequence.'"[31]

Most will recognize this fact of history with regard to the Baptist understanding of baptism, but few acknowledge that Baptists applied the same logic they used with the form of baptism to forms of other ecclesiological matters as well. This is not to say Baptists were always consistent in their application of the regulative principle. For example, Puritan Henry Jessey (1603–1663) observed such potential inconsistency in Baptists' insistence upon biblical prescription for the form of baptism while at the same time allowing for "some variation, if not alteration either in the matter or manner of things according to Primitive Practice," such as "laying on of hands, singing, washing of feet, and anointing with oil."[32] Neither does this mean that all Baptists came to the same conclusions regarding what the New Testament prescribed; indeed, Baptists have been rarely able to come to agreement on such matters. Matthew Ward even suggests that the commitment of the early Baptists to the regulative principle is what prevented them from unifying in any lasting way:

> This is why worship was so disintegrative to the early Baptists. Every practice which they thought had biblical mandate or precedent became a just cause for separation, and those who did not agree with them were accused of harboring 'poor conceits and Notions, as if the word of God came out from them' and them only, all the while being open to that same charge potentially on the same practice.[33]

Rather, what this study has shown is that these disagreements and debates over the minutia of church practice themselves reveal a deep commitment to the regulative principle in both substance and form of church practice.

Furthermore, there is little question as to whether Baptists have continued to affirm and apply the regulative principle in this way, especially in America. On the contrary, a comparatively much smaller percentage of Baptists today hold to any form of the regulative principle, let alone apply it as strictly to the forms of church practice as early English Baptists did. For example, Reformed theologian Richard L. Pratt Jr. describes the contemporary Baptist ambivalence toward the forms and circumstances of the Lord's Table, in stark contrast to early Baptist debates about such matters, when he writes,

> It is common for Baptists to exercise freedom in many circumstances as they observe the Lord's Supper. The elements are served in individual cups and wafers, even though this was

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[31]Malone, "The Subjects of Baptism," 57.

[32]Cited in John Bunyan, *The Whole Works of John Bunyan: Reprinted from the Author's Own Editions*, vol. 2 (London: Blackie and Son, 1862), 646.

[33]Ward, *Pure Worship*, 139.

not the NT pattern. In fact, Paul spoke of "the cup" and "the one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:16–17) and drew specific theological implications for the unity of the body of Christ in the oneness of the loaf. Even so, few Baptists insist on observing these details because the Scriptures do not clearly insist on them. Observing the Supper is an element of worship, but the precise manner in which we serve Communion is a matter of circumstance.[34]

Pratt states this observation as a way to insist that Baptists should not be so concerned with the form of baptism since they are not troubled with such things in other matters like the Lord's Supper.

Yet this inconsistency is exactly the point. Every Baptist would defend believer's baptism by immersion on the basis of its explicit New Testament prescription and would argue against other forms of baptism on the basis of lack of biblical warrant. In other words, all Baptists by definition apply the regulative principle very strictly to the matter of baptism. Perhaps Baptists should also apply the principle to other issues of church practice, as did their Baptist forefathers.

Conclusion

Baptists are people of the Book. This is not simply a fact of history—it is at the core of what it means to be Baptist as revealed in the distinctive of believer's baptism by immersion. English Baptists emerged out of English separatism because of their desire to apply the regulative principle more consistently than their Reformed counterparts, and they insisted that both the substance and form of whatever they do as part of church practice—whether baptism, the Lord's Supper, singing, and many other matters—must have clear biblical warrant.

The purpose of this essay was not to evaluate the relationship between biblical authority and Baptist practice in more recent times, but contemporary Baptists would do well to consider the example left for them by early Baptists. Baptists today remain committed, of course, to biblical authority over the subject and mode of baptism and over church polity, yet Baptists often fail to consider how the Bible should regulate other aspects of their ecclesiology, most notably their worship practice. If Baptists today rightly hold Scripture as the supreme authority over Christian doctrine and practice, then as with early English Baptists, the regulative principle should continue to govern both substance and form in all matters of Baptist ecclesiology, including corporate worship.

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[34]Richard L. Pratt Jr., "A Reformed Response," in *Understanding Four Views on Baptism*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 43.

Hermeneutical Problem? Homiletical Opportunity!

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Hermeneutical problems are part and parcel of biblical interpretation and exposition. Preachers from differing theological viewpoints (such as Dispensational or Covenant Theology), and from divergent denominational affiliations (such as Presbyterian or Baptist) face hermeneutical problems. Those who preach texts with hermeneutical problems must resolve them in such a manner that the biblical text is preached with both integrity and relevance to contemporary listeners. This article demonstrates that hermeneutical problems can become homiletical opportunities.

Various authors consider the subject of hermeneutics.[1] To these can be added scores of journal articles, commonly focusing on particular issues, or texts, of interpretation. These sources provide valuable assistance toward interpreting, and sometimes for applying, the Scriptures. A reoccurring omission in them, however, is how hermeneutical problem texts can be effectively preached to a contemporary audience.

This article will consider six representative types of hermeneutical problems preachers will encounter in their ministries: language issues, obscure texts, synonymous words, theological difficulties, textual difficulties, and difficult prophetic passages.[2] Guiding principles are presented to show how each of these types can be confidently preached so that God's people are edified and brought into a closer walk with him. In this process

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[1]For examples: D. A. Carson, *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005); J. Edwin Hartill, *Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007); Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987); A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 1977); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010); Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999); Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974).

[2]A preacher may also face other types of difficult texts. Some of these can be interpreting and preaching parables, miracles, narratives, proverbs, or discrepancies in parallel texts. Walter L. Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984, 135–54), summarizes many of these. Each must be studied diligently and preached with care and accuracy. The general principles identified in this article can also apply to these other types of difficult texts.

pastors should remember that preaching to a church congregation is different than writing a scholarly article for a journal, or preaching to students in a college or seminary chapel. The first problem to consider is that of language issues.

Language Issues

Hermeneutical Problem

Hermeneutics books consider various types of language issues. Many church attenders will be familiar with some of these (even if they cannot identify the precise terms) and will understand them with little difficulty. For examples, a preacher will pay attention to such items as:

> (a)Simile, which is an explicit comparison using "like" or "as." For example, Jesus said, "I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves" (Luke 10:3).[3]

> (b)Metaphor, which is a direct assertion describing one thing in terms of another. David asserted, "The LORD is my shepherd" (Ps 23:1).

> (c)Metonymy, which is referring to one thing with the name of another thing. Luke declared, "Then beginning with Moses [Pentateuch] and with all the prophets [their writings], He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27).

> (d)Personification, which is when a thing is spoken of as a person. The Psalmist affirmed, "Let the rivers clap their hands, Let the mountains sing together for joy" (Ps 98:8).[4]

One type of language issue appears more problematic in preaching to church audiences. That is the issue of hyperbole. Hyperbole is a conscious exaggeration for added emphasis and effect. People may struggle with this figure of speech because of commonly heard statements. For example, preachers and Bible teachers have said, "all means all and that is all all means." Without doubt, in many contexts the word "all" does encompass the entirety of the subject or object involved. At the feeding of the 5,000, "they all ate and were satisfied" (Matt 14:20), involves the full totality of those present at the miracle. Romans 3:23 really means "all" when it says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

On other occasions, however, such is not the case. How does a preacher explain that Matthew 1:17, "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations," does not mean "all" when it clearly

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[3]All Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible-Updated Edition* (LaHabra, CA: Lockman Foundation, 1995).

[4]Other types of figures of speech can be found in the standard hermeneutics books.

says "all"?[5] In Matthew 1:8 the names of Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are omitted (cf. 1 Chron 3:10–12). The name of Jehoiakim is omitted in Matthew 1:11 (cf. 1 Chron 3:15–16). In addition, Jechoniah is counted twice, once to conclude the second group of fourteen, and again to start the third group of fourteen (Matt 1:11–12).

Homiletical Opportunity

To assist congregations in understanding how "all" does not consistently mean "all," an appeal to Jeremiah 44:27–28 provides clear information. Reading these verses to a congregation periodically will remind them of this principle. In verse 27 God asserts: "Behold, I am watching over them for harm and not for good, and all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt will meet their end by the sword and by famine until they are completely gone." That looks direct and clear. Reading that verse in isolation leads to the conclusion that "all the men of Judah" in Egypt will die. However, God continues in verse 28: "Those who escape the sword will return out of the land of Egypt to the land of Judah few in number. Then all the remnant of Judah who have gone to the land of Egypt to reside there will know whose word will stand, Mine or theirs." In this verse God specifically stated that some will "escape" and "return out of the land of Egypt." The "all" of verse 27 does not mean "all" in its most comprehensive sense. This is spoken in hyperbole, for emphasis.

Likewise, Matthew uses "all," hyperbole, for emphasis. He asserted that his list is arranged purposefully. In a technical sense, Matthew's "all" refers back to "all" the names he *chose* (out of others that he did not choose) to include. Those he included were emphatically listed and arranged. Matthew also stated that "all" Judea came to be baptized by John (Matt. 3:5), when clearly many who came to see John did not receive his message nor his baptism (John 1:19–28).

> In a similar manner, when lamenting the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah wrote:
> You called as in the day of an appointed feast
> My terrors on every side;
> And there was no one who escaped or survived
> In the day of the Lord's anger. (Lam 2:22)

In view of those who were taken alive and transported to Babylon, obviously some did survive the destruction of the city. Once again, hyperbole appears for emphasis. Other obvious examples of hyperbole include such examples as the "log" in a person's eye (Matt 7:3), and straining out a "gnat" and swallowing a "camel" (Matt 23:24).

In preaching such language problems, pastors can carefully show their congregations how language is used in similar ways even today. People commonly say things like, "Everyone

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[5]For a full discussion of the New Testament genealogies, see R. Larry Overstreet, "Difficulties of New Testament Genealogies," *Grace Theological Journal* 2.2 (Fall 1981): 303–26.

was at the game" (when clearly not "everyone" was actually there). It casts no aspersions on Scripture to realize that biblical authors used language in the same way contemporary people use it.

Obscure Texts

Some biblical texts are difficult to preach because of their obscurity. Two examples will be considered.

Goat in its Mother's Milk

Hermeneutical Problem

Three times the command is given: "You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother" (Exod 23:19; 34:26; Deut 14:21). While Robinson confidently asserts that "we now know the pagans did that when they worshiped their idolatrous gods," the reality is that is not certain at all.[6] For example, "Many scholars, medieval and modern, follow the suggestion of Maimonides [1135–1204] that this law prohibits some pagan rite—although no such rite is presently known."[7] Keil and Delitzsch object to this view even more strongly: ". . . there is no intention to prevent the introduction of a superstitious usage customary at the sacrificial meals of other nations, which *Spencer* and *Knobel* have sought to establish as at all events probably, though without any definite historical proofs, and for the most part on the strength of far-fetched analogies."[8] Hegg explains this lack of historical verification in detail.[9]

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[6]Haddon W. Robinson, "The Heresy of Application," *Leadership* 18 (Fall 1997): 23.

[7]Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 147.

[8]C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, "Exodus," *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951), 2:151–52.

[9]Hegg precisely observes: "In recent times, an Ugaritic text (KTU 1.23, line 14) was heralded as providing the proof which Rambam lacked. In this text commonly referred to by the title 'Birth of the Gracious and Beautiful Gods,' line 14 was translated as: 'Cook a kid in milk, a lamb in butter.' Many thought that at last a parallel to the biblical phrase had been found in a context of pagan sacrificial rituals. Many older commentators, based upon the information published from the Ras Shamra tablets, settled on the view that the prohibitions in the three texts we have studied was, as Rambam surmised, an injunction to Israel against adopting pagan sacrificial practices. However, in more recent times, the misgivings of some scholars regarding the reconstructed text has been confirmed. Ratner and Zuckerman, with new photographs of the tablet in question, have given ample evidence to the fact that whatever the line read originally, the reconstructed text does not refer to cooking a kid in milk and therefore cannot be used as a parallel to the biblical prohibition against boiling a kid in its mother's milk [see Robert Ratner and Bruce Zuckerman, "'A Kid in Milk?' New Photographs of KTU 1.23, line 14," HUCA (1986), 15–60]. Hegg then concludes: "Therefore, the interpretation of our texts prohibiting a pagan cultic practice remains without support, whether biblical or extra-biblical" [Tim Hegg, "You Shall Not Boil a Kid in its Mother's Milk" (unpublished paper, delivered at Evangelical Theological Society, Baltimore, MD, November 20, 2013), 27].

Geisler identifies seven possible meanings of this command:[10]

> (1) this was an idolatrous practice;[11]
> (2) it was a magical practice to make the land more productive;[12]
> (3) it was cruel to destroy an offspring in the very means (milk) which sustained it.[13]
> (4) it showed contempt for the parent-child relation;[14]
> (5) it would profane (symbolically) the Feast of Ingathering;[15]
> (6) God wanted them to use olive oil, not butter, for cooking;
> (7) it was too luxurious or epicurean.[16]

Homiletical Opportunity

Geisler concludes his discussion by stating, "The truth of the matter is that we do not know for sure the purpose of the text. . . . [However, the] meaning is clear, and this is all that matters. . . . One can know what is meant (and what to do) without knowing why God gave this command."[17] And, this is the crux of the matter for the preacher. Pastors can explain to congregations the overarching principle that when God issues a command, his people still have the responsibility to obey God. This text illustrates that principle.

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[10]Norman L. Geisler, "The Relation of Purpose and Meaning in Interpreting Scripture," *Grace Theological Journal* 5.2 (1984): 229–45. Jewish midrash took interpretations even further: "In the *Mekhilta* (*Kaspa* 5, Lauterbach III, 187–90), the earliest collection of midrashim on the book of Exodus, nine interpretations are offered to explain why the verse is repeated, and seven more simply to explain the full significance of the Exodus verse alone," quoted by David Stern, "Midrash and Midrashic Interpretation," *Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1867.

[11]For example, this is the view of Haddon Robinson, identified above.

[12]See John D. Hannah, "Exodus," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 144; and Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 232–33.

[13]As an example of this view, Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, 147, suggests that the text adduces "a humanitarian motivation akin to that cited in the comment to [Exodus] 22:29" (p. 147), and that the text reflects "the desire to avoid cruelty to animals and, more broadly, to foster humane feelings in human beings" (p. 141). See also Philo. *On the Virtues*, http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book31.html, accessed September 21, 2016.

[14]See Keil and Delitzsch, "Exodus," 151.

[15]See Tim Hegg, "You Shall Not Boil a Kid in its Mother's Milk."

[16]The Jewish scholar Rashbam (Samuel ben Meir, 1083–1174) wrote: "It is disgraceful, voracious and gluttonous to consume a mother's milk together with her offspring," quoted by Barry D. Walfish, "Medieval Jewish Interpretation," *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1889.

[17]Geisler, "The Relation of Purpose and Meaning," 232.

"Sons of God" in Genesis 6

Hermeneutical Problem

Another example of an obscure text is found in Genesis 6. Who are those "sons of God"? Many church attenders carry study Bibles with them, and they will perhaps observe a footnote which gives various interpretations as to who these "sons of God" were. Some advocate they were fallen angels. Some argue for demon possessed men. Others support tyrannical human judges or kings. Still others promote godly descendants of Seth. I advance the view that they were godly men in general, and not limited to the line of Seth.[18]

Homiletical Opportunity

The important question is: what is the emphasis of the passage? If the "sons of God" were fallen angels, the point of the passage is: God judges sin. If they were demon possessed men, the point remains: God judges sin. Regardless of the view held, the stress of the passage remains unchanged: God judges sin. In preaching the passage, therefore, pastors can quickly submit what the various views are (without necessarily defending any of them), realizing that probably most church members are not that concerned with the question, and then put the emphasis where the text puts the emphasis: God judges sin. That principle continues today.

Synonymous Words

Hermeneutical Opportunity

A variety of synonymous words are found in Scripture. In addition to standard lexicons and theological dictionaries, Old Testament synonyms have been studied by Girdlestone and White,[19] and Baker.[20] Those in the NT are explicated by Trench,[21] and Custer.[22] Both Testaments are included in Vine, Unger, and White.[23] To these can be added numerous helps in electronic databases.

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[18]R. Larry Overstreet, "The Identity of the 'Sons of God' in Genesis 6" (unpublished research paper, San Francisco Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968).

[19]Robert Baker Girdlestone and Donald R. White, *Synonyms of the Old Testament: Their Bearing on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983).

[20]Warren Patrick Baker, *The Complete Word Study Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 1994).

[21]Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (London: James Clark, 1876; reprint, 1961).

[22]Stewart Custer, *A Treasury of New Testament Synonyms* (Greenville, SC: BJU, 1975).

[23]W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

One particular text serves as an example. Two Greek verbs for "love" are found in John 21:15–17, *phileō* and *agapaō*. What is the distinction between them? Some writers advocate that *agapaō* refers to a higher, divine type of love (cf. John 3:16) and that *phileō* refers to a lower, human type of love.[24] The NIV seems to follow this with its translation of "truly love" for *agapaō* and "love" for *phileō*. On the third interchange, in this view, Jesus came down to Peter's level. In contrast, some commentators reverse the significance. They suggest that *agapaō* is a cooler type of love, while *phileō* is more passionate.[25] Still others believe that the words are complete synonyms and merely reflect "John's love of variation in triple repetitions."[26] Another possibility modifies Trench to say that *agapaō* refers to a love of decision and *phileō* refers to a love of emotions. No verse commands people to *phileō* one another; that is reserved for *agapaō*, since it is a love of the will, of the decision. People can usually control decisions, but emotions are much more difficult to manage.

Homiletical Opportunity

The continuing principle that applies, regardless of the interpretation, is one that all believers need. Morris observes that Peter's "actions showed that Peter had not wanted a crucified Lord. But Jesus was crucified. How did Peter's devotion stand in the light of this? Was he ready to love Christ as he was, and not as Peter wished him to be? That was the question and it was an important one. Peter must face it and answer it."[27] This is the abiding principle which believers need to accept and apply. Are believers willing to accept Christ, to love him, to obey him as his follower—as he is, revealed in God's Word? That is the how God's people demonstrate their love for the risen Lord.

Theological Difficulties

Romans 5:12–21

Hermeneutical Problem

Study of this text readily reveals theological differences in its understanding.[28] How does Adam's sin relate to, and affect, humanity? Arminian theology proposes that people get a corrupted nature from Adam, which affects them physically and mentally but does not affect their wills. In addition, God's universal prevenient grace through Christ's atonement

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[24]Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John: The Authorized Version with Introduction and Notes* (London: John Murray, 1903), 302–3; and, R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1961), 1418–19.

[25]Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 38–40.

[26]Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 873; see also D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 676–77.

[27]Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 871.

[28]For discussion, see: Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 631–36; and, Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 492–98.

removes sin guilt. People, therefore, have a corrupted nature, but have no sin guilt, and continue to have the will to choose God.

Calvinistic theology holds that God imputes both a corrupt sin nature and sin guilt to all people through Adam. Some hold that this is due to Adam's position of "federal headship" over the human race, that is, as humanity's representative. This is commonly held by those who also advocate that God creates each individual soul, which is joined (at conception, or at birth) with the body received through human parents.

Others believe this is due to Adam's "natural (seminal) headship," that is, that the human race was seminally present in Adam. All people receive the totality of life, material and immaterial, from their parents.[29]

Homiletical Opportunity

How will pastors approach this problem text? Obviously, their theological presuppositions affect their understanding. The question is: do the church members have vital interest in the theological debate? Do they have even a passing interest? Whether Arminian or Calvinistic, whether federal or natural headship, two critical truths are explicated in this passage: (1) people are sinners; (2) Christ gave himself to solve the sin problem. The pastor, preaching through Romans, can focus on those two issues in 5:12–21, bringing people either to faith in Christ or to confidence in the work of Christ.

Hebrews 6:1–8

Hermeneutical Problem

Anyone who preaches through Hebrews knows that this text is challenging. Study Bibles have footnotes presenting various explanations for the text. The various views on this text may be summarized in four basic categories. (1) The Jewish interpretation believes that this text was for Jewish believers in the first century only, and is not directly related to believers today.[30] (2) The unregenerate person interpretation is that the people referred to in this text were not truly born again, but were only outwardly professing Christianity.[31] (3) The hypothetical interpretation is that the text is only suppositional, and is written so as to constitute a strong warning.[32] (4) The regenerate person interpretation advocates that

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[29]For an exhaustive study of this text, see David L. Turner, "Adam, Christ, and Us: The Pauline Teaching of Solidarity in Romans 5:12–21" (Th.D. dissertation, Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1982).

[30]David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 2006).

[31]Gleason L. Archer Jr., *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1957), 40.

[32]Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1974),

the text considers true believers in Christ, who may either fail to go on to maturity as they should (either backslide or become carnal),[33] or apostatize and lose their salvation.[34]

Homiletical Opportunity

Because many church attenders bring study Bibles to worship services (to say nothing of their iPads, Kindles, and Bibles on their smartphones), and because this is such a well-known "problem text," pastors must demonstrate familiarity with the views on this text. Rather than seeking to provide detailed explanations, and refutations, of each of them, however, another approach may be more beneficial. Once pastors identify the various views, they may then say something like this: *Having summarized the basic views on this text, let us now turn our attention to the text itself. The best way to understand this passage is simply to examine it, and let it speak for itself.* The sermon can then seek to answer three basic questions: (a) Who are the persons addressed (6:4–5)? (b) What is the danger involved (6:4–6)? (c) Why give this warning (6:7–8)? The answers to those questions, of course, will reflect the theological position of the preacher. The answers should also challenge listeners to respond positively, in faith, to the warning of the text.

Textual Difficulties

Ezekiel 21:8–17

Hermeneutical Problem

This Ezekiel text is difficult to translate. For example, the ESV text of verse 10 reads, "You have despised the rod, my son, with everything of wood," while the footnote says, "Probable reading; Hebrew *The rod of my son despises everything of wood*." The ESV text of verse 13 reads, "For it will not be a testing—what could it do if you despise the rod?" The footnote says, "Or *For it is a testing; and what if even the rod despises? It shall not be!*" The ESV text of verse 15c reads, "Ah, it is made like lightning; it is taken up for slaughter." The footnote reads, "The meaning of the Hebrew word rendered *taken up* is uncertain." Comparing other translations, such as the KJV, NASB, and NIV reveals the same difficulties in translation.

Concerning 21:10, Feinberg asserted that it "is admittedly difficult, and neither the Septuagint nor the Vulgate helps here."[35] At verse 13 Feinberg observed that it "has received various treatments by interpreters . . . and some leave the problem unsolved. . . . Difficulty in interpretation arises from the conciseness and brevity of the statement."[36]

113–14.

[33]Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1959). 257.

[34]R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1937), 185–87. For a detailed overview of the major interpretations of this text, consult Herbert W. Bateman IV, ed. *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007).

[35]Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 119.

[36]Ibid, 120.

Homiletical Opportunity

Most likely those preaching through Ezekiel will be taking larger sections of the book and doing more of a synthetic approach than a detailed verse-by-verse exposition (except in a few particular texts). For example, the entire section 4:1–24:27 deals with *God's glory revealed through judgment of his people*. This is subdivided into four sections, each of which could be a sermon: (a) signs of coming judgment (4:1–5:4); (b) visions of coming judgment (8:1–11:25); (c) certainty of coming judgment (12:1–19:14); and (d) warning of coming judgment (20:1–24:27). If this type of approach is followed, then no reason exists to confuse a congregation with various Hebrew translation problems in 21:8–17, and the attendant difficulty of precise exegesis. Instead, take the suggestion from the *ESV Study Bible* footnote: "Even if the details are obscure, the gist is clear enough. Verses 8–13 focus on the nature of the sword itself, honed to razor sharpness; vv. 14–17 describe its lethal effect."[37]

<div align="center">John 7:53–8:11</div>

Hermeneutical Problem

While numerous textual variants occur in Scripture, some are more critical in preaching. Indeed, some textual issues can simply be bypassed in preaching since they do not affect the flow of the text, or its meaning. This pericope of the adulterous woman, however, is well-known, often referred to, and not easily dismissed.

This text presents a significant problem in textual criticism. These verses are found in the KJV, and the NKJV has a marginal note, where "NU" stands for the Nestle-UBS critical text: "NU brackets 7:53–8:11 as not in the original text. They are present in over 900 mss. of John." Hodges and Farstad include the passage in their Greek text of the NT,[38] having defended its authenticity. If the pastor accepts the Majority Text as the most accurate, then no direct problem is encountered in this passage. Likewise, even if pastors doubt the Johannine authorship of the passage, they may still agree with Metzger's statement that "the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity."[39] In this case, they may preach it because they believe it to be a true account of an event in Christ's ministry, even if not part of John's Gospel.[40] People in the congregation, however, will still have Bibles with those marginal notes. How will those be handled?

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[37]David J. Reimer, "Ezekiel" footnotes, *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 1529.

[38]Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, ed. *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 319–20; they defend its authenticity on pp. xxiii–xxxii.

[39]Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2005), 188.

[40]This is precisely the case with Nancy Hardin, "A Woman Who Came a Stone's Throw from Death, John 8:1–12," in *Biblical Sermons: How Twelve Preachers Apply the Principles of Biblical Preaching*, ed. Haddon W. Robinson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 179–99. In similar manner, Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 333, asserts, "there is little reason for doubting that the event here described occurred, even if in its written form it did not in the beginning belong to the canonical books." Adopting this perspective allows pastors to preach the text as a true account of an event in the Lord's life, even if the text is not considered part of John's Gospel.

Most modern translations put the section in brackets with either a marginal note or a footnote asserting something like "Later mss add the story of the adulterous woman" (NASU), or "The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53–8:11" (NIV). If you are preaching through John's Gospel, and believe that this text is not part of the biblical text, what then?

Homiletical Opportunity

Several suggestions can help when confronted with this type of problem.[41] First, it is a matter of wisdom not to begin preaching through John (or Mark, since a similar problem occurs at 16:9–20) as the first book after you become the pastor of a church. It takes a few years for your church people to get to know you, to know that you completely believe in the integrity of God's Word, and to develop a trust in you. Second, be conscious and sensitive becuase your listeners may not understand textual criticism and may have a negative emotional reaction to what they perceive is an attack on Scripture. Third, since textual problems exist in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, it may be good to teach on the problems of the text in a venue distinct from the morning worship service. A Sunday school class or home Bible study groups could provide good interactive opportunities.[42] Fourth, confidently affirm that a textual variant "does not affect the integrity of the original and that no doctrine would be left unsupported if a favorite reading must be abandoned because of a more valid variant."[43] Finally, when you explain a textual variant, be as simple and direct as possible, assuring your listeners that the goal is to understand and apply God's Word accurately.

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Difficult Prophetic Passages

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When dealing with prophetic texts, a person's theological perspective obviously plays a role in interpretation. Whether one is amillennial or premillennial, pretribulational

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[41]See Stephen D. Patton, "Why Does Your Bible Read Differently from Mine? The Preacher and Text Criticism," *Preaching* 30.1 (July–August 2014): 27–29.

[42]An excellent book which could be used as a study guide in a Sunday school class or home Bible study group is David Alan Black, *New Testament Textual Criticism: A Concise Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994). Its 79 pages concisely set forth the basics of textual criticism in a user-friendly manner for both preacher and congregational members. For detailed study of textual criticism on the New Testament, see Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), along with Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005); for the Old Testament, see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011), or Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993.

[43]Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition*, 143.

or posttribulational, influences the specific approach to prophetic texts. Beyond those parameters, however, certain texts pose significant challenges regardless of a person's prophetic bent.

<p style="text-align:center">Ezekiel 26:1–14 and 29:17–20; 40:1–48:35</p>

Hermeneutical Problem of 26:1–14 and 29:17–20

The interpretive problem in these texts relates to the historical accuracy of the prophecy. Some critical commentators assert that in 26:1–14, Ezekiel predicted that Nebuchadnezzar would defeat Tyre, and as a result of that would "make a spoil of your riches and a prey of your merchandise" (26:12). They assert that this did not occur, and that it was actually Alexander the Great who finally defeated Tyre and got its spoils. Ezekiel finally realized his error about Nebuchadnezzar, and explained that Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Egypt (29:17–20) was God's way of making up for the erroneous prophecy of chapter 26.[44] Various explanations have been given concerning this so-called difficulty.[45] The simplest, and most connected with the actual text, however, is observed in the change from the singular pronoun "he," referring to Nebuchadnezzar, found in 26:8–11, to the plural pronoun "they" in 26:12. "It is rightly understood that Ezekiel was carrying the picture beyond Nebuchadnezzar to other invaders as well who would complete what he began. Especially this would be true of Alexander."[46] A detailed historical accounting of the defeat of Tyre and its relationship to Ezekiel 26 can be found in Ferguson.[47]

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[44]Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1970), 407–11.

[45]The *ESV Study Bible* has an extended note on this passage: "Ezekiel announces the devastation of Tyre at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (26:7–13). Tyre eventually capitulated but was not destroyed, as Ezekiel eventually knew (29:17–20). How is this so-called 'failure' of the prophetic word to be explained? Some recent interpreters have preferred to identify Alexander the Great's victory over Tyre in 332 BC with Ezekiel's prophecy. This interpretation is unsatisfactory, however, because it does not do justice to the expectation that *Babylon* would destroy Tyre (cf. 26:7). Others appeal to God's sovereign freedom, claiming he is able not only to carry out a threat but also to relent, as with Nineveh in Jonah 3. However, there is no suggestion that Tyre repented as did Nineveh, and this approach renders the interpretation of prophecy quite arbitrary. A third strategy lays emphasis on the element of promise rather than prediction: no matter the actual outcome, the real intent was to subject Tyre to God's sovereignty by prophetic word. However, this reading is unsatisfactory in that it seems to render insignificant the details of Ezekiel's language. A further possibility is to read Ezekiel 26 along the lines suggested in ch. 16, that is, that metaphorical language should not be confused with literal. Since much of this prophecy is metaphorical, one should not look for literal fulfillment. Finally, it is also clear that biblical prophecy is not necessarily exhausted in a single historical location (cf. Jeremiah's 70 years [Jer. 25:12; Dan. 9:2, 20–27]). So too here, Tyre's initial reduction in Ezekiel's day . . . was but the firstfruits of the unfolding of God's judgment on Tyre" (Reimer, "Ezekiel" footnotes, *ESV Study Bible*, 1537).

[46]Feinberg, *Ezekiel*, 149.

[47]Paul Ferguson, "Ezekiel 26:1–14: A Proof Text for Inerrancy or Fallibility of the Old Testament?"

Hermeneutical Problem of 40:1–48:35

The interpretive problem of this extended text relates to how literal, metaphorical, or symbolic the passage is. Several major views on the passage are common.[48] First, it may be interpreted to refer to Solomon's temple. Second, it presents the pattern the remnant should have followed after the Babylonian Exile. Third, it may be interpreted literally, and a rebuilt temple will exist with Israel fully restored to its land in a future Messianic (millennial) kingdom.[49] Fourth, it may be interpreted metaphorically as a prediction of God's presence in the church. Fifth, some interpret it as a metaphor of all the redeemed, of every age, who are seen in heaven in the worship of God. Sixth, others interpret the passage as a metaphor of God's presence with believers in the new heavens and the new earth. Many would agree with the conclusion of the footnote in the *ESV Study Bible*, "Almost all interpreters agree that Ezekiel 40–48 is one of the most difficult passages in the entire Bible."[50]

Homiletical Opportunity

When dealing with prophetic passages such as Ezekiel 26, it is important to clarify to your congregation that God's Word is true. They can depend on it. In those places where critics allege errors in the text, the pastor will want to demonstrate that the allegations do not stand up under closer scrutiny. Even after this is done, however, the pastor must still preach the text to make it relevant to the congregation.

With prophetic passages such as Ezekiel 40–48, pastors may find it helpful to summarize what their hermeneutical approach to the text is. A dispensationalist, for example, will interpret the text literally (or "normally"), while an amillennialist will obviously explain a different position. Whichever view is taken, the pastor must, again, preach the text to make it relevant to the congregation.

Scripture asserts that God gave prophetic passages for particular and practical reasons, and these are not primarily to satisfy curiosity, to set a timeline, or make it possible to

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Bible and Spade 19.2 (2006): 48–58. Feinberg also explains Ezekiel 29:18, "Ezekiel's statement in verse 18 has been taken to mean that Nebuchadnezzar was unsuccessful in his campaign against Tyre, but this is not the significance of the prophet's words. He is rather stating that the thirteen-year siege had not been materially successful. . . . The Tyrians were able to send off their wealth, according to the statement of Jerome, out of the reach of the Babylonian army. Without booty the Babylonian commander could not pay his army, so he turned to Egypt to take its wealth" (Feinberg, *Ezekiel* [Chicago: Moody, 1969], 171).

[48]See *ESV Study Bible* footnote, 1564, and Feinberg, 233–39.

[49]Some Jewish commentators (*Jewish Study Bible*, 1118) and dispensationalists (Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1959]; and Feinberg, *Ezekiel*) are representatives of this kingdom view.

[50]*ESV Study Bible*, 1564.

write best-selling books. Rather, God desires to accomplish specific purposes in the lives of believers through his prophetic Word. First, God wants to challenge a believer's character. This includes the challenge to purity of life (1 John 3:2–3), and the challenge to godliness in life (2 Pet 3:10–12). Second, God wants to stimulate his child's living. This includes the stimulus to steadfast work (1 Cor 15:58), and to zealous work (Tit 2:13–14). Third, God wants to encourage witness. Believers should witness to Jesus (Rev 19:10), and evangelize for Jesus (2 Cor 5:10–11). Finally, God wants to comfort believers' hearts (1 Thess 4:13–18). His children find comfort in the face of death, and comfort in the promise of the Lord's return. One, or more, of these purposes can be drawn from both Old and New Testament prophetic texts. As preachers proclaim God's prophetic Word, they can make these applications relevant to their congregations.

Conclusion

Problems of interpretation can arise whether preaching from the Old Testament or the New Testament. When they do, the conscientious pastor will want to deal with them both fairly and adequately. Pastors who are seminary graduates may be tempted to include every seemingly relevant piece of data in their sermons, like they did for research papers, regardless of whether it overwhelms their congregations. When so tempted, Walter Liefeld's experience and advice is relevant. After listening to a well-known conference speaker give only one interpretation (and maybe not the best one) of a passage to his audience, Liefeld came to realize that "conference audiences, and probably most congregations, want to hear a clear, uncomplicated exposition that leaves them confident that they understand the passage and its application."[51] He continues with the caveat that this approach may not succeed in seminary chapels, but his point concerning congregations is valid.

Preachers must present Scripture clearly and professors or preaching must teach students to present it clearly. Do not ignore hermeneutical problems, but treat them as homiletical opportunities for the direct exposition and teaching of Scripture. In the process of preaching on passages with hermeneutical problems, the ultimate goal of preaching must be the constant focus: changed lives for the glory of God.[52]

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[51]Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition*, 136.

[52]This is the emphasis of my book, *Persuasive Preaching: A Biblical and Practical Guide to the Use of Persuasion* (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014).

Pericope-by-Pericope: Transforming Disciples into Christ's Likeness through the Theological Interpretation of Scripture

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A fundamental requirement and marker for the maturation of disciples of Jesus Christ is their ability to interpret Scripture theologically. As the Bible's timeless theological truths are correctly understood and applied pericope-by-pericope,[1] disciples are slowly transformed into Christ's likeness. This paper will define then attempt to locate the concept of pericopal theology within the larger framework of authorial intent for Scripture; consider how the Bible intends to persuade the whole person to a Christiconic end; and survey how signs operate within biblical pericopes to administer their authors' intended theological thrusts.

> *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby..."*
> (1 Pet 2:2)[2]

> *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity..."*
> (Heb 5:12–6:1a)

Introduction

Believers have long cherished God's inscripturated Word as their personal treasure and soul's sustenance. More desirable than gold and sweeter than honey, David extolled the Lord's law as his means for reviving the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the

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[1] Commonly used to connote a portion of the Gospels, the term "pericope" is used throughout the following to demarcate a segment of Scripture that forms the basis of an individual sermon. The length of a pericope is determined primarily by its literary genre. Pericopes drawn from Proverbs, for example, are normally short—sometimes as short as a single verse. Narrative texts, on the other hand, tend to result in longer pericopes.

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

heart, and enlightening the eyes (Ps 19:7–10). Within the pages of Scripture the newborn Christian finds milk, and the mature finds meat. Each discovers nourishment *to the degree* and *in the form* he[3] is capable of receiving it.

As the writer of Hebrews notes, not all handling of God's Word produce equal results. Different levels of spiritual maturity exist, in large part, due to how the Scriptures are handled. There is a "lawful" way for preachers to handle the Bible (1 Tim 1:8), one that successfully meets the challenge of entrusting to faithful men what the preacher himself has rightly understood (2 Tim 2:1–5).[4] But there is also a way of twisting the Word to the preacher's and his hearers' destruction (2 Pet 3:16). Therefore it behooves the preacher to do his utmost to present himself to God as an approved worker, one who *rightly* handles the word of truth to the eternal benefit of his hearers (2 Tim 2:15).

