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# Table of Contents

Editorial Introduction .....	1
<i>Adam Harwood, PhD</i>	
Multiplication or Management?: Tension and the Creation Mandate.....	3
<i>Ryan Rindels, PhD</i>	
Retrieving Diversity and Unity on the Work of Christ in the Apostolic Fathers .....	21
<i>Thomas G. Doughty, Jr., PhD</i>	
“He Who Is and the Angel of Him Who Is”: Nicene and Post-Nicene Views of Christophanies .....	73
<i>Rex D. Butler, PhD</i>	
Sharing in the Distributed Body of Christ: Luther’s Eucharistic Reading of Philemon 6.....	95
<i>Casey B. Hough, PhD</i>	
Reformation Boundaries: The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone and Ecumenical Rapprochement .....	117
<i>Jacob G. Milstead, PhD</i>	
Watch with Me: The Pastors of Port William in the Writings of Wendell Berry .....	139
<i>Jason P. Kees, PhD</i>	
The Southern Baptist Convention and World War II .....	157
<i>David T. Crum, PhD</i>	
Book Reviews .....	175

## Editorial Introduction

**Adam Harwood, PhD**

*Adam Harwood is professor of theology, occupying the McFarland Chair of Theology; director of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry; and editor, Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.*

This Spring issue of JBTM features seven thought-provoking articles from pastor-scholars in the areas of historical, systematic, and pastoral theology. **Ryan Rindels** is pastor of First Baptist Church Sonoma in Sonoma, California. In his article, “Multiplication or Management? Tension and the Creation Mandate,” Rindels considers the Genesis 1:28 mandate to “be fruitful and multiply” against concerns about global population growth and a sustainable ecology. **Thomas G. Doughty, Jr.** serves as assistant professor of theology and Christian worldview, and associate dean of Leavell College in New Orleans, Louisiana. In his article, “Retrieving Diversity and Unity on the Work of Christ in the Apostolic Fathers,” Doughty examines the writings of five Apostolic Fathers to discern their views on the work of Christ. **Rex D. Butler** is professor of church history and patristics, occupying the John T. Westbrook Chair of Church History at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. A version of this article, “‘He Who Is and the Angel of Him Who Is’: Nicene and Post-Nicene Views of Christophanies,” was presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society on Nov. 16, 2021, in Fort Worth, Texas. Butler’s current article continues the research presented in a previous article, “‘The Son of God Appeared to Prophets and Patriarchs’: Ante-Nicene Views of Christophanies,” which appeared in JBTM 18.1 (Spring 2021): 63–83.

**Casey B. Hough** is pastor of Copperfield Church in Houston, Texas, and assistant professor of Biblical Interpretation at Luther Rice College & Seminary in Stonecrest, Georgia. In “Sharing in the Distributed Body of Christ: Luther’s Eucharistic Reading of Philemon 6,” Hough examines Martin Luther’s neglected interpretation of Paul’s statement about “the sharing of your faith” (Phlm 6, NKJV and ESV) as a remark about participation in the Lord’s

body through the Lord's Supper. **Jacob G. Milstead** serves as family pastor of Agricola, Baptist Church in Lucedale, Mississippi. In "Reformation Boundaries: The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone and Ecumenical Rapprochement," Milstead compares the conciliatory *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* made between twentieth-century Lutherans and Catholics with the writings of sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers to discern the significance of the doctrine of justification. **Jason P. Kees** serves as the associate pastor of discipleship at East Leesville Baptist Church in Leesville, Louisiana, and adjunct professor of Biblical Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. In "Watch with Me: The Pastors of Port William in the Writings of Wendell Berry," Kees gleans wisdom on the pastor's vocation from the fictional writings of Wendell Berry. **David T. Crum** serves as assistant professor of history at Truett McConnell University in Cleveland, Georgia. In "The Southern Baptist Convention and World War II," Crum presents some of the research he completed for his PhD dissertation on the topic at the University of the Free State, South Africa.

The seven articles are followed by a collection of book reviews covering the fields of biblical studies, biblical theology, historical and systematic theology, Christian psychology, spiritual formation, and pastoral leadership. May these articles and reviews encourage and strengthen pastors, scholars, and students to grow in their knowledge and love for the Lord as well as their love for and service to others.

## Multiplication or Management?: Tension and the Creation Mandate

Ryan Rindels, PhD

*Ryan Rindels serves as pastor of First Baptist Church Sonoma  
in Sonoma, California.*

Note: A version of this article was presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society on Nov. 18, 2021, in Fort Worth, Texas.

In Paul Schrader’s transcendental thriller *First Reformed* (2017), Ernst Toller, pastor of a historic Dutch Reformed church in Snowbridge, New York, is asked by a parishioner, Mary, that he talk to her husband, Michael. He is a climate activist recently released from prison, and he wants Mary to have an abortion. The young man explains to Toller how global warming has brought the planet on an irreversible path of ecological collapse. “How do you sanction bringing a little girl into the world,” he asks, “where that little girl grows up and she looks you in the eyes and says, ‘you knew this all along?’” Toller expresses sympathy for Michael’s concerns, conceding that “man’s great achievements have brought him to the place where life as we know it may cease in the foreseeable future, yes, that’s new. . . . We are rational people, we want answers . . . and if humankind cannot overcome its immediate interests enough to ensure its own survival, you’re right, the only rational response is despair.”<sup>1</sup> After recounting his son’s death in the Iraq War, Toller advises, “I can promise you that whatever despair you feel about bringing a child into this world cannot equal the despair of taking a child from it.” Soon after that, Michael commits suicide. The remainder of the film witnesses Toller’s wrestling with the legitimacy of Michael’s environmental concerns and their existential implications. On the verge of committing an act of terrorism, Toller heeds the advice he initially gave to Michael, not on rational evidence, but out of love for Mary and her child. The narrative of *First Reformed* engages a subject of seri-

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Schrader, *First Reformed*, DVD (New York: Killer Films), 2017.

ous concern for many in the twenty-first century: the value of potential human life in a context of heightened environmental consciousness.

Until relatively recently, the injunction to “increase and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it” would not only make theological sense to Jewish and Christian readers of the Hebrew Bible but appear as a rational course shared by cultures across the world.<sup>2</sup> Concerning expansion, the principal concern was thus *how* a society could support its inhabitants’ most basic needs, not *if* it should grow. People groups and their respective cultures faced the problem of sustaining existing populations, malnutrition being the primary cause—and conversely, the result—of war and disease. For ancient Israel dwelling in Palestine, the biblical authors frequently cite the curses of Deuteronomy 28:15–68 as a reminder that unfaithfulness to the covenant would bring the result that they “shall be left few in number” (v. 62). The sheer loss of men would render the pitiable scenario described by the prophet Isaiah: “Seven women shall take hold of one man . . . saying, ‘let us be called by your name; take away our reproach’” (Isa 4:1).<sup>3</sup> Positively, the sixth-century prophet Zechariah spoke of a glorious future age in which “the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets” (Zech 9:5).

At the close of 2021, the world population is just under a staggering eight billion inhabitants. Remarkably, the specter of critical food shortage has not materialized as statisticians, scientists, and some futurists predicted. Food prices have, in fact, decreased across the globe.<sup>4</sup> Modern medicine has eliminated most devastating communicable diseases. Women with access to health care no longer die in childbirth at high rates. Infants likewise succumb in

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<sup>2</sup> Calvin comments on Genesis 1:28 that “pure and lawful method of increase, which God ordained from the beginning, remains firm; that is the law of nature which common sense declares to be inviolable.” Cited in *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 98. After YHWH’s diluvial judgment, the divine command, one given to Adam in the garden is repeated: “be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply, in it.”

<sup>3</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless noted.

<sup>4</sup> “Food is Growing More Plentiful, So Why Do People Keep Warning of Shortages?” NPR, August 4, 2020, available at <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/04/897804434/food-is-growing-more-plentiful-so-why-do-people-keep-warning-of-shortages>.

fewer numbers to fatal illnesses. Adult life expectancy continues to climb. All such attainments are unquestionable goods, providing levels of well-being and comfort inaccessible to earlier generations. These advances notwithstanding, humanity faces a new horizon of possible and actual dilemmas that are consequent to—and in some cases, resultant from—a large and growing world population.

Christians affirm the truthfulness of Scripture that human beings have a royal status as God's image bearers. In relation to careful stewardship, this identification has unfortunately been the subject of misunderstanding and misappropriation by believers and unbelievers alike. Journalist Stephanie Hendricks suggests that various versions of eschatology, notably a pretribulational rapture and belief in an imminent Armageddon, sanctify human spoiling of the ecosphere.<sup>5</sup> Americans who settled the western frontier in the nineteenth century explicitly or implicitly believed that "dominion" meant subjugation and exploitation.<sup>6</sup> Though the early twentieth century witnessed a shift, many evangelicals were, for a complex set of reasons, either unaware or indifferent to deforestation, pollution, and the extinction of various species of animals.