How does one do that? What is the best way for the preacher to handle the Bible so as to contribute to his own and his hearers' growth as disciples in the likeness of Jesus Christ? The answer is to be found in studying the Scriptures pericope-by-pericope with an eye toward theological interpretation.

Defining Pericopal Theology and the Signs of Its Presence

A theological interpretation of Scripture goes beyond raw exegesis and is an essential practice in the quest to know God. "It is that pursuit," writes Daniel Treier, "by which we endeavor to know where we are going and to catch a glimpse of what it will be like to arrive at our destination."[5] To interpret the Bible theologically does not mean imposing one's system of doctrines on Scripture in the name of bringing biblical exegesis and theology together.[6] Rather, it is the discipline of reading carefully what is actually in the text with an eye toward the life God intends for his creation—that life as fully realized and revealed in the incarnated person of God's living Word, Jesus Christ.

Theology builds in Scripture pericope-by-pericope. Abe Kuruvilla in his ground-breaking book *Privilege the Text!* defines pericopal theology as:

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[3]The third person masculine pronoun is used generically for both sexes when referring to human beings throughout this paper.

[4]The adverb *nominos*, translated "lawfully" by the King James Version, is found only twice in the New Testament: 1 Tim 1:8 and 2 Tim 2:5.

[5]Daniel Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 205.

[6]As D. A. Carson writes in "Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Yes, But...," in *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives*, ed. R. Michael Allen (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 194, "Surely a distinction must be made between a richer reading of Scripture that deploys more than historical-critical methods to find doctrine in Scripture that fair-minded readers can see is truly there once the blinkers of a reductionist method are removed, and another thing to impose one's doctrine on Scripture in the name of bringing Scripture and theology together."

the theology specific to a particular pericope, representing a segment of the plenary world in front of the canonical text that portrays God and his relationship to his people, and which, bearing a transhistorical intention, functions as the crucial intermediary in the homiletical move from text to praxis that respects both the authority of the text and the circumstances of the hearer.[7]

Put simply, pericopal theology is the particular theological truth ensconced in a text of Scripture that was intended by the original author to impact his audience in a particular way. To determine a pericope's theology one must learn how to read its signs.

The term "signs" (alternately, "signals") is used deliberately here in contradistinction to "clues" as the latter may imply traces of evidence left behind either accidentally or tauntingly, the kinds of minutia and esoterica only keen-eyed detectives and specially trained experts can spot and interpret. Signs, on the other hand, are more blatant, deliberate, and intentional.

Signs are the *lingua franca* of the initiated, conveyors of information and instruction to those "in the know." The more accurately an initiate reads the signs, the more successfully he or she can navigate the world in which those signs operate. Whether it is the lineman listening to his quarterback bark out formations, the driver seeing the car ahead with its left-turn indicator flashing, or the exegete of a biblical pericope, success depends on how well each one reads and reacts to the given signs/signals.

The reason for this paper's use of "signs" when referring to what readers encounter in the Bible is the author's deeply held conviction that the purpose of Scripture is not obfuscation but revelation,[8] the belief that God inspired and preserved his Word in such a way that it might be "adequately" understood by the average reader. "Interpreters may not know everything," as Kevin Vanhoozer so correctly observes, "but they often know *enough*—enough to understand a text and to respond to it appropriately" [emphasis in original]. Surely, "we *can* achieve interpretive adequacy without having to achieve interpretive absolutism"[9] [emphasis mine]. While readers cannot state with absolute certainty everything the author might have hoped to communicate through his text—e.g., his motives, unspoken thoughts, or feelings—they can summarize well enough what he actually includes there.[10] That is, in the author's recorded words hearers encounter the author's intent. These words call to the reader to look backward for understanding and, simultaneously, project forward to engage the reader in his present context.

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[7]Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 111.
[8]Ibid., 89.
[9]Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 139, 335.
[10]Jeannine Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 22, 39.

The Bible is by nature "a highly shaped, convincing theological document that 'works' [effectively] as persuasive writing"[11] precisely because its authors wrote purposefully, desiring to be understood and heeded. John Sailhamer in his *Introduction to Old Testament Theology* defines a text as "an embodiment of an author's intention, that is a strategy designed to carry out that intention."[12] To define them in terms of what they do, texts are strategic compositions that employ techniques to signal ideas in order to achieve their authors' predetermined purposes. Thus, a text's meaning originates in its author's mind and is embodied in the actual words and techniques used by the author as signals to convey that meaning—a meaning the author intends for the reader to understand. And what is said here of written passages applies equally to voiced speeches.

Words, whether written or spoken, are signals of intent. They signal what the speaker intends to be understood, what the speaker intends to do personally, and/or what the speaker intends for the hearer to do. Words are intermediaries of meaning. When written down, they convey meaning by facilitating a conversation between author, text, and reader. Meaning therefore may be defined as "the complex pattern of what an author intends to communicate with his or her audience for purposes of engagement, which is inscribed in the text and conveyed through use of both shareable language parameters and background-contextual assumptions."[13]

Practically, this means that while biblical linguists, historians of antiquity, and other experts might be able to shed additional light on a given pericope's meaning, their insights should rarely, if ever, undermine what the average person might glean on his own from a close and humble reading of the text itself. Signs abound in every pericope. By these the author (human and divine) sincerely attempted to indicate his intentions to the reader as clearly as possible given the limitations of the human author's historical context.

Persuading the Whole Person

Authors intend for their texts to say something (a matter of semantics), to do something (a matter of pragmatics), and, in the case of Scripture, to claim something (a matter of dogmatics). Words bear a performative aspect—to persuade, per Aristotle; to prove, delight, and move, per Cicero; and to teach, reprove, correct, and train for sake of completing their hearer, per Paul (2 Tim 3:16–17).

Genesis 1 illustrates the performative aspect of speech dramatically. There, God speaks and things happen. Jewish thought, shaped by its study of this passage and others like it, therefore held that "a word was more than a sound expressing a meaning, a word actually

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[11]Patricia Dutcher-Walls, *Reading the Historical Books* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), xix.

[12]Quoted by Jeffrey Arthurs, "Preaching the Old Testament Narratives," in *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott Gibson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 75.

[13]Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 48.

did things." Consequently, "[t]he word of God is not simply a sound, it is an effective cause."[14] Disciples should therefore study the words of Scripture for their pragmatic intent as well as their semantic meaning.[15] In the case of Scripture, signs are given to enjoin a response that is "more demanding," one that is as much ethical as epistemological [and ultimately theological], than is expected in every day forms of communication.[16]

To bring all this to bear particularly on the subject of preaching as it pertains to discipleship, preaching should be viewed as more than the explication of divinely inspired words. Preaching's three primary purposes are to inform, to convince, and to activate.[17] A faithful preacher will seek to engage the whole person as do the words of Scripture: intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and volitionally. *When taken together, the mind, emotions, conscience, and will constitute the framework within which authorial intent, including theological thrust in the case of Scripture, registers when a text is proclaimed.*

A text's theological thrust, culminating in a "Christiconic"[18] outcome, is the perlocutionary intention of every pericope and pertains specifically to what any particular pericope teaches about living one's days with reference and in deference to God, following in the way of Jesus Christ. The principal interest of Scripture, its authors, and its original audience was theological. "[R]eading the Scriptures therefore meant [and continues to mean] coming to hear God's word and to know God better," then to be transformed in the process by the renewing of one's mind.[19] The renewed mind is a Christlike mind that, in turn, produces a Christlike manner of life (Phil 2:5–8). Thus, the goal of biblical preaching "is to instill in disciples a practice, that becomes a habit, that creates a disposition, that blooms into Christlike character (all by the power of the Holy Spirit)!"[20] It is a goal that, like the Scripture itself, targets the whole person.

Every pericope develops an idea that God intends to impact hearers' beliefs, affections, and behaviors. Therefore, "[t]here are few deficiencies in preaching quite so disastrous in their effect," as Jay Adams asserts, "as the all-too-frequently occurring failure to determine

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[14]Quoted by Kent Edwards, "Training the Mouth of a Preacher's Kid," in *Models for Biblical Preaching: Expository Sermons from the Old Testament*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Patricia Batten (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 133.

[15]Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 48–54.

[16]Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text*, 335.

[17]See, for example, Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose: The Urgent Task of Homiletics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 31.

[18]Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 262, coined the term "Christiconic" to mean that every portion of Scripture bears a divine demand that has been met by Christ and, therefore, "portrays a facet of his perfect image and points to what it means to be Christlike."

[19]Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text*, 22.

[20]Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 168.

the *telos* (purpose) of a preaching portion."[21] And that *telos*, as stated by Kuruvilla, "is what the author was *doing* with what he was *saying* (the pragmatics of the utterance...the *world in front of the text*)"[22] so as to transform hearers into Christ's likeness.

In sum, writers and speakers alike intend to do things with what they say. They intend that their words not only convey ideas but incite feeling, conviction, and action. The preacher of Scripture therefore has as his ultimate object the motivation of his hearers to actions that will form and, over time, come to reflect their life's character. In keeping with the primary purpose of Scripture, the character that preaching aspires to stimulate is Christlikeness, to the glory of God. To echo Kuruvilla, "[E]very pericope of Scripture enjoins Christlikeness, pericope by pericope, facet by facet, 'until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4:13)."[23]

Reading the Signs that Point to Him

As proponents of the burgeoning movement known as "theological interpretation of Scripture" (or, TIS) like to point out, the Bible was not written *to* us contemporary readers as much as it was written *for* us. "Paul himself articulates such a principle explicitly (see 1 Corinthians 10:11 and Romans 15:4), and the rest of the biblical writers, who constantly reuse and reinterpret earlier texts and traditions, seem to share that perspective," namely, "that all Scripture is written for all God's people in all ages and places."[24] It is this "*for* us but not *to* us" aspect of Scripture that gives rise to most of our problems as contemporary readers and preachers.

Besides facing the challenges created by his own separation in time and space from the text's original *sitz im leben*, today's preacher bears the added burden of dividing compositions that were often meant to be heard in a single sitting into smaller units to be studied over weeks, if not months. Where the preacher draws those lines of demarcation can have a significant impact on how he understands each of the resulting pericopes' individual meanings.

Because we are not the original audience, contemporary analysis of any passage must be subjective to a degree and depend upon our interpretive skills. Our conclusions "will be only as certain as [they are] clear and straightforward in the text."[25] To the extent that Bible

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[21]Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 27.

[22]Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 51.

[23]Ibid., 262.

[24]Michael Gorman, "Principles of Theological Interpretation (pt. 2)," available at www.michaeljgorman.net.

[25]Duane Garrett, "Preaching from the Psalms and Proverbs," in *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott Gibson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 103.

interpretation remains an art, disagreements as to any single pericope's theological thrust will follow. But a rudimentary understanding of the nature of the signs used in Scripture to signal its theological thrusts might contribute to a greater consensus in our interpretations and a greater appreciation for one another when we disagree.

The guiding principle in what follows is, to borrow from Kuruvilla's book's title, the privileging of the text itself as an embodiment of the author's intention, historically-contextualized but universally-applicable. Instead of bringing in some political philosophy or theology (e.g., feminism, liberation thinking, queer theory) from outside the Bible to apply its contents, or prematurely filtering a pericope through his personal conception of the gospel (as suggested by Andre Resner),[26] preachers should strive to follow the signs embedded in the text itself.[27] These signs, to be likened in the following to traffic signs on America's roadways, need to be appreciated for their communal, variegated, synergistic, and (arguably) polysemic nature.

Community: Signs Assume an Understanding Audience

Signs, whether along roadsides, in speeches, or written down in texts, are only meaningful when there is a community who understands them. Without such, signs are no longer indicators of meaning but pointless gibberish.

Speakers convey their intentions through *how* they say *what* they say, *where*, and *to whom*—through voice inflections and gestures, standing beside time clocks and outside their children's bedroom doors. "It's 8:15!" means different things in different contexts. The boss standing beside the time clock saying those words probably means her employee is late (again?) and in danger of losing his job. A mom standing outside her five-year-old son's bedroom door speaking the very same words may mean it's time to go to bed, get up, get dressed for church, eat breakfast, or something else entirely.

In a setting where there are assigned or agreed upon responsibilities, when a speaker or writer states that the conditions are such that the audience is responsible for acting (i.e., meeting a responsibility), the audience automatically knows what the speaker or writer

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[26]Andre Resner, "Preacher as God's Mystery Steward," in *Slow of Speech and Unclean Lips: Contemporary Images of Preaching Identity*, ed. Robert Reid (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 60–66.

[27]The exegetical and theological tasks unquestionably go together, like Esau and Jacob—twins, but not identical; the latter grasping at the heel of the former; each contesting which should take priority. The author realizes that his bibliology (i.e., theology concerning the doctrine of Scripture) is, ironically, the reason for his insistence upon the prioritization of Scripture over theology. And yet, his bibliology is the result of how he has read and understood the Scriptures in the first place. To take this to suggest that the exegetical and theological tasks might be likened to conjoined twins is, however, to go too far—equating divine revelation with philosophical and metaphysical musing. In the end one must take priority over the other, and Scripture must win out.

intends for him to do. So when Timothy's wife states, "The trash is full," he knows she expects him to empty it because they have at some point reached an understanding that garbage control is his responsibility. Likewise, when Timothy tells his wife, "We're out of milk," she knows he expects her to pick it up the next time she is out because it is a responsibility she has previously accepted.

The idiom we use to describe what is happening in these scenarios is "catching my [the speaker's or writer's] drift." Generally, we catch the drift of what a person is implying should be done because of our shared understanding. We catch the drift of what classical authors intend to convey because we share in their understanding of humanity and the experiences depicted in their literary creations. We catch the drift of what biblical authors intend to convey because we share in their humanity ("fallen condition") and live in the same faith community (as a result of experiencing the same "divine provision" of grace).

As his creation, all of us are responsible for loving and obeying God. Historically, Old Testament Jews were responsible for keeping the Mosaic Covenant; New Testament believers were expected to follow the Way. Within each of these communities were overt and implied understandings of what was expected of each member. Some expectations were clearly stated—thou shalt not commit adultery, love one another, etc. Others were implied based upon the character of God as it was to be reflected in the community.

The more straightforwardly an author commands his audience in an attempt to make his intentions known (in what is termed "transmissive communication") or the more that readers perceive themselves to hold in common with a text's contents and implied intention (termed "expressive communication"), the more easily they seem to catch the author's drift. Solomon in Proverbs and Paul in his letters transmit their meanings and intentions directly. Readers can generally catch their drift rather quickly. The Bible's narrative authors and poets, on the other hand, generate an imaginative world and invite readers to engage it, rarely using terms of direct address.[28] Here, readers may find it more challenging to catch the writer's drift precisely.

In short, Scripture readily addresses contemporary readers to the degree they perceive themselves standing in continuity with its original audience. Without an immediate sense of being able to relate, the more explicitly today's readers must be told by interpreters how to feel or what to do in response to a text.

Preachers should be sensitive to how likely their hearers will be to catch a pericope's drift. They should consider the wisdom of plotting their pericopes on a spectrum of relatability based upon their hearers' contexts. The more readily contemporary hearers can pick up on the signs for themselves, the more naturally, and intensely, they will experience the pericope's theological thrust.

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[28]Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 75.

Variety: Signs Come in all Shapes and Sizes

Yehoshua Gitay asks, "Is there a fixed paradigm of ancient Hebrew persuasion or effective communication?" His answer: "Emotions, exaggeration, repetitions, sound effects, examples, and parables are all used to appeal to an audience."[29] And these are only a few of the techniques used by Scripture. Because of this great variety, readers must be vigilant. The two constant rules to be observed at all times when reading the Bible are to slow down and pay close attention.

While speakers can nod their heads, roll their eyes, motion with their hands, or vary the volume, inflections, and rate of their voices, texts must use more sophisticated, subtler forms of emphases to make their point. Some means of emphasis are so common in certain genres of Scripture that they are widely regarded to characterize those genres—repetition and characterization in narratives, parallelism and metaphors in poetry and prophecy, etc. The genre in which a writer composed his text signals generally how he wants his words to be taken. Each genre therefore calls for a style of reading that proceeds from faith, respects the genre's conventions, and seeks theological understanding. To read biblical texts in this way is to read them "as they wish to be read, and as they should be read in order to do them justice"[30]—as binding laws, instructive history, meditative observations, cultural critique, good news, etc. The better one knows how to read the genre, the better one can capture its author's intent.[31]

Some of the techniques used regularly across all genres to emphasize ideas include:

- repetition of key words or concepts (as in Gen 22: "your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love");

- manipulation of word ordering (especially moving a key word to the front or back of a sentence);

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[29]Yehoshua Gitay, "Rhetorical Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, ed. Steven McKenzie and Stephen Haynes (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 145.

[30]Kevin Vanhoozer, gen. ed., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 22.

[31]Generally speaking, one can detect a central theological emphasis in each of the Bible's disparate genres. The books of Law reflect God's righteous character. The Historical Narratives demonstrate His sovereignty. The books of Poetry and Wisdom reveal God's interest in and pertinence to all life. The Prophets, combining the emphases found in Law and the Narratives, dwell upon God's righteousness in terms of honoring His covenants and His sovereignty in terms of using the nations as agents of His will. The Gospels depict what happens at the intersection of divinity and humanity, and the Epistles reflect upon God's orderliness as it should manifest itself in the church. Apocalyptic literature, combining emphases and features from Poetry and the Narratives, depicts God's sovereignty in bringing all things to bow to His will. As soon as one identifies a pericope's genre, he has already taken an important step toward identifying its theological thrust.

- deliberate omissions (which happens when an item is left out of a repeated phrase or list within a passage [as "whom you love" is omitted from Gen 22:16]);

- deliberate alterations of passages quoted from an earlier author;

- divine and editorial comments (as in "so Abraham called the name of that place 'the Lord will provide,'" thereby indicating the pericope's theology—i.e., the Lord provides what He demands);

- plays on words (as when Paul plays on the meaning of "Onesimus" in Philemon 10–11);

- stark contrasts (as in the description of Goliath's armor vs. David's simple sling, or David's abuse of authority and flaunting of privilege vs. Uriah's submission to authority and eschewing of privilege);

- changes in pacing (especially by slowing down to provide details [like Saul's height] or to record dialog [which often yields insight into the speaker's inner life]);

- unexpected twists (like Ehud's left-handedness and women being the first witnesses to Christ's resurrection); and

- structural design (for example, chiasms, acrostics, and various forms of parallelism).

When an author employs the foregoing techniques, he is pointing toward the theology he hopes will "hit home" for the reader.

Authors practice selectivity by choosing what to include (content) and how to present it (technique). And through their selectivity, they emphasize what they want to convey. Too often though what they leave unsaid overwhelms readers' imaginations, provoking them to conjecture in order to fill in the gaps, especially with regard to characters' motivations and hidden thoughts. When this happens, what the author *did* say and the reason(s) he said it is too often lost. Preachers can help their hearers avoid this pitfall by modeling how to study a pericope with an eye out for its genre and actual contents.

Synergy: Signs Work Together

Departments of transportation design and strategically place traffic signs along roadways intending them to work together to facilitate a smooth, safe flow of traffic. Biblical authors do likewise. They intend for the various signs they place in their texts to work *together* to convey meaning, give direction, and facilitate the journey to Christlikeness. Readers of Scripture ought therefore to search for meaning in the whole, taking time only afterward to appreciate the devices of each constituent part.[32] Put differently, the interpreter's central task is to make sense of the parts in light of the whole.[33] Understood in this way, the hermeneutical task is clearly circular.

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[32]Gitay, "Rhetorical Criticism," 143.

[33]John H. Sailhamer, "Preaching from the Prophets," in *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott Gibson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 129.

A reader will naturally form a general idea of a text's meaning based on his initial reading of the whole composition. Afterward, he can test the accuracy of his understanding by considering whether each of the composition's parts supports his understanding or relate meaningfully to one another. For the preacher this means that his initial study of a pericope should yield his text's "big idea." He can then check the soundness of this idea by testing whether all the pericope's parts support it or one another. The big idea is the pericope's overall theological message and intended thrust; the pericope's parts contribute and pertain to that message/thrust.

What Sid Buzzell in *Models for Biblical Preaching* identifies as the key to understanding biblical poetry and parables applies to all Scripture. The meaning of any pericope is to be found "in the middle," by seeing how all its parts work together. Buzell writes:

> In Hebrew poetry, the lines work together. And my model when I'm working with a proverb or psalm is that the meaning is in the middle. The meaning isn't in the first line and the meaning isn't in the second line. When you rub the two lines together you get a spark, and that's where the meaning is. . . . That's the same with parables. You've got to ask, "What's the point here?" not just "Do you understand the first line, do you understand the second line?" You have to ask how the two lines work together because that's what the sage is saying.[34]

Daniel Treier, illustrating Hans Georg-Gadamer's thoughts on how readers understand texts, likens the process to playing a game. "Certain actions become meaningful only within a given context, and one responds within the flow of the play instead of endlessly analyzing every move in isolation."[35] As original hearers listened to whole books of Scripture read in single sittings, their disparate parts played together on the courts of the hearers' imaginations. Hearers did not then analyze the parts individually as much as they responded to the whole. Upon further reflection later they could see how the parts informed one another producing the whole. Each part's significance was then appreciated for its relation to the other parts and its contribution to the whole.

Old and New Testament authors alike sometimes spell out plainly, often near the beginning, what they hope all the parts of their books working together will achieve or what they want their readers to do in light of them. Proverbs 1:1–6 details what Solomon hoped to impart to those who would take time to listen to his wisdom. John 20:30–31 leaves no doubt about why John recounted the events from Christ's life that he did. Elsewhere, Luke explains his purpose in writing to Theophilus (1:1–4; Acts 1:1–3), Paul to Timothy (1 Tim 3:14) and Philemon (vv. 8–10), and Peter to his readers (2 Pet 1:12–15; 3:1–2). Jude speaks matter-of-factly about his change in purposes (v. 3) and John clearly indicates God's purpose for what he showed him on Patmos (Rev 1:1–2, 19).

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[34]Sid Buzzell, interview in *Models for Biblical Preaching: Expository Sermons from the Old Testament*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Patricia Batten (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 92–93.

[35]Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, 130.

At other times, New Testament authors at or near the beginning of their books quote Old Testament passages in order to orient their readers to the theological stress of their work as a whole.[36] Matthew, most notably, refers back often to the Old Testament in the opening of his Gospel in order to set Jesus in the context of Jewish Messianic expectation, to highlight his familial ties to David, to point out his fulfillment of Mosaic law, to portray his prophetic ministry as reminiscent of Elisha's, and to establish him as king.

Occasionally, New Testament authors *seem* to imply connections between their writings and the Old Testament through allusions—varying in degree of directness. Whether they were always aware that they had implied a connection is debatable, being as saturated in the Old Testament as they were. Contemporary readers might suspect a writer to be echoing or evoking an earlier text or idea without the writer being fully aware he had done so.[37] When this happens, the reader should allow the perceived connection to influence his understanding of a pericope only to the degree that it is consistent with what the overall text is obviously attempting to convey, which leads to our final consideration.

Polysemy: May Signs Point in more than One Direction?

Some road signs are imperatival. They command drivers to stop, yield, "eat at Joe's," and "see Rock City." Others are informational. Included among these are signs that tell how many miles one must travel to reach two or more places ahead. They point to ultimate destinations and lesser ones too.

Might the signs within a biblical pericope do something similar? That is, might a pericope point to two or more theological ideas and/or be intended to elicit more than one type of response? Kuruvilla suggests that a pericope incorporates a *single* thrust and "is essentially a self-intact sense-unit bearing a relatively complete and integral idea that contributes to the whole, a defined portion of Scripture that reflects a unified span of thought and content...."[38] David Gunn, to the contrary, sees the drive to form interpretations that offer "an encompassing, comprehensive, and coherent account of their text," that place a premium "on sameness (unity) and univocality and devalues difference (diversity) and multivocality," as potentially harmful. Per Gunn, this "totalizing" drive "leads to our ignoring or suppressing the very tensions and fractures in texts that may offer us enlivening insight or, indeed, escape from the tyranny of an interpretive tradition."[39] So some advocates of TIS hold an expansive view of the text, affirming that "Scripture has multiple complex senses given by God, the author of the whole drama."[40]

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[36]Roy Ciampa, "Toward the Effective Preaching of New Testament Texts That Cite the Old Testament," in *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott Gibson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 161.

[37]Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 108.

[38]Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 92.

[39]David Gunn, "Narrative Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, ed. Steven McKenzie and Stephen Haynes (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 192.

[40]Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, 200.

A more moderate and mediating position is to see a text's meaning as being both "complex and determinate."[41] Or, as Vanhoozer states, "It is important to acknowledge that authors may intend to communicate complex, multilayered intentions."[42] They can point to a number of things at once. Put differently, the message emphasized in a text is its primary intended message but may not be its only message.

Old Testament narratives communicate three related messages simultaneously— revealing insight into God's character, Israel's history, and individual lives.[43] Jesus's parables, claims Craig Blomberg, teach one main point per main character.[44] Biblical authors in both testaments often "sandwich" stories within stories to make more than one point at a time. Naaman's healing and generosity, in contrast to Gehazi's greed and subsequent leprosy (2 Kings 5), are sandwiched within the larger Elisha narrative (2 Kings 2–8). Mark's Gospel contains six sandwich stories, most notably the story about Jesus's healing of the woman with the bloody issue sandwiched within the account of His raising Jairus's daughter.[45]

Apart from whatever complex intentions their human authors may have hoped to convey, certain passages of Scripture suggest that the Holy Spirit who inspired them sometimes had purposes that went beyond what their historical authors understood (see, for example, 1 Cor 9:9, 10, 14; 10:6; 1 Pet 1:10–12; and numerous Old Testament prophecies that appear to have a double referent). E. D. Hirsch's term "implications" does not fully describe this phenomenon, but it points in the right direction. Implications are "(sub) meanings in a text of which the author may have been unaware while writing but that nevertheless legitimately fall within the pattern of meaning he or she willed."[46]

Does the possibility that a text may contain a complex network of intentions, or that the Holy Spirit's purpose for it may go beyond what the human author realized, give the contemporary preacher free rein to assign any significance he chooses to the details of his chosen pericope or to read other passages and their theologies back into it? If not, what are the controls? Which details can he justifiably emphasize beyond what the author intended? What intertextual connections to other parts of the canon can he reasonably suggest?

Jay Adams offers a helpful insight. Insisting that preachers must determine the Holy Spirit's intention for any pericope before preaching it, he clarified, "I do not mean merely

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[41]Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 83.

[42]Quoted by Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 83.

[43]Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 74.

[44]Craig Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 15–17.

[45]Abraham Kuruvilla, *Mark: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 108.

[46]Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 39.

His intention in the limited application to an event at the time when the passage was written, but any and all valid applications that He intended to make from any principles that may be generalized from the basic thrust of the passage."[47] Later on, Adams allows, "It is possible, of course, to preach on sub-*tele* so long as (1) there are sub-*tele* in the passage..., (2) you do so in a way that recognizes the larger *telic* thrust of which it is a sub-category, and (3) you do not distort the *telos* or *tele* of which the sub-*telos* is a purpose unit."[48]

Particularly noteworthy here is Adams's suggestion that a passage may possess a primary purpose (*telos*) and multiple (sub)purposes (sub-*tele*), what Kuruvilla termed a "theological subfocus."[49] As long as a pericope's primary thrust is recognized and respected within his sermon, the preacher may justifiably choose to focus the greater part of his message's attention upon one or more of a pericope's (sub)purposes that speak pointedly to his hearers' situation(s). Cross-references to other passages of Scripture within such a sermon will then not only buttress that sermon's emphases but serve as a check against the danger of pushing the application of any (sub)purpose beyond what the whole Bible will permit.

To acknowledge complexity in a pericope's meaning is reasonable. This is not to say, however, that a pericope may mean contradictory things. Purported contradictions are often the result of differences in perspective, but those that are truly contradictory must be weighed and compared with the rest of Scripture, with the least supported interpretation being set aside.

Texts can indeed be complex, but so are their readers. In the give-and-take between reader and text, the latter exerts an influence upon the former and the former upon the latter. The same reader on subsequent occasions may find different *tele* and thrusts in a pericope than he has seen before. This often results from a deeper understanding of the pericope's context or changes in the reader's personal context. According to Vanhoozer, "Opinions as to what an author did may, and should, change as we come to a deeper understanding of the author's language and circumstances."[50] Similarly, changes in the reader's circumstances create new vantage points for viewing the text. Though the text's meaning doesn't change in either case, there is a perceived newness to it.[51] The text says more than it said before, drawing attention to other vistas than initially perceived.

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[47]Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 28.

[48]Ibid., 33.

[49]Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 160.

[50]Quoted by Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 87.

[51]Ibid., 117.

Conclusion

Discovering a pericope's theological thrust is an important transitional step in the preacher's move from exegesis to homiletics for sake of transforming disciples into Christ's likeness. Biblical authors fully intended to make their texts' thrusts plain. Scripture was not written to be a mystery for only savvy readers to solve or a word-jumble to be decoded. A pericope is less a collection of clues than a grouping of signs strategically designed and placed to lead readers to an understanding of an author's thoughts, to arouse passions appropriate to those thoughts, and to provoke fitting actions, with Christlikeness to the glory of God being the ultimate object. It is to him that all signs finally point. To preach Scripture, therefore, is to engage in theological/Christological discourse.

Signs of what a pericope's author intended for his original audience to do with what he wrote will begin coming into view as soon as one begins to read. Accounting for the genre of the book wherein the pericope appears, studying the book's historical context, then carefully dissecting the pericope's contents should bring those signs into sharper focus. Rhetorical criticism, whereby one next attempts to retrace the author's "strategy of appealing to or mastering the audience's mind,"[52] should then help today's reader in his quest to experience again the text's intended theological thrust(s). Then, thrust-by-thrust, he is slowly nudged in the direction and likeness of his Master.

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[52]Gitay, "Rhetorical Criticism," 136.

Romans 9 and the Calvinist Doctrine of Reprobation

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Calvinist theologian Wayne Grudem defines reprobation as "the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in sorrow *deciding not to save them*, and to punish them for their sins, and thereby to manifest his justice."[1] The doctrine of reprobation, which is essential to Calvinism as the necessary corollary to the doctrine of unconditional election,[2] asserts that there is a certain group of persons who have never been and will never be the objects of God's redeeming love regardless of whether or not they hear the gospel. God has determined not to give this certain group of individuals the grace and faith necessary for salvation. He does not base this determination to withhold grace and faith on anything having to do with the reprobate persons themselves. He withholds grace and faith from them simply because it brings him the most glory. The jolting but unavoidable reality is that Calvinism teaches that the one and only reason that the lost are not saved is that "God does not want them saved."[3] Indeed, Grudem's definition is quite clear on this point: reprobation is God's "sovereign decision . . . before creation . . . not to

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[1]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 685. Italics mine. Cf. W. S. Reid, "Reprobation," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984): "This term . . . refers to the fact that God has eternally condemned the nonelect to eternal punishment." Similarly, Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 319, avers that reprobation refers "to negative predestination or God's choice of some to suffer eternal damnation or lostness."

[2]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 684: "When we understand election as God's sovereign choice of some persons to be saved, then there is *necessarily* another aspect of that choice, namely, God's sovereign decision to pass over others and not to save them." Italics mine. See also Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (1932; Woodstock, Ontario: Devoted, 2017), 47, available at https://books.google.com/books?id=y3KUDgAAQBAJ&pg=PA47&lpg=PA47&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed January 17, 2018): "The doctrine of absolute Predestination of course logically holds that some are foreordained to death as truly as others are foreordained to life." James Leo Garrett, Systematic Theology, 2nd ed. (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 2001), 2:483–85, demonstrates that Augustine, Calvin, and those following in their theological tradition would affirm that reprobation is a necessary implication of election.

[3]Ken Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 58, calls this "the deep, dark, 'dirty-little-secret' of Calvinism."

save them."[4] Critically engaging this particular doctrine of Calvinism is important because reprobation lies at the very core of Calvinist soteriology and because it suffers from acute exegetical, philosophical, and theological problems. If the dubious doctrine of reprobation falls, Calvinism will need a significant revision.

In calling reprobation into question, I will focus on the very particular task of *demonstrating that Romans 9 does not demand such a doctrine*. This may seem rather inconsequential at first glance, but it is actually quite significant because of the role Romans 9 plays in Calvinist constructions of the doctrine. Calvinists themselves acknowledge that reprobation is enormously problematic and that the problem is compounded by a lack of biblical support.[5] Grudem notes, " . . . the doctrine of reprobation is the most difficult of all the teachings of Scripture for us to think about and accept because it deals with such horrible and eternal consequences for human beings made in the image of God."[6] The repugnance of reprobation is why Calvinists like Grudem come up with philosophically incoherent fixes like "single predestination," God's "asymmetrical relationship" to election and reprobation, God's "two wills," "two loves," and so on.[7] Grudem concedes that it seems disingenuous to speak of God's sorrow over the reprobate if he decrees it. His answer is that "God can decree something that causes him sorrow yet ultimately will bring him glory."[8] But God's decreeing something sorrowful is not the problem with reprobation. It is God's decreeing something evil. Jerry Walls's observation at this point is apt:

> [T]heological compatibilists [like Grudem] often make claims and engage in rhetoric that naturally lead people to conclude that God loves them and desires their salvation in ways that are surely misleading to all but those trained in the subtleties of Reformed rhetoric. . . . Such language loses all meaning, not to mention all rhetorical force, when we remember that on compatibilist premises God could determine the impenitent to freely repent, but has chosen instead to determine things in such a way that they freely persist in their sins.[9]

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[4]For the sake of simplicity and ease of engagement, I will be interacting in the body of the paper exclusively with Grudem's view of reprobation. His systematic theology text has sold over a half-million copies and is a trusted staple of conservative evangelical seminary education. His construction of the doctrine conforms to the standard "infralapsarian" approach of the Reformed tradition. See also Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 316–17.

[5]Boettner, 47: [In his section on reprobation] "The chief difficulty with the doctrine of Election of course rises in regard to the unsaved; and the Scriptures have given us no extended explanation of their state."

[6]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 685.

[7]Roger Olson, *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 102–35, and Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty*, 138–63, demonstrate, in their respective chapters on unconditional election, the self-contradictory and, therefore, self-defeating nature of these assertions.

[8]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 686.

[9]Jerry Walls, "Why No Classical Theist, Let Alone Orthodox Christian, Should Ever Be A Compatibilist," *Philosophia Christi* 13 (2011): 98–99.

God's refusal to determine the repentance of sinners when it is within his power to do so can be called nothing other than immoral. Damning certain people by withholding something freely given to others is not glorious. It is indeed a horrible decree.[10]

Therefore, if there are no biblically explicit reasons to affirm reprobation, it should be gladly and quickly rejected. The burden is on Calvinist theologians to assemble significant and unassailable biblical support for reprobation because it runs against the grain of what the Bible clearly teaches about God's character and purposes,[11] and because it is philosophically impossible both to affirm reprobation and deny that God causes evil.[12] Calvinists must do more than point to biblical texts like Romans 9 that might suggest reprobation; they need unimpeachable proof of it. Therefore, it is not necessary to demonstrate that Romans 9 *cannot* affirm reprobation. All that is required is to demonstrate that Romans 9 can be understood legitimately another way.

Moreover, demonstrating that Romans 9 does not demand reprobation is significant because the main reason Calvinists give for affirming reprobation is that Scripture does demand it, that there is no other way to read such texts. Grudem says of reprobation, "It is something that we would not want to believe, and would not believe, unless Scripture taught it . . . . Moreover, if we are convinced that these verses [Rom 9:17–22, specifically] teach reprobation, then we are obligated both to believe it and accept it as fair and just of God, even though it causes us to tremble in horror as we think of it."[13] But what if one is not convinced on exegetical grounds that these verses teach reprobation? Romans 9 most certainly can be read faithfully and seriously in a completely different way—indeed, in a manner much more faithful to Paul's intentions and to the plain sense of the text and context. Strong cases can be made that other Calvinist proof-texts for reprobation can be

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[10]R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* in *The R. C. Sproul Collection*, vol. 1, available at https://books.google.com/books?id=n9QRDgAAQBAJ&pg=PT244&lpg=PT244&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed January 20, 2018). Sproul's honesty at this point would be refreshing if his conclusions weren't so disturbing: "The nasty problem for the Calvinist [is] . . . . If God can and does choose to insure the salvation of some, why then does he not insure the salvation of all? . . . The only answer I can give to this question is that I don't know. . . . One thing I do know. If it pleases God to save some and not all, there is nothing wrong with that." On the contrary, it is the very definition of *wrong*.

[11]The handful of texts that might suggest reprobation is set against those texts that clearly teach God's love for and desire to save all (John 3:16, 1 Tim 2:2–4, 2 Pet 3:9, 1 John 2:2, etc.).

[12]William Lane Craig, "Response to Paul Kjoss Helseth's 'God Causes All Things,'" in *Four Views on Divine Providence*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 58–62. Craig argues that, against the determinism on which reprobation is based, five objections can be raised: (1) "[It] cannot offer a coherent interpretation of Scripture," (2) "cannot be rationally affirmed," (3) "makes God the author of sin and denies human responsibility," (4) "nullifies human agency," and (5) "makes reality into a farce."

[13]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 685. *See also* Reid, "Reprobation," who states that, while Calvin, in his *Institutes*, regarded the doctrine as dreadful, he viewed it as the clear teaching of Scripture, citing mainly Romans 9 as his evidence from the New Testament.

understood differently as well. Grudem relies heavily on Romans 9 (and Romans 11), but mentions Jude 4 and 1 Peter 2:8 as well, both verses highlighting the fact that the unfaithful were destined for condemnation long ago.[14] However, there is every reason to understand these verses as simply pointing out the fact that God has always planned to condemn those who oppose the gospel. Again, if reprobation readings are not demanded by the texts, and reprobation is, frankly, a theological and philosophical cul-de-sac, then it should be abandoned.

So, to restate the purpose of this essay: *the problematic doctrine of reprobation is not a necessary theological implication of Romans 9.* If Romans 9 disappears as an iron-clad justification for reprobation, then the doctrine and Calvinism with it are in serious trouble.

Romans 9 and the Centrality of Jewish Unbelief

The essential exegetical warrant for the claim that Rom 9 does not support the doctrine of reprobation is this: Romans 9–11 is focused on *the salvation-historical role of unbelieving Jews in the present*, not *the ontological status of all unbelieving people for all time*. While Jewish rejection of the gospel certainly has implications for everyone else (i.e. Rom 9:22–26 and 11:17–25), Paul's fundamental argument in Romans 9–11 addresses the problem that Jewish unbelief is creating for the credibility of the gospel he is preaching and the manner in which he goes about preaching it. What Paul says of these unbelieving Jews cannot simply be transferred to all unbelievers. In fact, the point that Paul is driving home in Romans 9–11 is that God does *not* treat Jews the same way that he treats the rest of humanity. The things Paul says in Romans 9–11 concerning the *unchosen, hated, not recipients of mercy, hardened, vessels of wrath, not saved, like Sodom and Gomorrah, pursuing salvation by works, unbelieving, stumbling, zealous without knowledge, disobedient, obstinate, failing to obtain what they are seeking, in a stupor, blind, bent, trespassing, broken off, not spared, enemies of the gospel* are things he is saying about unbelieving Jews, not everybody else. If Calvinists want to try to infer that these adjectives apply eternally to all those individuals who will never believe in Jesus because God has foreordained it, that is certainly their prerogative, but it is not a demand of the text and such a theological assertion fits very poorly within the context of Romans and with the rest of the biblical witness.

This exegetical approach to Romans 9 begins with the conclusions of John Taylor, who writes:

> Christian scholarship has focused on Romans 9 as source material for the free will/determinism debate, going back at least as far as Origen's dispute with the Gnostics. With Augustine the ground of the debate moved, and after him a determinist reading of Romans 9 became dominant, continuing in Protestant churches through the writings of Luther and Calvin. Both this reading, with its emphasis on individual election as the thrust of the

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[14]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 685.

chapter, and the opposing reading, with its emphasis on free will and corporate election, stem largely from an atomistic and philosophical approach to the passage which has paid too little attention to the relevance of Rom 9–11 to the Roman believers to whom Paul writes, and to the flow of the argument in Romans. This is not to suggest that the concerns of the tradition are illegitimate, or that such questions should not be asked of the text. But it is necessary to question whether Romans 9 can bear the weight of the theology which has been thrust upon it, and to investigate what theological emphases would emerge from a more contextual and unified reading.

Based on an approach to Romans which sees the interpretation of the phenomenon of Jewish unbelief in Jesus by comparison to the growth of the church among the Gentiles as the *key factor behind the writing of the letter* (italics mine), an initial investigation leads to a number of conclusions.[15]

Taylor's conclusions are: (1) unbelieving Jews are the focus of Romans 9; (2) the fate of these Jews is salvation by faith, a fact that restores credibility to Paul's claim that his gospel is powerful enough to save both Gentiles and Jews; (3) God is free to save these Jews by faith, and, therefore, is not unjust to reject them if their hope remains in "works of the Law;" and (4) the Jewish hope for salvation is based completely on God's mercy. The significance of these conclusions for this discussion of reprobation is that Rom 9 is not dealing with philosophical issues related to the metaphysics of divine action and human freedom.[16] Rather, it is the first part of Paul's answer to the central problem driving the entire letter: the problem that Jewish unbelief is creating for the credibility of his gospel and his missiology.[17]

The centrality of the problem of Jewish unbelief in Paul's letter is *implicit* in his proposition in Rom 1:16–17: the gospel is the power to save Jews and Gentiles in fulfillment of God's covenant faithfulness, yet there is a potential for shame. The problem is *explicitly* set forth in Rom 3:5, *Is God unrighteous in inflicting wrath upon Jews rather than saving them?* The problem is fully addressed in the letter's climax, Romans 9–11: Jews are rejecting the gospel and are, therefore, rejected by God. If God's righteousness is revealed in the power of the gospel to save Jews and Gentiles, then what of his righteousness if Jews are rejected?[18] The whole promise of God in Messiah Jesus through his chosen people was to

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[15]John Taylor, "The Freedom of God and the Hope of Israel: Theological Exegesis of Romans 9," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 56 (Fall 2013): 25–41.

[16]Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, ed. Gordon Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 548: "Once we recognize the importance of this Jewish motif in Romans, we can give Rom. 9–11 its appropriate place in the letter. . . . Paul is not simply using Israel to illustrate a theological point, such as predestination or the righteousness of God. He is talking about Israel herself . . . ."

[17]Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 548: "Paul frames chaps. 9–11 with allusions to the key tension he is seeking to resolve: the Jews, recipients of so many privileges (9:4–5), are not experiencing the salvation offered in Christ (implied in 9:1–3)."

[18]Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9–11*, WUNT 63 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 51.

create a worldwide Jew and Gentile family, through whom he would rescue all of creation. On one hand, these promises are being fulfilled amazingly: Gentiles are coming to faith in droves. What is happening in the church in Rome is known all over the world (1:8). On the other hand, surprisingly, mysteriously, grievously, the Jews, by and large, are refusing to come. And this raises the question of God's righteousness. Has he been unable to keep his promises stretching all the way back to Abraham?[19]

Let's trace this concept quickly through the letter: The power of the gospel is on display in the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles (1:16–17). God has the right to judge and save both Jewish and Gentile sinners by his standards, and his standard is faith in the gospel (2:12–16). Gentiles who think their efforts will save them are in trouble (2:1–5). Gentiles who have something happen to their hearts will be viewed as righteous (2:14–16). Jews who think their efforts will save them are in trouble (2:17–24). Jews who have something happen to their hearts will be viewed as righteous (2:28–29). It is in the discussion of true Jewishness that Paul raises the issue of fairness, an issue he does not raise in the discussion of Gentiles. Is it fair for God to condemn Jews because of their failure to keep the Law God gave them. Is it fair of God to use their failure to point others to the way of faith (3:5–8)?[20] Paul's answer, at this point in the letter, to the question of God's righteousness with respect to Jewish unbelief is simply to affirm it because he is the judge of the world. Then he quickly returns to the central point of Romans 1–3: everyone is under the judgment of sin, therefore the promise to Abraham is unfulfilled. The Law has not solved the problem (3:9–20). So, apart from the Law, God has revealed his righteous commitment to keep his promise to Abraham: the salvation of a Jew and Gentile family through faith in Jesus (3:21–31). This is Abraham's faith and true members of Abraham's family share this faith (Rom 4). They are beloved children who now share in the whole story of Israel's redemption: rescued from Adam's death-dealing rebellion by the Second Adam (Rom 5), brought out from slavery to sin through the death of Christ (Rom 6), having the Law fulfilled in them through Christ (Rom 7), and brought fully through suffering to the end of the story by the Spirit (Rom 8).[21]

But the problem of God's righteousness in the face of Jewish unbelief left hanging in Rom 3:5–8 is made all the more acute by what has happened from 3:9 to the end of Romans 8. If God has accomplished his great work in Christ of adopting many sons through whom he will rescue all of creation, what has gone wrong with the Jews? They aren't coming. Isn't this an embarrassment? Isn't this a failure on God's part? Isn't this unjust treatment of his covenant people, which calls God's righteousness into question? Or is this simply evidence

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[19]Taylor, "The Freedom of God and the Hope of Israel," 36.

[20]The questions of 3:5–8 ("Does Jewish faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath on unfaithful Jews") are both answered with *mē genoito*! These questions are raised again in Rom 9:14 ("Is there any injustice in God?"), 11:1 ("Has God rejected his people?"), and 11:11 ("Have they stumbled in order to fall?"). The answer is the same: *mē genoito*!

[21]N. T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," available at http://ntwrightpage.com/2016/05/07/romans-and-the-theology-of-paul/ (accessed January 17, 2018): 5–20.

that God has given up on them in favor of the Gentiles? Should the church in Rome even bother with Jews anymore? Should Paul continue to go to the synagogue first as he takes his gospel west toward Spain? And so, in Romans 9–11, Paul takes up the task of explaining how Jewish rejection of the gospel is not a source of shame for him or a cause to question God's righteousness. The essence of Paul's defense of the gospel in the face of Jewish rejection is this:

> God actually purposed Jewish rejection all along. Just as God's rejection of the Jewish Messiah served to save the world, so his on-going rejection of Jews serves a salvific purpose as well.[22] The present function of Jewish rejection of the gospel is to show the world how God does not save, piling up and bearing a bit longer the wrath deserved by the whole world and driving the good news of how he does save out into the world (Rom 9). The source of Jewish rejection is what it has always been, confidence in their privileges instead of trust in the promises, and the solution to their rejection is what it has always been, faith in God's promised Messiah (Rom 10). And the story of unbelieving Jews is not over. Their fate is not consignment to perdition based on God's inscrutable choice; instead, it is glorious salvation as part of God's ultimate plan to have a Jew and Gentile family of faith, if they believe (Rom 11).

So, where did the Romans 9 reprobation readings of the last 1500 years come from? From this one fact: Paul's overwhelming concern about Jewish rejection of the gospel has not been shared by those interpreting the text in subsequent generations. The unbelief of Jews as a primary falsifier of the gospel has not been a feature of Christian soteriological reflection in many centuries. When the central concern of Romans has been lost by those reading it, is it any wonder that confusion ensues? Is it any wonder that Paul's interests have been replaced with those of Western metaphysics of divine action and human freedom? It turns out, however, that Romans 9–11 is not about the ontological function of reprobation in service of God's justice, but the salvation-historical function of present Jewish unbelief in service of a great Jew and Gentile redemption.

Paul's discourse on God's dealings with unbelieving Jews not only excludes reprobation readings in Romans 9 because he is not addressing God's soteriological disposition to all people, it also excludes reprobation because what is said of unbelieving Jews is temporary, not permanent.[23] Again, Grudem's definition of reprobation states that God settled his decision about unbelievers "before creation." Paul, however, is talking about a temporary state of affairs for currently unbelieving Jews. Within the long list of descriptors Paul uses to describe these temporarily unbelieving Jews, three in particular are most often cited in Calvinist constructions of reprobation: *hated*, *hardened*, and *vessels of wrath*. These states of affairs, however, are temporary, not permanent. In Romans 9–11, God does not "hate" all unbelievers forever, just unbelieving Jews who are like Esau and who, only if they remain like him, will not be counted as sons. In Rom 11:28, these same "hated" unbelieving Jews are also "beloved" for the sake of their forefathers, who have been promised a massive Jew

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[22]N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 1208.

[23]Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1236–37.

and Gentile family. God is not hardening all unbelievers, just unbelieving Jews. In 11:25, God's hardening of these unbelieving Jews is "partial," and he will not harden them forever, only until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. The vessels of wrath in 9:22 are not all unbelievers but unbelieving Jews in distinction to vessels of mercy who are both Jews and Gentiles. In 11:31, these disobedient Jews, because of mercy shown to the Gentiles, will also be shown mercy. If, in Rom 11:11–32, the unbelieving Jews of Romans 9 are stumbling so as *not* to fall; if their failure will become full inclusion; if their rejection will become acceptance; if the leftover lump will be made holy, if broken branches will be grafted back in, then Romans 9 cannot support a doctrine of reprobation.[24]

Finally, a reprobation reading of Romans 9 is ruled out by the fact that Paul clearly intends to demonstrate that the temporary resistance of Jews to the gospel has a redemptive function that brings salvation to all, including those very same unbelieving Jews. An ample intertextuality between Rom 5:6–21 and 11:11–32 makes the case for an analogical relationship in Paul's mind between the vicariousness of Messiah Jesus for the world and the vicariousness of unbelieving Jews for the world.[25] Rather than an expression of God's unconditioned choice of some individuals and not others, God's treatment of unbelieving Jews has a unique salvation-historical purpose. He is treating them in ways he is not treating everybody else because of their unique role within the promises to Abraham to save the world. Paul is telling the story of how the vocation of Israel (just like the vocation of the Messiah) has always included (and continues to include) rejection and suffering for the salvation of the world as well as acceptance and vindication. God is setting aside Gentile "disobedience" through Jewish "disobedience" thereby making a way for Gentile "obedience" (11:30–31) in a manner that is analogical to the way that Adam's "disobedience" was set aside by the "obedience" of Messiah Jesus (5:19).[26] Through the Messiah, God is graciously allowing his faithfulness to be reckoned to sinners while the condemnation of sinners falls on the Messiah. With unbelieving Jews, God's judgment against their unbelief is substituting for his rightly falling judgment against all, so that room is made for mercy toward the Gentiles. In Calvinist constructions of reprobation, there is no thought of a redemptive purpose in the casting away of the lost. As Grudem notes, reprobation is a display of God's "justice," not his mercy. But for Paul, mercy is the point of God's treatment of unbelieving Jews (11:30–31).

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[24]A. Chadwick Thornhill, *The Chosen People: Election, Paul and Second Temple Judaism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 248.

[25]"Much more" (5:9, 10, 15, 17; cf. 11:12, 24; no other occurrences in Romans); "transgressions" (4:25, 5:15, 16, 17, 18, 20; cf. 11:11, 12); "reconciliation" (5:11; cf. 11:15; no other occurrences in Romans); "enemies" (5:10; cf. 11:28; one other occurrence); "being saved" (5:9, 10; cf. 11:14, 26; only one other occurrence outside chs. 9–11); "life from the dead" (5:10, 21; 11:15); abundance/fullness (5:20 cf. 11:12).

[26]N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans* in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 10 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002), 681.

The redemptive aspect of Jewish unbelief is further substantiated by Paul's employment of the "jealousy motif" in Rom 10:19 and 11:11 and v.14. In 10:19, Paul quotes from the Song of Moses (Deut 32), a passage that deals with the salvation-historical necessity of judgment and salvation. In Rom 10:19, Israel's "jealousy" is negative, but the eventual redemption promised by Moses allows Paul to shift the motif in a positive direction in Romans 11. Paul explains in v.11 that Jewish rejection has resulted in the salvation of the Gentiles, which, in turn, will provoke his fellow Jews to jealousy, resulting in the salvation of some of them in fulfillment of Moses's prediction. Here, Paul can positively juxtapose "provoke to jealousy" and "save."

> As in the Song of Moses, Paul believes that when Israel sees that God's favor has passed them over and been given to the Gentiles, they will be provoked to jealousy, in the sense of seeking to emulate. They will then be saved, in the same way as the Gentiles, by turning to the Lord.[27]

In the Calvinist doctrine of reprobation, there is no possibility for jealousy over the salvation of others to be a gateway to redemption. If Paul's focus is on Jews (not everyone), the current time period (not all eternity), and ultimate redemption (not settled rejection), then Rom 9 does not support the doctrine of reprobation.

Specific Exegetical Examples of the Failure of Romans 9 to Support Reprobation

Three verses in particular figure heavily into Calvinist constructions of reprobation: Romans 9:13, 18, and 22. Paul's meaning becomes quite clear in each when the overall context is kept in mind, and it is clear that a doctrine of reprobation is far from a necessary conclusion.

Romans 9:13, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated

Here, Paul is not making a general point about how God deals with everybody, that all people can be put into two groups, those he has rejected from eternity and those He has accepted. Paul is making a specific point about how God has always dealt with and continues to deal with unbelieving Jews. Paul's conclusion of the whole argument about unbelieving Jews is that God will ultimately save them by faith. So, whatever "Esau I hated means," it cannot mean God reprobates certain people because Paul's point is *not* that God has *reprobated* unbelieving Jews. Like the unbelieving Jews, Esau has the right ethnicity and he has not "done anything good or evil," but he is rejected as a son because ethnicity and effort have never been the basis of salvation.[28] God purposes this as a demonstration of how he *does not* save. Paul is not citing the verse "Esau I hated" as proof that God sets his hatred on some individuals for no other reason than his own glory. Paul cites the verse as

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[27]Sigurd Grindheim, *The Crux of Election: Paul's Critique of the Jewish Confidence in the Election of Israel*, WUNT 202 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 163.

[28]Thornhill, *The Chosen People*, 237.

a demonstration that God was never obligated to have beloved sons on the basis ethnicity or effort but by believing his promises. He decided long before Jacob and Esau were born to welcome children on the basis of a call that demands a response. Unbelieving Jews find themselves in precisely the same position as Esau (genetically related to Abraham, not "having done bad") because they reject God's call in the gospel, believing that law-keeping will justify them.

<div align="center">Romans 9:18, So, he has mercy on whomever he wills
and he hardens whomever he wills</div>

Again, Paul is not making a general point about how God deals with everyone. He is making a specific point about how God deals with unbelieving Jews. Just as God hardened Pharaoh so that Israel would be saved and his name would be proclaimed everywhere, God is hardening ethnicity-trusting, Torah-trusting Jews in this moment to make the glory of his Messiah-trusting salvation among Jews and Gentiles evident to the whole world. God has mercy on Gentiles even though they do not have the right genetics or the Torah, and God hardens Jews who do. Paul will make the point in Rom 11:25 that this hardening of unbelieving Jews will last only until all the "fullness" of the Gentiles is achieved, then these unbelieving Jews will be saved, if they believe.[29] So, reprobation is ruled out of Rom 9:18 because the hardening Paul speaks of is specific to the Jews, not all unbelievers, it is temporary, not permanent, and it is for the maximizing of salvation for all, not the display of God's justice.

<div align="center">Romans 9:22, Vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction</div>

Once again, Paul is not making a general, philosophical, timeless point about how God deals with everyone. He is making a specific, salvation-historical, time-sensitive point about how God is dealing with unbelieving Jews. Paul draws the imagery of vessels from Jer 18:1–12. Jeremiah goes down to the potter's house where he observes a potter crumpling an unwilling clay pot he has not yet fired and starting over. God's point to Jeremiah is that he has the right to change what he will make of a nation based on its response to him. Paul's point is that God has the right to change the destiny of Jews if they refuse to believe the gospel. Even though they have been shaped for blessing as God's people, because they reject his gospel, they are now being shaped for wrath. This may not look fair from a human point of view. These Jews have the right pedigree, and they have the Torah, so it might be assumed they should be saved. But God has the right to make his plan for salvation the way he wants, and he wants to save through faith in the Messiah. Because salvation through faith in Messiah Jesus is "God's purpose in election," Gentiles, vessels formerly shaped for wrath are now being surprisingly re-shaped into vessels of mercy, while Jews, vessels shaped historically for mercy are now being shaped for wrath. In God's plan, Jewish

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[29]Grindheim, *The Crux of Election*, 162.

rejection of the gospel makes clear to the world that God is powerful enough to save the way he chooses and that he will not give special treatment even to his own ethnic people if they do not trust in Messiah Jesus. This makes even more clear and glorious his salvation of Jews and Gentiles by grace. Yet, the illustration in Jeremiah rests on the fact that the pots have not yet been fired in the oven. If the unbelieving Jews will repent, the Potter has the right to remake them for mercy rather than destruction. This is exactly Paul's conclusion in Rom 11:30–31: "For just as you [Gentiles] once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their [Jews'] disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy." It cannot be the case that the unbelieving Jewish "vessels of wrath" of 9:22 refer to a class of individuals permanently reprobated if this same group, disobedient in the present, have a destiny in which they will be shown mercy.

Romans 9 and Calvinist Exegesis

What does this approach to Romans 9 mean for Calvinist theological exegesis related to reprobation? Let's look again at Grudem. He cites Rom 9:17–22 (the "hardening" and "vessels of wrath" verses) as evidence of God's decision to save only some, giving no explanation, as though reprobation is so plain that no further analysis is needed. Grudem himself, however, acknowledges in the same section on reprobation that Rom 9:1–4 speaks of Paul's "great sorrow when he thought about unbelieving Jews who had rejected Christ."[30] Context demands that the problem of Jewish unbelief must still be in Paul's mind thirteen verses later. Like Pharaoh, unbelieving Jews are being hardened so that God's name might be made great in all the earth, namely, through the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. Is hardness the final word on these unbelieving Jews? Hardly. Rom 11:25 speaks of the partial hardening of Jews until the Gentiles have come in, at which time salvation will come to all. Grudem goes on to quote Rom 11:7 "the elect obtained it but the rest were hardened" in support of the Calvinist idea that "God failed to choose all for salvation."[31] But what does Paul go on to say about the "hardness" of the "rest"? Again, just a few verses later, Paul speaks of a partial hardening removed once the Gentiles come in.

Indeed, in quoting Rom 11:7, Grudem hints at what I imagine is the main Calvinist exegetical objection to my reading of Romans 9–11: that Paul is speaking of elect and reprobate Jews—elect Jews obtained salvation but non-elect Jews are rejected forever. Paul's resolution, however, in Romans 9–11 to the problem of Jewish unbelief is not merely that God is preserving a remnant of Jews who believe. That is certainly part of Paul's answer, given in Rom 11:1–6. God has indeed kept a remnant of believing Jews, Paul's own faith serving as an example.[32] But what about the rest of the Jews, the "non-remnant?" In

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[30]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 686.

[31]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 685.

[32]It is worth noting here that pre-conversion Paul serves as a perfect example of the soteriological

11:7, Paul does say that these unbelieving Jews are presently hardened. However, in v. 11, Paul asks (and this is critical) concerning these hardened, unbelieving, non-remnant Jews who have been the focus of the entire passage, "Did they stumble in order that they might fall?" The clear import of the question is, "Are these presently unbelieving, non-remnant, stumbling-over-the-gospel Jews destined to fall permanently?" Paul answers his own question in the strongest terms: "*mē genoito!* Absolutely not!"[33] God is using their missteps to bring Gentiles to faith in order to make these unbelieving Jews jealous in order to include them in the "fullness" of Israel. In v. 14, Paul says his ministry is about saving some of these jealous, stumbling but not falling, unbelieving Jews. If "the rest" are permanently hardened, why is Paul bothering to preach to them? That is exactly the thinking that Paul is arguing against here.[34] In v. 15, still referring to this single category of presently unbelieving, non-remnant Jews, Paul speaks of both their rejection and their acceptance. In v. 16, not only is the remnant of Jews "holy," so is the rest of the lump of unbelieving Jews. The "remnant" root is holy and so are the branches.

In vv. 17–24, Paul observes that indeed these branches, these unbelieving, non-remnant Jews, *the rest*, have been broken off. Why are they broken off? Verse 20 tells us: "they are broken off because of unbelief." Is this being broken off permanent? Verse 23: "Even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again." Paul draws his argument to a conclusion in vv. 25–31. The hardening of these unbelieving Jews is partial. The hardening will be removed, and all Israel, *the rest*, will be saved. They are not reprobate but "beloved" (v. 28). No longer vessels of wrath, they are objects of mercy (vv. 31–31).[35]

Paul's point in Romans 9–11 is not that there are elect and reprobate Jews. These categories must be read into the text. Paul's long point beginning in Romans 9 is that presently unbelieving Jews, like Ishmael, are not saved by ethnicity; like Esau, not saved by works; like Pharaoh, hardened for world-wide proclamation; like exilic Israel, reshaped for wrath, no longer "My people" because of their faithlessness and, thereby, putting the glory of the grace extended to believing Jews and Gentiles on display. In Rom 10:1, Paul still desires the salvation of these unbelieving Jews who are pursuing righteousness by works. Salvation is by faith, and this good news must still be preached to them. In Rom 11:1, Paul asks, "Has God rejected his people?" Again, *mē genoito!* is the answer. He is preserving a remnant of Jews by grace through faith. He is hardening the rest presently so that the Gentiles can come in, making the rest of the Jews jealous, so that at the right time God can bring them to salvation—if they believe.

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function of the "hardened," unbelieving Jew. The Saul we meet in Acts 7:58 is an "enemy of the gospel," opposing it with all his might. Yet, he only serves to drive it out of Jerusalem and toward the Gentiles. This is the consistent plot of Jewish rejection in Acts.

[33]Thornhill, *The Chosen People*, 248.

[34]Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1236.

[35]Glen Shellrude, "The Freedom of God in Mercy and Judgment: A Libertarian Reading of Romans 9:6–29," *Evangelical Quarterly* 81 (2009): 315.

How then can Grudem find reprobation in Rom 9:17–22 and in 11:7 when the subjects of those verses remain the objects of God's saving intentions? As Taylor warns above, Grudem's exegesis suffers from an inappropriately atomistic and deterministic reading that causes him to make one mistake after another. In an attempt to make the case that God is not being disingenuous for feeling sorrowful over the condemnation of people he refuses to save, Grudem points to Paul's sorrow over unbelieving Jews, as though Rom 9:1–4 is focused on Jews who will *never* believe.[36] But Romans 9–11 tells the story of the present, not permanent, unbelief of Jews. Of this same group, Paul says in 10:1, "My heart's desire and my prayer for them is for their salvation." Paul's grief in 9:1–4 is not that they *cannot* believe but that they have not *yet* believed and stand, therefore, under God's coming wrath. Only by completely ignoring the context can Grudem understand Paul as desiring and praying for the salvation of people he believes God does not desire to save.

In conclusion, it ought to be clear that the key texts from Romans 9 used to support the Calvinist doctrine of reprobation can be understood actually to be making the opposite theological case: God has not given up on a certain category of people. Since these texts do not demand the exegetically, theologically, and philosophically incoherent idea of reprobation, what verses are left to support this problematic doctrine? If we simply let Paul say what he wants to say in Romans 9–11, we have an incredible doctrinal truth: Even when, by our standards, it looks as though certain people will never come to faith, God never gives up on his plan through his people to pursue them. That is a sovereign God worthy of worship.

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[36]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 686.

Southern Baptist Openness to and Departure from Ecumenism

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Openness to Ecumenism: 1899–1919

For many, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is synonymous with anti-ecumenical. There was a time, however, when the SBC was not only open to ecumenical cooperation but was actively involved in the establishment of cooperation. The early-twentieth century was quite promising for Southern Baptists. The SBC had finally recovered from Reconstruction and several new institutions were established including the Woman's Missionary Union, the Sunday School Board, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS).[1] Like the rest of the country, Southern Baptists were optimistic about the future. America seemed to be moving forward and the industrial revolution was fueling a belief in the idea of progress and human perfectibility.[2] A postmillennial eschatology and Kingdom theology were influencing many of the new Southern Baptist ministers and leaders, which in turn helped to create a period of self-confident expansion. It may come as no surprise then, that given the spirit of optimism, Southern Baptists began to explore relations with other Christians.

The initiative for Christian cooperation came from the foreign mission field where many Southern Baptist missionaries labored alongside Protestants from other denominational affiliations. Often in a hostile environment, these missionaries found common ground with their Protestant kinsman. When confronted with the priestly office and sacramentalism of Roman Catholicism as well as deified humanism and the animism of primitive cultures, many Southern Baptist missionaries discovered that the gulf that separated them from their Presbyterian and Methodist friends was not so wide and deep after all.[3]

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[1]The Woman's Missionary Union was established in 1888, the Sunday School Board in 1891, and SWBTS in 1907. See Timothy George, "Southern Baptist Relations with Other Protestants," *Baptist History and Heritage* 25.3 (July 1990): 25.

[2]Ibid.

[3]See the quote from W. A. Bagby in H. A. Tupper, *A Decade of Foreign Missions* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1891), 48.

London Missionary Conference and Openness to Unity

In 1888, the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) of the SBC sent representatives to the London Missionary Conference. The conference was an interdenominational gathering of Protestant mission leaders from Europe and North America. For those Protestants gathered at the meeting, it was not organizations or formal written agreements that would bring divided Christianity together, but rather a love for evangelism.[4] With a firm commitment to the simple truths of the Bible, it was believed there was enough of a basis to cooperate abroad on foreign missions and that this might ultimately lead to cooperation at home.[5] Although many Baptists applauded the conference, there was some reservation with respect to two issues: interdenominational comity agreements and communion. Southern Baptists took exception to the non-intrusion rule that would limit the various mission agencies from establishing new work where evangelical work had already begun. The celebration by the conference of communion was also offensive to some who viewed the Supper as a local church ordinance only.[6] Nevertheless, the pervasive spirit of optimism and cooperation that existed in much of the latter part of the nineteenth-century American Protestant culture lived in the SBC as well.

As a result of the London Missionary Conference, T. T. Eaton introduced a resolution at the annual meeting of Southern Baptists in 1890. The resolution called for an interdenominational summit of representative scholars committed to the authority of Scripture who would discuss the true teaching of the Bible as it relates to points of disagreements, in the hope that some level of unity might be achieved.[7] Even though scholars could not agree on all points, he argued, they might be able to clear the field of useless rubbish and establish some points of agreement.[8] Eaton's proposal was based upon his firm conviction that the only path to Christian unity was on the basis of Scripture. While each denomination claims to base its particular doctrines on Scripture, Eaton theorized that differences first arise from the depths of men's consciousness and the influences around them; they run to the Scriptures to hunt texts to support their positions.[9]

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[4]James Johnson, ed., *Report of the Centenary Conference: The Protestant Missions of the World* (London: Nisbet, 1888), 101.

[5]Ibid.

[6]George, "Southern Baptist Relationships," 25.

[7]What makes this resolution astonishing is the fact that Eaton was sympathetic to Landmarkism. Eaton, through his position at the *Western Recorder*, along with John T. Christian led the assault on William Whitsitt, the embattled professor at Southern Seminary who questioned Baptist succession. See William W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845–1953* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1954), 136–38.

[8]T. T. Eaton, "Editorial," *Kentucky Western Recorder*, 26 December 1889, p. 4.

[9]T. T. Eaton, "Editorial," *Kentucky Western Recorder*, 4 December 1890, p. 4.

At the annual meeting in 1890, the SBC adopted a resolution presented by Eaton suggesting that a meeting between representative scholars be held, and the results would be published in all denominational papers.[10] Thus, eleven years prior to the proposal by Bishop Charles Brent that would become known as the Edinburgh Conference, Eaton had made the same proposal for a conference on Faith and Order. The proposal was accepted by the SBC and letters were sent as a result. Only the Disciples of Christ formally responded. The Disciples of Christ discussed the proposal at its annual meeting in 1890, but the SBC received no official response until 1894. At the 1894 convention, a committee of five appointees discussed and responded to the letter.[11] That same year, W. E. Hatcher from Richmond, Virginia, delivered in person a response from the SBC to the Disciples of Christ annual meeting. He quickly moved to what the committee considered the most significant part of the Disciples letter, namely that any effort toward unity must not come at the surrender of principles.

The ecumenical endeavors of T. T. Eaton came to an end with the conclusion of the 1895 SBC meeting. However, Eaton's model for cooperation and dialog can be seen in the first Faith and Order Conference that would become the genesis of the modern ecumenical movement. W. E. Hatcher delivered a sermon three weeks later in which he expressed his belief that the organic, harmonious union of all Christians would be the most sublime and glorious event that could occur on earth next to the advent of Christ.[12]

At the 1900 annual meeting, a committee was appointed to consider a paper submitted on the subject of Christian union by I. T. Tichenor, who served as Secretary of the Home Mission Board for many years.[13] Unfortunately, no copy of Tichenor's letter remains, but the importance of the letter can be seen in the convention's actions. Only the response of the convention is recorded.[14] A representative from each southern state was appointed to a committee for the purpose of reviewing the letter and making recommendations. Such a practice was only followed when a significant matter was brought before the convention. Whether the content of the letter or the longstanding position of Tichenor within the convention initiated the response cannot be ascertained. Whatever the reason, the convention felt the issue to be important to the life of the SBC. There are no further references in subsequent convention proceedings to the paper, to the committee appointed to review the paper, or to any correspondence connected to the paper.[15] Prior to the meeting

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[10]*Annual,* SBC, 1890, p. 22.

[11]*Annual*, SBC, 1894, p. 51.

[12]Eldridge B. Hatcher, *William E. Hatcher: A Biography* (Richmond, VA: Hill, 1915), 370.

[13]For the importance of Tichenor in SBC life, see William R. Estep, *Whole Gospel, Whole World: The Foreign Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention 1845–1995* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 136–37.

[14]*Annual,* SBC, 1900, p. 50.

[15]Raymond O. Ryland, "A Study in Ecumenical Isolation: The Southern Baptist Convention" (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 1969), 58.

in 1900, Tichenor retired due to failing health and died two years later. It is not known whether his failing health and therefore lack of participation in the Committee on Christian Union is the reason for the absence of any further discussion.

Foreign Missions and a Spirit of Camaraderie

From the beginning of Southern Baptist foreign mission work a spirit of camaraderie with other evangelical Christians prevailed.[16] In 1893, the Foreign Mission Conference of North America was formed to coordinate the foreign missionary efforts of participating denominations. The Foreign Mission Board (FMB) decided it should keep in touch with the work of other denominations.[17] So from 1893 through 1919, the secretaries of the FMB represented the SBC at annual meetings of the Foreign Missions Council. Such collaboration may have been the impetus behind the SBC's favorable response to the Episcopal churches call for an international conference on Faith and Order in 1911.[18] A committee appointed at the 1911 convention reported on its efforts to promote a growing union among all Christians at the 1912 annual meeting.[19]

In 1911, the FMB reported plans to establish a Union Medical College in Nanking, China, with one professor and a small amount of operating expense from each cooperating denomination. In Brazil, an interdenominational seminary was already flourishing for the purposes of expediting world evangelism. While known as a Baptist College, the college received support from various Protestant as well as Catholic organizations.[20] The committee formed in 1911 with reference to the Faith and Order Conference was expanded into a commission charged with keeping the SBC informed on all matters related to the proposed World Conference on Faith and Order. On this commission were two of the most prominent Southern Baptists of their time, E. Y. Mullins and J. B. Gambrell.[21] The report of this commission to the SBC was the monumental document in 1914 entitled, "Pronouncement on Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency."[22] The document is divided into two parts: Christian union *and* denominational efficiency, and begins by acknowledging the evils of division and that Southern Baptists do indeed desire the unity of all believers and are firmly behind every cause and movement which seeks to promote this unity without impairing one's sense of loyalty to Christ. Unity cannot come at the expense of truth and conscience.[23] In light of the continued calls for unity, the commission felt it

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[16]Estep, *Whole Gospel, Whole World*, 258.

[17]Ryland, 62.

[18]George, "Southern Baptist Relationships," 26.

[19]*Annual*, SBC, 1912, p. 14.

[20]*Annual*, SBC, 1911, p. 29.

[21]Both Mullins and Gambrel had become traveling statesman for Baptist ideals. William Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004), 47.

[22]*Annual*, SBC, 1914, pp. 73–77.

[23]Ibid.

necessary to further assert and explain certain distinctives with regard to regeneration, ordinances, and separation of church and state, which Baptists believe to be established in the pages of Scripture and non-negotiable. Any unity based upon compromise of firmly held principles is to be rejected. Even if complete and organic unity could not be achieved, then all Christians should cooperate in moral, social, civic, and other movements in order to promote common Christian convictions.[24]

E. Y. Mullins and Cautious Ecumenism

In this first section, the fingerprints of E. Y. Mullins can be detected. From 1900 until his death in 1928, the influence of Mullins can be seen in every sphere of Southern Baptist life.[25] He often acted as a liaison between Northern and Southern Baptists and was asked by the organizers of the Federal Council of Churches to help bring the SBC into the organization. With the calls for Christian union coming from several areas, he used the opportunity to deliver for the first time six axioms, which he believed reflected basic Christian beliefs expounded in the New Testament, and submitted them as a new Baptist apologetic.[26] The writing of these axioms is a reaction to the heightened interest in the union movement. It intended to provide theological clarity pertaining to Baptist identity and serve as both a guide toward cooperation and a guard against unacceptable union.

While glorifying the Baptist denomination, Mullins did not disenfranchise others from the Christian fold.[27] He continued to participate in interdenominational meetings throughout his life. Never neglecting his responsibilities to Southern Seminary and the SBC, he believed some union dialogue was necessary for the ongoing work of all Christians.[28] Although his early cooperative efforts were focused on academic and evangelistic endeavors, in 1905 he pursued a moderate course in cooperation with the political reform element in Louisville in the midst of a contested mayoral election.[29]

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[24]Ibid.