Ecological destruction and climate change are twin ills that evangelicals should take seriously. Whether the degree to which fears over catastrophic scenarios are warranted, the majority of those who craft public policy believe the planet's imminent disintegration demands radical measures, some of which violate the inherent dignity of those who bear the *imago Dei*.<sup>7</sup> Christians thus

<sup>5</sup> Stephanie Hendricks, *Divine Destruction: Wise Use, Dominion Theology, and the Making of American Environmental Policy* (Hoboken, NJ: Melville House, 2005). Cited in Russell D. Moore, "Heaven and Nature Sing: How Theology Can Inform the Task of Environmental Protection (And Vice Versa)," *JETS* 57.3 (September 2014): 573.

<sup>6</sup> Russell Moore captures that ambiguity of the concept in the following observation, "Nature seems at some points disinterested and at other points actively hostile to human dominion." Cited in "Heaven and Nature Sing," 577. Calvin understood the duty incumbent on humans to practice stewardship when he wrote, "all things were ordained for the use of man, that he, being under deeper obligation, might devote and dedicate himself entirely to obedience toward God." Cited in *Commentary on Genesis*, 64.

<sup>7</sup> This influence extends beyond academia and the halls of congress. Celebrities such as Prince Harry and Meghan Markle have been vocal about their decision to have a small family. See "Prince Harry and Meghan Markle Given Environmental Award for Decision to Only Have Two Children," *The Independent*, July 10, 2021, available at <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/royal->

face an apparent clash between humanity's relation to the planet according to Scripture and governments and societies guided by secular principles. Much is at stake, including the legalization and proliferation of abortion—elective and, in some cases, compulsory.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, economic hardship is a steady but growing reality in the scores of nations with *diminishing* populations, such as those in east Asia and western Europe. For the two-thirds world, from where most growth is concentrated, management of natural resources and preservation of species and ecosystems is the more existential threat. Thus, Christians in those contexts face the challenges pertaining to environmental stewardship rather than the coercive mandates of secular states. Without nuance, such polarities threaten to stretch the meaning of Genesis 1:28 to the level of incoherence. However, if the creation mandate to “increase and multiply” is understood as multiplication *and* stewardship, evangelicals may have a constructive path moving forward. Conceptually, this schema can affirm the goodness of procreation without dismissing contemporary challenges associated with an expanding population—notably, the destruction of the environment.

Theologically, Scripture's affirming the intrinsic value of human beings as superior to all animate and inanimate life forms resists all policies—public or private—that implement abortion and forced sterilization.<sup>9</sup> With respect to stewardship, human agents

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family/prince-harry-meghan-markle-children-b1881705.html?utm\_content=Echobox&utm\_medium=Social&utm\_source=Twitter#Echobox=1625916349. Carl Trueman's comments are apropos, “In a world in which the idea of universal human nature has been abandoned . . . it also means that those who shape popular taste become those who exert the moral power and set society's moral standards.” Carl E. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 161.

<sup>8</sup> Paul VI's comments in *Humanae Vitae* are germane, “careful consideration should be given to the danger of this power passing into the hands of those public authorities who care little for the precepts of the moral law. Who will blame a government which in its attempt to resolve the problems affecting an entire country resorts to the same measures as are regarded as lawful by married people in the solution of a particular family difficulty? Who will prevent public authorities from favoring those contraceptive methods which they consider more effective?”

<sup>9</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer comments that forced sterilization “constitutes a grave violation of a man's right to possess his life intact, and there is an overwhelming danger that once this boundary has been crossed (perhaps, in the last analysis, in a manner which can be answered for) all other barriers will soon be



function as vice-regents of their creator, accountable for proper care of the planet, and endowed with the wisdom necessary to achieve human flourishing. A crucial component for defending an anthropocentric view of the universe is the unpredictability of human actions and the surprising innovations that not only sustain but accommodate—in the example of the present essay—larger populations, often with improved quality of life.

### **New Horizons: Possibility and Anxiety**

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971), writing in the early days of World War II, perceptively noted that modern, technologically-advanced nations faced a paradoxical situation. The achievements of science no longer instilled confidence that the future would be one in which technological mastery over nature obviated all contingency and uncertainty but rather increased it. He wrote,

Man is anxious, not only because his life is limited and dependent and yet not so limited and dependent that he does know of his limitations. He is also anxious because he does not know the limits of his possibilities. He can do nothing and regard it as perfectly done, because higher possibilities are revealed in each achievement. All human actions stand under seemingly limitless possibilities. There are, of course, limits but it is difficult to gauge them from any immediate perspective.<sup>10</sup>

Niebuhr's assessment is instructive for understanding dramatic population growth as a phenomenon that exists in large part because previous ills such as fatal communicable diseases, widespread famine, and infant mortality have been dramatically reduced and, in some cases, outright eliminated. The same body of knowledge that preserved and strengthened human life can be and has been used—as in the cases of two global conflicts in the twentieth century—to denigrate and destroy life on a massive scale. Niebuhr attributes this anxiety to the duality of human nature in which finitude exists alongside consciousness of the infinite. For many entering the third decade of the twenty-first century, mete-

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broken down as well.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1955), 180.

<sup>10</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man, vol. 1, Human Nature* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1941), 183.

oric population growth—though possible by venerable scientific achievements—instills angst that an overabundance of people will wreak destruction on an apocalyptic level.<sup>11</sup>

As noted, a horizon is open on the plane of human history, which requires serious and thoughtful theological reflection in order to avoid great perils to present and future generations. Writing in 1948, the Jesuit theologian and paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) observed that “from the paleolithic age onwards and still more after the Neolithic age, Man has always lived in a state of expansion: to him progress and increase have one and the same thing. But now we see the saturation point ahead of us, and approaching at a dizzying speed.”<sup>12</sup> A similar sentiment is voiced in *Humane Vitae*, where Pope Paul VI asks rhetorically if an era had arrived when—as some believed—that “the transmission of life should be regulated by [human] intelligence and will rather than through the specific rhythms of [a husband and wife’s] own bodies.”<sup>13</sup> The encyclical, of course, opposes such a reductionist view of human nature. It acknowledges, however, that population growth does give contraception and abortion a degree of plausibility if particular presuppositions stand. The extent to which moderns have actual and potential control over their own biology has solved many problems that affected earlier periods. These attainments have likewise created new conditions that defy simple ethical assessment.

Premodern Christians were not unaware of the inherent limits of the earth to accommodate and sustain human populations. John Calvin, in his commentary on Genesis, wrote, “God has marked, as with a boundary, the space of earth which would suffice for the reception of men,” followed by a comment that “any inequality which proceeds from this arrangement is nothing else than a corruption of nature that proceeds from sin.” The Genevan Reformer shows awareness of spatial limitations on the basis of surface area, though he does not offer any concrete guess as to what the earth could sustain. Furthermore, he acknowledges ineq-

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<sup>11</sup> See Roger Scruton, *How to Think Seriously about the Planet: The Case for an Environmental Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 86–87, who avers that doomsday scenarios lend themselves to “salvationist” solutions instead of local, small-scaler solutions.

<sup>12</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man*, trans. Norman Denny (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 233.

<sup>13</sup> *Humanae Vitae*, “New Questions,” 3.

uity present in both the respective physical locations and the quality of land people groups occupy. He nevertheless concludes that “by the benediction of God . . . the earth everywhere lies open . . . that an immense multitude of men may find, in some part of the globe, their home.”<sup>14</sup>

The dramatic increase in world population and the growing awareness of its ecological toll led to counterintuitive reflections on the meaning of Genesis in the last one hundred years. A figure no less than the twentieth-century apologist and founder of *L'Abri Fellowship*, Francis Schaeffer, proposed in his *Genesis in Space and Time Commentary* that the punishment for Eve's sin (3:15) meant that God multiplied not just pain, “but also the conception.” He opined, “It seems clear that if man had not rebelled there would not have been as many children,” a surprising claim coming from a conservative evangelical.<sup>15</sup> Whatever the merits of this exegesis, Schaeffer was conscious of the fact that—whether intentional or not—a large world population posed a greater potential for environmental harm.<sup>16</sup> Multiplication, under his reading, is part of the curse. Writing in the early 1940s, Dietrich Bonhoeffer affirmed that sex and the bearing of children should not be separated—agreeing with the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. In his *Ethics*, however, he observed that “only in the age of rationalism and technology” could reproduction in marriage not be understood as a straightforward command to fruitfulness.<sup>17</sup> The principal difficulty with the power granted by such technology is an attendant belief that the same rationality which produced such means of control could also manage any and every problem emerging from these sources.