[25]Jerry M Stubblefield, "The Ecumenical Impact of E. Y. Mullins," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 17.2 (Spring 1980): 98.

[26]Herschel H. Hobbs and E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of the Christian Religion*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1978), 38–39.

[27]William E. Ellis, *A Man of Books and A Man of the People: E. Y. Mullins and the Crisis of Moderate Southern Baptist Leadership* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 79.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Joining representatives from the Disciples of Christ, Methodists, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Catholic churches, Mullins called for moral reform in both the city and the State. Ibid., 132.

J. B. Gambrell and the move toward Denominationalism

While Mullins, E. C. Dargan, and others who represented Southern Seminary were more irenic toward other evangelical Christians, there existed another highly influential element which represented a non-cooperative position. J. B. Gambrell, B. H. Carroll, and J. M. Frost were more sympathetic to Landmark ecclesiology and were afraid cooperative endeavors would hamper the Baptist protest against Paedobaptist errors.[30] The section on denominational efficiency is far more sectarian in nature and clearly reveals a strong focus on the building up and strengthening of denominational resources.[31] Likewise, one can detect a firm belief that the best possible method of missions and evangelism is not through a homogenized organic union, but rather through strong denominational programs supported by local, autonomous churches. No doubt, Frost and others who had worked so hard at establishing efficient denominational agencies felt the need to preserve the integrity of those agencies against an encroaching ecumenism that was focused on diminishing the expansion of those agencies in the name of unity. While the first section of the report seemed to adopt a positive attitude toward some forms of cooperation, the second section clearly did not. Yet, this document accurately reflects the dynamic viewpoint of the Southern Baptist Convention both in the past and in the present.

World Conference on Faith and Order

In 1915, the convention again said yes to the ecumenical movement when the planning of a Faith and Order Conference was given permanent structural form.[32] At the 1915 convention, E. C. Dargan, the chairman of the Commission on the World Conference for Faith and Order read the report of the commission. He urged the convention not to withdraw from connection with the movement but to enact a standing committee consisting of the president and three secretaries and those who succeed them in office.[33] The report also affirmed interest in the union movement and its desire to bring about a larger, more intelligent, and practical unity among the followers of Christ. The convention also acknowledged its sympathy with all sincere efforts to bring together and unite, under the Spirit, all Christians.

By 1916, however, the SBC gave the first signs of alarm. While the proposed conference on Faith and Order was being delayed by the war in Europe, the report of the commission for Faith and Order reminded the convention that the willingness for such a movement

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[30]George, "Southern Baptist Relationships," 27. Gambrell, Carroll, and Frost are identified with Landmark sympathies by Albert H. Newman, *A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1915), 519–22.

[31]*Annual*, SBC, 1914, p. 77.

[32]Ryland, "A Study in Ecumenical Isolation," 73.

[33]*Annual*, SBC, 1915, p. 17.

among the divergent churches might not exist.[34] Baptists and other communions of congregational polity were not yet convinced the hierarchically structured traditions were willing to enter into serious discussions of faith and order. Apart from Episcopalians, no other denominations had given signs of a willingness to enter into discussions. American Baptists, likewise, were displaying signs of concern and were not yet ready to yield to sacramental theories upon which most non-congregational denominations were built.[35] While cooperative and conciliar levels of ecumenism were met with favor by American Baptists, organic union did not have the same support.[36]

In the same year, the SBC heard a report from the FMB on the attitude of the board toward union. In that report, organic union was categorically rejected in the missionary endeavor. In the interest of denominational integrity with respect to mission work, the SBC was urged to forego any interest in organic union. "The Pronouncement on Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency" would become the source of reference for the FMB which felt compelled to make a statement regarding the union movement.[37] Since the Edinburgh Conference in 1910, ecumenical enthusiasm and pressure had mounted throughout the world and denominationalism was becoming much maligned. J. F. Love, the new secretary of the FMB, felt the urgency of the issue and released a policy statement on Christian union in 1916.[38] Southern Baptists, he declared, could not be indifferent to the sentiment which is favorable to Christian union, but neither could they be hostile to it.[39] No serious reader of the New Testament can deny the natural impulse and desire for unity, but a unity that puts Christian truth in jeopardy seriously undermines the authority of the very Scriptures from which the concept of unity is drawn.

In the policy statement, Love proposed four guidelines that would direct the FMB: accept no comity agreements, do not subscribe to any exchange of church letters, do not engage in any activity with respect to cooperation that is not fully reported to the Convention, and foster a policy abroad that is consistent with the denominational policy at home. Just as important was the statement by the FMB urging Southern Baptists to acknowledge the bonds of brotherhood which unite all Christians of every name and to work to secure the closest possible impact of Christianity on the social order.[40] In summary, the position of the board was to preserve the integrity of the denomination and only cooperate as long as such cooperation does not involve a surrender of principles with respect to truth.

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[34]*Annual*, SBC, 1916, p. 42.

[35]Ibid.

[36]W. Hubert Porter, "Ecumenical Concerns Among American Baptists," in *Baptists and Ecumenists*, ed. William J. Boney and Glenn A. Igleheart (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1980), 32.

[37]Estep, *Whole Gospel, Whole World,* 192.

[38]Ibid.

[39]J. F. Love, *The Union Movement* (Nashville, TN: Sunday School Board Southern Baptist Convention, 1918), 29.

[40]*Annual*, SBC, 1916, p. 122.

By 1919, the mood of the SBC had begun to change drastically. Prior to 1919, the disposition of the SBC toward union was driven in large part by the thought and passion of E. Y. Mullins and others from Southern Seminary. Mullins and others took the position that some union dialog was necessary, but true Christian unity can only come through obedience to the will of Christ as revealed in the New Testament.[41] However, the war in Europe and the particular direction of the union movement would cause Southern Baptists to reassess their position.

Departure from Ecumenism: 1919–Present

In January of 1919, J. B. Gambrell, the current president of the SBC, wrote an article in the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, in which he asserted that Baptists do not necessarily repel overtures toward union and, in fact, eagerly approach opportunities to share their distinctive beliefs with other denominations.[42] They are compelled, however, to condition the union they favor.[43] Gambrell indeed acknowledged the scriptural desire for unity that is evidenced in both the prayers of Jesus and Paul, but he also recognized that mere union, that is the gathering together of incoherent elements, would only serve to promote further discord and would not be spiritually wise.[44] In a similar fashion as Mullins, Gambrell believed true union must be predicated upon the truth of God. Such truths are found in Scripture alone and expounded in Baptist fundamentals. In a more assertive way than Mullins, Gambrell expressed the Baptist distinctives as a true expression of apostolic teaching upon which the New Testament church is built. Mullins, while expounding upon his axioms, did indeed believe them to be a true expression of what all Christians do believe and should accept as true, but he never asserted it in such blunt terms.

These distinctives concerned Gambrell. What would the union movement do with them if they were to be successful? The result, he believed, would be the formation of a body without form or belief, followed by a territorial rather than doctrinal focus upon the mission field. Methodists, upon entering the Baptist field, would become Baptists, not via baptism by immersion but by their sprinkling and a letter from a Methodist church, and likewise among the Presbyterians and the Lutherans.[45] This, he feared, would be followed by union schools, union literature, and union evangelism, all of which would result in the continuing breakdown of doctrinal differences.[46] Instead of being a positive force for drawing the world to Christianity, organic union would actually serve to turn the world

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[41]Stubblefield, *Ecumenical Impact of E. Y. Mullins*, 101.

[42]J. B. Gambrell, "The Union Movement and Baptist Fundamentals," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 3.1 (January 1919): 39.

[43]Ibid., 38.

[44]Ibid., 39.

[45]Gambrell, "The Union Movement," 41.

[46]Ibid., 42.

over to Romanism as humans tend to be attracted to something that is definite and sure rather than vague and weak.[47]

Concerns about Organic Union and Denominational Freedom

In that same year, Gambrell delivered the presidential address at the annual meeting of the SBC in which he unleashed an assault upon the policies of the War Department during America's involvement in the First World War.[48] During the war, the policy of the War department was to approve Protestant chaplains on a non-denominational basis under the support of the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.).[49] Chaplains would be categorized as Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. The Secretary of War described the intent of the policy as a desire to break down rather than to emphasize denominational distinctions.[50] It was also reported that ministers were told not to tell soldiers that they were lost without Christ and there must be a strict liturgical form of worship in the camps.[51]

In light of this breach of religious freedom, Gambrell emphasized that Baptists should not discount the good done by the brethren of other denominations but faced with the present situation, Baptists are bound to preach the truth covering the whole field of divine revelation.[52] John Mott and the other leaders of the ecumenical movement were viewed as conspirators behind the government policy of excluding denominational chaplains.[53] Many in the SBC had been suspicious for some time that the ecumenical leaders were attempting to abolish all denominational boundaries and now they believed they had proof of this at home as well as abroad. At the annual convention in 1919, the SBC reiterated its opposition to the policies of the War Department. It also adopted a declaration of Christian union asserting its denominational identity and the desire for spiritual rather than organic union.[54] The Y.M.C.A. event revealed two long-standing fears many Southern Baptists held; fear of centralized control that would ultimately undermine denominational autonomy

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[47]Ibid.

[48]For the sermon in its entirety see J. B. Gambrell, "Baptists and Religious Liberty—We Shall Lead," in *The Sacred Desk: Sermons of the Southern Baptist Convention Presidents*, ed. Ergun Caner and Emir Caner (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2004), 83–88.

[49]Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845–1953*, pp. 280–81.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Joseph E. Early Jr., *A Texas Baptist History Sourcebook* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2004), 221.

[52]Gambrell, *Baptists and Religious Liberty*, 87.

[53]John Raleigh Mott was an American Methodist Layperson who received the Nobel Peace prize in 1946 for his work in promoting and strengthening international Protestant student organizations that worked to promote peace. He was intimately involved in the formation of the World Council of Churches. He presided over the 1910 World Missionary Conference.

[54]*Annual,* SBC, 1919, p. 111–13.

and freedom.[55] J. W. Porter stated, "The true aim of the movement was to coerce the country into a single church."[56] Others feared the overthrow of the Baptist denomination was the true objective.[57] The second underlying fear was more regional. Southerners were still reeling from the effects of Reconstruction and did not trust the North. It did not help matters that many of the pro-ecumenical groups were from the North. Mullins and others from Southern Seminary were also suspect due in part to their close ties with Northern academic institutions and men such as A. H. Strong. Gambrell, on the other hand, reflected the attitude of suspicion that many in the deep South still harbored due to the Northern economic control of the South. Gambrell went so far as to predict a rupture between Northern and Southern Baptists as a result of the North's continued support of the church union movement and its alliances with those seeking to break down Southern Baptist policies.[58] Southern Baptists were convinced they could carry on their own work through their own agencies cheaper and better than any interdenominational agency. The fear of losing control as well as the identification of many ecumenical leaders with the liberal side of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy served to redirect Southern Baptist attitudes toward union.[59] The decision to retreat, while based upon a majority, was not unanimous.[60]

Mullins seemed to support the new direction. Serving as president of the SBC from 1921–23, Mullins declared in his presidential address of 1922 that Southern Baptists have been called to a duty to the Protestant world to define, maintain, and promote the New Testament religion in its fullness.[61] This alone is the hope for humanity. While the world was busy trying to eradicate the causes of the First World War and prevent further wars, Mullins was calling Baptists to their evangelistic roots as the only true hope for the world. The result of what he called a "Baptist movement" will be the eradication of sacramental, hierarchical state churches.[62] Reflecting upon Mullin's sermon, one could rightly conclude that Mullins believed the state churches of Europe to be partly responsible for the initiation and propagation of the First World War. If state churches were the problem, then the only

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[55]George D. Kelsey, *Social Ethics among Southern Baptists: 1917–1969* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1973), 23.

[56]J. W. Porter, "The Interchurch Movement," *Western Recorder,* 1 January, 1920, sec. Editorial, p. 8.

[57]Kelsey, *Social Ethics among Southern Baptist*, 25.

[58]J. B. Gambrell, "Can Northern and Southern Baptists Hold Together?" *Baptist Standard*, 12 February 1920, p. 1.

[59]George, *Southern Baptist Relationships*, 28.

[60]Ashby Jones and Edwin Poteat were among some of the most vocal opponents to the SBC's decision. Cf. Jones M. Ashby, "A Reply to the Editor of the Christian Index," *Christian Index,* 1 August 1918, p. 6. Edwin M. Poteat, "The Interchurch World Movement and the Baptists," *The Baptist Courier*, 26 June 1919, p. 3.

[61]E. Y. Mullins, "Southern Baptists at a Crucial Hour," in *The Sacred Desk: Sermons of the Southern Baptist Convention Presidents*, ed. Ergun Caner and Emir Caner (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2004), 90.

[62]Ibid.

remedy could be the establishment of true New Testament churches, which Baptists were uniquely equipped to establish. In this way, Mullins was an enigma. He rejected state churches and any form of church that deviated from New Testament polity, but at the same time remained committed to interdenominational activities and cooperation on a personal level.

In his opening address of the 1923 annual meeting, Mullins both warned and challenged Southern Baptists. In the midst of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy, he urged Baptists not to divide over secondary matters. Southern Baptists had set out to accomplish a worthy goal with the 75 million campaign, but infighting threatened to unravel all the hard work.[63] Southern Baptists must also protect the principle of voluntarism and not become bound to any other body in such a way as to limit their work in the world. He acknowledged the decision by the convention in 1919 to repudiate the interchurch movement and declared that now the eyes of the world were upon the SBC. [64] If Southern Baptists were to be successful, it would add tremendously to their prestige and demonstrate to the world the efficiency of religious democracy. He added that those who believe in centralized church government do not deem Baptists as capable of achieving such success. The task, therefore, of Southern Baptists is to renew their commitment to the Great Commission and to build up the Kingdom of God. Post-war Europe was in a shambles, and the Far East was suffering immeasurably. Mullins concluded the only possible hope for those places was for Southern Baptists to steadfastly set themselves toward taking the gospel of grace to a suffering world.

The Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy

Another precursor to the redirection of Southern Baptists was the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy that began during the turn of the twentieth century but fully developed during the early 1920s. The Modernists believed Christianity needed to adjust itself to the norms of modern culture and at the core of this adjustment was a re-evaluation of Scripture that included the questioning of its accuracy and validity. Modernists emphasized humanity and the redemptive potential of society and the world. Modernist theology became less theocentric and more anthropocentric. Besides the obvious problem concerning the veracity of Scripture which Modernism posed, compounding the problem for the SBC was the fact that many Modernists were in favor of organic union.[65]

The reaction of Fundamentalists varied. J. Gresham Machen represented the more scholarly and academic response to Modernism. Through his articulate and thorough

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[63]E.Y. Mullins, "The Dangers and Duties of the Present Hour," *The Alabama Baptist*, 24 May 1923, p.7.

[64]Ibid., 8.

[65]Thomas E. Fitzgerald, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Introductory History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 172–75.

academic approach, he became the leading intellectual voice opposing Modernism. Southern Baptists, however, were not without their own scholarly voice. E. Y. Mullins, J. J. Reeve, and Charles B. Williams each contributed an article to a collection of booklets known as *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*.[66] Although differences existed among the various authors within *The Fundamentals*, those differences were set aside in order to tackle what was perceived as the greater threat, Modernism.[67] Additionally, SWBTS professors W. T. Conner and H. E. Dana voiced concerns during this same time period against organic union.[68] Given that many Modernists were more open to organic union and Southern Baptists were more theologically aligned with the Fundamentalists, this served to strengthen the anti-organic union attitude within the SBC.

The SBC and the Refusal to Join the World Council of Churches

After World War I, two organizations developed within the ecumenical movement, the Life and Work movement and the Faith and Order Commission. In 1937, the SBC received an invitation to attend the second Faith and Order Conference in Edinburgh and appoint five delegates to the conference.[69] The first had been held in 1927 in Lausanne with no official representation by the SBC. The conference was designed to discuss the theological barriers to cooperation, but many within the conferences maintained the goal of organic unity. The SBC voted to decline the invitation, but W. O. Carver asked the convention to send George Truett as a spokesman of the convention. Truett, however, was unable to attend and instead the assembly appointed John R. Sampey. Sampey refused to address the group formally out of respect for the SBC, but he did speak to a plenary session. In his speech, he reiterated what had been some Baptist concerns in prior years. Once again, the church and the sacraments were thrust between the individual soul and Christ.[70] That same year, Sampey delivered a clear ecclesiological stance against the interdenominational ecumenical movement. With the totalitarian trends sweeping across Europe, many Baptists believed the threat to religious liberty and the autonomy of the local church was in danger. Sampey declared that Southern Baptists were being challenged by unionists to cease their protest against soul competency and the right to do business with God without the intervention of church, priest, or sacrament.[71]

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[66]R. A. Torrey, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003).

[67]Dispensationalists, confessional Calvinists, Separatists, Denominationalists, and Holiness advocates all cooperated in responding to the theological challenges of the day. Cf. Mark Knoll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 381.

[68]Harvey E. Dana, "Christian Unity as Taught in the New Testament," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 8.1 (January 1924); reprint, 51.1 (Fall 2008): 65–70. Walter T. Conner, "The Essentials of Christian Union," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 7.2 (April 1923): reprint, 51.1 (Fall 2008): 24–30.

[69]For a detailed history of the Faith and Order movement, see Ruth Rouse and Stephen C. Neill, comp., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement: 1517–1948*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1968).

[70]Ryland, "A Study in Ecumenical Isolation," 100.

[71]John R. Sampey, "An Old Man Dreams," in *The Sacred Desk: Sermons of the Southern Baptist Convention Presidents*, ed. Ergun Caner and Emir Caner (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman,

In 1937, the SBC reaffirmed its policy of isolation from the ecumenical movement in a "Report on Interdenominational Relations" delivered at the 1938 annual meeting. In the report, the SBC reaffirmed its desire for Christian unity but reiterated its opposition to structural unity.[72] As the Faith and Order movement, along with the Life and Work conference, the Christian social action wing of the ecumenical movement, continued to gain influence throughout the 1930's, the Second World War brought most of their work to a halt. After the War, and the introduction of the nuclear age, the desire for organic unity as a necessary precursor to world peace grew immensely.[73] By 1948, the Faith and Order Conference and the Life and Work Commission officially merged into the World Council of Churches. However, for the SBC, the issue was settled at the 1940 convention. There would be no official involvement in the worldwide ecumenical movement.

Conclusion

For much of the first half of the twentieth century, no question seemed more complex and difficult than that of Christian union. Southern Baptists approached the subject with both theological seriousness and caution. For Southern Baptists, cooperation does not mean an organic union requiring a surrender of Baptist principles. Such distinctives are rooted in the belief that truth matters.[74] To disregard these principles is to reject the importance of the local church as the meaning of "church" and the ordinances that serve as the boundary markers.[75] Organic union fails to appreciate the spiritual nature of the church and emphasizes the form of the church over and above its substance.[76] Throughout the twentieth century and the formation of the World Council of Churches, Southern Baptist leadership would maintain this position. As a result, the SBC would never formally involve itself in union discussions but would continue to cooperate where no surrender of principles was involved.

2004), 130–31.

[72]*Annual* SBC, 1938, pp. 24–25.

[73]Ernest F. Campbell, "Southern Baptists and the World Council of Churches," *Religious Herald*, 11 July 1940, p. 9.

[74]James B. Gambrell, "Obligations of Baptists to Teach their Principles," in *Baptist Principles Reset*, ed. Jeremiah B. Jeter (Paris, TX: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 2004), 262.

[75]Russell Moore, "Learning from Nineteenth-century Baptists," in *Southern Baptist Identity: An Evangelical Denomination Faces the Future*, ed. David S. Dockery (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 107–9.

[76]E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, edited with an introduction and notes by C. Douglas Weaver (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010), 131.

Spiritual Warfare: A Strategic Guide

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> Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens (Eph 6:10–12).[1]

This is a passage most of us are familiar with and perhaps we have heard a message or two on the armor of God from the following verses in Ephesians 6. Even so, do we take the idea of spiritual warfare seriously, or do we gloss over it as purely hypothetical or metaphorical? Most people react in one of two ways. Either they make too much of Satan and see a demon behind every bush, or they make too little of Satan, living a life of practical naturalism.

In the first response, every temptation is addressed as "the Devil made me do it." As believers, we are our own worst enemies because of our continued desires for the things of the flesh (Rom 7:15). We cannot blame every problem in our lives on demonic influence. Even when temptation comes our way, God has promised that we always have a way out (1 Cor 10:13). While demonic influence indeed does tempt us, we are more often enticed by our own flesh as well as the worldly pleasures that surround us and compete for our attention (Eph 2:1–3).[2] At the other end of the spectrum, we must be aware that the "spiritual forces of evil" are a reality, and we would do well to be vigilant and informed of their power and influence. A balanced approach is not only necessary for proper interpretation and application of biblical truth but also necessary for comprehending life in this world.

It is imperative that we grasp two essential facts: **1) Satan and his demons are real. They hate everything about you and want to destroy you.** "Be serious! Be alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour" (1 Pet 5:8). We are at war with a relentless enemy who will exploit our weaknesses in every possible way. Although Satan cannot snatch you from the hand of God (John 10:28;

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[1]All translations are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.

[2]Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 32.

Rom 8:38–39; Php 1:6), he will do whatever he can to render you ineffective as a tool for God's purposes. His goal is to take you off the battlefield, out of the game, and put you on the sidelines. **2) We serve a sovereign and victorious God who has equipped you with everything you need to have victory over evil.** The good news is that the outcome of the war has already been determined since Jesus paid the penalty of sin for us on the cross and was raised from the dead (Col 2:15). In the meantime, we are fighting spiritual battles every day, but God is with us.

"The story of your life is the story of the long and brutal assault on your heart by the one who knows what you could be and fears it. . . . Otherwise, much of the Bible will not make sense to you. Much of your *life* will not make sense to you."[3] How many times have we faced situations in our life and not understood why people acted or reacted in a certain way? While not every challenge is evidence of a spiritual attack (lest we stray to one extreme referenced earlier), we are wise to have our spiritual eyes open to recognize the possibility of something going on behind the scenes.

Regarding evidence for spiritual warfare or demonic activity, there seems to be a prevalence of such activity in underdeveloped countries, whereas in developed countries, these are rare, or perhaps simply rarely recognized. Satan appears to have two primary approaches to the way he engages our world. Either he evokes fear and reverence from us, or he is invisible to the point we do not believe he exists.

The first approach is his primary strategy for underdeveloped countries. Despite undue arrogance of developed countries in our post-Enlightenment mindset, we are largely oblivious to the realities of demonic forces. Underdeveloped countries recognize these forces as part of their worldview and history. For people living in these areas of the world, demonic activity is accepted as a part of life. There is no place for Satan to hide, so his strategy is to frighten people to the point that many pay tribute to Satan and his demons to keep them at bay. Often, syncretism results from their attempts to "cover their bases" in satisfying all "gods." For example, in the country of Haiti, Roman Catholicism is often mixed with voodoo and other cultic/occultic practices because the people live in fear of evil.

The second approach is Satan's primary strategy in developed countries. As products of the Enlightenment Period, we tend to explain away every supernatural occurrence with a naturalistic explanation. The last thing Satan wants to do is make himself known. If people begin to believe that he and demons are real, this will open the door to the possibility of the existence of God, a belief that is mocked by many in the scientific community. Instead, he lays low and allows us to come up with alternate explanations. Lewis recognized this strategy:

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[3]John Eldredge, *Waking the Dead: The Glory of a Heart Fully Alive* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 149.

> I wonder you should ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient in ignorance of your own existence. That question, at least for the present phase of the struggle, has been answered for us by the High Command. Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves. . . . The fact that "devils" are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that, he therefore cannot believe in you.[4]

Even those who are more open to the supernatural in a developed country have tended to gravitate toward the idea of ghosts rather than demons, again keeping Satan's true identity veiled in speculation. Also to the enemy's advantage if people believe in ghosts is that wretched souls trapped between worlds is not a biblical idea, thus casting doubt on the validity of Scripture. Nevertheless, it appears that Satan's strategy of concealment is beginning to shift toward manifesting himself in the United States as postmodernism has taken root and culture moves into a post-Christian worldview. The melting pot of the United States is becoming more and more diverse due to the influx of cultures from around the globe. Worldviews are shifting and interest in the supernatural continues to climb. Regardless of Satan's approach, the objective is the same: attack those who belong to God.

> Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels also fought, but he could not prevail, and there was no place for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was thrown out—the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world. He was thrown to earth, and his angels with him. . . . When the dragon saw that he had been thrown to earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. . . . So the dragon was furious with the woman and left to wage war against the rest of her offspring—**those who keep God's commands and have the testimony about Jesus** (Rev 12:7–9, 13, 17, emphasis mine).

While this passage has many different interpretations of which are beyond the scope of the present work, our focus is that Satan and his angels are currently waging war with those who follow Jesus. One of the primary ways he wages war is to accuse. Even the name, Satan, is defined as "the adversary" or "the accuser."[5] In what ways does he accuse followers of Jesus? In his book, *Fighting Satan,* Joel Beeke mentions three ways: 1) Satan accuses God to us; 2) Satan accuses us to God; 3) Satan accuses us to one another.[6] I would like to add 4) Satan accuses us to ourselves.

First, Satan accuses God to us. Before the account of the fall in Genesis 3, God tells Adam and Eve specifically not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or they will die (Gen 2:16–17). When the first couple encounters the serpent, he tells them that not

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[4]C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 1990), 39–40.

[5]Graham H. Twelftree, "Demon, Devil, Satan," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 164.

[6]Joel R. Beeke, *Fighting Satan: Knowing His Weaknesses, Strategies, and Defeat* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2015), 12.

only will they not die but they will also "become like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:4–5). The accusation is plain to see: God was holding out on Adam and Eve.

This strategy worked with the first couple and continues to work today. Satan accuses God to us of not looking out for our best interest but wanting to keep us in the dark. When crisis hits, he is quick to point out that God does not really care about us or that he has abandoned us. Rather than fall prey to this type of insinuation, we must remember what he has done for us in Christ. "Look at how great a love the Father has given us, that we should be called God's children" (1 John 3:1).

Second, Satan accuses us to God. The story of Job is a prime example. At the beginning of the account, Satan is described as presenting himself before God along with the other "sons of God" (angels). When Satan is asked where he has come from, he responds by saying that he has been roaming back and forth across the earth (Job 1:6–7). This sounds similar to the description we highlighted earlier from 1 Peter 5:8, where he is described as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The accuser is pictured as pacing across the earth, most likely looking for someone to attack or accuse. When God points out the faithfulness of his servant, Job, Satan is quick to accuse Job of being faithful and obedient only because of God's blessings on his life. Satan says that if God allows everything to be taken away, "he will certainly curse You to Your face" (Job 1:8–11).

The scene in heaven is repeated after God allows Satan to take away Job's possessions and children. Satan once again accuses Job's integrity before God, this time because he has not suffered physical harm himself (Job 2:1–5). God allows Satan to inflict Job with sores all over his body, yet Job continues to be faithful throughout the rest of the account.

Another example of Satan's accusations is found in an obscure biblical passage in Zechariah. In Zechariah's fourth vision, Joshua, the high priest, is pictured as standing before the angel of the Lord. Satan "stands at his right side to accuse him" (Zech 3:1).

While there are other passages that imply Satan's accusations, even using the law to do so (Col 2:14–15), the two examples above provide evidence that Satan accuses us to God. Revelation 12:10 further clarifies this truth: "The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Messiah have now come, because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown out: the one who accuses them before our God day and night." Like Job, we are unaware of what goes on behind the scenes and the accusations made before God regarding us. Satan lives out daily his namesake of "accuser."

Unfortunately, much of what Satan accuses us of is actually true. We are all lawbreakers (Rom 3:23) and deserving of the penalty of death (Rom 6:23), but Jesus Christ has paid our penalty for us on the cross: "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous One. He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:1b–2).

Third, Satan accuses us to one another. While there is no explicit Scriptural example of Satan sowing seeds of discord, he undoubtedly does. There are accounts where God's people are stirred up against one another (Num 16:1–7; 2 Sam 19:41–43) and many where non-believers are stirred up against God's people (Acts 13–14) and make accusations against them (Acts 4, 6, 17, 18). Paul begins his first letter to the church at Corinth by addressing their divisions (1 Cor 1:10–17). Again, Satan is not mentioned in these passages as being behind these accusations but, knowing his nature, it is almost certain that he is.

Have you ever wondered why two Christian friends cannot get along? Why are church business meetings or deacons' (or elders') meetings known for the danger of personal attacks? What—or should we say *who*—is behind most church splits? Just as Jesus explains that "a house divided against itself cannot stand" when defending himself against the accusation of casting out demons in the name of demons (Mark 3:22–30), Satan also knows the truth of this statement. We begin to find fault in everything others do. We question one another's motives. Satan sows seeds of doubt in our hearts and minds as we relate to one another. If a body of believers is fighting among themselves, they serve as no threat to the real enemy. No wonder Jesus emphasizes unity so much in his prayer before his arrest (John 17). Instead of turning against each other, we would do well to recognize the real enemy behind the discord. Remember, our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against evil spiritual powers (Eph 6:12).

Fourth, Satan accuses us to ourselves. One of the most devastating accusations of all is when the enemy whispers accusations in our ears. He accuses us to God and to others but this pales in comparison to the damage done when he speaks words of condemnation to us. We can feel as if the rug has been pulled out from underneath our feet. Obviously, being brought low in humility before God is a good thing. Pride is the source of the original sin and continues to be the root cause of sin today. Throughout the Bible, those who approach the Lord in humility are rewarded (Prov 22:4; Isa 6:5–7; Matt 8:8; Mark 1:7; Phil 2:5–11).

Furthermore, it is essential to distinguish between conviction and condemnation. In the Greek, there is much overlap between the two words, *elegcho* ("convict") and *katakrino* ("condemn"), making it very difficult to discern the difference other than by examining the context. It might be helpful to define these terms in a modern, Christian understanding. Conviction, outside of legal contexts, is used to refer to someone who is being brought to a correct understanding for the purpose of improvement. One may be brought under conviction regarding things in their life that should not be there or regarding the truth of God's Word. The Holy Spirit brings conviction on the life of a believer (Rom 14:19–23; 1 Cor 1:10) or when calling someone to salvation (John 16:7–11; Acts 2:37; 1 Cor 14:23–25). On the other hand, condemnation is used in a negative way, such as when someone is doomed and there is no hope of recovery. Condemnation is spoken of many times in the New Testament regarding eternal damnation (Matt 12:37–42; Matt 23:33; John 3:17–18; Rom 5:12–18; 2 Pet 2:3–6).

The message from God through his Holy Spirit to the believer is never one of condemnation (1 John 3:19–20) but one of conviction. The purpose of this conviction is to lead the believer to the truth (John 16:13). "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). Believers should remember this truth when the enemy accuses them. The voice that whispers in your ear, "Look what you did. You are not worthy of God's love. In fact, you are worthless and ought to be ashamed of yourself," is not the voice of the Holy Spirit but of the enemy. The Holy Spirit's purpose is to pick you up, dust you off, and put you back on track. The enemy's purpose is to kick you when you are down. When Adam and Eve sinned against God in the garden, God sought after them (Gen 3:8–9) and although he banished them from the garden, he provided a covering for their shame (Gen 3:21) and ultimately provided a once-for-all sacrifice (Heb 9:12) to satisfy his wrath on sin (Rom 8:1–4). Satan's goal is not to lead us to repentance with his message of condemnation but to lead us to despair and self-hatred.

Now that we have examined the reality of spiritual warfare and the ways that Satan accuses, what does a typical spiritual attack look like and how do we defend ourselves? Usually spiritual attacks include at least one of the following and often include a combination of several or all of them: fear, doubt, apathy, and condemnation.

The first element of a spiritual attack is some type of **fear**. This could range from being unusually worried about a situation to experiencing demonic nightmares. The latter is rare but many have experienced bad dreams that have inflicted fear upon them because of demonic themes. Still rarer are those times when demons manifest themselves, but that is beyond the scope of the present work. This type of fear is most often experienced in underdeveloped countries or pockets of the country who are more open to the spiritual world. The purpose here is to gain a fearful awareness of Satan's activity.

The area of fear that we are going to concentrate on is increased anxiety. Many believers have awakened with a racing heart or one that does not allow them to sleep at night. When physical tests do not indicate any health concerns, they cannot figure out the root cause. Realized or unrealized fears can escalate to the irrational very quickly and can be paralyzing. Jesus addresses worry in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:25–34). Things that are outside of our control can appear overwhelming and the enemy likes to create a snowball effect by compounding the anxiety. Thoughts of what might happen or what we perceive others to be saying about us creep into our head. Faced with a decision, we are paralyzed with fear and bewilderment. It is important to remember that God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor 14:33). So, if you find yourself experiencing an unusual sense of fear or anxiety, it may not simply be your own worry about things in your life. It could actually be a spiritual attack aimed at rendering you immobile and ineffective.

It is important to be aware of the reality of such attacks and some of the common elements included in them so that you can recognize them when they come. At the same

time, however, it is essential that we know that God is victorious and has given us what we need to stand firm against such attacks. Although Paul's description of the armor of God in Ephesians 6 is to be primarily understood as a whole rather than dissecting details of the different pieces, believers must pick up the shield of faith (Eph 6:16) in order to extinguish the fiery arrows of fear. First John 4:18 states that "perfect love casts out fear." Examining the context of this passage, it is evident that this "perfect love" is the love of God at the root of our faith. "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). As we hold dear the content of our faith (the gospel), this love of God that remains in us will drive out fear. As the Psalmist asked, "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom should I fear?" (Ps 27:1).

The second element of a spiritual attack is **doubt**. Your relationship with God—and sometimes your very faith—come into question. A person who has been a believer for years, demonstrating fruit of the Spirit and walking closely with God, can experience a spiritual attack that can make her sense that somehow her relationship with God is broken. Although unconfessed sin can impede one's relationship with God, nothing is severed (John 10:28–29; Rom 8:38–39; Phil 1:6). Thoughts of abandonment or cruel indifference by God begin to fill the head of the person under attack. I personally dealt with this shortly after college when I lacked direction and felt like I was in a rut. Although I had prayed frequently about God's will for my life, I heard no reply. What I did hear was almost a whisper saying, "The Bible says, 'My sheep hear My voice.' You aren't hearing anything. Maybe you're not really one of God's sheep." This began a period of several months when I doubted my salvation. The enemy is good at twisting God's Word for his own purposes (Matt 4:1–11). The whisper I was hearing was not from God.

It is essential to hold on to the above passages regarding perseverance and God's sovereignty in salvation in times of doubt. Furthermore, this is where the breastplate of righteousness (Eph 6:14) would be most suited for defense. Doubting one's salvation is an attack on the heart of the believer, and we would do well to remember that our righteousness is not from ourselves but from Christ who freely gives it to the one who believes.

The other decimating result of doubt is to question one's faith. Although a believer may have confidence in the reliability of the Scriptures and the reality of the Holy Spirit, a spiritual attack can begin to chip away at this confidence. Gradually, God's existence comes into question, and the once-strong believer now finds himself feeling foolish for believing something so outlandish. As mentioned above, the true believer will not fall away from the faith but he can go through periods of severe questioning that renders him ineffective in Kingdom work because he is having to work through his own doubts about the validity of the gospel.

We would do well to put on the belt of truth (Eph 6:14) by continuing in God's word. Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31–32). The Devil is a liar (John 8:44) and the only way to destroy a lie is with

the truth. We should wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Eph 6:17), a great offensive as well as defensive weapon that will help us attack and defend against doubt.

Although there are many historical-critical reasons for trusting the reliability of Scripture as well as scientific and philosophical reasons for believing in the existence of God, perhaps the most important defense during these periods of doubt is remembering when God has pulled through for you in the past. This is one of the primary reasons the children of Israel built remembrance stones at the site of significant events of God's deliverance (Joshua 4); when they passed that way again, even in the midst of their doubts, they could not deny the fact that God showed up in the past. This, in turn, would lead them to have faith in their present and future. When my family was under the attack of doubt about whether God cared for us or not because of a situation we were faced with, we applied this passage to our own life and wrote significant events and the year in which they took place on index cards. We taped those cards all around our home so that we could have a constant reminder of the God who cares showing up in our circumstances.

The third element of a spiritual attack, and perhaps the most subtle, is **apathy**. Even the most vigilant believer can be fooled into thinking that apathy is always his own fault or, even worse, he is not even aware that he has begun to lose interest in spiritual things until he finds himself wandering in a spiritual wilderness. In addition to being the most subtle attack, apathy is perhaps the most damaging and widespread. How many churches and ministries are filled with leaders as well as laypeople who seem to have lost their zeal for the Lord? Although they are doing spiritual things, they are simply going through the motions. There is no longer any heart behind the ministry. Spending time alone with God no longer brings spiritual refreshment but is simply a box to check off each day, if that time is taken at all.