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<sup>14</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 97–98. Estimates of world population loosely coterminous with Calvin's lifetime ranged from 461 million in 1500 to 554 million in 1600, roughly 1/16 of the estimated 2021 global population. See Statista, available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1006502/global-population-ten-thousand-bc-to-2050/>.

<sup>15</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972), 97.

<sup>16</sup> Schaeffer's awareness and interest in this subject is evident in his *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1970), published two years before *Genesis in Space and Time*.

<sup>17</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 178.

### Systematic Unpredictability: The Human Factor

In his modern classic, *After Virtue* (1981), Alasdair MacIntyre critiques the notion that law-like generalizations could be discovered that enable governance of human affairs with precision akin to the natural sciences. From Auguste Comte (1798–1857) onward, social scientists have proposed various theories pertaining to human actions in order to maintain “managerial expertise,” the possession of which validates their role in crafting public policy.<sup>18</sup> MacIntyre observes that even the modest predictions in the last century-and-a-half—particularly in the field of economics—have proven incorrect, a failure he attributes to ignorance of the systematic unpredictability characteristic of human behavior.<sup>19</sup> The insistence that human action can be explained with the precision of physics or chemistry has consequences for the citizens of governments who teach and apply such theories. Confidence, for example, that there are population thresholds that require limiting the number of children born by coercive means is a logical, even necessary, appropriation of theories which assume ontological materialism and naturalistic determinism.

Writing in 1929, Sigmund Freud lamented that modern medicine might have, in fact, constituted a historical *digression* by undermining the evolutionary process and limiting sexual freedom. He asked,

What is the use of reducing infantile morality when it is precisely the reduction which imposes the greatest restraint on us in the begetting of children, so that, taken all round, we nevertheless rear more children than in the days before the reign of hygiene, while at the same time have created difficult conditions for our sexual life in marriage, and have

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<sup>18</sup> French historian Elie Halevy (1870–1937) called such persons “moral Newtonians.” Cited in Gary Scott Morson, “Tolstoy’s Wisdom and Folly” *First Things* no. 317 (November 2021): 22.

<sup>19</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), 103–126. The four sources are the nature of radical conceptual innovation, the unpredictability of certain of his own future actions by each agent individually generates another element of unpredictability as such in the social world, the game-theoretic character of social life, and pure contingency.

probably worked against the beneficial effects of natural selection?<sup>20</sup>

Only thirty years later, hormonal contraception made possible the sexual freedom Freud believed was untenable in the 1920s. Presently, the majority of western European nations—as well as developed east Asian countries such as Japan, China, and South Korea—have birth rates well below replacement levels. While there is—with the exception of China—freedom to have as many children as possible, women of childbearing age have not borne, on average, the minimum number of babies for long-term economic stability. The deleterious effects of this trend, though they are not fully realized for several decades, will lower the overall quality of life.<sup>21</sup> The irony with this phenomenon is that quality of life, economically measured, is the primary reason why many couples and some governments prefer smaller families or no children at all.

An examination of world history has shown that every dire prediction concerning the world population, from Thomas Robert Malthus (1768–1834) to John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) to Paul Ehrlich (b. 1932), has not come to fruition, in large part, because of an unforeseen scientific advancement, notably in agriculture.<sup>22</sup> If systematic unpredictability were true in the way Alasdair Mac-

<sup>20</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), 40. The fact that Freud idealizes an earlier period of high infant mortality overlooks the devastating toll on the women who not only lost their children, but in many cases, their own lives as well, is remarkable.

<sup>21</sup> Observing the counterintuitive increase of energy usage by smaller populations and vice versa, Roger Scruton comments, “It is often the *absence* of growth that leads to depletion, as people fail to find substitutes for dwindling resources. Growth in Western countries and Japan, for example, has been accompanied by a per capita fall in energy consumption, and a rise in the efficient use of scarce resources.” Scruton, *How to Think Seriously about the Planet*, 378.

<sup>22</sup> In his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), Malthus himself claimed that England could only support several million people. Ehrlich, Emeritus professor of biology at Stanford University wrote in *The Population Bomb* (1968) that, “The battle to feed all humanity is over. In the 1970’s, hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash program embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate.” Several other works that argued for variations of the same thesis include Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976) and Donella H. Meadows et al., *The Limits of Growth* (London: Earth Island, 1972).

Intyre claims, such discoveries would be unsurprising. MacIntyre explains the meaning of “radical conceptual innovation,” one of the four components of systematic unpredictability.

Any invention, any discovery, which consists essentially in the elaboration of a radically new concept cannot be predicted, for a necessary part of the prediction is the present elaboration of the very concept whose discovery or invention was to take place only in the future.<sup>23</sup>

A notable element is the unpredictability of future science. MacIntyre explains that physicists, for example, can tell us the future about areas such as thermodynamics, but not the future of physics, “insofar as the future involves radical conceptual innovation.” Herein lies the problem: “It is the future of physics which we need to know about if we are to know about the future of our own physics-based society.”<sup>24</sup> This conclusion limits organizational predictability and thus undermines any sweeping claims about, for example, how many human beings the earth can sustain.

Without the certainty of law-like generalizations, society must rely on future discoveries to solve present problems. But are there ways to predict when and how these discoveries will be made? MacIntyre says no. It is not that radical innovation is *inexplicable*, “particular discoveries or innovations may always be explained after the event.” He claims, however, that it is “not entirely clear what such an explanation would be and whether there are any.”<sup>25</sup> These conclusions are not amenable in contexts where indeterminacy is denied—as in traditional Marxism. Dogmatic materialism joined with a facile notion of progress, has led to state-sponsored intrusion—and various forms of manipulation—into the lives of citizens around the globe. The outcome of such policies has been predominantly negative, lowering citizens’ emotional, spiritual, and—ironically—economic quality of life. Citing the work of Herbert Kaufman, MacIntyre notes,

Attempts to monitor what every subordinate is doing all the time tend to be counter-productive; attempts to make the activity of others predictable necessarily routinize, suppress intelligence and flexibility and turn the energies of subordi-

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<sup>23</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 109.

<sup>24</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 109.

<sup>25</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 111. He cites the work of Karl Popper.

nates to frustrating the projects of at least some of their superiors.<sup>26</sup>

There is no better exemplar of an attempt to achieve organizational success and organizational predictability than the People's Republic of China, specifically, its One Child Policy. Instituted in 1979 on the premise that radical limitation to the number of children born to Chinese women was necessary to avert mass starvation, the policy has, in fact, cost an estimated 400 million lives. With respect to achieving the Party's expressed goal of staving off famine, the Population and Family Planning Law seems to have proven effective. But by 2016, with an aging population and a disproportionate number of Chinese men—the result of sex-selection abortions—the CCP relaxed the long-standing policy, allowing couples to bear two children. Surprisingly, Chinese women did not respond to the levels policy-makers hoped for, citing economic inconvenience. In the spring of 2021, the policy was extended to three children per woman.<sup>27</sup> In September 2021, abortion restrictions were established.<sup>28</sup>

The CCP's volte-face is remarkable on several levels. Presently, it has failed to generate the enthusiasm necessary to avert a demographic crisis that will be realized in the upcoming decades.<sup>29</sup> If

<sup>26</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 123. Herbert Kaufman, *Administrative Feedback: Monitoring Subordinates' Behavior* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute, 1973). Cf. Tom Burns and G. M. Stalker, *The Management of Innovation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Tavistock, 1968). The counterproductive nature that results from government pressure to meet technological goals is a central theme in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The First Circle*, trans. Michael Guybon (London: Collins, 1968).

<sup>27</sup> Laura He, "China's economy needs workers but its three-child policy may not fix the problem," CNN, May 31, 2021, available at [https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2021/05/31/economy/china-economy-three-child-policy-intl-hnk/index.html?\\_twitter\\_imp=impression=true](https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2021/05/31/economy/china-economy-three-child-policy-intl-hnk/index.html?_twitter_imp=impression=true). Ben Westcott and Eric Cheung, "China to allow couples to have up to three children in attempt to reverse falling birth rates," CNN, May 31, 2021, available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/31/china/china-three-child-policy-intl-hnk/index.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Kaamil Ahmed, "China to clamp down on abortions for 'non-medical purposes,'" *The Guardian*, May 27, 2021, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/27/china-to-limit-abortions-for-non-medical-purposes>. The limitation stated in "Outline for Women's Development in China" is ambiguously referred to as "non-medical reasons."

<sup>29</sup> China's work force will peak in the next few years and decline by 5% in the next decade.

abortions and sterilizations can be accomplished by coercion, producing and rearing children by such means are theoretically, though practically, impossible. Communist China of the second decade of the twenty-first century aptly illustrates the futility of policies that assume organizational success and organizational predictability are possible. By ignoring or denying unpredictability in human behavior, the CCP has not only destroyed millions of lives; it must now reckon with a populace that is wielding the Party's own ideology against it. Justifying abortion and sterilization on the basis of economic necessity, Chinese women have cited the expense and a diminished quality of life as reasons for not wanting more than one child.<sup>30</sup>

### Considerations Going Forward

While the CCP's draconian legislation faces strong opposition in the west, couples who voluntarily choose to have few or no children on the ground of economic preference reveal the pervasive extent of secular reasoning in this matter—thereby suggesting ideological proximity to the CCP. For contemporary evangelicals, one distinctive challenge is navigating wide-ranging perspectives on contraception and family planning.<sup>31</sup> Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, evangelicals lack a definitive, authoritative theological document such as *Humanae Vitae*. While polls show consistently high opposition to abortion—higher than Roman Catholics in some polls—birth rates among American evangelicals have fallen to levels similar to the national average.<sup>32</sup> In an interview for *Chris-*

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<sup>30</sup> David Stanway and Tony Munroe, “Three-Child Policy: China lifts cap on births in major policy shift,” Reuters, May 31, 2021, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-says-each-couple-can-have-three-children-change-policy-2021-05-31/>. In a poll on Xinhua's Weibo account asking #AreYouReady for the three-child policy, about 29,000 or 31,000 respondents said they would “never think of [having three children].” The poll was quickly removed.

<sup>31</sup> Dennis Hollinger provides a helpful overview of the shift in evangelical circles on the issue of contraception in the twentieth century. See Hollinger, “The Ethics of Contraception: A Theological Assessment,” *JETS* 56.4 (December 2013): 683–96.

<sup>32</sup> Bill Chappell, “U.S. Birthrate Fell By 4% In 2020, Hitting Another Record Low,” NPR, May 5, 2021, available at <https://www.npr.org/2021/05/05/993817146/u-s-birth-rate-fell-by-4-in-2020-hitting-another-record-low>. There are evangelical circles that advocate for large families, and some which oppose any artificial birth control. Furthermore, the birth rate for



*tianity Today*, Wheaton College professor Emily McGowin commented that during the last century, “Protestants jumped into the birth control movement with two feet.” A lack of patient, thoughtful reflection on the nature of contraception is not without consequences. Theologically, McGowin predicts that it will take “a good hundred years to come to terms with this.”<sup>33</sup>

While there is intellectual work to be done on the meaning and lawfulness of contraception among evangelical Protestants, a compelling vision of the goodness of marriage and childbearing is paramount.<sup>34</sup> Granted that evangelicals as a whole adopt a position on contraception similar to what is articulated in *Humanae Vitae*, some couples would likely still be hesitant to wed and start a family. We can underestimate the harmful impact stemming from perspectives on Climate Change and global pollution that lay blame on human existence *per se*, rather than human agents’ improper stewardship of the natural world.

Careful observation and research often prove surprising. For example, despite the global increase, the number of children born per woman has decreased in nearly every nation since 1900. Additionally, women began to have fewer children after the year 1800, a period that coincided with decreasing infant mortality and a century-and-a-half before reliable contraception was widely accessible.<sup>35</sup> Such phenomena cannot be explained by the rise of feminism, whose impact was limited until the early twentieth century, nor access to contraception—much less abortion—without committing anachronism. Statistically, couples have smaller families than they did two hundred years ago.

Considering the scourge of infant mortality, however, a family with four or even three children is larger in a functional sense than, say, that of Sarah Fuller (d. 1792), first wife of the British Baptist

American evangelicals is presently 2.3 children per woman per lifetime, higher than the 2021 national average of 1.68.

<sup>33</sup> Luan Huska, “Americans are Having Fewer Kids. Evangelicals are No Exception,” *Christianity Today*, January 6, 2020, available at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/january-february/americans-are-having-fewer-children-evangelicals-are-no-exc.html>.

<sup>34</sup> See Scot Yenor, “Sexual Counter-Revolution,” *First Things* 317 (November 2021): 27–33.

<sup>35</sup> See David French, “A Civilizational Challenge Beyond the Government’s Grasp” *The Dispatch*, September 14, 2021, available at <https://frenchpress.thedispatch.com/p/a-civilizational-challenge-beyond?s=r>.

theologian Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), who lost eight of eleven children before the age of five.<sup>36</sup> We think differently about potential and actual children precisely because cases like that of Sarah Fuller are virtually unknown. Wayne Grudem, in his *Christian Ethics*, for example, makes the conventional criticism that population-control measures violate Genesis 1:28. He then follows by noting the United Nations’ prediction that an increase in prosperity will lead to declining birth rates in developing nations. Interestingly, Grudem does not comment further on the significance of this pattern except that it should allay fears that no habitable space will remain on earth.<sup>37</sup> If this trend holds true, then poorer nations with relatively high birth rates, such as Nigeria and Rwanda, will resemble Japan and South Korea in a few generations. The prospect of a negative birth rate dispersed across the globe is, as Jesus Fernandez Villaverde, professor of Economics at the University of Pennsylvania, has recently written, unprecedented. Villaverde comments that the “political, social, and economic consequences of such a demographic collapse will be tremendous on the world’s demographic future.”<sup>38</sup> A *scarcity* of human inhabitants may, in fact, be the greater challenge to human flourishing in the next century.

### Conclusion

Genesis 1:28, as God’s Word, requires that Christians affirm the goodness of multiplication—despite cultural and intellectual disapproval in some quarters—by those who bear the *imago Dei*. Moreover, evangelicals should be culturally astute in noting that population control measures are almost exclusively proposed by the rich, white, and secular and aimed at the poor—particularly those who are brown, black—and religious. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for example, has made the promotion of contraception and access to abortion in Arica a major emphasis of their philanthropic project. The purported benevolence of sharing the west’s wisdom, particularly in Africa, echoes the colonialism of

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<sup>36</sup> See Matthew Haste, “Marriage and Family in the Life of Andrew Fuller,” *SBJT* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 28–34. Fuller died because of complications in childbirth.

<sup>37</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 1111.

<sup>38</sup> Jesús Fernández-Villaverde, “The Demographic Future of Humanity: The Trends (Part I),” *Public Discourse*, available at <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2021/10/78340/>.

the nineteenth century. It should not go unnoticed who is talking about *whom* in discussions about excess population.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from the imperative in Genesis, systematic unpredictability is helpful for understanding, conceptually, how a population could continue to grow, at least theoretically, without decimating the environment or exhausting the world's food supply. As in earlier times, radical conceptual innovation has led to advancements that met humanity's needs. Crucially, men and women of a new generation were those who have discovered such boons. Considering the unpredictable nature of breakthroughs, society will do well not only to preserve the lives of the unborn but embrace the injunction to participate in bringing a future that, with all its potential sorrows, contains the seeds of unforeseen good.<sup>40</sup>

For all the means and methods by which technology regulates human life in the present century, it is a salutary reminder that, as Paul Ramsey has reminded us, a child emerges not as the "cool, deliberate act of man's rational will, but through the wildness of nature in the sexual union."<sup>41</sup> Attempts to control a dimension of human existence by managerial and bureaucratic means are bound to fail for the simple reason that men and women are not machines. The Chinese Communist Party is presently facing the monumental task of reorienting an entire generation's view of children and family in half a decade's time. The coming years will reveal the extent of the damage wrought by the One Child Policy on the hearts and minds of 1.3 billion people. And as current trends show, a low view of children and the family is not confined to the citizens and government of China.

It would, of course, be intellectually dishonest to gloss over the dilemmas associated with a world population that will reach 9 bil-

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<sup>39</sup> See Obianuju Ekechoa, *Target Africa: Ideological Neo-Colonialism of the Twenty-First Century* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2018).

<sup>40</sup> See C. S. Lewis's comments in the *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Harper One, 1974), 55. "As regards contraceptives, there is a paradoxical, negative sense in which all possible future generations are the patients or subjects of a power wielded by those already alive. By contraception simply, they are denied existence; by contraception as a means of selective breeding, they are, without their concurring voice, made to be what on generation, for its own reasons, may choose to prefer. From this point of view, what we call Man's power over nature turns out to be power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument."