One of the most severe warnings given to the seven churches in the book of Revelation is the warning given to the church of Laodicea. The charge is that this church had become lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. In other words, this church had become apathetic and thus, useless. Jesus warned them that he was going to spit them out of his mouth (Rev 3:14–22). This is not to say that as a result of spiritual attack he was going to take disciplinary action, but his actions would be a result of their own attitudes. Not every bout of apathy is a spiritual attack but there are indeed many situations that are a direct result of this type of assault. The passage from Revelation reveals the dangerous side effect of apathy: uselessness. This is Satan's goal. He wants to take the believer off the field.

We must put on the helmet of salvation (Eph 6:17) to protect our minds from indifference. When we reflect on the depth of salvation and the love of God not only for ourselves but also for others, it will awaken us (Eph 5:14) to the light of God's redemptive plan in which we play a significant part. Furthermore, we should prepare our feet with the gospel of peace

(Eph 6:15) so that we can turn our apathy into action. One of the most effective ways I have fought my way out of apathy over the years is to share the gospel with others. There is something about saying out loud what you believe that makes it come alive. Being obedient to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20) properly aligns our priorities, enables us to be a part of God's plan, and keeps apathy at bay.

The final element of a spiritual attack is **condemnation**. Since we have already discussed this above, we will be brief. Because Satan is "the accuser," his condemnation of believers should not be a surprise. We have already explained that he accuses God to us, us to God, us to one another, and us to ourselves. It is this last accusation that is relevant here. We can become so guilt-stricken in our sin that we consider ourselves unworthy of God's love or to be used by him. We wallow in our own self-pity and see no way out. Satan whispers words of condemnation that are akin to whispers of doubt. We must remember that God took the initiative to save us from our sins while we lay helpless (Rom 5:8). Again, in the same way that the breastplate of righteousness is our defense against attacks of doubt, it is our protection from condemnation. We must be constantly and firmly convinced that God no longer condemns believers (Rom 8:1) because he has already paid the penalty due to us. While we can disappoint God, we cannot make him love us less and we cannot separate ourselves from that love (Rom 8:38–39).

When these attacks come, it is essential to remember that we serve a sovereign and victorious God. When the serpent led Adam and Eve into rebellion, God cursed the serpent and determined that the seed of the woman would crush its head, a foreshadowing and metaphor for Jesus's crushing blow to Satan on the cross (Gen 3:15; Rom 16:20). When Satan took everything away from Job and caused harm to his physical body, Satan was still under the sovereign rule of God, who set parameters as to what he could or could not do to Job (Job 1–2). When Joshua the priest was being accused by Satan in Zechariah's fourth vision, the Lord rebuked Satan (Zech 3:1–2a). Every time we see Jesus encounter demons in the Gospels, they immediately recognize his authority over them and often beg him not to destroy or torment them (Mark 1:23–27; 5:6–8; Luke 4:33–36).

As frightening as the reality of demons is, we can be assured that our God has won the war: "He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; He triumphed over them by Him" (Col 2:13–15). These are the same rulers and authorities discussed in Eph 6:12. Jesus's sacrificial death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection was the death knell for the evil spiritual forces. Jesus not only defeated sin but also death itself and the one holding its power—Satan (Heb 2:14–15). The ultimate victory of God is spelled out in Rev 20:10, when the Devil will be thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented day and night.

When Jesus lived on earth he made the blind to see and the lame to walk; he will return to

rule over a kingdom that has no disease or disability. On earth he died and was resurrected; at his return, death will be no more. On earth he cast out demons; at his return, he will destroy the Evil One. On earth he came as a baby born in a manger; he will return as the blazing figure described in the book of Revelation. The kingdom he set in motion on earth was not the end, only the beginning of the end.[7]

I have not had many dreams involving spiritual warfare, but one stands out to me. Several years ago, I dreamed that Satan was standing before me, accusing me. I do not recall what he looked like or if I even saw his appearance but I knew he was there. When I was beginning to buy into his lies, I suddenly thought about the reality of his future and told him that he had no business telling me about defeat. He had already lost the war and his fate is already certain. When I defended myself with the reality of the victory of God, he went away.

While we have the assurance of Satan's defeat, we find ourselves struggling constantly with evil in this world. This is part of what theologians refer to as the "already-not yet" concept:

> The gap is somewhat like the time between lightning and thunder. In reality, they happen at the same time, but because light travels faster than sound, we see the lightning first, then, seconds later, hear the thunder. In Christ's ministry, death, and resurrection, Satan fell as lightning from heaven. On judgment day, we will hear the thunder of Satan's eternal destruction.[8]

Many promises in Scripture put us in an in-between position where the victory has already been determined but we have not yet seen the full realization of that victory. God has won the war with Satan but the day to day battles still rage on in spiritual warfare. The outcome of the war was established at Jesus's death and resurrection but the final battle will be fought upon Jesus's victorious return.

> For though the devil has been defeated, he has not yet conceded defeat. Although he has been overthrown, he has not yet been eliminated. . . . On the one hand, we are alive, seated and reigning with Christ, as we have just seen, with even the principalities and powers of evil placed by God under his (and therefore our) feet; on the other we are warned (also in Ephesians) that these same spiritual forces have set themselves in opposition to us, so that we have no hope of standing against them unless we are strong in the Lord's strength and clad in his armor.[9]

When Paul talks about taking up the armor of God, it is because we are at war, whether we like it or not. The primary point of Paul's words is to help believers to know they are equipped with exactly what they need for spiritual battle because their struggle is not

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[7]Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 253.
[8]Beeke, *Fighting Satan*, 98.
[9]John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 20th anniv. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 235.

against flesh and blood but against evil spiritual forces (Eph 6:12):

> This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. In every situation take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word. (Eph 6:13–17)

Studies on Paul's metaphors for the armor of God suggest that each piece of armor has unique qualities as a defensive or offensive weapon for a soldier. Rather than go into great detail about every piece of armor, we have highlighted a few of these pieces of armor as they pertain to spiritual attack. Recall that Paul used these vivid images of a soldier's outfitting to help the reader understand that they were at war. Paul says that we must put on the "full armor of God," indicating that no piece should be lacking. The only way that a believer can take his or her stand is to be prepared with every piece of armor: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and God's Word. Many people think of the above passage as the complete strategy for spiritual warfare but leave out the most critical part:

> Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough in Him to speak as I should. (Eph 6:18–20)

Prayer is the greatest weapon in spiritual warfare. Prayer is our tool for communicating and connecting with our victorious God. It is not meant to be just a mealtime blessing or a rhyme we recite before bedtime. Paul concludes his passage on spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6 with an emphasis on prayer. His emphasis is on constant prayer for fellow believers and for boldness in spreading the gospel. The good news of Jesus spread by believers (the church) is an unstoppable force that is described as penetrating even the gates of hell (Matt 16:18). Again, Lewis explains the power of prayer well in his classic written from the perspective of a higher-level demon (Screwtape) to his underling (Wormwood):

> The best thing, where it is possible, is to keep the patient from the serious intention of praying altogether . . . but you can worry him with the haunting suspicion that the practice is absurd and can have no objective result. . . . If the thing he prays for doesn't happen, then that is one more proof that petitionary prayers don't work; if it does happen, he will, of course be able to see some of the physical causes which led up to it, and "therefore it would have happened anyway," and thus a granted prayer becomes just as good a proof as a denied one that prayers are ineffective.[10]

The disciples understood the importance of prayer and even asked Jesus how to pray.

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[10]Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 24, 137.

Jesus gave the model in Luke 11:1–13 (cf. Matt 6:5–15). Being aware of the schemes of Satan is an important first step in being prepared to take a stand in spiritual warfare. Confidence in the victory of God reminds the believer that the outcome of the war has already been decided. In the meantime, however, it is essential to put on the entire armor of God to defend against spiritual attacks. The final and perhaps most critical component in engaging in spiritual warfare is the power of prayer (James 5:16). We are not powerful enough to overcome evil but our great God is. This is what makes prayer so important. Prayer is our lifeline, our communication with the only One who can deliver us from the evil one (Matt 6:13).

Only when we realize that we are living in a deeper reality beyond what the eye can see and the ear can hear will we begin to grasp the necessity of prayer. And until we begin to value prayer, we will never find time for it. Until we recognize our desperate need for prayer and the power in it, our prayers will be no more than a letter to Santa, a wish upon a star, an empty recitation of words before a meal, or a generic request that never gets past the ceiling.

Through exploring the many tactics of Satan in this work, it becomes more and more evident that spiritual warfare is a reality which many choose to ignore. Although there is an extreme end of the spectrum where people are paranoid and almost obsessive concerning demonic activity, many of us live in the opposite end where we deny its existence. The point of this present work has been to make the reader more aware of the spiritual battles you may not realize are all around you and to help recognize a spiritual attack. Our purpose has also been to stress the importance of relying on God's sovereignty, salvation, and the power of prayer to not only fend off the attacks of the enemy but also to advance the gospel, the ultimate offensive weapon against the forces of evil. While the present study is not comprehensive on the complex subject of spiritual warfare, perhaps it will be a quick and accessible playbook for believers who either have never read anything on this topic or have been too afraid to confront it. Let us not only prepare ourselves for the daily battles we face but may we be an encouragement to one another (Heb 10:23–25) as we stand shoulder to shoulder against a fierce enemy whose ultimate defeat is certain and forthcoming.

All Things in Common: The Economic Practices of the Early Christians. By Roman A. Montero. Eugene, OR: Resource, 2017. 146 pages. Paperback, $16.00.

All Things in Common is an interesting, yet controversial, book. Montero is favorable towards communist ideology and, as a result, he chose to adopt communist language. He made a deliberate effort to distance himself from the ideologies of the Soviet Union and communist China. Nevertheless, many readers will find Montero's use of communist language and criticism of capitalism to be off-putting. However, regardless of his political or ideological proclivities, Montero made a coherent and well-researched argument that should be evaluated without bias.

Montero presented two major arguments. First, he argued that "the accounts found in Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–37 describe historical economic practices found within the early Christian community," which "were taken very seriously" and "were widespread over different Christian communities around the Roman world," lasting "at least well into the second century" (5). Second, he argued that "these economic practices were grounded in both Jewish and Christian theology and had precedent in Jewish tradition and practice; as well as the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth" (5).

Montero developed his arguments over ten chapters. In chapter 1, he explored the economic, social, and political background of first-century Palestine. He argued that Christianity began in an environment that was marked by economic disparity and class conflict. In chapter 2, Montero described the methodological framework that he would use throughout the book. He drew on the ideas of the anthropologist David Graeber and others to develop a model for understanding the economic practices of early Christianity. Graeber suggested three types of economic relationships: hierarchy, exchange, and communism. In his model, communism is defined as "any inter-personal relationship that functions on the basis of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need,' no matter where it is found and no matter its size or scope" (18). Montero divided communist relationships into two types, informal and formal. In chapter 3, Montero argued that the Essenes practiced communism and may have influenced the early Christians. In chapter 4, he claimed that in the Greco-Roman world, the upper classes viewed informal communistic relationships as an ideal, but only between equals. In chapter 5, the author argued that the early church practiced informal and formal communism across class lines until the second century. He also expanded his definition of communism to include a principle of common property that was taken literally. According to Montero, early Christians viewed these practices as moral obligations and not merely as ideals. Moreover, he contended that the early church fathers, especially Justin Martyr and Tertullian, wrote about these practices.

In chapter 6, the author asserted that early Christian writings, such as Second Thessalonians, First Timothy, and the Didache, indicate that some people attempted to exploit these communist practices for their own gain. In chapter 7, Montero claimed that

non-Christian writers, such as Lucian and Julian, took note of the Communist practices of early Christians. In chapter 8, the author asserted that the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus were the theological foundations for these practices. In chapter 9, the author emphasized his earlier point that Christian economic practices, unlike in Greco-Roman culture, crossed ethnic and class line. In chapter 10, Montero contended that scholars, such as James Dunn and John Dominic Crossan, reached incorrect conclusions about early Christian economic practices because they imported modern ideas into their work.

All Things in Common is a well-written, well-organized, and concise book. Montero divided the book into short and digestible chapters that included only pertinent information. Montero's ability to present and explain complex concepts in a short space was impressive. He has provided a well-researched investigation into the economic practices of the New Testament that included insights from biblical studies, history, and the social sciences. Yet, he limited the book to only 123 pages of content.

Montero's work is significant because he challenged the reader to think in a different way. He made arguments that should not be dismissed without thorough consideration. For example, his assertion that the economic practices mentioned in Acts extended into the second century was intriguing. He presented evidence that the early church fathers used language that was reminiscent of Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–37. He also cited examples of non-Christian sources who confirmed the evidence concerning the church fathers. Though many readers will disagree with Montero's interpretation of the evidence, his work is valuable because it challenges the reader to think critically about the economic practices of the early church.

Montero's work is useful and interesting, but is his argument convincing? Readers will have to answer this question for themselves, but four weaknesses should influence that answer. First, Montero frequently discussed the concept of class (especially in chapters 1, 4, and 9), but he appears to have limited class to an economic category rather than acknowledging the importance of social status in the ancient world. In the ancient world, wealth did not guarantee a person's social status, and social status did not guarantee a person's wealth.

Second, Montero accused other scholars of being influenced by modern ideas, yet he imported the ideas of Karl Marx and other socialists into his examination of the evidence. He made some attempts to distance himself from Marxist notions of communism, but his admiration for Marx and his tendency to interpret evidence through a Marxist lens was apparent throughout the work. He presented his work as a new interpretation of Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–37 that does justice to the ancient context, but it was actually just another biased interpretation, influenced by communism rather than capitalism.

Third, Montero redefined communism to make it more palatable for his audience but then shifted definitions near the middle of the book. His initial definition of communism was, "any inter-personal relationship that functions on the basis of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need,' no matter where it is found and no matter its size or scope" (18). Most would probably agree that the portrayal of the church in Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–37 would fit this very broad definition. However, once the reader began to follow his argument and accept the new definition, Montero claimed that the Christian community held a principle of common property that "looks exactly like 'communism' in the classical Marxist sense of the word" (52). The author appears to have used this as a rhetorical maneuver intended to coax the more skeptical readers to accept his ideas.

Fourth, the author's argument hinges on the claim that Luke intended for the "all things in common" (Acts 2:44) to be taken literally, yet this point is not clear. He acknowledged that the saying could be viewed as figurative, but simply pointed out that "what Luke seems to imply by writing 'and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions' in Acts 4:32 is that this was taken literally" (52). However, this statement could also be figurative. Montero's entire argument rested on the literal meaning of these passages, yet he failed to prove that his assumption was correct.

In conclusion, Montero made observations about the early church that were unique and helpful. Scholars who are studying Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–37 or the economic practices of the early church should interact with the ideas of this book. However, pastors, laypeople, and students will find the book to be unnecessarily dense and prejudiced toward a specific viewpoint.

- Benjamin Browning, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana

An Anomalous Jew: Paul among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans. **By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016. 310 pages. Paperback, $28.00.**

Michael Bird is lecturer in theology at Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia. In *An Anomalous Jew,* Bird seeks "to understand Paul's Jewishness as it was expressed in relation to other Jews, to Paul's fellow Jewish Christians, and to Romans and the Roman Empire" (vii). While some scholars maintain Paul totally rejected Judaism after his conversion, others maintain that Paul remained thoroughly Jewish. Exactly where in this spectrum does Paul belong? Bird sets the stage to answer this in the introduction with a selected survey of Pauline scholarship in relation to this issue, which he places under the following five classifications: a former Jew, a transformed Jew, a faithful Jew, a radical Jew, and an anomalous Jew. Bird's answer is that Paul is an anomaly, "a strange figure with a blend of common and controversial Jewish beliefs that brought him into conflict with the socioreligious scene around him" (vii). While adopting the phrase "anomalous Jew" from

John M. G. Barclay, Bird actually is a master fusion chief, or should I say Pauline scholar, attempting to take the best from each perspective to produce a robust understanding of Paul's Jewishness. The "former Jew" concept and N. T. Wright's brand of "transformed Jew" are the most prominent influences in his creation. Contra Barclay, it was not Paul's transgression of the Diaspora synagogues' boundaries that made him an anomaly, it was "his attempt to create a social space for a unified body of Jewish and Gentile Christ-believers worshiping God" (28). Bird summarizes,

> The anomalous nature of Paul's thought consists of his apocalyptic interpretation of the Messiah's death and resurrection, which forced him into a rereading of Scripture and into a different praxis that yielded a transformation of "common Judaism" whereby the story and symbols of Judaism were now redrawn around Jesus the Messiah and his followers, who constituted the renewed Israel of an inaugurated eschaton. (28)

The five chapters of the book (three of which are modified from previous publications) are an attempt to test this thesis in five areas: the meaning of salvation, the scope of Paul's apostleship, apocalypticism versus salvation history through Galatians, the incident at Antioch, and Paul and the Roman Empire.

Bird begins chapter 1 by providing a history of interpretation of Paul's portrayal of Judaism in order to ascertain how Paul viewed the socioreligious religious Christian Gentile communities in relation to Judaism. Bird identifies the crux as whether one views Paul *contra* Judaism (discontinuity) or *intra* Judaism (continuity).

In the second chapter, Bird argues that Paul was not just an apostle to the Gentiles but also to the Jews (though his emphasis was often on the Gentiles). In the midst of this argument, Bird proposes that Luke has shifted the chronology of Acts by moving the

> story of the Hellenists at Antioch to a later point in Acts in order to prioritize Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1–30) and Peter's "Gentile Pentecost" with Cornelius (Acts 10:1–11:18). . . . Luke does this in order to provide apostolic precedent to the Gentile mission, whereas the inclusion of non-Jews into the Jesus movement was probably more piecemeal, sporadic, and less controlled than what Luke depicts. (91)

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on issues in the book of Galatians. While utilizing elements of apocalyptic readings of Galatians as a corrective to N. T. Wright, Bird maintains that salvation history is inseparable. Against the apocalyptic interpretations, he levels the accurate charge of too much Barth. The fourth chapter provides an in-depth study of the incident at Antioch in order to understand "Paulinism, i.e., the essence of Paul's thought concerning God, Messiah, Torah, and the salvation of the Gentiles" (171).

In the final chapter, Bird investigates the claims of the "counter-imperial" movement concerning Romans. Bird provides another helpful historical overview of recent scholarship on another Pauline debate. He concludes that Romans is not a political manifesto but pastoral theology.

I always find Bird's works engaging and often intriguing. This one is no different. He writes with clarity on views that are not always so clear. His writing skills, combined with interaction with a breadth of international biblical scholarship (see the impressive 31-page bibliography), makes this a useful book for a survey of recent Pauline scholarship.

- Wayne Cornett, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary Northeast, Schenectady, New York

The Apostle Paul: His Life, Thought, and Letters. By Stanley E. Porter. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016. 473 pages. Paperback, $40.00.

Stanley E. Porter serves as president, dean, and professor of New Testament, occupying the Roy A. Hope Chair in Christian Worldview for McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. Porter is a prolific writer, authoring twenty-eight volumes and more than 300 journal articles and chapters. He has also edited more than ninety volumes. His specialties include Greek language and linguistics and the broader area of the New Testament.[1] Porter's wide range of research interests places him in a rare breed of scholars prepared to write a monograph broadly focused on the life of Paul.

In the preface, Porter describes the purpose for this work clearly, "This book represents my best efforts to provide a comprehensive treatment of the life, thought, and letters of one of the first, and arguably the greatest, Christian theologians" (ix). The text is organized into two parts, a conclusion, and two indexes covering modern authors and ancient sources.

Part one focuses on Paul and his backgrounds as well as the writing of the epistles and formation of the canon. The first two chapters introduce the person of Paul and a basic chronology. Porter suggests Paul was a slightly younger contemporary of Jesus who may have been in Jerusalem by age thirteen (13). Porter provides a useful examination of Paul's life including areas like education, views on the empire, religion, and conversion. For those not already familiar with Porter's writings, the most surprising view is that Paul had seen and heard Jesus during his earthly ministry. Since they were in Jerusalem around the same time, Porter argues, Paul likely would have seen and heard Jesus. Paul's implication that he has seen the Lord (1 Cor 9:1) is understood by Porter to mean that Paul saw Jesus while he was alive rather than a post-resurrection appearance. In chapter 2, Porter's chronology relies closely on Acts. He considers all thirteen letters which claim to be Pauline as authentic and argues for Rome as the place of writing for the Prison Epistles.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on Paul's background and major themes in the Pauline letters. Porter acknowledges that the Greco-Roman context and the Jewish background of Paul are important for a proper understanding of Paul's writings. Authors often stress one or the

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[1]Information adapted from www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/faculty/core/stanley-e-porter.

other of these aspects in their views of Paul and his writings. While many authors stress the Jewish background, Porter suggests that the Greco-Roman influence deserves more attention. The prevalence of Jewish tombs in both Rome and Palestine with Greek epitaphs highlights the prevalence of the Greco-Roman culture among Jews (74). While many have stressed Jewish thought and influence upon Paul, Porter sees Judaism as one influence among others. "I believe that the Greco-Roman world was a complex environment that included Judaism as one of its many and varied components" (92). Chapter 4 covers the expected Pauline themes that provide the framework for Paul's views. This section provides brief but dense discussions of key elements in Paul's thoughts from a non-New Perspective view.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the Pauline letter form, pseudonymity, and the formation of the Pauline canon. The reader will find little that is surprising in the chapter on the letter form, but this section provides a good introduction to the topic. Porter rejects pseudonymity in light of the early church's response to known pseudonymous works. "If a work was discovered to be pseudonymous, it was excluded from any group of authoritative writings" (158). In the section related to the formation of the Pauline canon, Porter argues that Paul was involved in the collection of the thirteen letters as a normal part of letter writing. "The collection of Paul's letters would not have been an afterthought or required a later effort to visit the various designations or people to gather the letters, but rather they were kept by Paul and his literary team" (178).

In Part two, Porter examines the Pauline epistles in six chapters: Galatians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Corinthians, Romans, Prison Epistles, and Pastoral Epistles. Part two serves as a survey of the Pauline epistles, covering key critical issues like authorship, date, place of writing, and audience for each letter. Most of what Porter says in this section fits with traditional conservative approaches to these texts. He takes the South Galatians theory with an early date for the writing of this text. He has a traditional view of the Thessalonian and Corinthian correspondence. Porter does an excellent job throughout this section of covering the issues and giving a clear conclusion. As Porter states, "The purpose of chapters 7–12 is not so much to convince the reader of any one position as to present each reader with sufficient data to arrive at their own informed decisions" (183–84).

Stanley Porter has provided what will certainly be a standard work for those interested in studying Paul. In many ways, this text serves as an updating of works like F. F. Bruce's *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Part two of this text contains information which one might find in a typical New Testament introduction. One of the more helpful aspects of each chapter is a short bibliography following each chapter, divided into basic and advanced sources. Readers will be well served by this resource. The major strength of the work is part one. Porter does an excellent job of engaging various scholarly views and clearly articulating his own. While some may reject his conclusions because of his dependence on Acts and the Pastoral Epistles for reliable information, using these texts allows Porter to paint a

more complete description of Paul and his views than is often given. The author's emphasis on the Greco-Roman background for Pauline thought is a helpful reminder. Perhaps the greatest weaknesses of Porter's work is how much of it is not unique. While there are a few distinctive contributions within the work, the primary contribution is compiling an updated treatment of Paul from a conservative perspective.

- *Norris C. Grubbs, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana*

The Beginning of Baptist Ecclesiology: The Foundational Contributions of Thomas Helwys. By Marvin Jones. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017. 157 pages. Paperback, $22.00.

Often overshadowed by John Smyth, Thomas Helwys was the first permanent Baptist. Helwys founded the first Baptist Church in England, wrote the first English Baptist Confession of Faith, and penned the first plea for religious liberty in English. In this work, Marvin Jones, assistant professor of theology and church history at Louisiana College in Pineville, Louisiana, provides the reader with an excellent study of Helwys's ecclesiology.

There are many strengths to this book. Jones provides a quick but adequate overview of the English Reformation. His depiction of religious strife in seventeenth-century England and the apocalyptic thought that dominated this era is helpful to understanding Helwys' belief that he was living in the last days- thus lending to the urgency of his writings. Jones's strongest section is his interpretation of Helwys's ecclesiology. By drawing from what and who Helwys wrote against in his *Short Declaration of the Iniquity* (Catholic Church, Church of England, Puritanism, and Separatism), Jones was able to draw out the material that demonstrated Helwys's personal ecclesiology. Even at this early date in Baptist history, Jones demonstrates that Helwys maintained several tenets that would become hallmarks of Baptist belief such as the necessity of believers' baptism, religious liberty, a rejection of the necessity of baptismal succession, and the centrality of scripture as the sole source of authority. The sections where Jones draws attention to and elaborates on Helwys's conviction that fleeing from persecution is wrong is foundational to understanding why he returned to England to face almost certain incarceration. The bibliography is strong, and his choice of footnotes rather than endnotes should please all academics.

Jones's text has no glaring flaws worthy of attention or critique. It is an excellent book that can be used by both academics and laymen alike. Without any reservation, I recommend Jones's *The Beginning of Baptist Ecclesiology* to all who want to know the foundations of how and the reasons why the first Baptists organized their church.

- Joseph E. Early Jr., Campbellsville University, Campbellsville, Kentucky

Biblical Doctrine: *A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth.* **Edited by John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017. 1,023 pages. Hardcover, $60.00.**

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue's new systematic theology titled *Biblical Doctrine* has many positive aspects. For example, the book is well-organized. Following a single-page table of contents, the authors provide a ten-page analytical outline. First and second-tier headings are provided, which signal to readers how each doctrine will be presented. The topics addressed in the ten chapters are Prolegomena, Bibliology, Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Anthropology & Hamartiology, Soteriology, Angelology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. Each chapter begins with a hymn and chapter outline. Each chapter concludes with a prayer, another hymn, and a bibliography of the location of the relevant section in fifteen systematic theologies as well as chapters or monographs which address the chapter's topic. Each prayer is a lengthy excerpt from a book of prayer by MacArthur,[1] and many of the lines are restatements of Scripture. These devotional aspects are welcome contributions to the volume.

Who is the author? The cover lists two general editors, MacArthur and Mayhue. However, neither the table of contents nor the individual chapters provide the names of any authors. Instead, this sentence appears in the preface, "Our Master's Seminary colleagues Dr. Bill Barrick, Dr. Nathan Busenitz, Dr. Jim Mook, Dr. Bryan Murphy, Dr. Michael Vlach, and Professor Michael Riccardi supported us by producing drafts of several sections" (27). It seems this volume is similar in composition to the 2003 publication by the Dallas Theological Seminary Faculty edited by Swindoll and Zuck titled *Understanding Christian Theology*. That volume, however, was comprised of chapters with named authors. It is somewhat confusing to see the names of two general editors listed on a volume with no other attestation of authorship. If MacArthur and Mayhue are the general editors, then why not list the authors? If the reason is that the work is attributed primarily to MacArthur and Mayhue, then why not refer to them as the *authors*, while including the line of thanks in the preface for the contributions of others?

The volume displays a surprising lack of interaction with other viewpoints. For example, the doctrine of Bibliology, chapter 2, is treated in 70 pages. The chapter deals with issues such as inspiration, inerrancy, and authority. Besides the references to material penned by the general editors, the footnotes identify fewer than ten sources—all of which support the view presented in the text. Readers would benefit, however, from reading some of the current arguments against inerrancy—especially the cases made by Christian scholars such as N. T. Wright or Michael Bird. Also in chapter 2, the Roman Catholic view of Scripture is stated as follows: "In their view, the Bible is the Word of God because the Roman Church has decreed it to be" (102). That assertion does not accurately reflect Roman Catholic theology. Instead, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Holy Spirit inspired the

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[1]John MacArthur, *At the Throne of Grace: A Book of Prayers* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2011).

Scripture but the Church transmits and interprets that revelation.[2] These examples from chapter 2 illustrate that the work would be strengthened by interacting with other Christian viewpoints.

In chapter 3, "God the Father: Theology Proper," the authors address an array of subjects including God's existence, names, perfections, the Trinity, decrees, creation, miracles, providence, and evil. The authors prefer preaching to declare God's existence and for evangelistic purposes rather than presenting the classic proofs. They dismiss, for example, the cosmological argument because a Muslim philosopher and Gottfried Leibniz used the method (149). The analysis would have been strengthened by interacting with Christian philosophers and theologians who have argued for some version of the proofs, such as Alvin Plantinga, William Lane Craig, and C. S. Lewis. Also, statements such as this one will convince only those who embrace a simplistic version of the presuppositional apologetic: "The reason one must believe that he exists is because he said that he exists" (154).

The section on God's names and titles correctly grounds the investigation of God's nature in his revelation in Scripture. When discussing God's perfections (a term favored over attributes), the authors lean toward soft determinism, insisting on God's "perfect determination and sovereign ordination of all things" (185). Also, "God predetermined all events" (225). Even so, they argue for compatibilism in which "human free will and divine determinism are complementary ideas" (225). The authors' commitment to soft determinism, however, is a flaw which diminishes the work. Despite the authors pointing to secondary causation and their assertions that free will and divine determinism are compatible, their claims that God predetermines all events, including sin (225), seem to render God accountable for the human sins which he rightly condemns and judges. Critics will argue, instead, that God as an exercise of his sovereignty determined to create humans as morally free and responsible beings.

In their chapter on Theology Proper, MacArthur and Mayhue teach that God created all things in "six literal twenty-four hour days" and they regard the earth to be "relatively young—perhaps less than ten thousand years old" (216). They leave no option for any old earth version of creation such as theistic evolution, also called evolutionary creationism. The authors mention this issue repeatedly. For example, in the chapter on Christology, they claim, "Denial of instantaneous creation in Genesis 1 must, to be consistent, likewise deny the miracle by which Jesus created the wine at Cana. Rejecting his miracle at Cana results in rejecting Jesus as the God-man and as the Redeemer" (286). This claim that denying creation as instantaneous results in denials of Jesus as the God-man or his work of redemption is an example of a fallacious, slippery slope argument. The burden is on the authors to explain precisely how affirming either old earth creationism or evolutionary

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[2]Catechism of the Catholic Church §§ 80–82, available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM.

creationism necessarily results in one affirming unorthodox theological views of Christ and his work.

In chapter 4, the authors treat Christology under the headings of preincarnate, incarnate, glorified Christ. They provide the biblical basis for the historical affirmations of the person of Christ expressed at Nicaea and Chalcedon. Their study emphasizes the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in his life and ministry (chart begins on page 247 and ends on page 250) as well as the trials and crucifixion (286–305). In an interesting moment of speculation, the authors suggest Jesus's cry of dereliction from the cross was "a painful sense of estrangement from the Father" and "temporary separation from the Father" as a result of his work of substitutionary atonement (303). The authors provide a compelling argument for substitutionary atonement then mention his resurrection and ascension, topics which are treated more fully in the atonement section of the salvation chapter (ch. 7). The Christology chapter provides an instance in which the authors confuse explicit claims in Scripture for theological deductions. They write, "The Scripture, however, argues for the impeccability of Christ" (273). Although a compelling argument can be made for the view that Christ *could not* sin (impeccability), the Scripture states explicitly only that Christ *did not* sin.

Systematic theologians tend to repeat themselves when writing on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit because they cover many of the same biblical texts, historical controversies, and formulations when discussing the doctrine of the Trinity. Although this was the case in chapter 5, "The Holy Spirit," most of the material was unique to the chapter and aided in developing a biblical and systematic formulation of Pneumatology. Since the preface disclosed the cessationist perspective, readers might be pleasantly surprised at the depth of treatment in the chapter dedicated to the names, biblical word pictures, ministries, baptism, dwelling, and filling of the Holy Spirit. The cessationist label is deserved because the authors regard many of the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Cor 12–13 to be "temporary gifts," so named because they "served both revelatory and confirmatory purposes in authenticating God's special messengers and the inauguration of the new covenant era" (381). One might ask if these gifts—though not needed to confirm revelation due to the completion and closing of the canon—could be operative today in regions of the world which have no Scripture in the heart language of the people. These nine "temporary gifts" are included in Scripture with eleven "permanent gifts." The authors provide a peaceable rationale for their view, but alternate Christian interpretations are not presented.

In chapter 6, the authors address the doctrines of man and sin. Man is defined as a conditional and complex unity who is made in God's image. Although the authors affirm sudden creationism to explain the origin of the universe as well as the direct creation of man by God, they teach a traducian view of the soul and state that humans are "a result of the God-ordained procreation process" (426). Also, they state that God created humans with either a male or female gender (others would use the phrase biological sex where

these authors use the term gender). They assert a classical view of marriage and reject the idea that a homosexual union can rightly be called a marriage (431). After addressing the topics of death, ethnicity, government, and culture, they address the doctrine of sin. They define the core of sin as the desire for autonomy from the Creator. They locate the origin of sin in Adam and Eve's choice to disobey God when tempted by Satan in the garden. Man's relationships with God, other humans, and creation were all damaged by man's fall, which resulted in physical, spiritual, and eternal death. After presenting four views for understanding the transmission of sin, the authors endorse representative headship, a covenantal view which rejects the covenant of works, "since Scripture makes no mention of a covenant of works" (465). After bundling total depravity with the inability "to accept or reject God and his gospel" (468), the authors treat topics such as the unpardonable sin, the sin leading to death, and mortal and venial sins. The chapter ends with a three-page section titled "Biblical Theology of Sin," which narrates in a concise, engaging way the sweep of salvation history from the fall of Adam to the cross of Christ.

At 178 pages, chapter 7, "Salvation: Soteriology," was twice the average length of the other chapters. Stated another way, the chapter covered 10% of the book's doctrines but comprised 20% of the total page count. Such a proportion is justified, however, because the authors treat what other systematic theologians regard as two doctrines, atonement and salvation. Following a brief introduction, the chapter is divided according to the actions of each person of the Trinity: the plan (Father), the accomplishment (Son), and the application (Holy Spirit) of redemption. The greatest strength of the chapter is the use of Scripture (either citation or quotation and explanation) to support and illustrate doctrinal claims. The sections on perseverance and glorification provide fine examples of how to explain doctrinal concepts such as eternal security, apostasy, and sanctification by drawing insights from key biblical texts as well as anticipating and answering common objections.

The greatest weakness of chapter 7—one shared by other chapters in the book—is that alternate viewpoints are represented either weakly or not at all. MacArthur and Mayhue provide thorough explanations of Scripture from the perspective of five-point Calvinism, but the material would have benefited from other interpretations common among evangelical Protestants, such as three-point and four-point Calvinism as well as Molinism. Although the interpretations presented in the book are legitimate options, readers are presented many times with only one interpretation and consequently might be left with the (unfortunate and incorrect) impression that only one viewpoint exists on those matters among evangelical Protestants. The section on election, for example, would have been strengthened by including a robust summary of an alternative viewpoint on the doctrine, such as that of William Klein, Brian Abasciano, or Chad Thornhill.

Another weakness of the chapter on salvation is that the section on the application of redemption was structured according to an *ordo salutis* based on an interpretation of a single biblical text, Rom 8:29–30. The "goal of a biblical *ordo salutis*" is stated as: "to

read out of the text the divine logic and order that the Spirit of God himself has plainly revealed" (567). Such a definition gives readers a glimpse into the apparent assumption of the authors—that God has plainly revealed in the biblical text *their* interpretation of the biblical text. Affirming such a notion would reveal either one's theological naiveté by equating the word of God with one's *interpretation* of the word of God, or one's obtuseness in failing to acknowledge that some systematic theologians reject the notion of discerning the mind of God (via a logical order of decrees) which God has not chosen to reveal plainly in the Scriptures.[3] Although many New Testament texts are examined in that section, before the discussion began the presupposition was set into place that two verses of Scripture reveal a logical and theo-deterministic order of salvation. For example, the authors presuppose that all biblical texts concerning repentance and faith presuppose that regeneration precedes faith because "Scripture seems to clearly present faith as the consequence of the new birth" (569). In other words, the Bible teaches that regeneration precedes faith because Rom 8:29–30 reveals a logical order of God's decrees, including the logical order of salvation. Even with these weaknesses, the chapter on salvation provides a compelling and Bible-saturated account of God's trinitarian work on behalf of sinners at the cross of Christ.

Chapter 8, "Angels: Angelology," is a comprehensive examination of the biblical material on holy angels, Satan, demons, and the angel of the Lord. The sections are proportional treatments of the biblical material, which focus on biblical terms and their occurrences in Scripture which are organized topically to address their respective reality, character, and actions. The authors should be commended for including this chapter on angelology, a topic which is relegated in some systematic theologies to only a few pages. Interestingly, the chapter ends with a Q&A section comprised of brief answers to thirteen questions on angels, Satan, and demons. This is the only chapter with a Q&A section, and one wonders if this material should have been incorporated into the chapter at relevant points. Also, this chapter (as well as several other chapters) would have been strengthened by including a small section of historical theology to provide some perspective on the interpretation of key thinkers in the history of the church concerning this doctrine.

"The Church: Ecclesiology," chapter 9, addresses topics one would expect, such as the nature, unity, and membership of the church as well as the use of spiritual gifts. One might wonder if some of the material presented is essential in a work of systematic theology. For example, the authors spend three pages providing Jesus's "seven hallmark principles for building his church" based on Matt 16:18. The seven points are alliterated ("A Permanent

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[3]Consider this critique by James Leo Garrett Jr, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 2:447–48, "Can we as finite, mortal beings correctly order and arrange the eternal decrees of God as they are indeed in the mind and purpose of God? Is such an effort not in itself a presumptuous attempt? Does the doctrine of decrees extend beyond the clear teachings of the Bible as to the will, purpose, and plan of God, thus posing conclusions that are not specifically provided within the biblical canon?"

Foundation," "A Positive Expectation," "A Powerful Advance," etc.). Although this material might have served as a helpful sermonic outline (the section was adapted from a book by Mayhue), would any reader today think Jesus had these principles in mind when uttering the words of Matt 16:18? Many such outlines can be found in this volume, and such material does not strengthen the credibility of the book as an academic resource for either understanding the Bible or organizing its content.

Also in chapter 9, the authors make an extended case for churches being led by a plurality of male elders (759–69). When contrasting "elder rule" (769) with other forms of polity, no biblical case is presented for a congregational form of government. Rather, the authors state that "democratic political values often prompt" the congregational model (769). Also, no mention is made of the possibility of a blended form of polity in which elders serve in a congregational model. Groups which have many churches adopting this blended model, such as Southern Baptists, will likely notice this gap in the presentation. Another point of interest is the brief case the authors make for the permissibility of women to serve as deacons (772–73); such a view is possible but not commonly found among complementarians. Also, they advocate for a model of believers' baptism by immersion and reject the legitimacy of infant baptism with no attempt to engage other Christian views on the matter. The authors rightly affirm the practice of church discipline (793–95), but one wonders if the authors' rejection of congregational polity results in their reading elders into the texts of Matt 18 and 1 Cor 5, which do not mention elders. The section on spiritual gifts in the church unfortunately presents a false dichotomy in which one affirms either cessationism[4] or one affirms "the modern counterfeits of the charismatic movement" (805), with no attempt to present credible biblical-theological scholarship for either the continuationist or the open-but-cautious position by advocates such as Max Turner, Robert Saucy, Wayne Grudem, Sam Storms, and Amos Yong.

The last chapter deals with last things. Entitled "The Future: Eschatology," chapter 10 organizes the doctrine as follows: Introduction to Eschatology, Personal Eschatology, and Cosmic Eschatology. The authors explain, "The Bible presents the glorious end to come as the source of ultimate hope and encouragement for the Christian" (828). Advocating for a new creation model (rather than a spiritual vision model), they view the future return of Christ as the time when he will establish a physical kingdom in Jerusalem and reign on earth prior to establishing the new heaven and new earth mentioned in Rev 21–22. Following a brief treatment of personal eschatology (which addresses death, the intermediate state, hell, and heaven), the authors devote their attention to cosmic eschatology. In this final

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[4]Cessationism is defined as "the view that the sign gifts (e.g., the performing of miracles, gifts of healing, speaking in tongues) and the revelatory gifts (i.e., the reception and proclamation of new revelation from God) passed away when the foundation stage of the church ended" (804), and is advocated throughout this chapter—and other parts of the book—with citations from MacArthur's *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013).

section, they highlight the significance of Old Testament promises to Israel, note the distinctions between Israel and the church, and advocate for futuristic millennialism. They explain, "As a refinement of dispensational premillennialism, futuristic millennialism affirms a futuristic view of Daniel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:27), which includes the events of Matthew 24 and the judgments of seals, trumpets, and bowls described in Revelation 6–18" (856). Those who do not affirm this eschatological interpretation will appreciate the authors' treatment of biblical covenants as the means of fulfilling God's plan in history as well as the careful argument from Scripture for a millennial view. The authors' presentation of four options (preterist, historicist, idealist, and futurist) for interpreting the end times might be strengthened by offering a fifth option (eclectic), which allows one to affirm various views depending on which portion of the biblical text one is considering.[5] The authors conclude the book with a 16-page glossary of basic theological terms "drawn with minor revisions" from Millard Erickson's *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (923).

MacArthur and Mayhue's book will be a helpful resource for students of the Bible who are already in general agreement with the book's doctrinal conclusions. Those who desire biblical citations and textual interpretations which support a conservative and literalistic reading of Scripture—which advocates for views such as young-earth creationism, cessationism, soft determinism, complementarian, and premillennialism, with either weak or no representation of alternative Christian viewpoints—will find this book to be an ideal resource. However, those who desire to wrestle with the Scriptures and the wider Christian tradition in order to make their own judgments to identify the strongest viewpoint will not find this book to be as helpful as other works of systematic theology.

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***Christ Alone—The Uniqueness of Jesus As Savior: What the Reformers Taught . . . and Why It Still Matters.* By Stephen Wellum. In The Five Solas Series, edited by Matthew Barrett. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017. 343 pages. Paperback, $24.99.**

Stephen Wellum (PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) serves as professor of Christian theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and is editor of the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*. Among his various publications is *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (2012), which he co-authored with Peter Gentry.

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[5]Grant Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 21–22, names several commentaries on the book of Revelation which opt for what he calls the eclectic approach.

Christ Alone is part of a five-book series edited by Matthew Barrett (PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Each volume is devoted to a specific "sola" of the Reformation with a goal of restoring these truths to prominence in contemporary evangelical life and thought.

Wellum's goal "is to learn from the Reformers' *solus Christus* so that we might proclaim the same Christ in our context today" (24). He accomplishes this aim by defending two biblical truths that were central to Reformation Christology: the exclusive identity of Christ and the sufficient work of Christ. Christ's unique personhood positions him to be the only Savior: "From beginning to end, this book confesses with the Reformers that Jesus Christ bears the exclusive identity of God the Son incarnate and has accomplished an all-sufficient work to fulfill God's eternal plans and establish God's eternal kingdom on earth" (27).

The plan of the book is both logical and straightforward. After an introductory chapter, Wellum devotes part one to the exclusivity of Christ's identity. With rigorous biblical exegesis, he demonstrates that the uniqueness of Jesus as the only Savior is not dependent on select verses in the New Testament, but instead rests on the Bible's entire storyline, the biblical covenants in particular.

Wellum devotes chapter 2 to establishing that both Jesus's words and works indicate that Jesus understood himself to be both God and man, and therefore the promised Messiah as depicted throughout the Old Testament. Chapter 3 is devoted to showing that the apostles also understood and proclaimed that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who defeated death and is worthy of worship.

In chapter 4, Wellum carefully exegetes Hebrews 2:5–18 to establish the necessary connection between Christ's exclusive identity and his sufficient work as Savior. He concludes part one by saying, "In every possible world where sinners stand before the self-sufficient, holy, and triune God, the only way to save us is by Christ alone" (155).

Wellum dedicates part two of the book to establishing the sufficiency of Christ's work, grounding that sufficiency in his unique identity. In chapter 5, Wellum shows that Jesus's role as prophet, priest, and king fulfills the Old Testament storyline, revealing him to be the all-sufficient Savior. On behalf of his people, Jesus subdues their hearts, defeats their enemies, and inaugurates the kingdom of God.

In chapter 6, Wellum—in recognition of the centrality of Christ's priestly office—explains and evaluates the major atonement models advocated in Christian history. While Wellum acknowledges that the atonement is a rich, multifaceted concept and that each model captures an essential aspect of Christ's work on the cross, he contends that the penal substitution model most comprehensively represents the biblical teaching

on the atonement. Wellum rightly sees the postmodern view of the atonement as a contemporary restatement of the Socinian/classical liberal position. That view, along with the governmental model, garners special attention. Wellum concludes that neither view can explain adequately why Jesus had to die and why the atonement was provided by this precise method, the death of Christ.

Wellum dedicates two chapters, 7 and 8, to a biblical formulation and defense of the penal substitution model. His central claim is that the penal substitution model alone accounts for the biblical data, including the necessity of Christ's death, and best explains why Christ alone is Savior. Wellum argues that the Reformers' understanding of penal substitution as the most comprehensive biblical model of the atonement is a major contribution to Christian thought. Penal substitution—the fact that Christ's death was substitutionary and that it involved legal payment—best explains the biblical facts about the cross, such as Jesus's own understanding of the cross in God's plan and how his death brings forgiveness of sin.

In chapter 8, Wellum establishes that biblical ideas such as obedience, sacrifice, propitiation, redemption, reconciliation, justification, victory, and even moral example are best understood in light of Christ's bearing the penalty of sin as God's chosen substitute. Wellum aptly concludes part two of his book: "But none of this biblical data makes sense apart from viewing Christ's work, in his life and death, as the one who shed his blood as our new covenant head, our great high priest, and *as our penal substitute*. All of Christ's benefits are ours because the Son became man, represented us in his life and death, and died in our place" (244).

In part three, Wellum uses biblical/theological truths established in parts one and two to assess post-Reformation denials of Christ's uniqueness and the sufficiency of his work—denials which ultimately reject the Reformers' position of Christ alone. In chapter 9, Wellum demonstrates that the Chalcedonian formula, which is the standard of orthodox Christology, accurately presents Jesus as the unique Son of God, the second person of the Trinity incarnate.

In chapter 10, Wellum pinpoints the heart of the Reformers' disagreement with Roman Catholicism. Both positions firmly concur with the Chalcedonian definition and therefore agree concerning the unique personhood of Jesus of Nazareth. The disagreement concerns the sufficiency of Christ's work, which Roman Catholicism denies with its thoroughgoing sacramentalism. The Reformers opposed the practice of indulgences, the sacrifice of the Mass, and the doctrine of purgatory since these undermine Christ's all-sufficient work.

In chapter 11, Wellum explains and critiques developments in the Enlightenment which cast doubt on biblical Christology. In this "age of reason," the human mind was elevated to a position of supreme authority, all but eclipsing divine revelation. As a result, the orthodox

practice of "Christology from above" was replaced with a Christology that conforms to modern human reason and experience. Subsequent "quests for the historical Jesus" made a sharp distinction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith, ultimately resulting in religious pluralism which denies the sufficiency of Christ's work.

In chapter 12, Wellum observes that postmodernism's denial of the possibility of knowing objective truth and its "incredulity toward metanarratives" provide no basis for metaphysical knowledge in general and Christology in particular. Postmodern pantheism does not entirely deny the deity of Jesus as much as it affirms a lesser degree of deity in all humans, an obvious dismissal of Christ's unique identity.

Wellum warns that the church must cling tenaciously to the Reformation teaching of Christ alone. The way forward is by reaffirming the authoritative nature of the Word of God in its entire storyline and following its model of Christology from above—thereby reclaiming *solus Christus* by affirming *sola Scriptura*.

Wellum concludes by urging the church to proclaim unequivocally that "Jesus Christ is Lord, and apart from faith alone in Christ alone there is no salvation" (312) and Christians to submit to him in love, joy, and worship.

Christ Alone is a paradigm of careful weaving of biblical, systematic, and historical theology, permeated with doxology. The eight-page Scripture index attests to Wellum's prodigious use of the Bible. The seven-page subject index (which includes a high concentration of names), along with the lengthy bibliography, indicates the wide range of theologians with which Wellum interacts in the book—thinkers from the early church to the present.

Christ Alone is a significant contribution to a valuable series that calls the church back to the core contributions of the Protestant Reformation. This book would serve well as a main text in a course on Christology or as a supplemental reading text in systematic theology, at either the graduate or undergraduate level. I also highly recommend this book to pastors since Christ's uniqueness and the sufficiency of his work, as biblical doctrines, are foundational to the life of the church.

- Walter Johnson, North Greenville University, Tigerville, South Carolina

The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament. **2nd edition. By Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016. 1168 pages. Hardcover, $59.99.**

First published in 2009, the second edition of *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (hereafter CCC) has reestablished itself as one of the premier New Testament introductions available on the market today. Authored by Andreas

J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, all of whom serve on faculty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, CCC not only provides the reader with an extensive amount of academic information concerning the world of the New Testament, but also helpfully balances this information with a concern for spiritual growth (e.g., 337).

CCC begins with a fruitful discussion of Scripture and canon (2–62) as well as the political and religious background of the New Testament (63–110). These two chapters will serve the professor well who desires to provide a helpful overview of each area without burdening the student, but it will likewise serve the pastor or laymen well who either needs a refresher or a basic introduction to the topics at hand.

The heart of the book begins when the authors discuss the relevant New Testament books. Each chapter contains the same layout: an examination of the history (author/date/provenance/destination/purpose), literature (structure/outline/survey), and theology of the respective book. By structuring the book in this way, the authors have remained consistent for the reader of the work chapter-by-chapter and, as such, makes the work very user-friendly.

The New Testament books are divided into three sections: Jesus and the Gospels, the Early Church and Paul, and the General Epistles and Revelation. This is, of course, a natural division of the New Testament canon itself. However, rather than following the structure of the New Testament canon the textbook authors chose to arrange the Pauline corpus by date. They structure the Pauline corpus this way because they believe "studying Paul's Letters in the order in which they were written helps integrate them with the historical framework of Acts" (xvii). Table 9.2 provides this point in a visual that allows the reader to see a chronology of Paul's life and his letters, with the corresponding sections in Acts. However, the sections on the Gospels and the General Epistles and Revelation stay with the order of the New Testament canon.

The work concludes with a helpful discussion on the unity and diversity within the New Testament and how "these various books cohere and yet reveal a certain amount of diversity" (999). Here the reader will find helpful introductory discussions on various topics that are important conversations within the broader academic world but often are omitted from New Testament introductions. For example, an important discussion is that of the identity of Paul in Acts and that of the Pauline letters (1007–10) as well as the alleged developments in Paul's thought from the beginning of his conversion to his death (1010–13). Of particular addition to the second edition is the Epilogue in which the storyline of the Bible is highlighted from "creation to new creation, from promise to fulfillment, from dominion and disaster to renewed dominion" (1024). The reader would do well to spend time in this chapter, and it serves as a fitting conclusion to the book.

This second edition of CCC provides many updates in the state of current research for the New Testament and, with the addition of more than 200 pages which provide the reader with ample sources. The bibliographic material found at the conclusion of each chapter supplies the reader with helpful material and conversation partners of similar or opposing views. Furthermore, the use of footnotes rather than endnotes allows the reader to track with certain arguments more easily, as the tendency of many footnotes is to include relevant content.

The authors are evangelical and hold to conservative positions throughout the book. Their position is stated clearly from the beginning (xvii), and their arguments are centered on this theological spectrum. For example, the authors reject the pseudonymity of the letters that are written by both the Apostles Paul (719–26) and Peter (855–64). The discussions of these topics, as well as others, introduce the reader to the topic, provide a helpful response, and allow for further research through the bibliographic material.

As with the first edition, the second edition refrains from identifying the primary author of each specific chapter. Although Köstenberger is identified as the general editor, all other authors are left open for speculation as "it would be counterproductive to identify the authors of individual chapters" since the authors stand behind the final product (xxi). This decision is most unfortunate as each author should be duly recognized for his respective contribution to this work.

Also, despite the suggestion by the authors to follow the Pauline date of writing for their discussion of Paul's writing, it would have perhaps been better to follow the canonical order. The canonical order of Paul's writings has been read by Christians for centuries and, as such, is one the reader of the New Testament recognizes. This feature is the only area in which the book loses its user-friendliness.

The reader of this book, or any book of considerable size, will not agree with everything that is written, as this reviewer did not. Nevertheless, CCC is a praiseworthy New Testament introduction that deserves to be on the shelf of any student of the New Testament. Many will benefit from the helpful discussions and be encouraged to pursue further research. This introduction is still the best on the market available today.

- Jason P. Kees, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri

Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright. **Edited by James M. Scott. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 343 pages. Hardcover, $40.00.**

Few modern biblical scholars drive the discussion on numerous topics like N. T. Wright. His views on the exile and its impact on Jewish thinking in the Second Temple period is no exception. James Scott, professor of religious studies at Trinity Western University in British Columbia, assembled a wide array of scholars to engage in a conversation with

Wright on the exile in the Second Temple period. In 2010, Wright went to Trinity Western University to participate in a symposium on exile. Other scholars were invited to interact with Wright from their specific discipline. This book is a continuation of that symposium as many of the essays, revised for publication, are included in the book with new articles.

Scott, as editor, introduces the topic by synthesizing Wright's views and presenting scholarly responses both for and against Wright's claim. The introduction presents the recent scholarship on the issue and helps the reader better understand the arguments. The central question presented is: Upon return to Jerusalem in 538 BCE by a remnant of Jews, did the exile end or did the spiritual condition persist with an expectation of the exile ending in the future? Wright believes it is the latter with an ongoing exile found in the Second Temple period. Most scholars think the motif is valid, but that Wright takes the theme too far. For instance, in *God and the Faithfulness of Paul*, Christoph Heilig, J. Thomas Hewitt, and Michael F. Bird interact with Wright's views on the exile by presenting how the exile is a valid motif but not the major metanarrative that Wright presents. Other scholars like Joel R. Wright, Richard B. Hays, Nicholas Perrin, Seyoon Kim, and Steve Moyise range on a spectrum of agreeing completely with Wright to exposing weaknesses in Wright's thesis. James D. G. Dunn is a vocal opponent of Wright on this topic saying Wright's greatest weakness is being unable to show how the narrative was a controlling part of the teaching of Jesus. Dunn provides Wright with a small reprieve by stating that Wright may be correct in response to pre-New Testament writers, but the thesis falls short in response to Jesus and Paul (10–13). Even though the scholarship is divided on the Jewish view of the exile in the Second Temple period, exploration continues in the rest of the book.

The book is divided into six parts with scholars from their respective fields providing responses. Wright begins by presenting a lead article on his views of the exile and its impact on the first-century Jew. Part 1: Old Testament/Hebrew Bible/Septuagint provides responses from Walter Brueggemann, Robert J. V. Hiebert, and Jörn Kiefer. Part 2: Early Judaism produces responses from Philip Alexander, Robert Kugler, and Dorothy M. Peters. Part 3: New Testament has articles from Scot McKnight, S. A. Cummins, and Timo Eskola while Part 4: Theology contains articles from Hans Boersma and Ephraim Radner. The conclusion follows with a closing response from Wright engaging the previous articles.

Wright begins by presenting his thesis again that "the majority of Second Temple Jews saw themselves as living within an ongoing exile" (19). It is not proposed by Wright that all Jews thought exactly the same on all topics. His thesis is based on a general consensus of Jews following the same thoughts on the exile as continuing. Wright contends that in the Second Temple period, the continuing narrative finds the Jews in the Deuteronomic cycle of sin-exile-restoration. The Jews think they are still in the exile phase with the restoration still to come. The exile contains an already-but-not-yet component. Wright focuses on how eschatology fits into the exilic motif, basing his views on Daniel 9, Ezra 9, and Nehemiah 9. Wright presents some exceptions to the rule of the Jews still in exile from the Second

Temple period literature in Sira, Judith, and Maccabees. But as Wright says in supporting his thesis, "The point is that Jewish eschatology in the second Temple period focused on the hope that that which had happened in the Babylonian exile, the triumph of paganism over Israel because of its sins, was still the dominant state of affairs but would at last be undone" (36). Wright presents the view of continuing exile as that of a metanarrative that is over all the other narratives of the New Testament.

Wright presents other evidence like the temple in the continuing exile and Wright concludes that Jesus saw himself as the culmination of the exile. For Wright, the prophets in the pre-exilic time see the culmination of exile as forgiveness of sin. Wright shows how the forgiveness of sin happens in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul picks up on this metanarrative showing Jesus as the culmination of exile; presumably, the exile ends with Jesus.

The other response articles generally agree that the Jews of the Second Temple period see themselves in some form of exile. One of the main points of differentiation centers on the idea that the exile as metanarrative is given too much weight. Most respondents do not see the exile as a metanarrative with a Jewish focus. The exile may play a role in the thoughts of the Jews of the Second Temple period but not with the weight given to them by Wright.

Wright assigns more significance and weight to the exile then pushes some of his conclusions too far. For instance, Wright sees the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 11:32) as an example of the Israelite nation being in exile, returning home to the waiting father (God), and the older brother being the Pharisees or other religious leaders. What Wright does with this parable is a fine example of eisegesis. Wright takes what he thinks of the Jewish thought of exile as continuing and puts that into the text instead of exploring the text. Much of what Wright concludes is because of his focus on exile as an eschatological theme. It is highly probable that some or even many Jews focused on the exile as a spiritual condition, one that they were still waiting to reach its conclusion. But this was neither the driving force nor the metanarrative that Wright claims.

The editor, James Scott, provides a valuable resource for the study of exile in the Second Temple period. Wright continues to provide documentation in support of his thesis. This book is well laid out, and the arguments presented by both Wright and all the respondents are well written, easy to read and follow. For those interested in furthering their study on the views of the Jews and exile in the Second Temple period, this book is highly recommended.

- Michael Gill, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana

God and Soul Care: The Therapeutic Resources of the Christian Faith. **By Eric L. Johnson. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 717 pages. Hardcover, $45.00.**

Eric Johnson earned his PhD from Michigan State University and is an academic psychologist. He has held teaching positions at Northwestern College in Minnesota and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Out of a desire to see a field of psychology emerge based on biblical theology and psychological research, Johnson has written numerous articles and contributed to two books on the subject of Christian psychology. He has two formative books in the area of Christian psychology, *Foundations of Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (2014) and the book being reviewed in this article, *God and Soul Care: The Therapeutic Resources of the Christian Faith*.

The author's primary purpose for this book is to develop the therapeutic benefits of the aspects of biblical theology on which the Christian faith is based. He purports, based on a quote from Pascal, that every worldview must include both reason and faith, which Pascal called "first principles." Johnson writes, "The following book is an exposition of the 'first principles' of Christianity with regard to psychotherapy and counseling as they emerge from the Bible and the Christian tradition" (4). The author hopes this work will be used as a textbook in Christian psychotherapy and counseling programs to merge the fields of systematic theology and counseling. He also hopes it might create a more common understanding and possibly a dialogue between mental health professionals and Christian ministers, possibly giving the later a better understanding of therapeutic implications of Christian faith and helpful guidance as they counsel their parishioners.

The author divides the book into six parts. Each one of the sections contributes to laying a foundation of what Johnson terms the "first principles of Christian Psychology and Counseling," or the basic assumptions underlying this model of therapy. He suggests there are three basic principles. The first is a relational principle in which "God created humans to flourish best when He is the center of their life and His glory is their greatest motive." The second is a trinitarian principle in which "a core feature of God manifesting His glory is the revelation that He is triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." The third principle is a christological one in which the "Trinity's glory-agenda is refined further by its concentration on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Son of Man" (4).

In Part 1 of his book, Johnson seeks to explore how God's ultimate desire is to bring himself glory and man's created purpose to bring God glory function together resulting in man's flourishing and thriving in all aspects of life. Part 2 seeks to demonstrate how the goodness of God, as denoted in his sovereign majesty, righteousness, and love establishes proof that "reality is fundamentally personal and positive," "God's creation is primordially good," and that "human evil and sin are not intrinsic to human life" (153).

Part 3 is Johnson's attempt to create a framework for unifying the ethicospiritual damage of sin, the biopsychosocial damage of contemporary psychiatric and psychological disorders, and the damage caused by suffering. He moves on in Part 4 to explain the many therapeutic healing attributes of man's union with God.

Part 5 is an introduction to Johnson's idea of divine therapy. According to the author, divine therapy occurs when Christian psychotherapy and counseling facilitates two aspects: *redemptive differentiation* and *redemptive integration*. Redemptive differentiation is the resolution of the conflict between old man and new man. Redemptive integration is "the increasing purification and unification of one's body/soul" (437). Johnson suggests redemptive integration happens in communion with the triune God and the church, and through an owning of one's full identity in Christ.

In the final part, Johnson writes that the divine cure is the hope through faith in the Spirit that believers have in their stage of life directly following life on earth. "Believing by the Spirit that this stage is coming is intended by God to transfigure how those in Christ interpret everything in this life, to help them cope with their earthly limitations, struggles, and obstacles, and to promote the coming of Christ's kingdom through their lives, their relationships, and their culture, including inviting others to join them on this journey" (43).

Johnson's writing has been highly criticized in the biblical counseling field by those who suggest he does not adhere to sufficiency of Scripture for Christian psychotherapy and counseling, ultimately undermining the authority of the Word of God.[1] While one could dismiss this criticism by arguing that their criticism is based entirely on a difference of opinion on how to interpret 2 Tim 3:16–17, a stronger response would be to look at how Johnson talks about the sufficiency of Scripture in his work. While the entire work is a treatise for developing a psychology grounded in a Christian worldview based on biblical theology, the primary focus of Part 3: The Divine Diagnosis is written as a support for the sufficiency of Scripture. Johnson argues that three distinct perspectives exist for psychopathology, or "soul disorders": an ethicospiritual or sin perspective, a biopsychosocial perspective or the contemporary psychiatric and psychological disorders, and a perspective of suffering. Johnson suggests that a Christian psychology would place the truth of Scripture as a lens through which it examines the relationship between the three perspectives of psychopathology. It would seem that John Calvin would agree with Johnson when he writes, "All truth is from God; and consequently, if wicked men have said anything that is true and just, we ought not to reject it; for it has come from God. Besides, all things are of God; and therefore, why should it not be lawful to dedicate to his glory everything that can properly be employed for such a purpose?"[2]

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[1]Keith Palmer, "Christian Psychology: An Introduction and Biblical Analysis." Association of Certified Biblical Counselors. Available at https://biblicalcounseling.com/resources/acbc-essays/christian-psychology-introduction-biblical-analysis/.

[2]John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 300–301.

The impact Eric Johnson's book will have on the field of Christian psychology and counseling is epic. As all models of therapy have foundational assumptions on which they are based, *God and Soul Care* lays down the biblical and theological assumptions from which all models of Christian psychology should be based. Johnson uses a systematic theology influenced by Augustine, Julian of Norwich, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Søren Kierkegaard, Thomas Merton, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Eleonore Stump, and John Piper to propose Christian psychological assumptions, which have never been expounded upon and supported to such an extent. Johnson lays a foundation for therapeutic models of Christian psychology to be formulated and developed. It is the opinion of this author that this work will be catalytic to the growth of the Christian psychology field of study.

Johnson wrote *God and Soul Care* to be read by graduate-level students or above. It is written as a textbook for graduate programs which combine psychology and counseling with biblical theology. While this book requires a high level of literacy to read and may be daunting for students, the book is not an impossible read. One should give the time and energy it will take to read, study, and comprehend due to the value of the work.

- Ashley Brooks, Restoration Counseling, New Orleans, Louisiana

The Historical Reliability of the New Testament: Countering the Challenges to Evangelical Christian Beliefs. **By Craig L. Blomberg. In B&H Studies in Christian Apologetics, edited by Robert B. Stewart. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016. 816 pages. Softcover, $39.99.**

Craig Blomberg has been a professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary in Colorado since 1986. He received an MA from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a PhD from Aberdeen University in Scotland. He is the author of numerous academic books and articles as well as several popular level works dealing with the Bible. He has written commentaries on Matthew (NAC), 1 Corinthians (NIVAC), and James (ECNT), and he has published a number of books about biblical interpretation and the reliability of the New Testament.

Blomberg and others had previously written on the historical reliability of various segments of the Bible, but no previous work had compiled all of those topics into one volume, which was the gap Blomberg aimed to fill (xxii–xxiii). He also desired to approach the topic from a conservative perspective by a specialist in the field who could present the material in a way more amenable to a general readership (xxx). His goal was not to do a point-by-point analysis of every issue but to provide a survey that was more than superficial but not too encumbered by footnotes and technical jargon (xxx, xxiii).

The book is divided into six parts with each comprising roughly one hundred pages of text: Synoptic Gospels, Gospel of John, Paul and Acts, the rest of the New Testament, canon and transmission, and the problem of miracles. The first four sections, which cover the books of the New Testament, proceed in the same manner. Blomberg began by addressing challenges to the reliability of the books based on critical issues like authorship, date, or origins, and then he selected individual passages within the books themselves that bear the mark of accurate historiography. In other words, in the first four sections, he typically moved from negative arguments against a particular book or collection to possible positive arguments based on corroboration from external sources or whether the verisimilitude of a particular passage could be demonstrated. In the last two sections, Blomberg answered questions about the text and canon of the New Testament and the nature of miracles.

As Blomberg noted in the introduction, readers could find more detailed discussions of any of the topics covered in the book, many of which Blomberg had done himself in other publications, but this was the first work to put all of these topics together in one volume (xxiii). For that reason, the book serves as an excellent starting point or introduction to a host of complicated questions. Readers could then be directed elsewhere for a more detailed engagement of the topics. Blomberg did not often explicitly refer readers to other works—sections on Acts (293) and Miracles (673–76) are notable exceptions—but he did cite numerous current works on the topics under discussion. As an introductory volume, however, the work would be improved by the inclusion of a bibliography after each section for further research.

As the footnotes bear out, Blomberg should be commended for maintaining engagement with scholarly discussions on a wide range of topics. Even in subjects where he had previously published work, Blomberg did not just repeat the content found in his previous publications. The volume felt like a sustained and coherent argument rather than a copy-and-paste job of new research spliced together with older work. Blomberg did not often refer to his previous works to make or settle a point, and he was usually forthcoming about reworking or summarizing previous research (e.g., 157n13). Blomberg seemed to reexamine each of the issues in light of recent research, and at times he even shifted his positions (e.g., 57). Moreover, even within such a large volume, he duplicated material only on a few rare occasions (63–64; 82–84; 111–12).

Throughout the work, Blomberg sought to position himself as a centrist within the broader evangelical landscape. He noted in the conclusion how the book would likely be rejected by hardline skeptics of Christianity as well as evangelicals who were "too threatened by the questions" to even entertain his arguments (717). On the one hand, he chided conservative scholars who "jump on the bandwagon of viewpoints with slender evidence" like maintaining an early (pre-AD 70) date for the Gospel of John (162). On the other hand, he argued for the marginally-less conservative position of dating the Synoptics and Acts before AD 70. He suggested that he took a "conservative position" throughout the

work, but he recognized that many of his arguments about genre or literary form could be used to dismiss him by more conservative camps (718).

To maintain his conservative positions, Blomberg did seem to force issues at times. For example, his reading of the census "before" Quirinius rather than "first," as every other time the word was used in Luke, comes across as special pleading (60). Notably, the sources for support here were also much older works. Generally, Blomberg cast a reliable portrayal of positions with which he disagreed, but he did occasionally skip over a few pieces of counter-evidence. For example, in his discussion of the pseudonymity of the Pastorals, he ignored the manuscript evidence and the potential parallel with Marcion's work (i.e., 1 Tim 6:20). Likewise, his suggestion that the author of the Gospel of John made decisions on which stories to include in his writing based on "what he believed the Synoptics already covered well" seems to go beyond the available evidence (188).

Overall, the work fills an interesting place in scholarly research. The volume functions somewhat like a cross between an introduction to the New Testament and a conservative critical commentary. The sections that one would not find in either of those types of works were perhaps the strongest, namely the chapters on pseudonymity (ch. 8) and miracles (ch. 14). In both chapters, Blomberg succinctly summarized the debates, detailed the most effective arguments in recent history, and cogently defended his own positions. His conclusion to the argument for the reliability of the miracles in the New Testament was perhaps the most forceful argument in the book (715).

This book will be a valuable resource for anyone interested in or concerned about the historical reliability of the New Testament. Whether a pastor, layperson, or student, Blomberg's book is an excellent introduction to the questions of the Bible's reliability. He writes clearly, summarizes complicated arguments well, provides balanced treatments of opposing positions, and interacts with recent research. This volume should be the starting point for these discussions for years to come.

- *Jesse B. Coyne, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana*

The Love of God: A Canonical Model. **By John C. Peckham. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015. 295 pages. Paperback, $32.00.**

The topic of God's love is familiar grounds for John C. Peckham, who is associate professor of theology and Christian philosophy at Andrews University, a Seventh-Day Adventist institution. Previously, Peckham wrote his dissertation, which upon publication, received an outstanding dissertation award in 2012. *The Love of God: A Canonical Model* also won IVP Reader's Choice Award. The book has been well-received with an appeal that

goes beyond denominational ties, and this is evident even in its cover description, which lists the range of questions dealing with God's love: Does God choose to love or does he love by necessity? Is God's love emotional and does it include desire or enjoyment? Is it conditional? These questions lead the discussion here, mostly confined to the canonical realm with the canonical approach of the book.

The first chapter contextualizes the questions being asked with the points of discussion on God's love in historical theology, which include theological positions of Augustine (divine love as unilateral beneficence), Thomas Aquinas (God's love as his essence and beneficence), Martin Luther (God's love being nonevaluative and impassible), and Anders Nygren, whose position is that God is the only true agent of love: "spontaneous, unmotivated, indifferent to value, nondesirous and nonemotive, beneficent, gratuitous and sovereign" (22). These short summaries of theologians lead to a discussion of God's nature bifurcated into two primary approaches to God: the transcendent-voluntarist model and the immanent-experientialist model of God's love. Peckham states that the latter stems from process theology, which places God in a relationship with his creation, by placing himself within the realm which he created.

A primary question which Peckham desires to explore is whether the love of God in relation to creatures is reciprocal. Peckham writes: "Significant conflict continues over the nature of divine love, especially regarding whether God's love for the world is volitional or essential, evaluative or nonevaluative, passible or impassible, conditional or unconditional, and unilateral or reciprocal. The following chapters seek to address the conflict by way of a canonical approach to systematic theology, explained in chapter two" (44).

The second chapter lays out Peckham's canonical approach in that it receives the canonical Scriptures as the final form. The style of writing is systematic theology with commitments to (1) a high view of revelation-inspiration, 2) the dual authorship of God and humans of the biblical text, and (3) grammatical-historical exegesis (47). Peckham is quite thorough in his coverage of the occurrence of Hebrew and Greek variance of love and affection. Within context, the author examines the range of uses, both positive and negative, and determines that even the Greek *agape* is not uniform in its usage. From this assessment, Peckham concludes that "God's love is volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional and ideally reciprocal within the context of the God-world relationship" (67).

By volitional love, God has the freedom to love. He loves his creation freely in that he "freely decided that to create beings and bestow his love on them, voluntarily opening himself up to relationship with the world while remaining distinct from it" (94). Peckham grapples with the discussion of election and chosenness. God's will is an essential part of God's love that determines his love relationship with his people.

The evaluative love of God means that God appreciates his creatures with pleasure and enjoyment, which is evident throughout Scripture; God enjoys, delights in, appreciates, and finds value in humans. The key word in evaluative love is "appraisal" in that God loves the righteous (Ps 146:8) and loves the cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:7; cf. Heb 13:16) while hating those who commit iniquity (Ps 5:5).

God's love is emotional. It is within God's character that he is compassionate and jealous. Peckham identifies this heightened fervor in the Hebrew word group of *qanah* to have "very strong emotions of ardor and intense passion, related to a basic sense of zeal, passion or jealousy for what belongs to one, or (with human agency) envy for what belongs to someone else" (156).

God's love is given freely, but it is also foreconditional. Peckham's coinage of the expression "foreconditional" describes God's love to be "freely bestowed prior to any conditions but not exclusive of conditions" (191). In other words, God loves freely without any predetermined condition at the onset, but his love still imposes conditions on human disposition and action.

Finally, God's love is reciprocal. In light of the covenant and the kinship relationship constructed by God with his people, there is a clear description of a bilateral relationship although God often acts unilaterally. Hence, Peckham concludes that the reciprocal relationship is an ideal one since God's love is not always reciprocated. In the end, the reciprocal relationship is a result of the characteristics described in the previous sections (see above).

In the end, Peckham asks in his concluding chapter of the book: Who is the God who loves? The God who loves is the one who loves in freedom. He is free to love and engage in his creation toward the goal of a reciprocal love relationship. He is perfect and self-sufficient but desires a relationship with his people. Peckham's fascination with a God who loves has led to a greater picture of a personal God who can sympathize with his human creation.

A few thoughts come to mind after reaching the end of this rich, well-researched theological exploration. At the conclusion of the first chapter, some readers may find the content of the book different from the description on the cover, which includes questions about God. The answers to those questions should require some familiarity with historical theology, systematic theology, and process theology. Due to the elevated nature of the academic style of writing, the target audience seems to be theologians and seminary students, not the popular readership. The esoteric terminologies found here are not the usual language employed in most church settings. At the same time, the language should be familiar within many theological circles. The book is rich in its interaction with the biblical text as well as theologians known with an evangelical bent (Vanhoozer, Carson,

Piper, Moo), but the discussion is inclusive of those outside of those circles (Torrance, Tanner, Trible, Oden, Barth, Moltmann).

Peckham's strength in this book is his ability to work through the possibilities of what love means in the context of God's character, while also examining the alternatives of commonly held views as well as the consequences of each. There may be parts of the discussion that seem inconsequential, but as stated in the preface, the rigorous undertaking of discussing God's love has been fruitful for the author's faith journey. The book has that potential for anyone drawn to the subject matter as profound as God's love.