<sup>41</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, "The Blessing of Children," *New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology & Society* 36 (2012): 95.

lion souls by 2050, dilemmas that defy rigid, predictable schemes. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing 80 years ago, reflecting on contraception and its implications for married couples, noted that inward conflicts can be avoided in instances where nature and reason accord in a way that “many problematic tensions . . . remain undisturbed.” Unfortunately, he writes, “in the present generation this good fortune is granted to relatively few, and that is a burden which we must bear with a due sense of responsibility.”<sup>42</sup> In Africa, a continent that boasts of more Christians than any place on earth, management of natural resources and preservation of biodiversity will be crucial for flourishing. In the west, the church must guide the generation of marriageable age away from a Manichean cynicism that denies the goodness of creation in pseudo-salvific acts of procreative martyrdom.<sup>43</sup>

Understanding Genesis 1:28 as multiplication and stewardship is exegetically possible and theologically constructive. Reflecting deeply on divine revelation and human response accords with Alasdair MacIntyre’s own observations in *After Virtue* that “the narratives we live out have both an unpredictable and a partially teleological character.” Human existence is neither random nor mechanistic. Thus, “it is always both the case that there are constraints on how the story can continue *and* that within those constraints there are indefinitely many ways it can continue.”<sup>44</sup> The church must testify to the value of human life, not only as it pertains to divine injunction, but as essential to provide, arguably, the best possible quality of life across the globe. Affirming embodied existence as a blessing in itself will be crucial to combat the modern, secular obsession with technological control that, when it proves unsuccessful, often leads to despair. But despair, to quote Paul Schrader, in his paraphrase of Thomas Merton in *First Reformed*, “is a development of pride so great that it chooses on certi-

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<sup>42</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 178.

<sup>43</sup> Again, from *Humanae Vitae*: “From this it follows that they are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life, as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, they are bound to ensure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator. The very nature of marriage and its use makes His will clear, while the constant teaching of the Church spells it out.”

<sup>44</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 250. Italics in the original.

tude rather than admit that God is more creative than we are.”<sup>45</sup> The confession that God is Creator implies a creativity that, as graciously given to humanity, will assure this world’s story does not end before its appointed time.

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<sup>45</sup> *First Reformed*. In *New Seeds of Contemplation* (1949), Merton (1915–1968) wrote, “Despair is the absolute extreme of self-love. It is reached when a person deliberately turns his back on all help from anyone else in order to taste the rotten luxury of knowing himself to be lost.”



## Retrieving Diversity and Unity on the Work of Christ in the Apostolic Fathers

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### Introduction: Heresy Regarding the Work of Christ

In an often-cited essay reflecting on the work of Christ, systematic theologian Robert W. Jenson critiqued several characteristic tendencies of manifest atonement theories. Jenson pointed out the variability of the theological topic by lamenting the lack of dogmatic establishment:

It is a commonplace to observe that there is no dogma of atonement. Although, in Christology there is dogma established at all seven ecumenical councils, no council—or pope or other plausibly ecumenical authority—has ever laid down a dogma of atonement. If you deny that Christ is “of one being with the Father,” or that the Son and Jesus are but one hypostasis, you are formally a heretic. But you can deny any offered construal of how the atonement works, or all of them together, or even deny that any construal is possible, and be a perfectly orthodox believer. To be sure, if you simply deny that Jesus’ death does in fact somehow reunite us with God, you are no Christian at all, but that is a different sort of deficiency.<sup>1</sup>

According to Jenson, the absence of fixed dogma on the atonement led to a proliferation of theories meant to explain how the crucifixion of Jesus reunites humanity with God. Jenson rebuked theologians who “make a virtue of this proliferation of proposals

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<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Jenson, “On the Doctrine of Atonement,” Center of Theological Inquiry, May 9, 2008, available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/148066225/On-the-Doctrine-of-Atonement>, 1–2; archived at [https://web.archive.org/web/20080509135005/http://www.ctinquiry.org/publications/reflections\\_volume\\_9/jenson.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20080509135005/http://www.ctinquiry.org/publications/reflections_volume_9/jenson.htm).

and the absence of formal or informal consensus around any one of them.”<sup>2</sup> Instead, Jenson argued that the church simply has not yet formulated a clear, authoritative account of atonement.<sup>3</sup> In short, with no boundaries to distinguish orthodoxy and heresy regarding the work of Christ, the church is doomed to produce partial, competing theories of how God and humanity are united in Christ.

With no creedal guidance on crafting a clear account of Christ’s work on the cross, how does the church proceed to teach and preach the work of Christ? Are there, as Jenson implied, no necessary components of an orthodox model of the atonement? Or should Christians adopt an “anything goes” mentality which allows for adaptation of Christ’s work based on the theologian’s context?<sup>4</sup> Jenson was correct that no dogmatic statement explicating the atonement was drafted in the early church, but he was unclear on the topic of heresy. Through a broad rule of faith, the earliest Christians testified to some clear criteria for orthodox

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<sup>2</sup> Jenson, “On the Doctrine of Atonement,” 2. Recent proponents of a multifaceted atonement include Leon Morris, Adam J. Johnson, Joel B. Green, and Joshua M. McNall. Morris wrote, “Christ’s atoning work is so complex and our minds are so small. We cannot take it all in. We need the positive contributions of all the theories, for each draws attention to some aspect of what Christ has done for us.” Leon Morris, “Atonement,” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1988), 56. Those supporting multifaceted atonement, however, still display considerable diversity in method and controlling themes. See Adam J. Johnson, *The Reconciling Wisdom of God: Reframing the Doctrine of Atonement* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016); Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011); Joshua M. McNall, *The Mosaic of Atonement: An Integrated Approach to Christ’s Work* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> The two errors which lay at the heart of the church’s failure, in Jenson’s estimation, were the separation of the resurrection from Christ’s work on the cross and the dislocation of the crucifixion from the canonical history of Israel. Jenson, “On the Doctrine of Atonement,” 4.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the work of Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green who insisted that doctrinal language on the work of Christ communicates “significance,” so any imagery is allowable if it corresponds to the context of the personal subject. They argued this is true of the biblical authors, the historical proponents of various models, the contextual theologies they surveyed in their major work (Japanese and feminist), and all church and missions settings. Thus, teaching the work of Christ is not about knowledge or explication but experiencing and transmitting the gospel into each new context. Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 175, 222f.



summaries of Christ's incarnate work. Spread across geographical bounds and writing in different contexts, the Apostolic Fathers exhibit diversity in key themes of the work of Christ. They share, however, a clear requirement for right Christian belief through a common confession of some specific themes.<sup>5</sup> While not crafting any authoritative creedal statement akin to teachings on the Trinity or person of Christ, early Christians displayed clear expectations of acceptable and unacceptable diversity regarding the work of Christ. The Apostolic Fathers, then, provide a fruitful path forward in identifying the minimal requirements of a Christian doctrine of atonement.

### **Methodology: Analyzing Selected Apostolic Fathers**

For this article, five Apostolic Fathers were analyzed and compared for their explicit employment of various themes in the work of Christ. The purposes of this comparison were to demonstrate the diversity of themes cited across the five texts and to investigate the common unity across the texts, especially themes which the original authors indicated as normative. The five selected texts are collected among others in Michael Holmes's *The Apostolic Fathers*.<sup>6</sup> After a close reading of the texts, "themes" explicitly cited as part of or in conjunction with the work of Christ were identified. Each distinct thought in the texts which cited one or more themes was recorded along with notes regarding the context and meaning of the passage and an identification of how the thought was used in the purpose of the writer. The record of explicit descriptions of the work of Christ and evident themes is provided in

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<sup>5</sup> The *regula fidei* recorded by apologists such as Irenaeus of Lyon and Tertullian of Carthage are shockingly similar to the occasional witness of the Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament. Even at a time when the New Testament canon had not been solidified, the consistency of citations and imagery testifies to the strong tradition protected throughout the first three centuries of the church. Schaff noted, "The Rules of Faith and Baptismal Confessions which we find among the ecclesiastical writers of the second and third centuries mark the transition from the Bible to the Ecumenical Creeds. They contain nearly all the articles of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds." Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 2, *The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 11. Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: HarperOne, 1978), 32–35.

<sup>6</sup> Michael W. Holmes, ed. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

Appendix 1. The total counts of themes in each text and cumulative to all texts were compiled for comparison. A set of charts and graphs describing these totals is provided in Appendix 2.

The five Apostolic Fathers examined for this project were *1 Clement (1 Clem.)*, the seven Letters of Ignatius (various abbreviations), the *Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians (Pol. Phil.)*, the *Epistle of Barnabas (Barn.)*, and the *Epistle to Diognetus (Diogn.)*.<sup>7</sup> These five texts presumably originated from different geographical areas: Rome, Syria, Asia Minor, Alexandria (from a Jewish perspective), and Alexandria (from a Hellenistic perspective), respectively. These selected texts bear witness to views from differing ecclesiastical occasions and geographically local emphases in the late first and early second centuries.<sup>8</sup>

### Delimitations and Limitations

Two delimitations bounded my analysis of the selected Apostolic Fathers. First, I did not include in my analysis every reference to the name of Christ. In order to include a passage in the analysis, some aspect of the work of Christ must have been cited by the

<sup>7</sup> In this article, I will use the proper noun Apostolic Fathers to refer to the texts themselves. These texts developed in the second generation of early Christianity. Whereas traditional authors and specific dates could be disputed, the texts were clearly preserved as early, respected documents within the life of the church.

<sup>8</sup> Many writers exploring the relation of orthodoxy and heresy point to the lack of surviving primary sources from heretics as a deficiency in the literature. Given the invested nature of early heresiologists, heretical groups cannot be granted a thorough hearing. For an example of such a lament, see Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: University Press, 2003). In this research project, however, heretical positions need not be heard to witness the diversity and unity present across Christian writings which were *accepted* by the Christian tradition. Whether sects which the Apostolic Fathers deemed heretical were fairly represented or had any authoritative claim does not change the issues which the church universal did eventually uphold as orthodoxy and heresy.

The *Epistle to Diognetus* is included in collections of Apostolic Fathers due to tradition rather than form or content, since it is likely later and testifies to the age of Apologists such as Justin Martyr Irenaeus. *Diognetus* was included in this project as an extra test of diverse occasions for writing as well as to point toward the apologetics characteristic of the next phase of Christian history. The apologetic nature of this treatise helps to test the firm boundaries which early Christian leaders saw separating the Christian community from any external or heretical threats.

author explicitly in the same thought or implicitly through the larger context of the passage.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, I did not include ambiguous references to “the Lord” unless the context clearly showed this name was applied to the Second Person of the Trinity. Second, I did not include in my analysis references to spiritual benefits unless there was an explicit relation to the work of Christ in context.<sup>10</sup> When an effect of Christ’s work is cited explicitly by the text but no clear aspect of his work is noted in context, I used the theme “ambiguous.”<sup>11</sup>

Two limitations introduced difficulty in the analysis of the selected texts and in the synthesis of the findings reported in this project. First, the necessary act of interpretation added a degree of uncertainty in my analysis. The meaning of any text must be explored to determine the relevant themes the author intended to employ. Then, emphasized themes must be compared with sensitivity toward how the themes relate in different authors’ works. Additionally, the common use of a given word in multiple authors or passages does not indicate the same theme or usage necessarily, especially in regard to the work of Christ. Second, the use of numerical counts limited the synthetic comprehensiveness of the findings. A theme being omitted by a given author does not mean it was not believed by the author. Likewise, the total counts of various themes do not indicate a ranking of importance for belief but for the authors’ purposes in writing. Despite these limitations, however, discernible trends became evident in the research based on the themes which were cited.

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<sup>9</sup> An example of a passage omitted includes *Barn.* 9.8 where the author identified the number of Abraham’s household as foreshadowing the number of Jesus’s name. In this case, Jesus’s name itself is not cited as an aspect of his work.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the salutation of the letter of Ignatius *To the Trallians* is included (“at peace in flesh and spirit *through the suffering* of Jesus Christ”) whereas the salutation of the letter *To the Magnesians* is not (“which has been blessed through the grace . . . in Christ Jesus our Savior”).

<sup>11</sup> For example, *1 Clem.* 33.7 cited the Lord’s “good works” as setting an example for believers to perform good works. This aspect of Christ’s work as an exemplar is so broad that I used the ambiguous theme instead of creating a theme for generic good works. In the same instance, though, I counted the passage as citing Jesus’s “first coming,” since the implication of the passage was works performed in the flesh.

## Themes

The themes identified in the texts are events in the life, actions, or component parts of the person of Christ which impart some benefit to believers. I have chosen the term theme to describe these aspects because even as specific events, they are presented by the Apostolic Fathers in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes. That is, the citation of a given theme (e.g., passion) often points beyond the fact of the event, action, or part to the effects of that theme. In many cases, the theme category which is counted in the analysis of the texts does not refer to a lexical appearance while the clear explicit use of the theme is present (e.g., Ign. *Magn.* 10.1–3, where the relation of Judaism and Christianity clearly represents the transformation of God’s human-divine “covenant”). The themes identified in the research are described below in alphabetical order.

“Ambiguous,” as mentioned above, is used to identify any aspect of the work of Christ which is generic. “Ascension” refers to the resurrected Christ’s ascension into heaven, which is only cited once in the selected texts in *Barnabas’s* allegorical application of Christian Sabbath observance (*Barn.* 15.9). “Blood” is the theme listed when an explicit mention of Christ’s blood given for human beings is cited by the author (e.g., *1 Clem.* 49.6). This theme is closely related but recorded separately from “passion” because of the specificity of the Apostolic Fathers’ references to the blood of Christ. In many cases, the mention of Christ’s blood is given without any further reference to the life of Christ but with direct connection to the forgiveness of sins. “Call” is a theme sparsely cited by the selected texts referring to the relation between Christ and the church. Believers are called as God’s people through the work of Jesus (e.g., *1 Clem.* 59.2, 65.2).

“Covenant” is a theme primarily invoked by *Barnabas* to explain the relation between the work of Christ and the Old Testament faith. Christ imparts a new law (e.g., *Barn.* 2.6) and establishes a new covenant in believers (e.g., *Barn.* 14.5). “Creation” is cited in relation to Christ’s work in ordering the cosmos in his preincarnate ministry (e.g., *Diogn.* 12.9). “First coming” is used to designate a number of phrases and contextual descriptions where the event of the incarnation or earthly ministry of Jesus was emphasized. The sinless life and moral example of Jesus (e.g., *Pol. Phil.* 8.1–2) as well as the virginal conception and human birth of Jesus (e.g., Ign. *Eph.* 18.2) were key aspects of Jesus’s work and were

tied to the benefits Christians received from him. "Flesh" is a theme cited by all five of the selected Apostolic Fathers. Both the explicit term *sarx* and contextual references to Jesus's work in the flesh or true humanity were counted as instances of the theme. "Future" refers to promised work of Christ in his kingdom reign or specific restorative acts.

"Helper" is a theme explicitly used only in *1 Clement*. In this epistle, Jesus is referred to three times as the "high priest" and "benefactor of our souls" (*1 Clem.* 36.1, 61.3, 64.1). This unique title may be linked with the work of the high priest but may be more active than a high priest's mediation. "High priest," however, is also cited in *Pol. Phil.* 12.2 and *Ign. Phld.* 9.1 where the Son is placed in a clear mediatory relationship between believers and God the Father. "Judgment" designates references to Jesus's act of final judgment (e.g., *Diogn.* 7.6) or to the judgment brought on humans by their rejection of Jesus's work (e.g., *Barn.* 5.11). "Justification" designates references to the justification of humans before God through the work of Christ (e.g., *1 Clem.* 32.4) or to the justification of an author's claims with Jesus's work as evidence (e.g., *Ign. Phld.* 8.2). "Life" refers to a more fulfilled life for Christians or eternal life which is granted through the work of Christ. Jesus himself *is* life for Christians (*Ign. Smyrn.* 4.1), he traded his life in the place of believers' lives (*1 Clem.* 49.6), and believers now live in him (*Pol. Phil.* 8.1).

"Passion" designates any reference to the physical suffering of Christ, particularly the event of the crucifixion. "Redemption" is a theme sparsely employed by the selected Apostolic Fathers which entails freeing or buying human beings from bondage. The noun *lutron* denotes a ransom or redemption price, and the verb *luo* reflects the loosing or freeing of one from bondage. "Relation to the Father" is cited when a direct connection is made between the work of Christ and God the Father. The use of the title "Son" does not warrant the application of this theme in the analysis unless some aspect of the whole work of the Son is in view in context. "Resurrection" refers to the resurrection of Christ three days after his crucifixion (e.g., *Ign. Phld.* 9.2) or to the final resurrection of believers when connected to the resurrection or agency of Christ (e.g., *Ign. Smyrn.* 5.3). "Revelation" describes both Christ himself when serving as direct revelation of the Father as well as the material revelation which Christ brings from the Father. "Salvation" is cited in the analysis when Christ is described as bringing

salvation through his work or being an example of salvation from the Father. “Teaching” refers to Christ’s public or private teaching during his earthly ministry or moral teaching deduced from Christ’s work.

### **Findings: Diversity and Unity in the Apostolic Fathers**

The five selected Apostolic Fathers demonstrated diversity in the themes of the work of Christ employed by the authors. Each of the five selected texts is an occasional document responding to problems, occasions, or threats associated with the second generation of the Christian church. None of the Apostolic Fathers are systematic theologies in form, nor do they attempt to provide a comprehensive theology. The occasional nature of each text is evident through the various ways they recalled the work of Christ. While not developing competing atonement models, as later systematic theologians would do, these texts show that many ways of describing and applying the work of Christ were acceptable in the early church while some themes were deemed necessary for fruitful Christian belief, worship, and practice. By reporting the occurrences of themes and usages, the diversity across the selected Apostolic Fathers and their common confession and rejections can inform the construction of doctrines today concerning the work of Christ.