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Luke's Christology of Divine Identity. **By Nina Henrichs-Tarasenkova. In Library of New Testament Studies 542. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016. 256 pages. Hardcover, $114.00.**

In *Luke's Christology of Divine Identity*, Nina Henrichs-Tarasenkova argues that Luke portrays Jesus indirectly as God in Luke-Acts through how he characterizes YHWH and Jesus in his narrative.[1] She offers a rationale for her study, explains her narrative approach, and discusses the meaning of "identity" in the ancient world, as well as examines specific passages in Luke-Acts where this characterization is evident. A brief summary of her writing can provide insights on the characterization of Jesus in these texts both for the scholar and the pastor, and an evaluation can offer rationales for a fuller engagement with her work and further engagement and discussion on these significant topics.

In her first chapter, Henrichs-Tarasenkova justifies her study despite what Moule calls a "formidable output of literature" on the subject (2). She notes that "the question 'Does Luke characterize Jesus as God/*theos* in his two-volume narrative?' remains uninteresting to the majority of scholars" (2), partly because Luke does not directly refer to Jesus as *theos*. She claims that the answer to this supposedly "uninteresting" but actually important question can be found only through a study of the Lukan narrative with particular attention to the characters of YHWH and Jesus (6).

Henrichs-Tarasenkova next explains the influence of Conzelmann, who confidently concludes that the Lukan Jesus is not God. Henrichs-Tarasenkova criticizes him for (1) attempting to find patristic or modern reflections on the deity of Christ in a first-century document, (2) for holding to a false dichotomy between functional and ontic categories, and

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[1]Thanks to Dr. John Lee, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, for his help in editing this review.

(3) for failing to evaluate his conclusions in light of on Second Temple Jewish monotheism (9–10). Many scholars such as Laurentin, Turner, Buckwalter, Fletcher-Lewis, and Rowe have already attempted to overcome these criticisms prior to Henrichs-Tarasenkova's study (11–15). Henrichs-Tarasenkova, however, suggests that although each of those scholars contributes to the discussion of Lukan Christology in one way or another, they have never completely resolved the issues with Conzelmann's hermeneutical presuppositions (21).

In the second chapter, Henrichs-Tarasenkova explains her narrative approach. She refers to Iser to show how readers pick up various clues in a text to fill in gaps left by the author (29). The reader fills these gaps but must use the appropriate linguistic and cultural frame of reference that sets boundaries for interpretation of the text. The *co-text*, *intertext*, and *context*, in particular, help the reader establish these boundaries (31–36).

Subsequently, Henrichs-Tarasenkova notes that even though most scholars view Acts as historiography, they debate the genre of Luke's Gospel. Henrichs-Tarasenkova herself argues that Luke is a historical narrative, referencing Ricoeur's three kinds of historiography: documentary, explicative, and poetic (36–38). Documentary history focuses on stating the facts or the events themselves, explicative history evaluates the events based on "a social, economic or political horizon," and poetic history reinterprets "founding narratives" to help people form their identity (36–38). She also notes that Luke's readers "are required to make a commitment not usually required of those reading fictional narratives" (42) and that Luke's historiography represents a more Jewish than Greco-Roman type (43).

Henrichs-Tarasenkova then addresses how authors construct narrative identities in their texts (43). She notes that action is interdependent on the character (44) and then explains how characters in a text can only function inside that text; they are "sustained and generated by the text" (49). Generation as such signifies that Luke-Acts "cannot present its readers with the real person Jesus," but only a portrait; the reader only sees "person" of Jesus within Luke's characterization (49). While the narrative "unfolds," the reader can add more traits to that portrait as the author of a text provides those traits both directly and indirectly (50–51).

In chapter 3, Henrichs-Tarasenkova explores Bauckham's *divine identity* concept under three sections. In the first section, she explains how the "path of introspection" does not reflect an ancient approach to identity formation (57–59). She prefers a "relational approach," adopting Ricoeur's narrative method whereby "people's identity is shaped by the stories they deem meaningful and the stories they choose to tell about themselves" (61).

The second section compares Hellenistic and Jewish identity concepts. In the Hellenistic view, identity is holistic as well as relational (64–69). On the other hand, the Jewish perspective emphasizes the relational role of the covenant in formulating identity

before Israel's God (69–74). Henrichs-Tarasenkova then narrows her focus to the role of the household in formulating personal identity, in particular, comparing YHWH's identity in the Jewish scriptures to the role of a *paterfamilias* in Hellenistic thought (74–77). Analogizing from this particular comparison, Henrichs-Tarasenkova concludes that there is no ontic-function dichotomy in the ancient Jewish world (78). Since only those who aligned their behavior with their character received honor in both Hellenistic and Jewish culture, she suggests this conclusion has merit (79).

Henrichs-Tarasenkova devotes the third section of the chapter to the issue of Jewish monotheism. While Jewish religion of the Second Temple Period was predominantly monotheistic and held a firm belief in the uniqueness of YHWH, some Jews of that era allowed for the existence of other heavenly beings. Particularly in the upper-classes of Jewish society, some viewed YHWH as a *paterfamilias,* supreme among the members of a divine family in the form of "inclusive monotheism," whereas others held to an exclusive monotheism (82–83). Henrichs-Tarasenkova proposes that Luke-Acts would have an orientation much closer to the traditional model of exclusive monotheism since Jesus is characterized as one God together with YHWH as opposed to a second subservient God (86).

In the fourth chapter, Henrichs-Tarasenkova traces the characterization of YHWH in Luke 1–2 and Acts 14 (90). She gives attention to the characters Zechariah and Elizabeth, who are righteous and blameless yet are aging and have no children, which means they lack God's blessing (91–92). Meanwhile, Luke speaks of YHWH as *theos* and as *kurios*, embedding these two terms with his own meaning—authority and power (93). This God of authority and power begins to honor Zechariah, who is chosen to offer incense (94). He learns that he will have a son, called John, "God is gracious" (97). However, for his disbelief, he is struck mute and thus shamed in his community (104). His muteness is, in a sense, the very sign he asked for in his doubting question. When he finally opens his mouth again, he has learned and is able to proclaim YHWH as gracious, merciful and faithful to his promises (108).

Henrichs-Tarensenkova next turns her attention to YHWH's relationship with Mary in the text. Henrichs-Tarensenkova suggests Luke as describing how YHWH reveals himself as faithful to his covenant by bringing forth an eternal Davidic king through Mary (116). Concerning Mary's Magnificat (Lk 1:46b-54a), Henrichs-Tarasenkova notes how YHWH is revealed as the God of mercy, grace, and strength, who can render judgment (120). She then moves to Paul's proclamation of YHWH in Acts 14. To Paul, YHWH is "the living God," who (1) created the world, (2) gives gifts to the Lystrans, and (3) proves himself as their Father (131–32). Since YHWH is their father, his authority applies to not only the lowly and unclean but to the whole world and all people, including the Gentiles (133).

In chapter 5, Henrichs-Tarasenkova engages the text and evaluates the characterization of Jesus in Luke 1–2 and Acts 2 (138). In Luke 1–2, Luke reveals Jesus as both "the son

of Joseph" and "the son of God." However, the emphasis is on the divine side. Gabriel describes Jesus as an ideal Davidic king and as YHWH's son (139), which permits Luke to associate Jesus more with YHWH than with Joseph (144–45). Elizabeth describes Jesus as *kurios*, which is a term restricted to YHWH and Jesus in Luke 1–2. Jesus and YHWH are inseparably associated with each other in the Lukan birth narrative by the way *kurios* refers to them both alternatively (147-148). In addition, John the Baptist turns the people *epi kurion ton theon autōn* and leaps in the womb. Both of these actions signify his own recognition of the beginning of the messianic age and of Jesus as Messiah and Lord (149–50).

Henrichs-Tarasenkova then shows how Luke assigns Jesus the unique responsibilities and functions of YHWH. First, Jesus in the Gospel of Luke is *keras sōterias,* used exclusively of YHWH in the LXX, and in other verses, such as 2 Sam 22:3 and Ps 18:2, is also *sōtēr* (152–55). Second, Luke describes Jesus as *anaolē*, also used to describe YHWH's "rising" in judgment or his glory rising, for example, Mal 4:1–2 (156). Third, Simeon's description of Jesus as *phōs eis apokalupsin ethnōn* mimics YHWH's characteristic divine care for all people (164). Fourth, the language used in the Acts 2:1–4 is similar to YHWH's OT theophanies and, therefore, creates an expectation on the part of the reader that YHWH will appear in order to give the disciples the Spirit. Nevertheless, Luke portrays Jesus, not YHWH, as the Spirit-Giver (172–76).

In Acts 2:14–41, through Peter's speech, Luke declares that Jesus is the Lord to whom all must call to be saved and join in the new Israel, thus making Jesus's name synonymous with the name of YHWH (182). Peter also appears to contrast Jesus with David, Elijah, and Moses and links him not with them but with YHWH (183). Based on all these divine associations as well as Luke's use of Pss 16:8 and 110:1, Henrichs-Tarasenkova concludes that although no direct association between Jesus and *theos* is made in his work, "Luke indirectly characterizes Jesus as the God of Israel without collapsing the boundaries between him and his Father YHWH" (184–86).

A short conclusion ends the book, which summarizes Henrichs-Tarasenkova's main points and urges scholars to reevaluate the commonplace position and examine carefully whether Luke's narrative reveals Jesus to be *theos* (194).

Henrichs-Tarasenkova's work can be commended on many points. First, Henrichs-Tarasenkova can be commended for her consistent and thorough use of the narrative approach. Second, Henrichs-Tarasenkova can be commended for her refining of the relational understanding of identity, which emphasizes the *character* of YHWH, particularly with regards to his acts toward the people of Israel. Third, Henrichs-Tarasenkova can be praised for refining the scope of the discussion of "divine identity." She abstains from and avoids terms like "divine prerogatives" in order to focus on "characterization." She, therefore, avoids such issues as Bauckham's "exception that proves the rule" concerning other beings with divine traits.

Henrichs-Tarasenkova's work, however, is not without its limitations. The following comments are therefore offered to advance the current conversations on Luke's Christology, in general, and Luke's divine Christology in particular. First, Henrichs-Tarasenkova's terminology lacks precision. If all she means by saying that "Luke indirectly characterizes Jesus as the God of Israel" (186) is that Luke does not record any statement that Jesus is *theos*, she is technically correct. However, her statement is a timid one . The loose association that Henrichs-Tarasenkova describes lacks precise definition and may cause confusion. While her terminology provide a "thicker" description of the term "divinity" than Bauckham's divine prerogatives and this choice does open up distinct pathways for her research, it also opens up ambiguity. More clarity would be useful despite clear definitions also limiting evidence for her case.

Second, Henrichs-Tarasenkova's work has several omissions that preclude her from having a representative and holistic view of the material. In fact, she has neglected the majority of the material of Luke-Acts. She explains,

> We chose Luke 1–2 because they contain the gist of what Luke wants his readers to know about YHWH. . . . Second, most of the information concerning YHWH that Luke 1–2 presents is not communicated through what Jesus says and does. Third . . . we include Acts 14 . . . which contains what is for the Lukan narrative the first proclamation of YHWH to a Gentile population on Gentile soil. (90)

As to her first point, she may be justified in selecting these passages but not in ignoring or only covering superficially much of the other material in Luke-Acts. She has included material from the birth narrative in Luke, but this material is not representative of the whole. Despite understandable space constraints, more substantial discussion of at least the Jerusalem journey and the Passion, would strengthen her argument. Her second point represents an excessive dichotomy. Whether Jesus, God, the disciples, or Luke fulfills the role of the protagonist in an individual passage, Luke as the author is in charge throughout the text. Her third point is more appropriate.

Third, and significantly, Henrichs-Tarasenkova's discussion of Second Temple Jewish monotheism (80–83) is limited. This background material is of such importance for christological studies that a mere four pages cannot cover even the most basic vital information. She does not, for instance, substantially address potential divine intermediaries such as Wisdom. While she does address the inclusive branch of Jewish monotheism, a larger discussion, further addressing the role of Wisdom, as well as figures such as angels, the Son of Man, and exalted patriarchs would be appropriate and useful.

Fourth, Henrichs-Tarasenkova has not dealt directly with the humanity of Jesus. In her discussion of the role of the paterfamilias she explain Jesus's human side through his status as the "son of Joseph." However, she does not address the human emotionality of Jesus in Luke. While this is a reasonable omission in a book on the "Divine Identity" of Jesus, without addressing Jesus's humanity one cannot fully discuss his divinity, and

addressing Luke's Christology does not provide any exemption in that regard. His human emotionality appears in verses such as Luke 2:40 ("the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom"), 4:1 (he was tempted), 4:2 ("he was hungry"), and 22:44 ("he was in an anguish") all show Jesus's human side. By not addressing how Luke portrays Jesus as human, Henrichs-Tarasenkova has omitted a significant portion of Luke's narrative and teaching.

Fifth, while Henrichs-Tarasenkova has provided detailed background information regarding Hellenistic and Jewish understanding of identity particularly in chapter 3, this information is often tangential, or at least disconnected, to her focus on identity as being defined "relationally." Perhaps this section could be cut back in length to allow the extra space to discuss identity formation, or simply for more synthesis between the fourth and fifth chapter, a much need integration. As the book currently stands, prolegomenon takes eighty-eight pages, and only the final chapter incorporates the characterization of Jesus. Better synthesis, especially between the characterization of YHWH and Jesus, would certainly be useful; as it is, Henrichs-Tarasenkova relies on the readers to carry the data from chapter 4 into chapter 5. Perhaps tables within the text or even as appendixes would make the data even more concise and understandable, and this might be more feasible with an abbreviated section on these backgrounds, however informative they may be.

Through her imprecision of terms, the omission of representative sections of the text of Luke-Acts, and an insubstantial discussion of Second Temple Jewish Literature, Jesus's humanity and identity formation, Henrichs-Tarasenkova has arrived at an incomplete assessment of Luke-Acts. She believes Luke "indirectly" characterizes Jesus as God, but a fuller examination is necessary.

The New Testament is anchored in the person of Jesus Christ, who he is (his identity) and what he has done (his works). In that sense, the subject of divine identity is immensely important in understanding New Testament books and Luke-Acts is no exception. Henrichs-Tarasenkova has contributed by doing Christology through looking at the character of God in the Lukan narratives. This contribution represents a worthwhile addition to the discussion of divine identity and Christology as a whole. Yet, her book also contains some problems and leaves out some of the crucial aspects of divine identity of Jesus in Luke-Acts as pointed out above, thus inviting corrections and further refinements.

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Matthew. **By Charles L. Quarles. In Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament, edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017. 384 pages. Paperback, $29.99.**

Charles L. Quarles is director of PhD studies and professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North

Carolina. While Quarles has contributed to the study of the New Testament in light of midrashim (*Midrash Criticism*, 1988) and apologetics (*Buried Hope or Risen Savior*, 2008), many of his publications have been focused on the Gospel of Matthew. In *The Sermon on the Mount* (2011), Quarles provided a focused commentary on Matt 5:1–8:1 that explained how Jesus's sermon applies to the modern church. In *A Theology of Matthew* (2013), Quarles investigated four broad theological themes utilized within Matthew's Gospel to promote higher Christology in Christian communities. As such, *Matthew* represents the third member of Quarles' Matthean triad of publications.

Matthew is the ninth installment of the Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (EGGNT) series. The goal of EGGNT is to provide the pastor, teacher, and student with a detailed analysis of the Greek New Testament. In other words, the aim is to "close the gap between the Greek text and the available tools" (xxxv). The series contains six specific elements for the sake of achieving this objective. These elements are found within each work in the series with varying orders: (1) the Greek New Testament of each individual book is evaluated phrase by phrase; (2) each work provides a structural analysis—both verbal and visual by means of a line diagram of the Greek text—of the larger paragraphs in light of the phrasal exegesis; (3) relevant textual variants are discussed providing the reader access to the author's own preference when issues of controversy arise; (4) significant words are offered various glosses; (5) each literary unit is provided with a bibliography so that the reader might partake in further study; (6) each literary unit also contains homiletical suggestions meant to serve as the foundation for sermon preparation.

Quarles's work provides the reader with only a few of these elements. First, there is little discussion of textual variants and various interpretations of certain texts. Second, each literary unit is not given a full translation. Instead, one must piece together Quarles's translation from the overall discussion of each unit. Third, this volume does not contain any syntactical diagrams of the Greek text. Fourth, "only scant attention" is given to the "discourse features of the Gospel" (4). Quarles reasoning for these omissions is because of the Gospel's "relative length" (4). As such, this volume will fall short of a few of its audience's expectations but those who have read Alan J. Thompson's *Luke* (2017) will not be entirely surprised.

Quarles's work is broadly divided into three sections: introduction, exegesis, and an exegetical outline. His introduction is a condensed version of his approach to Matthew's Gospel as found in *A Theology of Matthew*. As a conservative scholar, Quarles affirms Matthean authorship of the Gospel and provides the reader with ample evidence for arriving at the same conclusion. Quarles also offers a very short and compelling argument for dating the Gospel around AD 60.

Quarles's exegesis of Matthew takes up the majority of the work. Within this section, Quarles parses every Greek verb within the Gospel and explains their syntactical

significance. While brief, there are also a few mentions of the theological significance of certain texts. For example, Quarles explains that the mention of "the earth" (*tēn gēn*) in Matt 5:5 is a reference to "Israel inheriting the land of promise" and, thus, a reference to "Jesus's disciples as the new Israel" (50). A similar comment is made in Quarles's discussion of Matt 16:18, where he states that the gates of hell will not "prevailing against it" (*katischusousin autēs*), the church, because Jesus promises a resurrection. As Quarles states, "Jesus has already warned that his disciples will die. He now promises that their death will not be permanent" (189). The book concludes with an exegetical outline, which is generally a condensed version of the book's table of contents.

The value of Quarles's work is seen in light of his other Matthean works. Though each member of the triad has a different publisher, a certain level of dependency exists among them. While *The Sermon on the Mount* evaluated the Gospel of Matthew on a micro-level, A *Theology of Matthew* analyzed the Gospel with a macro-level approach. *Matthew*, then, returns to an investigation of Matthew's Gospel on a micro-level by providing the reader with a detailed analysis of the Gospel's Greek text. Frequently throughout this work, Quarles references his other Matthean works and when viewed together a grander picture of Matthew's Gospel comes into view. Thus, this work is highly recommended and will be useful to the student studying biblical Greek at any level. Even so, anyone more interested in basic Matthean theology would be better off purchasing one of Quarles's other works. For the scholar/pastor seeking to investigate the depths of Matthean theology as derived from the Greek text, Quarles has provided a foundation work for just such an occasion in *Matthew*.

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The Message of Worship: Celebrating the Glory of God in the Whole of Life. By John Risbridger. In The Bible Speaks Today, edited by Derek Tidball. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015. 293 pages. Softcover, $22.00.

John Risbridger is a minister at Above Bar Church in Southampton, England. He is also a former student minister at Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship.
The purpose of his book, *The Message of Worship*, is to integrate an in-depth biblical understanding the relationship between worship and congregational praise. While the author claims that he is neither a professional musician nor theologian, he is a pastor who is musically inclined. Many of Risbridger's applications are pastoral in nature, based on the assumption that the reader is a leader in a corporate worship setting. Risbridger accomplished his goal of encouraging worship leaders to be intentional about worship planning, allowing for growth of new disciples during the worship gathering.

The book is written with a trinitarian structure, each section exploring the connection between one person of the Godhead and worship. Part one emphasizes worship and the glory of God the Father. Part two centers on worship and the supremacy of Christ. The focus of part three is worship and the Holy Spirit. The book concludes with a study guide that helps the reader apply the material to life. Questions in the study guide section are designed to be used in either an individual or a group study.

Part one is the longest section of the book and is entitled "Worship and the Glory of God." Over the course of the first three chapters, Risbridger outlines the worship attempts of the Israelites as well as God's actions to rescue them from slavery, drawing from accounts in the book of Exodus. After a brief explanation of the divided kingdom (Israel in the north and Judah in the south), Risbridger uses the phrase "worship catastrophe" to describe the idolatry and hypocrisy that permeated the Israelites' attitude toward worship. Throughout the book, he revisits the theme of Judah's disobedience and how it undermined their worship, and he draws parallels to similar attitudes that undermine modern worship.

Risbridger also examines Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4 as he begins a discussion on worshiping in spirit and in truth. He cites the worship scenes in Revelation 4 and 7 as models for true, biblical worship. As worship is a response to revelation, Risbridger highlights the fact that the living creatures react to the vision of the exalted Christ by worshiping him for his past actions and for what is yet to come. Risbridger notes that much of what is done in worship is based on what Christ has done and what believers have experienced. He suggests that modern worship should also emphasize that which is to come (93–95).

Noting that the starting point for worship is not human emotion, Risbridger accentuates the transcendent qualities of God and suggests that balanced worship should include both exuberant joy and contemplative reverence. He encourages worship planners from both liturgical and non-liturgical settings to lead believers in an appropriate response to the awe and majesty of holy God (109–117).

Part two, "Worship and the Supremacy of Christ," begins in Hebrews 9 and 10. Risbridger examines the contrasts between Christ's work on the cross and the foreshadowing of his sacrifice found in the Old Testament. His goal is to show how Christ fulfilled all that was claimed by outlining several themes found in the biblical text. He reminds the reader that Old Testament worshipers were kept at a distance from the presence of God. New Testament worship, however, invites worshipers to approach his presence. Risbridger also accentuates the communal nature of New Testament worship, and he encourages worship planners to be aware of the need for community among believers for an enhanced worship experience.

In part three of the book, entitled "Worship and the Life of the Holy Spirit," Risbridger highlights the transforming role of the Holy Spirit. Again, drawing on the Exodus motif in the New Testament, he highlights the glory of the Spirit upon Moses after meeting with God on the mountain. He shows various contrasts throughout the chapter between the old covenant idea of "letters on stone" and the new covenant idea of God's law being written upon "tablets of human hearts" (210–11). He concludes the chapter by reiterating that the glory of the Lord is transformative because it is holy, and the Spirit who indwells also is holy.

The Message of Worship reads like a collection of sermons, most chapters having three points and several sub-points, often with alliteration. While there is the suggestion that this book could be used in a group setting, it is packaged like a book that many might think will be able to be digested within a few days. Each chapter, however, could stand alone as a Bible study. The author also has included practical suggestions for implementation into corporate and private worship. Based on heavy exegetical work and a carefully-balanced trinitarian approach, Risbridger has created a potentially useful resource for worship planners.

Reading this book was refreshing. By merely glancing at the title, one might think it is just another in the long line of worship books that discuss the same topics in a typical manner. Risbridger's book, however, offers a unique perspective and approach, based on many hours of biblical study and worshipful contemplation. As a pastor, he has seen what did and did not work with his congregation, and he has brought forth fresh insight into the field of worship studies. Written from a pastoral and preaching perspective, the author makes many connections between Old Testament worship practices and New Testament worship application. Any student of worship-related issues would benefit from reading this book.

- Jessica P. McMillan, Lamar Christian School, Purvis, Mississippi

The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity. 2nd edition. By Roger E. Olson. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. 396 pages. Hardcover, $34.00.

Roger Olson is the Foy Valentine Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics at Truett Seminary, Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Olson is widely known as an author of historical theology, systematic theology, and ethics. He self-identifies as an evangelical, Baptist, Arminian who has been influenced by Pietism and Pentecostalism in his early years. His many publications include *The Story of Christian Theology*, *The Journey of Modern Theology*, *Questions to All Your Answers*, and *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative*

Approach to Evangelical Theology. This last title points to his emphasis in recent years for the need to distinguish conservative evangelicalism from postconservative evangelicalism.

The book reviewed here is the second edition of his one-volume systematic theology, originally published in 2002. The entire book has been updated, and Olson added a new chapter on the Holy Spirit. In the introductory chapter, "The Need for a 'Both-And' Theology," Olson sketches out the purpose of his book and his basic approach. He saw the need for another introduction to systematic theology, and he described his book as "mediating (both-and as opposed to either-or whenever possible), evangelical, irenic in spirit and tone, nonspeculative and relatively simple for the uninitiated" (17, original italicized). In most of the sixteen chapters, Olson follows the pattern of stating the key issues, describing the consensus of Christian thought on the issue, exploring the major heresies on each topic, discussing the diverse interpretations within the Christian consensus, and proposing a unitive view for Christians today.

In chapter one, "Christian Belief: Unity *and* Diversity," Olson explains the significance of the Great Tradition, the relation of orthodoxy and heresy, and the need for a Christian unity that acknowledges legitimate diversity. Chapter two, "Sources and Norms of Christian Belief: One *and* Many," treats some of the typical issues of theological prolegomena. Olson reviews several patterns of authority and notes some of the heresies on this topic, such as Montanism. Olson prefers the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, but he clearly affirms the supremacy of the Bible as the highest authority. Olson moves on to "Divine Revelation: Universal *and* Particular" in the next chapter. Here he discusses traditional issues such as the relation of general and special revelation and whether revelation is primarily personal or propositional. Chapter six discusses "Christian Scripture: Divine Word *and* Human Words." He rejects views such as the Bible as a classic and the bibliolatry of folk religion. He prefers to describe the Bible as infallible rather than inerrant (109–11). Along the way, Olson notes the influence of Donald Bloesch on his views.

Olson dedicates several chapters to theology proper. "God: Great *and* Good" treats the nature and attributes of God especially. He clearly identifies alternatives to the Christian consensus such as deism and panentheism. Chapter six tackles the doctrine of the Trinity. Olson gives a clear review of the historical debates and heresies such as modalism, and he stresses the limits of most analogies for the Trinity. Chapter seven discusses God's creation of the world. He critiques heresies such as dualism and monism. His chapter on divine providence is one of the places where his ongoing Arminian criticism of Reformed theology is most evident. Olson rejects alternatives to the Christian consensus such as fatalism, Deism, and process panentheism. He discusses open theism briefly but does not consider it a heresy (199). Olson's chapter nine, "Humanity: Essentially Good *and* Existentially Estranged," might be considered a sequel to his chapter on creation. He includes discussion of topics such as the image of God and original sin. He affirms Christian humanism but rejects secular humanism, Gnosticism, and Pelagianism.

Chapter ten, "Jesus Christ: God *and* Man," treats Christology, or the person of Christ. Olson offers clear, concise discussions of the church councils and heresies of the early centuries. Chapter eleven, "The Holy Spirit: Divine Person *and* Power," is the only new chapter in this edition. Although Olson had mentioned Holy Spirit several times in the first edition, he saw the need for a fuller statement on pneumatology here. He reviews classic and contemporary debates well, noting the *filioque* topic that divided the church in 1054 and the ongoing discussion between cessationists and renewalists about the availability of speaking in tongues today.

Chapters twelve and thirteen deal with salvation. First, Olson attempts to balance the objective and subjective dimensions of salvation. He critiques alternatives to the Christian consensus such as pluralism and Korean-based Unificationism. Second, he notes that salvation is both a gift and a task. Salvation is based on God's gracious action in the death and resurrection of his Son, but sinners need to accept the gift. He rejects views such as Pelagianism/Semi-Pelagianism and universalism. Under the heading of alternatives within the Christian consensus, he discusses monergism and synergism.

Chapter fourteen covers many issues related to the doctrine of the church. He briefly tackles the marks of the church, ordinances, and polity while acknowledging the diversity of views in Christian history.

Olson's last two chapters deal with individual destiny and the destiny of the world. On life beyond death, Olson treats resurrection, judgment, heaven, and hell. He criticizes views such as the affirmation of immortality of souls to the neglect of bodily resurrection, reincarnation, and process theology's objective immortality. He presents annihilationism as a minority Christian view, not a denial of hell (359–60). Chapter sixteen, "The Kingdom of God: Already *and* Not Yet," includes Olson's treatment of cosmic eschatology. He covers the return of Christ, millennium, and related issues. He notes that amillennialism has been the majority view since Augustine.

Overall, Olson's book is a welcome addition to the long list of one-volume systematic theologies on the market today. He discussed major issues well but, by design, he did not treat some issues that might intrigue advanced students. Olson's treatment of historical theology is stellar, reflecting his interest in the Great Tradition. Although he offers brief treatments of biblical evidence on each topic, some readers might want more biblical theology than Olson gives. His tone is irenic, as he declared early in the book, but he clearly identifies heresies and alternatives within the Christian community on each issue. Readers who spot-check Olson on their favorite controversy might wish for fuller discussions at times, but Olson offers a balanced approach reflecting his identity as a Baptist, Arminian evangelical.

Readers of this journal might benefit from Olson's clear and concise discussions. Ministers on a local church staff might find this book a helpful resource to recommend to lay people, who have some training or interest in theology but who are not ready for fuller systematic theologies. Olson's generous spirit might be reassuring to some readers who feel the study of theology is primarily about detecting heresy or false teaching. Olson consistently strives to identify a unitive view on each topic.

- Warren McWilliams, Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma

NIV Faithlife Study Bible. **By Faithlife. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017. 2,264 pages. Hardcover, $49.99.**

Faithlife describes itself as "a tech company committed to the Church."[1] The corporation is well-known for its Logos Bible Software which has been in existence since the early-1990s. In 2012, Faithlife first published the *Faithlife Study Bible* (FSB). Since its publication, Faithlife has provided free copies to the public and has also made it accessible through a dedicated website, faithlifebible.com. Faithlife offers an app in which users can choose various English translations of the FSB and also connect and share with others.

The goal of the *Faithlife Study Bible* is to help the biblical reader engage with God's Word and with God himself. The FSB is written for readers who span the spectrum of having knowledge and experience with the Scriptures. The FSB facilitates understanding by providing readers with information that illuminates the ancient context of biblical passages.

Introductory information to the FSB includes tables of content for biblical books, visual content, and articles. It also includes an alphabetical listing of books with corresponding page numbers, a list of abbreviations, editorial team information, and prefaces to both the FSB and the NIV2011 translation.

The FSB contains 30 major articles on various biblical topics, written by well-known pastors and scholars, such as Douglas Stuart, Craig S. Keener, and N. T. Wright. Many of the articles introduce readers to the major divisions of biblical literature while others, tied to specific biblical passages, focus on important and even controversial topics such as covenant, suffering, and election. The articles are informative and helpful, especially for those with limited experience with the Scriptures.

Each book's introduction contains: (1) a paragraph which provides readers with a general synopsis of the book; (2) a background section which covers issues related to

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[1]Faithlife, "Who We Are," 2018 Faithlife Corporation, available at http://www.faithlife.com.

authorship, date, audience, etc.; (3) a section which discusses the literary structure of the book; (4) a brief outline of the book; (5) a section highlighting the major themes found throughout the book; (6) a map highlighting major locations related to the book; and (7) a list of dates related to people and events found in the book. Debatable issues, especially related to background topics, are briefly covered in the introductions and, surprisingly, with little indication of bias.

The charm of the FSB can be found in its notes. The notes' font is easy on the eyes, and readers can quickly find their place thanks to bold chapter and verse numbers. Readers will find various types of notes that correspond to the biblical text. Passage summary notes provide a quick overview of what is happening or being discussed in a certain biblical passage. The majority of notes in the FSB are commentary notes keyed to specific words or phrases from the NIV2011 text. Key words, people, geographical locations, and objects are often times set apart from regular commentary notes with color-coded symbols. These special notes are just as helpful as other notes but sometimes seem a little arbitrary. For example, in the Table of Nations section of Genesis 10, the Amorites are given special significance in the notes while other people groups are mentioned briefly in the regular commentary notes. Throughout the FSB, readers will also find a number of colorful and helpful timelines, family trees, charts, and illustrations.

A weights and measures conversion chart is included, which compares biblical units with their approximate American and metric equivalents. Readers will also find helpful the NIV Concordance, developed by John R. Kohlenberger III, with 2,474 entries and more than 10,000 Scripture references. The FSB concludes with 14 colorful maps related to both the Old and New Testaments.

As someone who has a number of study Bibles sitting on his desk, I can say that the FSB is definitely one of my favorites. I especially like its nonbiased approach to the notes. Today, many study Bibles, including some from the same publisher, appear to be theologically slanted, especially in regard to notes related to highly-debated passages. The FSB allows the reader to choose for himself or herself what is the best option without feeling compelled to choose one or the other. In fact, I found that the FSB lives up to one of its intentions which—according to the editor's preface—is to invite the reader to be an interpreter. I was so personally impressed with the FSB that I gave a copy to one of my teenage sons who wanted a study Bible to help him as he leads Bible studies for his peers. Bible scholars might not find anything new in the notes, but for those who simply want to understand the biblical text on a deeper level, the FSB is a great choice.

- David Champagne, Mississippi College, Clinton, Mississippi

The Old Testament for the 21ˢᵗ Century: A Concise Guide. **By R. Kelvin Moore. Covington, LA: Insight Press, 2016. 309 pages. Paperback, $25.00.**

This short guide to understanding the Old Testament is the product of both a pastor and scholar. R. Kelvin Moore (PhD, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) is professor of biblical studies and director of the DMin Program/Singapore at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. In conjunction with being a professor, Moore is also the pastor of Idlewild Baptist Church and has pastored in numerous churches for more than forty years. As such, *The Old Testament for the 21ˢᵗ Century* is intended to provide the typical reader with enough information to approach the Old Testament with some form of academic finesse.

Moore begins the book with a section entitled "Historical Overview." Here Moore covers eight major chronological periods that are found in a table at the book's beginning. While this section does highlight some of the important events found in biblical history, ultimately more emphasis is found on highlighting certain texts found within the Old Testament than an overview of its historical content. In other words, instead of seeking to explain who Abram (Abraham) is and where he came from, Moore explains that the "history of the Hebrews began with God's 'calling' Abram from Ur of the Chaldeans" (13). Noting that God "called" Abram is not a fact that can be proven historically. Instead, this is a theological statement that must be defended from an analysis of the biblical text. Thus, this section should probably have been entitled "Chronological Overview," as it seeks to overview the events found in the Old Testament in chronological order. The historical reliability of the Old Testament is assumed from the book's beginning.

From here, the body of the book is divided into five main sections: Law, Historical Books, Hebrew Wisdom Literature, Hebrew Poetry, and Hebrew Prophecy. Each of these sections is provided with an individual summary of the books contained within them, which also contains an outline, an identification of major themes and theological emphases, and a general introduction. These summaries end with short applications of each individual book, which are intended to be used for sermon illustrations.

Within the section entitled Law, Moore covers the books within the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy). Moore explains that the term Law is intended to imply the idea of guidance "given by the Lord to the Hebrews regarding life" (21), not simply commands. Once again, Moore does not defend the historicity of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch but instead identifies verses within the Pentateuch that attribute the book to Moses (see Exod 24:4 and Deut 31:24).

The historical books cover from Israel's conquest of the promised land (Joshua) until their return from exile under King Cyrus (Ezra–Nehemiah). Here Moore provides an interesting observation concerning the textual obscurity found in 1 Sam 13:1 (58). Moore notes that while "numerous translations reveal the confusion regarding the dates of Saul

and his reign . . . the truth is that some of the numbers [of Saul's reign] are not recorded in the original Hebrew Bible." Instead of seeking to provide his readers with a firm historical solution, Moore notes that "those numbers would not have been important to a theologian. The writer of 1 Samuel 13 was not concerned with WHEN Saul reigned as much as WHAT Saul's reign meant to the Kingdom of God." In other words, Moore wants his readers to understand that Scripture is "more than just simply history" but the record of "God's activity."

Ecclesiastes, Job, and Proverbs are discussed under the title of Hebrew Wisdom Literature. Moore affirms that these books cover wisdom from its philosophical (Ecclesiastes) to practical (Proverbs) aspects, with Job being somewhere in-between. While this section is relatively short, Moore does well to emphasize that biblical wisdom ultimately comes down to "honoring God and keeping his commandments" (154). In light of this, Moore constantly reminds his readers that the application of biblical wisdom is not tied to any one historical situation (130, 138, 148–49).

In his introduction to Hebrew Poetry, Moore provides his readers with a short introduction to Hebrew parallelism and its three main forms: synonymous, antithetic, and constructive. This introduction is very helpful to the novice, but a footnote pointing the reader to other resources for further reading is lacking. Even so, Moore provides some interesting comments in the application of Ps 46 in light of the reformer Martin Luther and the events of 9/11 (161–64).

Moore's discussion of Hebrew Prophecy ends his work and covers "fifteen books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (the 'Major Prophets') and Hosea–Malachi (the twelve 'Minor Prophets')" (180). The points of application within this section are just as diverse as the prophetic books themselves. For example, Moore provides a narrative reflection of the book of Jonah (251–52) as well the book of Nahum (264–66).

Moore then concludes his work by explaining how Mal 4:4–6 is not only an effective ending to the book of Malachi but "the entire Old Testament" (309). In light of this conclusion, Moore argues that the Old Testament is joined to the New because the prophet like Elijah is connected to John the Baptist in Matt 11:10. In his words, the Old Testament does not end with a period, but "with a colon. . . . Consider the colon to be a gate or a passageway inviting you to continue." Thus, Moore argues that what is begun in the Old is finished in the New.