#### ***1 Clement***

Specific to the work of Christ, *1 Clement* is unique among the selected texts for its appeal to Christ’s actions as an exemplar. Jesus taught about humility (*1 Clem.* 13.1–3), came in humility (*1 Clem.* 16.1–2), humbled himself (*1 Clem.* 16.17), set an example of instruction in humility and love (*1 Clem.* 21.8), and did good works (*1 Clem.* 33.7–8). Christ served as an exemplar through his works because of the pattern he left for Christians to copy: “You see, dear friends, the kind of pattern that has been given to us; for if the Lord so humbled himself [in incarnation, obedience, and passion], what should we do, who through him have come under the yoke of his grace?” (*1 Clem.* 16.17). Copying Christ signifies the saving work of Christ in the body of the believer (*1 Clem.* 37.1–5, 38.1), so that the epistle uses the work of Christ to challenge believers. Aside from a few biblical examples (including the blood of Jesus signified in the scarlet thread of Rahab, 12.7), the rest of the references to Christ’s work are to celebrate and teach his benefits.

The themes employed in *1 Clement* are varied and simple, without much commentary. Many references to aspects of the work of Christ allude to Old or New Testament testimony. The most employed themes are Christ's first coming, teaching ministry, and role in the call of believers. Although passion language is rather absent from the epistle, themes which recall Christ's suffering are evident throughout (blood, resurrection, and role as high priest). The extended citation of Isaiah 53 (*1 Clem.* 16.1–17) and the confession of Christ's blood bringing redemption "to all who believe and hope in God" (*1 Clem.* 12.7) place the epistle's emphasis on Christ's humility within the realm of substitutionary suffering. Other themes such as revelation, Christ's future kingdom, justification, and high priest imagery are cited in passing throughout *1 Clement*, demonstrating a diverse set of claims associated with Christ's work at the time of writing. Thus, without reciting a formal creedal passage (chapters 35–36 being the closest example of one), the church of Rome witnessed to a broad understanding that all aspects of the incarnate Christ's work provide benefits to the church universal. All these benefits drive believers to follow the example set by Christ of humility and unity.

### Letters of Ignatius

The letters of Ignatius of Antioch to six churches and to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, are the longest texts included in this analysis. The cumulative figures in Appendix 2 portray some inflation in the raw counts of different themes, but they do not drastically alter the main themes and diversity across the selected texts. In one sense, all seven letters arise from unique contexts of their recipients, but they all share the common experience of serving as Ignatius's "last will and testament."<sup>12</sup> In all but one letter (*Ignatius To the Romans*), heresy is cited as a problem for the recipient. The exact nature of the heresies Ignatius repudiated has been debated, but Grant noted the complexity of separating the errors of docetism and Judaizing: "Ignatius therefore had to conduct a two-front war. While attacking one kind of heresy, he had to beware of the others. . . . Furthermore, since both groups of opponents regarded themselves as Christians, there were elements in their

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<sup>12</sup> Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 166.

thought which Ignatius shared.”<sup>13</sup> The threat of heresy and the ecclesiastical response of obedience to the bishop, then, guided Ignatius’s treatments of the work of Christ.

In addition to celebrating the benefits of Christ and exemplar language like *1 Clement*, the letters of Ignatius exhibit many more connections to biblical and teaching examples. On many occasions, Ignatius cited the work of “Jesus Christ” (even before the incarnation of the Son) as evidence for a distinct teaching point. Biblical examples include interpreting the true relation between Judaism and Christianity, where Ignatius showed the Old Testament prophets “lived in accordance with Christ Jesus” under the first covenant before God revealed himself through Jesus, “his Word that came forth from silence” (Ign. *Magn.* 8.2). Teaching examples include Christ and God the Father serving as a pattern for the local church and its bishop. Just as Christ “is the mind of the Father,” the bishops are the mind of Christ in the church (Ign. *Eph.* 3.2). Just as “the Lord did nothing without the Father,” the local church is to do nothing without the bishop (Ign. *Magn.* 7.1). In these cases, themes from the work of Christ (relation to the Father, revelation, etc.) informed Bible interpretation and moral teaching in church life.

By far, the most referenced theme in the work of Christ for Ignatius is his passion (twenty-seven references). Christ “died for us” (Ign. *Trall.* 2.1), justified Ignatius through “his cross” (Ign. *Phld.* 8.2), and came to the world, “the Intangible, the Unsuffering, who for our sake suffered” (Ign. *Pol.* 3.2). Anti-docetic themes coupled with Christ’s passion in the seven letters include his flesh (eighteen references), first coming (twelve references), salvation (nine references), and blood (seven references). Due to the longer length of the seven letters, Ignatius includes the most citations of the work of Christ in correcting Christian doctrine. In sixteen of

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<sup>13</sup> Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 4, *Ignatius of Antioch* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1966), 22. Trevett and Moreschini and Norelli viewed docetism as the major heresy among the churches, but Ignatius stringently opposed any threat. While comparatively minor, Judaizers had to be repudiated because they invalidated the work of Christ. Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1992), 149; Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, vol. 1, *From Paul to the Age of Constantine*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 106–7.



eighteen such passages, Ignatius explicitly mentioned Christ's passion, flesh, or blood. The relation of Jesus Christ to the Father and resurrection and life (see both themes' double meaning above) are each referenced more than ten times each. Interestingly, Ignatius opposed the Judaizers by discussing Christ's primacy in revelation and relation to the God of Israel (Ign. *Magn.* 8.2–9.1; Ign. *Phld.* 8.2) rather than the Apostle Paul's apologetic of justification by faith alone.

### ***Polycarp to the Philippians***

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, wrote to the church at Philippi at the request of the church (Pol. *Phil.* 3.1). Polycarp's purpose of writing "about righteousness" clearly pertains to the active works of believers: "But the one who raised [the Lord Jesus Christ] from the dead will raise us also, if we do his will and follow his commandments and love the things he loved, while avoiding every kind of unrighteousness" (Pol. *Phil.* 2.2). Polycarp, however, does at one point name Jesus as "our hope and the guarantee of our righteousness" (Pol. *Phil.* 8.1). Like *1 Clement* and the letters of Ignatius, *Polycarp to the Philippians* issues several challenges to the Philippian church on the basis of the work of Christ associated with his judgment and teaching (chapters 5–6). Also, Christ is presented as an exemplar in his first coming and passion (chapters 8–10). In terms of themes employed, this short text is unique in its most-referenced theme of resurrection. The letter begins and ends with praise for the "Father who raised him from the dead" (Pol. *Phil.* 1.2, 12.2; cf. Rom 10:9). This tendency to recall the resurrection may stem from hope in the face of martyrdom given Polycarp's willingness to identify martyrs with Christ (Pol. *Phil.* 9.2).

### ***Epistle of Barnabas***

The final two texts included in the analysis stem from less specific historical occasions, but their motivations, shown through context, are historically motivated. The *Epistle of Barnabas* is an early attempt to relate the church of Christ to the people of God, Israel. The text claims, "The events of the past—that is, of Jewish religious history—hold the key to what is happening and what will happen," and yet, the history of the Jews has been completely re-

interpreted and supplanted by Christian revelation.<sup>14</sup> As *Barnabas* is mainly concerned with the Christian's relation to Judaism, it is unique in the selected Apostolic Fathers for its extensive use of the work of Christ in biblical examples. Numerous Old Testament traditions are reinterpreted in light of Christ so that new meaning is brought to old narratives which inform the life of the church (see especially chapters 6–12). Isaiah 53 is explicitly cited as the “scripture concerning him” (*Barn.* 5.1; cf. Luke 24:27; Acts 8:32–35).

The biblical emphasis of *Barnabas* extends to the work of Christ themes evident throughout the epistle. Christ's passion (thirteen references), flesh (nine references), and first coming (eight references) are the most used themes. Each of these is cited in relation to biblical material, especially in the key passage wherein the author debated the reason why Christ took on flesh and suffered in chapter 5 (Isa 53:5–7; Prov 1:17; Gen 1:26; Zech 13:7; Ps 22:16–20; Ps 119:120; and Isa 50:6–7 are all explicitly quoted in the chapter). Suffering prophesied in Old Testament Scripture, then, was the key to interpreting the ministry of Christ. Unlike the aspects of teaching and revelation in other Apostolic Fathers, “Pseudo-Barnabas shows little interest in or awareness of Jesus' earthly life.”<sup>15</sup> The most common title for Christ in *Barnabas* is “Lord,” drawing a close tie between Christ and the Father God of Israel as well as associating him with God's judgment and right to reign.