Ultimately, the book is accessible to the beginner and provides a helpful overview for them to work with. Though the book does not deal with many controversial issues, it does provide some of the basic understandings of Old Testament theology. For the average church member who wants to avoid living in "biblical illiteracy" and giving the Old Testament a "bad rap" (8), this book might serve as a useful guide. Otherwise, this work will prove to be unhelpful in an academic setting or for those who are engaged in more advanced study of the Old Testament.

- Ron Lindo, New Orleans Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana

Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness. **By Jeffrey D. Arthurs. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 192 pages. Paperback, $18.00.**

Jeffery D. Arthurs has taught at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, since 2002 and currently holds the position of professor of preaching and communication. He earned his PhD in communication from Purdue University. His passion for preaching has resulted in publishing several articles and two other books: *Preaching with Variety* (2007) and *Devote Yourself to the Public Reading of Scripture* (2012). He has served as the president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society and as a teaching elder in his local church. With decades as an instructor and practical experience in the field of preaching, he is well-prepared to address the topic in this work.

In the foreword, John Ortberg states, "The problem of the human race is that we remember what we should forget, and we forget what we should remember" (x). In *Preaching as Reminding,* Arthurs challenges his readers to act as "the Lord's remembrancers" by stirring memory within the preaching moment. This idea of "remembrancer" stems from a position held by an individual with the purpose of reminding the English monarchs of business as it pertains to the crown. This office is the "oldest judicial position in continual existence in Great Britain" (3). As the Bible frequently commands its audience to remember and contains ceremonies to foster memory, preachers should see the need to stir memory as a primary task. According to Arthurs, "One of the minister's primary responsibilities is reminding the faith family of God's grace extended in Jesus—the new covenant—and our fitting response of obedience. Like the king's remembrancer who put the barons in mind of their duties to the crown, the Lord's remembrancers remind the covenant people of their duty to love God and neighbor" (22).

Preaching as Reminding consists of seven chapters divided into two main parts. The first section, chapters 1–3, considers how biblical theology addresses memory. Readers will see in this section how both God and humans remember and forget (to clarify, God chooses to forget the saint's sins) and how God's ministers can act as "the Lord's remembrancers." "We remind the faithful of what they already know when knowledge has faded and conviction cooled. We fan the flames," Arthurs summarized (3). The second section turns to praxis by using the remainder of the book "to demonstrate how to stir memory through vivid language (chapter four), story (chapter five), delivery (chapter six), and [in chapter seven] ceremony" (3). Each chapter within this section has portions explaining "how it works," and "how to work it." They offer not only tangible application, but also pertinent examples of what it looks like to stir memory.

Chapter 2 provides novel content that separates *Preaching as Reminding* from other books on preaching. As Arthurs draws readers to consider how humans remember and forget, he employs recent research on neuroscience. For instance, as the author introduces his audience to fresh concepts like synesthesia, the reticular activating system, and the Rashomon effect, he states:

> Novelty, movement, and surprise can garner short-term attention, but preachers want something deeper—engagement—and that occurs only through relevance. The brain is hardwired to help us survive, so it scans the horizon for danger and threat, safety and reward. We find it nearly impossible to give attention for an extended period of time to anything that seems irrelevant. (33)

Another noteworthy concept set forth in the book explains how the worship service and, particularly, the sermon work to "re-member" or reconnect believers to the body of Christ.

The reality of living in a post-Christian America belies the greatest weakness of the book. Arthurs explains repeatedly how the sermon and worship service can act as reminders to the congregation but with biblical illiteracy at an all-time high, both within and without the church, one could question how a person could be reminded of content for which he or she is not familiar. He proposes, perhaps too strongly, "In a sense, all biblical preaching in the context of a worship service is an act of reminding" (48–49). Arguably, biblical preaching also acts to inform the audience, sharing with listeners new teaching, realities, and possibilities. Preaching, likewise, works to persuade the unbeliever who perhaps has little to no knowledge of God. Anticipating this objection, the author offers a brief section addressing the role of teaching and explaining, the role of apologetics, and contemporary biblical illiteracy (60–64). Whereas addressing unbelief in America is not consistent with the thesis of the book, Arthurs was wise to include this section.

Preaching as Reminding is a commendable book. Now, as perhaps no other time in American Christianity, believers need to remember who they are and to whom they belong in order to be salt and light. Similarly, as the number grows of those who claim no church affiliation, the need for clear biblical preaching is urgent. With its approachable content and style, students and practitioners will benefit from this work.

- Michael R. Baker, Sharon Baptist Church of Mayfield, Kentucky

***Reading Jesus's Bible: How the New Testament Helps Us Understand the Old Testament.* By John Goldingay. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017. 262 pages. Paperback, $24.00.**

John Goldingay is well-known in the field of Old Testament studies and has produced numerous works concerned with building a biblical theology of the Old Testament. His most important works include his three volumes of Old Testament Theology: *Israel's Gospel* (2003), *Israel's Faith* (2006), and *Israel's Life* (2009).

Since Christians are by definition followers of Jesus, who is revealed in the text of the New Testament, *Reading Jesus's Bible* is an attempt to explain how the authors of the New Testament utilized and understood their "Scriptures," the Old Testament. As Goldingay

states, "the expression 'Old Testament' is thus anachronistic in connection with the time of Jesus and Paul. For them, these works were simply 'the Scriptures'" (2). Goldingay notes that the first five chapters of the Gospel of Mathew suggest five ways of reading the First Testament (Goldingay's term for the Old Testament): (1) as a story, (2) as prophetic fulfillment, (3) as a framework for theological ideas and as a theological dictionary, (4) as the foundation of a relationship with God in light of God's relationship with Israel, and (5) as the basis for New Testament morality. As such, Goldingay provides a chapter of its own for each of these five observations from Matthew.

That the Old Testament contains a story seems self-evident but, as Goldingay notes, the nature of the Old Testament story is in need of clarification because of the modern divide between history and story. Though it is easy to state that the Old Testament contains historical information in the form of artistic narrative, the balance of this statement is extremely delicate. On the one hand, if one focuses too much on the historical side, one turns the Old Testament into nothing more than chronicles, annals, and documentary fragments. On the other hand, if one focuses too much on the narrative, one is likely to detach the narratives from any historical referent whatsoever. Neither should dominate the other. Instead, "we are better off reading the stories and letting them speak to us, and not worry about the boundary between fact and story" (12). This is because "the story works by drawing us in and making us think about what goes on, which may help us more than simply telling us the answer" (38). Thus, Goldingay correctly notes that Matt 1:1–17 explains how the Old Testament is "an account of what God has done" and "tells a story of which Jesus is the climax" (5).

Though Goldingay notes that the relationship between the two testaments is not as simple as promise/fulfillment, he also notes that it is "one important way in which the New Testament sees the link between the Testaments" (61). Ultimately, this chapter is one of the weakest within the book. In order to defend his view that Matt 1:18–2:23 is primarily concerned with a promise/fulfillment motif, Goldingay argues that the author of Matthew at times correctly interpreted Old Testament passages, while this same author added meaning to other texts for the sake of defending his argument. For example, Goldingay states that while "one cannot prove exegetically that Jesus is the ruler" mentioned in Micah 5:2, "Matthew's quotation of it fits its inherent meaning" (64). More extremely, Goldingay states that Matthew's "appeal to Hosea 11 takes the text in quite a different way from what Hosea meant" (64). Though Goldingay believes there is nothing wrong with such utilization of the Old Testament text, it ultimately creates for him a slippery hermeneutical slope. As Goldingay states, "I do rejoice that God sometimes speaks to me and through me by means of interpretations of the Scriptures that do not correspond to their original meaning and that I believe come from the Holy Spirit" (68). Such a statement appears to allow for any spiritual meaning of the Old Testament to have authority. Instead, a better alternative is to dig deeper into the canonical text and assume that the New Testament authors understood its nature and interpreted it correctly. Sadly, such an analysis of the Old Testament is

lacking in current scholarship since many scholars' "knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures and text production in the original languages is not always up to the task."[1]

The New Testament notes that Jesus was recognizable by those who had a knowledge of the Old Testament (see John 1:45). As such, Goldingay notes that God's statement in Matt 3:13–17 is a combination of at least three Old Testament texts: Ps 2:7, Isa 42:1, and Gen 22:1–2. "At Jesus's baptism, then, God the Father gives Jesus and his disciples some idea of who Jesus is and what role he is to fulfill, by taking up images from the First Testament" (109). Since these images are essential to an understanding of Jesus's baptism, the Old Testament must be essential to understanding the full extent of Jesus's life and ministry.

The necessity of the Old Testament is also affirmed by the New Testament's description of how the believer is to relate to God. Goldingay notes that one relates to God through submission, trust, and obeisance. He also notes that both Jesus and Satan quote from the Old Testament in Matt 4:1–11. This situation leads Goldingay to the following question: "What is the difference between the use and the abuse of Scripture" (175)?

Ultimately, Goldingay concludes that all Old Testament verses must be placed within the canonical context of the Old Testament and that "in this particular case, misuse of Scripture involves taking verses out of their original context" (175). Though one finds agreement with Goldingay's analysis, one questions how Satan is doing something different from what Goldingay claimed that the author of Matthew was doing in his quotation of Hos 11:1?

In his last chapter, Goldingay notes that many, if not all, of the New Testament's teaching on morality finds its foundation in the Old Testament. Matthew 5:13–16 seems to be drawing from Isa 60:1–3. Matthew 5:21–48 seems to be reliant on the Ten Commandments and numerous other Old Testament texts. As such, the texts of the Old Testament are "inviting us to study what they have to teach us about the way we should live" (208).

Goldingay concludes his book by stating that "in light of the importance the New Testament attaches to the First Testament, it is odd that the church does not read it much. And if the church does read it, this reading is more than slightly selective, mainly so as to use it for support in connection with principles we already think are important" (249). While one supports Goldingay's conclusion, it seems that Goldingay is also guilty of utilizing the Old Testament in almost the exact same way. For example, Goldingay notes that the "First Testament holds no hope of eternal life before people" (153) and that "one real difference between the Testaments is that there is no hope of the resurrection in the First Testament" (190). But Goldingay is only able to make such statement by ignoring texts such as Dan 12:2 and the reading of Gen 22:5 as seen in Heb 11:17–19 through the lens of Hos 6:1–3.[2] As a final

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[1]Michael B. Shepherd, *The Text in the Middle*, Studies in Biblical Literature 162 (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 2.

[2]Ibid., 43–44.

word of evaluation, though this work is somewhat helpful, it is recommended that readers engage this book with caution.

- Ron Lindo, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana

Romans. **By John D. Harvey. In Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament, edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017. 400 pages. Paperback, $29.99.**

John D. Harvey serves as dean and professor of New Testament at Columbia Biblical Seminary of Columbia International University in Columbia, South Carolina. *Romans* is a part of the Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (EGGNT) series published by B&H Academic. The purpose of each of the volumes in the EGGNT series is "to close the gap between the Greek text and the available tools" (xxi). In *Romans,* Harvey fulfills that purpose admirably. The volume is exactly what the series title says it is, an exegetical guide.

After a brief introduction, the author leads the reader through the details of the Greek text of Romans. Each unit begins with a "Structure" section followed by comments on the Greek text broken down into verses or parts of verses. Grammatical and syntactical locations appear along with comments on word meanings, text-critical issues, and how a passage fits into the broader context. Sometimes the reader will find references to classical literature that illuminate the text of Romans. Harvey often explains how the text communicates by highlighting rhetorical questions, the use of diatribe, conditional statements, and more. The detailed treatment of the text is followed by a "For Further Study" section and a "Homiletical Suggestions" section. The obvious focus of the book is the biblical text.

The volume begins with an unusually detailed table of contents. Among other items, the subjects covered in the "For Further Study" sections are listed as well as the headings of the "Homiletical Suggestions" sections. A detailed exegetical outline begins the back matter of the book. This is followed by a grammar index and a Scripture index. These features make the book much more user-friendly than it would have been otherwise. The book can be studied from cover to cover or easily consulted as a reference tool.

As an exegetical guide, *Romans* serves not only as a guide to the Greek text but also as a guide to critical commentaries and to other secondary literature. Commentaries by Cranfield, Dunn, Moo, Schreiner, and others are referenced regularly. Concise summaries of commentaries including contrasts between them provide the reader with the knowledge of exactly where to turn for a particular facet of the exegetical conversation. Greek grammars and other reference books often are included in the discussion. These are not limited to recent works, but are relatively comprehensive. For example, A. T. Robertson's

classic volume on Greek grammar sometimes appears in the discussion of a passage. Bruce Metzger's *Textual Commentary* often appears in the discussion at appropriate points. Similarities and differences in English translations are annotated as well.

Some passages generate more discussion than others because they are difficult to interpret, are the focus of debates, or for other reasons. Romans has its share of those passages, like 3:22 which some would translate as "faith in Jesus Christ" and others would render as "the faithfulness of Jesus Christ." Other such passages include "all Israel will be saved" in 11:26, and Junia being described as "among the apostles" in 16:7. Harvey is consistently evenhanded in his treatment of these and other much-discussed passages. He does draw his own conclusions, but also lists other interpretive options with limited comment while noting other resources to consult. A detailed discussion of interpretive options is lacking, but if such a discussion were present then the volume would be a critical commentary rather than an exegetical guide.

The various sections of the book, common to all the volumes in the series, make *Romans* particularly helpful. The "Structure" sections facilitate the reader's understanding of how the individual parts fit into the whole. The "For Further Study" sections, found after detailed discussion of the text, point the reader toward other resources for each passage and related subjects. Some reference books have significant blind spots in methodologies like social-science criticism or textual criticism, but this is not true of *Romans*. Given the massive amount of secondary literature on Romans, no volume could claim to be comprehensive, but this one is relatively complete. The "Homiletical Suggestions" are helpful, especially for the initial stages of sermon preparation. They provide useful ideas for outlining a sermon based on the structure of the text.

Romans is an excellent resource, but is not easy reading, nor should it be. A student who is nearing completion of an intermediate Greek grammar course should be able to follow most of the book. However, even people who are comfortable working with the Greek text may need to have a couple of references on hand for grammar and syntax. Too many pastors say that they "had Greek" with the implication that they no longer use the language as a tool for ministry. Books like *Romans* can help to bridge the gap between the classroom and the study, helping pastors to use the skills that they acquired in seminary. Beyond the pastor's study, this volume can be useful for a busy student or for a professor. Anyone working through the Greek text of Romans or studying a particular part of Romans can benefit from it. Beyond the study of Romans, working through this volume can strengthen language skills for understanding other New Testament books as well.

–Roland L. McMillan, First Baptist Church, Richton, Mississippi

The Spirit and the Lake of Fire: Pneumatology and Judgment. **By Rustin Umstattd. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017. 175 pages. Paperback, $24.00.**

This book attempts to combine two topics that customarily have not been linked before—Holy Spirit and judgment. This has produced a binitarian understanding on the role of judgment. The author's goal, then, is to fill in this gap and produce a trinitarian understanding of the topic. Rustin Umstattd is assistant professor of Theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. This study originated from a doctoral dissertation under the direction of Malcolm B. Yarnell III, who provides a foreword.

In the introduction, Umstattd notes the revival of interest in Holy Spirit studies the past century yet also a lack of interest in the doctrine of judgment. Modern theologians have been deficient in ascribing the work of the Spirit in the role of judgment. Those who attempt a connection lean toward universalism. Umstattd therefore proposes not only to make the connection, but to do so from an evangelical point of view.

Umstattd uses chapter 1 to define his understanding of judgment as presented in the Bible. First, he offers several reasons why moderns neglect the doctrine of judgment. Next, he examines the language of judgment found in the Bible. Using the paradigm of America's legal system, he argues that God encompasses all three branches of judgment (legislative, executive, and judicial). Umstattd concludes the chapter with theological implications of this judgment. This includes ideas such as the revelatory nature of God, highlighting justice and holiness, vindication, and mercy within judgment. It also vindicates his ways with humanity. God judged humanity's sin on the cross. This leads to a purifying aspect of judgment, both temporally and eschatologically. Ultimately, God's judgment is a judgment of love.

In chapter 2, Umstattd presents the necessity for the Spirit's role in judgment. The Spirit must be involved in this doctrine in order to affirm a trinitarian theology. He then proceeds to the biblical evidence which supports the Trinity's role in judgment—the judges in Judges, the coming messiah in Isaiah, the judgment of Ananias, Sapphira, and Elymas in Acts, John 16's paraclete, Heb 9:14, and Gal 5:17 and Rom 8:13 in Paul. In each passage, the Spirit's role in justice and judgment is drawn out.

Chapters 3–6 take on major motifs that confirm the connection of the Spirit to judgment. Fire is the motif of chapter 3. Fire serves as a major symbol for judgment in the Bible. It can be understood as either purifying or destructive, beneficial or harmful. Umstattd asserts that the Spirit, described symbolically as fire, includes the idea of God's judgment. Scriptural support is found in the pillar of fire (Exodus 19) and the sevenfold Spirit (Rev 1:4). Less used are passages from Isaiah (4:4–6; 30:27–30; 33:11) which mention *ruach*. English versions do not capitalize "spirit" and use "wind" or "breath" for translation. But Umstattd notes

Isaiah commentators who support the connection to the Holy Spirit. The New Testament connection is stronger. The author does well in citing scholars who understand "baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16) as primarily condemnation. This is further underscored with Luke 12:49–50 and 1 Cor 3:10–17.

Chapter 4 addresses the motif of God's breath. Once again, the symbol can be beneficial or harmful, creating life or destroying life. Likewise, the Spirit as God's "breath" (*ruach*, *neshamah*, and *pneuma*) creates and judges. Umstattd appeals to several Bible passages to support the Spirit's connection to "breath." Then he discusses the judgmental side of "breath" and the Spirit in several passages. One example is the connection between mouth, sword, and Spirit (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12; Rev 1:16; 19:15, 21). This breath and the words that come forth confirm the role of the Spirit and the trinitarian relationship of key passages such as John 12:46; 16:12–15.

Chapter 5 explores the hand and arm of God. As with the other motifs, there is good news and bad news. These images can be protective or destructive. Drawing support from James Dunn and I. Howard Marshall, Umstattd connects the Spirit of God to the finger of God through Jesus's use of exorcism in Luke 11:20 and Matt 12:28. He then progresses from finger to hand to arm, citing key Old Testament passages (1 Chr 28:12, 19; Ezek 3:12–14; 8:1–3; 37:1; Isa 8:11; 31:3; 63:10–12). Thus, the Spirit serves as the acting agent of the Father and the Son in both redemption and judgment. "When God's arm moves in the world, this action originates from the Father and is carried out by the Son in the power of the Spirit" (103).

Chapter 6 considers God's wrath. This motif cannot be separated from God's love. Moreover, the Son is love but also comes in judgment. Yet some theologians find it difficult to allow the Spirit the same distinctive. He reveals God's love but not his wrath. Umstattd addresses this deficiency, and in doing so, strengthens the trinitarian understanding of wrath. He presents two paradigms that connect the Spirit to judgment. First, going back to Augustine, the Spirit is presented as the mutual-love of the Father and the Son. Second, going back to Luther, since wrath is the converse (the "dark side") of God's love, then love-wrath must also be connected to the Spirit.

Finally, chapter 7 relates the Spirit's presence in the crucifixion of Jesus. Once again, the binitarian understanding of the cross gives way to the proper trinitarian view as Umstattd clearly demonstrates the role of the Spirit in several passages. Next, Umstattd addresses the Lake of Fire. Many evangelicals assume a physical location. Umstattd does well to remind readers that it is primarily a relational position, not a physical one. The last few pages offer a summarizing conclusion (151–55) that includes some application, and an eighteen-page bibliography.

Umstattd has achieved his goal of combining two topics that have traditionally not been coupled—Holy Spirit and judgment. He effectively presents his motifs and confirms they represent two sides, depending on the audience. For believers, judgment is purifying; for unbelievers, it is destruction. The book's arguments are structured well. There is solid interaction with scholarship which leads to synthesis. Moreover, Umstattd's writing style is effective and easy to follow. He employs good transitions. Headings and subheadings aid readers.

This is not a mere academic exercise that will force future systematic theology books to add a paragraph under Pneumatology. It is also a tool for the lectern and pulpit to debate the weaknesses of universalism. Most evangelical readers will agree with just about everything Umstattd has presented. He does make a stronger case for penal substitution as the heart of atonement (133–43), an issue that evangelicals continue to spar over. Altogether, this is an excellent contribution to the growing research of combining theology and biblical studies.

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The Temple and the Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation. **By J. Daniel Hays. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016. 208 pages. Paperback, $19.99.**

The Temple and the Tabernacle is the most recent monograph by prolific scholar J. Daniel Hays. Hays is dean of the Pruet School of Christian Studies at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas. His other publications include *Grasping God's Word* (2012, with J. Scott Duvall) and *The Message of the Prophets* (2010). Hays is also active in ministry, having served previously as a missionary to Ethiopia. He currently serves as a Sunday school teacher at Second Baptist Church in Arkadelphia.

In the current monograph, Hays endeavors to provide readers with a survey of God's dwelling places throughout Scripture. The book is filled with beautiful illustrations and photographs that help readers visualize and better understand the topics under discussion. Hays moves chronologically from Genesis to Revelation and includes historical background information where relevant. Points of connection between the Old and New Testaments are also given attention, namely the manner in which Christ embodies all that the temple represented. Hays's thesis follows: "The temple was important only as it held the presence of God" (10). He, therefore, hopes that his presentation will guide readers to a greater appreciation of vital theological concepts such as holiness and worship.

The book is comprised of eight chapters. The first chapter develops the conceptual framework for the remainder of the study. Hays introduces various Hebrew and Greek terms used to describe the temple in the Bible. He then draws four preliminary conclusions: the temple/tabernacle is (1) the place where God's presence dwells, (2) the place where God reigns, (3) a place of holiness, and (4) a place where people can worship God.

Chapters 2–7 proceed chronologically through Scripture. In chapter 2, Hays presents the garden of Eden as God's Temple. In chapter 3, he examines the tabernacle, along with its construction and appurtenances. In chapter 4, Hays examines Solomon's temple. In chapter 5, the study moves to Ezekiel and the departure of God from the first temple. Here Hays spends a lengthy portion of the chapter discussing cherubim and other divine attendants. In chapter 6, which is devoted to the second temple, Hays describes the Judean struggle to rebuild the temple. He then surveys Herod's renovation and expansion of the structure. In chapter 7, Hays examines the concept of temple in the New Testament. He emphasizes Christ as the mobile locus of God's presence that renders a literal temple obsolete. Hays also notes that each Christian believer, as a vessel of the Holy Spirit, is a temple of God.

In the brief final chapter, Hays offers a few concluding thoughts. He asserts that the concepts of temple and tabernacle are central to the biblical narrative in that they represent the presence of God abiding with his people in covenant love. Hays's thoughts here encapsulate the message of the entire book:

> The story of God's presence among his people is parallel to and inextricably intertwined with the story of salvation. The human race starts out in the garden of Eden, an earthly temple in which God himself lives so that he can interact with his people. Sin and disobedience drive the fickle humans out of the garden and away from God's presence. . . . The rest of the Bible tracks the story of how God works through his grace to restore his people to close relationship with him so that they can enjoy his relational presence. (185–86)

Believers now enjoy the presence of God through the Holy Spirit, but will eventually dwell fully in his presence when Christ returns to usher in the new heavens and earth.

Hays's monograph is obviously directed toward evangelicals. He unabashedly accepts the authority and inerrancy of the biblical text. The book is not written just to inform readers about the dwelling places of God, but to equip them to better abide in his presence.

Although the book is an overview, Hays manages to provide a level of depth that will keep even expert readers engaged. His presentation of Solomon's temple is especially insightful. Hays argues that when Solomon is praised in Scripture, readers should be skeptical. He postulates that the biblical author is "praising Solomon on the surface, but he does not tell the story with a straight face, and if we look closely, we see him winking at us" (66). Further, Hays contends that God's presence comes to dwell in Solomon's temple *despite*

the multitude of transgressions that took place during its construction. Hays painstakingly compares the account of the tabernacle's construction to the temple's construction and concludes that the tabernacle was constructed according to God's specifications, but the temple was constructed according to Solomon's.

Hays's presentation of the second temple is likewise insightful. He points out that the biblical text nowhere indicates that God's presence ever fell upon the temple that was constructed by the returned exiles or the version that was constructed by Herod. Hays notes that "there is no presence of God dwelling there in that temple until Jesus Christ enters in through the gates" (186).

Both lay and academic readers will find much of value in *The Temple and the Tabernacle*. Although Hays occasionally references Hebrew and Greek terms, he always provides an explanation. The endnotes and bibliography are kept to a minimum, but enough references are provided that readers desiring to do further research will have a solid starting point. On the other end of the spectrum, those reading for devotional purposes may be fatigued by the level of detail in some sections, such as those on temple and tabernacle furnishings. Nonetheless, Hays balances the academic and devotional aspects of the study well. As expected, he has produced a quality work that will benefit both the academy and the church.

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Theologies of the American Revivalists: From Whitefield to Finney. By Robert W. Caldwell III. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 246 pages. Hardcover, $35.00.

In *Theologies of the American Revivalists,* Robert W. Caldwell III surveys the theological positions and revival practices of the notable leaders of America's First and Second Great Awakenings (1740–1840). Caldwell (PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) serves as associate professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

According to Caldwell, revival theologies consist of three themes: the revivalists' theology of salvation, the way they practically preached the gospel, and the conversion experiences they expected from converts. In order to investigate these themes, *Theologies of the American Revivalists* encompasses eight chapters, comprised of three components: "a starting point, a main trajectory of doctrinal development, and several side stories that add texture to the main narrative" (6). Following a chronological path, chapter 1 introduces the moderate evangelical revival theology. Notable leaders such as George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, and Samuel Davies were Presbyterians and Congregationalists who were mostly "New Light," embracing revival. Heavily influenced by Puritan tradition, those within this

camp generally viewed salvation "as a threefold process they summarized under the terms *conviction* (spiritual preparation for faith by the law and the means of grace), *conversion* (spiritual illumination, repentance, and faith), and *consolation* (the quest and attainment of assurance of salvation)" (10, emphasis original). Because those under conviction employed the means of grace and waited for a marked consolation or assurance, lengthy conversions were commonplace.

Next, the book considers "First Great Awakening Alternatives." Chapter 2 contrasts the Edwardsean tradition, named for its innovator Jonathan Edwards, with Andrew Croswell's revival theology of "free grace." Croswell concluded that since salvation is freely granted, it can be freely received. He saw little need for protracted times of conviction, conversion, and consolation, believing instead that recipients could experience these things instantaneously. Some rejected his views as too subjective and even antinomian.

Edwards differentiated himself from "Old Light" Reformed theologians in two ways: his "voluntarist accent" and his "spirituality of disinterestedness." The *voluntarist accent* appeared in his belief that humans did not merely inherit Adam's sin but were rather active participants in it. The theme also shows up in Edwards's belief that the human will was active and that they "possess both a moral inability to choose Christ and a natural ability to repent and believe" (73). Edwards's second distinguishing factor proposed a "disinterested" spirituality which results in the believer becoming more disinterested in himself as he becomes more enamored with God.

Although Croswell's "radical, separatist revival theology" failed to leave a legacy, such was not the case with Edwards. A group of ministers known as the New Divinity movement transformed his thoughts into an independent theological system, Edwardsean Calvinism. The third chapter explores the two best-known proponents of Edwardsean Calvinism, Joseph Bellamy, and Samuel Hopkins. These theologians transformed Edwards's *disinterested spirituality* into an ethical theory known as *disinterested benevolence* which sought the good of the universal being at the expense of the individual. They also deduced *immediate repentance* and the *principle of personal merit* from Edwards's *voluntarist accent*.

The Second Great Awakening receives attention in chapters 4–6. Chapter 4 introduces the Awakening while continuing to investigate Edwardsean revival theology. Preaching and conversion experiences receive particular consideration as Edwardsean themes manifested in revival preaching.

Two evangelical denominations grew exponentially as a result of the Second Great Awakening. Chapter 5 considers the first group, American Methodists. John Wesley and his denomination believed an Arminian soteriology. Their unified system stressed a loving God, a universal offer of the gospel, and a serious call to holiness. Riding the wave of growth produced through revivals and the efforts of its selfless, gifted leaders, the Methodists ascended to the top as "the largest Protestant denomination in America by 1860" (126).

Chapter 6 studies the second benefactor of the revivals, American Baptists. Baptists, in contrast to their Methodist brethren, were a diverse group. Separate Baptists, Freewill Baptists, and Calvinistic Baptists filled their ranks. Though united on issues like religious liberty, congregational autonomy, and believers' baptism by immersion, they left behind no cohesive revival theology.

Historians regard Charles Finney as the most notable revivalist of the Second Great Awakening, and chapter 7 evaluates him. Though not formally trained, he borrowed from other theologies, particularly Taylorism, in order to construct his unique revival theology. Finney systematized a process he believed could work to ensure revival. This process involved dependence on the Holy Spirit and the minister's implementation of his "new measures." These "measures" involved public prayers, protracted meetings, and the use of the anxious bench. Caldwell summarizes, "His numerous writings on revival, which were severely criticized, represent the last original system of revival theology advanced in America" (10).

The final chapter gives room to two reactionary groups to the revival. The first group considered were traditional Calvinist theologians of Princeton Seminary. Represented by Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge, this group criticized modern revivals, preferring instead "a vision of Christian parenting and catechizing coupled with a cautious reappropriation of moderate evangelical revival theology of the First Great Awakening" (10). The other reactionary group was the Restoration Movement propagated by Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott. They emphasized a simple, "biblicist" approach. Campbell and Scott believed salvation was the result of four steps: faith, repentance, baptism, and regeneration. Their beliefs live on in the "Disciples" or "Churches of Christ" movement.

Theologies of the American Revivalists accomplishes its purpose of being a theological history of soteriology during the period of America's Great Awakenings. Caldwell utilizes extensive research of primary sources which introduce his audience to theologians not frequently referenced in church histories. Whereas the content at times can be heavy for the average reader, the author graciously offers a summary at the end of each chapter. Students of church history and particularly a class on the development of American Protestant theology will find this resource extremely helpful. Pastors and laypeople who love to meditate on the movements of God will enjoy this book. The vivid salvation testimonies and the colorful anecdotes about the work of God offer refreshment in this toxic time within American culture. It reminds the reader what God can do to individuals and communities when the Spirit of God descends with great power.

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The Vulgarization of Christ's Church: Combating Progressivism's Damning Influence upon Christian Thinking and Preaching. **By Ronnie W. Rogers. Eugene, OR: Resource, 2017. 191 pages. Paperback, $27.00.**

Ronnie W. Rogers is the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Norman, Oklahoma. He formerly held the positions of chairman of the Nominating Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention and chairman of the Board of Trustees at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. Rogers holds a BA in biblical studies from Criswell College and an MS in counseling from Henderson State University. His publications include *The Equipping Church: Somewhere between Fundamentalism and Fluff* (WestBow, 2014), *The Death of Man as Man: The Rise and Decline of Liberty* (WestBow, 2011), and *Undermining the Gospel: The Case and Guide for Church Discipline* (WestBow, 2015).

Rogers explains his purpose in composing this book, "In this book, I primarily seek to elucidate and demonstrate the incalculable and deleterious influence that progressive education has had upon preaching and the understanding of what a local church is to be and do" (xiii). The author appears to hold the position that the genesis and philosophical undergirding of government-run education has contributed to the current downturn of American churches. Therefore, a secondary purpose seems to be to react against the seeker-sensitive church growth model, a movement which elevates style over substance and method over doctrine, sacrifices long-term spiritual growth for immediate utilitarian application, and replaces expository preaching with felt-needs, application-driven messages (6–32). A summary of the seven chapters will provide insight into how Rogers accomplished his purpose.

In the first chapter, the author argues that progressive education is the most influential and detrimental force in American culture (4, 141). Seven tenets of progressive education and a demonstration of how each has contributed to the devaluing of the biblical picture of the church are offered in this chapter. In Chapter 2, Rogers highlights the origins and foundations of the philosophy of progressive education. His explanation is that in man's search for a "unifying principle," progressives began moving away from a classical approach to education to a scientific one. This, in turn, made science the determiner and evaluator of not only what should be taught (i.e., "real" knowledge), but also the methods for teaching. As such, the shift moved science beyond its natural bounds, pushed it toward scientism, and set up an inevitable confrontation with Christianity, and any system which is based in the existence of the supernatural (34, 141). "Rightly understood, the debate is not about the clash between religion and science; it is about the clash between supernaturalism and naturalism, Christianity and scientism" (34).

In Chapter 3, the author defines "Scientific Liberal Culture," the force that he argues is threatening the church and in which "we" are at war. After giving two historical bases for teaching religion, namely "it is constitutionally compatible" and "it is ethically

demanded," Rogers offers four guidelines for giving the teaching of religion a renewed place in government schools (79–82). In Chapter 4, Rogers begins by examining Sociology's and Psychology's attempt to deconstruct faith. However, in the majority of the chapter, he focused on the legal attempts that have been made to remove religious expressions from the public square. Here, the author specifically examined the 1947 Everson v. Board of Education case (330 U.S. 1) and the out-of-context use of Thomas Jefferson's "a wall of separation between church and state" statement. Having done so, Rogers makes the case that the teaching of religion in government schools and the expression of religion in the public square is not unconstitutional and that the American culture's attack on Christianity is unwarranted.

In Chapter 5, the author identifies how science and the tenets of progressive education have become their own religion. Namely, the attempt of the undergirding philosophy of progressive education to become the arbiter of all knowledge and what subjects are taught in school has caused it to engage topics beyond its capability. Progressive education, then, is now a religious endeavor *ipso facto* because it is addressing topics like why someone prays to God, morality, and man's origins. Rogers also argues, from primary source material including quotes from proponents of philosophy, humanism, and atheism, that this scientism or naturalism is, in fact, religious because it requires faith. "With regard to the influence of education, it is crucial to keep in mind that education itself is a religious endeavor. . . . To wit, progressive education is not supplementary to religious education; it is a replacement. . . . Even science becomes a religion–naturalism–when embraced as the supreme source of truth in every area" (136). Therefore, in chapter 6, Rogers exposes the weakness of science's ability to be the guardian of all knowledge and truth. The chapter appears to be an implicit warning against allowing scientism to become our religion. Rogers offered both strengths (154–55) and weaknesses of science (155–71), which are responses to the results of the strengths taken too far.

Chapter 7 makes a final appeal to the reader by arguing for the implementation of the "Equipping Model" in the local church. Rogers made his case for the value and need of this model based on three types of cultures that Sorokin described in his work, *The Crisis in our Age*. They are Ideational, Idealistic, and Sensate (173–75). The author believes that "America today is sensate" (174). Therefore, juxtaposed with both the traditional and contemporary ones, the Equipping Model is the model that must be employed if the church is going to stem the tide or at least be equipped "to live out their faith in a modern scientific liberal culture" (173).

There is little doubt that in this work Rogers has contributed to identifying the origins of the American educational system and its influences on her society and on Christianity. One would be hard-pressed to find gaps or holes in his argument. His research is valid and thorough. He substantiates his thesis and claims through the use of historical documents in context and primary source material in relevant fields. Thus, Rogers brings a unique, and

perhaps fresh, understanding of the weakening of the church, the unflattering evolution of the role of pastor, and the demise of biblical exposition and congregational expectations. He also makes a strong case that Christianity does not fear the proper uses of science; subsequently, science applied properly should not fear the presence of Christianity (141). Furthermore, the author *possibly* identifies a solution to the dilemma and a model for the church's response. However, one wonders if Rogers delivered completely on the expectations that he raised. For instance, the title of Chapter 3, "What the Church Must Do to Stem the Tide of Progressivism: Countering the Corrosive Influence of State Schools upon Culture and the Church," implies that some suggestions for church action will be offered. However, the four guidelines that are offered seem hardly implementable by anyone in the church, even a public school teacher (87–97). It appears that any of the four would have to be enacted by the government or school board, entities that the church currently does not directly control. Subsequently, the book does not offer much in the way of practical application. Even Chapter 7, in which the Equipping Model is identified, offers little in the way of describing the model or practical steps which one may take if he believes Rogers has correctly diagnosed the problem. To be fair, however, the tone of the book seems to be aimed more at understanding than a call to action. On more than one occasion, the author referenced his book *The Equipping Church: Somewhere between Fundamentalism and Fluff* as the source for an explanation of this model (xiv, 172). One assumes the reader will have to engage that work as well to have a full understanding of how to combat the influence that this work identifies.

Overall, Ronnie Rogers's defense of classical and Christian education was enlightening to read and could help many of the readers of this journal. The book seems ideal for any pastor, Christian educator, public school teacher, or believer who has an interest in understanding the culture and engaging in Christian apologetics in both the church and the academy. However, the content was substantial in sections, and thus the reading was dense at times. With this final caveat, I highly recommend this book.

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