### *Epistle to Diognetus*

Like the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Epistle to Diognetus* lacks a specific historical setting, but it is clearly designed as an apologetic to distinguish Christians from both Greeks and Jews. Although the term “Christians” is used from the beginning of the text, a proper title for Christ is not mentioned until he is described as the word from heaven in *Diogn.* 7.2. From that chapter on, the author listed a multitude of Christ's benefits to all nations. There is a break in the text at *Diogn.* 10.8, and most scholars assume that the homily

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<sup>14</sup> Robert A. Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 3, *Barnabas and the Didache* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965), 33.

<sup>15</sup> Kraft, *Apostolic Fathers*, 35. On his ministry of revelation, note that despite his close relation to the Father, Christ is never referred to by the title “Word.” He does carry out the function of God's Word, though, so this may be the result of reverence to the divine identity (36–37).

which serves as chapters 11 and 12 are not original to the epistle.<sup>16</sup> Still, the same primary themes are employed as the first section of the text. Consistent with a Hellenistic background, the text describes Christ as the Word sent from God the Creator to reveal and bring salvation. Though Gnostics may have been drawn to such themes, *To Diognetus* also makes isolated references to Christ's flesh and passion. First, the Word was sent by God "as a human to humans" (*Diogn.* 7.4). Second, God "gave up his own Son as a ransom for us" (*Diogn.* 9.2).

As this comparison of five Apostolic Fathers has demonstrated, the earliest Christians felt comfortable emphasizing a variety of aspects of the work of Christ. Depending on their purpose, they employed themes in different ways: not only to celebrate the blessings of Christ's work but also to promote Christ as an exemplar, to use Christ as an example in biblical or teaching arguments, and to challenge believers to take specific actions. Authors had favored titles for Christ and unique sets of themes based on the issues they faced in church life. Still, common threads joined the confession of the Apostolic Fathers.<sup>17</sup> There was acceptable flexibility in how Christians described and applied the work of Christ, but there were also clear boundaries for what constituted false belief or heresy, even at this earliest stage of Christian tradition. The common affirmations and rejections of the selected Apostolic Fathers will help to establish necessary components for orthodox expressions of the work of Christ.

### Common Affirmations

The cumulative counts of various themes found in the selected Apostolic Fathers (provided in Appendix 2 with and without Ignatius) exhibit the consistent, prevalent use of four key themes in the work of Christ: passion, first coming, relation to the Father, and resurrection. Whereas a multitude of aspects could be cited by the

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<sup>16</sup> Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 689.

<sup>17</sup> Speaking of creedal language in the age after the New Testament, Pelikan and Hotchkiss explained, "When one has said all of that about their diversity, however, an even more striking feature is the consistency and the continuity. No one could mistake most of these statements for anything else but the confession of Christian believers, who were trying to find the right words to express the Inexpressible." Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss, eds. *Creed & Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *Rules of Faith in the Early Church* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 37.

Apostolic Fathers such as Christ's relation to the covenant with Israel, his role in creation and the future, and his ascension, these themes were not referenced in all five texts, nor were they cited in multiple ways. If references to "blood" are considered under the category of "passion" and references to "flesh" under the category of "first coming," the four primary themes' consistency across the various texts is raised even higher.<sup>18</sup> There can be no doubt that despite allowable diversity, the identity, humanity, death, and resurrection were necessary confessions to be considered a true Christian.

The earliest church was dedicated to preserve and pass on the gospel kerygma which they had received through eyewitness accounts and (later to become) biblical traditions. Various attempts have been made to identify the earliest Christian kerygma. Two features best explain the proclamation common across communities: a foundational Jewish heritage and an eschatological importance to Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection.<sup>19</sup> These two features can be discerned in this analysis of Apostolic Fathers in the four most prevalent work of Christ themes. The Apostolic Fathers unashamedly referred to Jesus as the Son of God (e.g., *Barn.* 5.11), and they attached the titles Lord and Christ to his personal name (*1 Clem.* 16.1 where Jesus is also called the scepter of God). These titles show a clear connection to the Jewish worldview. They closely relate Jesus to God the Father and emphasize his being sent with the authority of God. Even while serving a Jewish role, Messiah, though, Jesus's work was a turning point in cosmic history. Polycarp identified the death and resurrection of Christ with world-changing implications: he was the one "who endured for

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<sup>18</sup> These four themes are of course also attested in the old Roman creed: "I believe in God the Father almighty; and in Christ Jesus *His only Son*, our Lord, Who *was born* . . . Who under Pontius Pilate *was crucified* and buried, and on the third day *rose again*." For the development of this and other early creeds see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 1972).

<sup>19</sup> See Oscar Cullmann, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*, trans. J. K. S. Reid, eds. Gary Habermas and Benjamin Charles Shaw (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018); Oscar Cullmann, *Unity through Diversity: Its Foundation, and a Contribution to the Discussion concerning the Possibilities of Its Actualization*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments: Three Lectures* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Limited, 1944); Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

our sins, facing even death, whom God raised up, having loosed the birth pangs of Hades” (Pol. *Phil.* 1.2).

The Apostolic Fathers, like their canonical forbears, did not articulate a mechanism for atonement on the cross, but instead held the entire work of Christ from first coming to resurrection and beyond to change the paradigm of their faith. As Jenson himself wrote, “Thus the Incarnation is indeed a *mysterion*, in that it is in itself an irreducible contingency, transforms other reality, and is to be known only if God reveals it.”<sup>20</sup> On these counts, Jenson is correct to insist on the inclusion of the resurrection and a Jewish narrative to make sense of the full work of Christ. Unfortunately, Jenson lamented that “very early, Christian theology of the cross” made these two errors without explaining how early the errors took hold in Christian thought.<sup>21</sup> Retrieval of the Apostolic Fathers, then, can help Christian theologians craft a work of Christ.

### Common Rejections

In addition to positive statements made to celebrate the benefits, promote Christ as an exemplar, use Christ as an example, and challenge believers, the Apostolic Fathers cited specific themes in the work of Christ to correct bad behavior and false doctrine. The overwhelming majority of the rejections of false teaching from the letters of Ignatius, *Polycarp to the Philippians*, and the *Epistle of Barnabas* mention the crucifixion or general suffering of Christ as well as his flesh. Borrowing from Johannine language, Polycarp condemned all those who do not confess the flesh, cross, teachings, resurrection, and judgment of Christ as the firstborn of Satan (Pol. *Phil.* 7.1). With a string of Old Testament quotations, *Barnabas* insisted that Jesus “submitted” to incarnation in the flesh and suffered on a tree (*Barn.* 5.12–14). Finally, Ignatius appealed to the historicity of the gospel tradition: “I want to forewarn you . . . to be fully convinced about the birth and the suffering and the resurrection that took place during the time of the governorship of Pontius Pilate. These things were truly and most assuredly done by Jesus Christ, our only hope, from which may none of you ever be turned aside” (Ign. *Magn.* 11.1).

Ignatius of Antioch, especially, explicitly warned of false teachers within the church which brought false teachings seeking to

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<sup>20</sup> Jenson, “On the Doctrine of Atonement,” 2. Cf. Col 1:25–28.

<sup>21</sup> Jenson, “On the Doctrine of Atonement,” 3.

divide the church (using the term *hairesis* to describe their teachings, Ign. *Trall.* 6.1). Schismatics (*schizomti*) misled the local churches by denying the passion of Christ (Ign. *Phld.* 3.3). Those within the church who rejected the flesh and true suffering of Christ were actually unbelievers (*apistoi*, Ign. *Smyrn.* 2.1) and ignorant (*agnountes*, Ign. *Smyrn.* 5.1). Heterodox beliefs regarding the physical suffering of Christ (*heterodoxountas*, Ign. *Smyrn.* 6.2) led some to abstain from church practices, and because of their schism they would perish. In these renunciations, heresy in regard to the work of Christ becomes clear: true Christianity unites in the real flesh and suffering of Jesus Christ.

To Jenson's credit, he mentioned that "if you simply deny that Jesus' death does in fact somehow reunite us to God, you are no Christian at all."<sup>22</sup> The importance of the true (*alethos*) incarnation, suffering, and resurrection of Christ for the Apostolic Fathers, however, can help determine the meaning of Christ's work since apart from it "we have no true life" (Ign. *Trall.* 9.1–2). The Apostolic Fathers fought a docetic view of Christ's person which resulted in an invalid view of Christ's work. A Lord who suffered in appearance only or even appeared to human beings in revelation without true flesh was not sufficient to serve as a Savior for human beings. Without the transactional act of crucifixion, believers would still be "clothed in a corpse" (Ign. *Smyrn.* 5.2). While not explicating a mechanism of atonement, the emphasis on the true flesh and suffering of Christ points to an objective approach to atonement in the Apostolic Fathers. This approach is grounded in humanity's union with Christ through crucifixion and resurrection (*Barn.* 7.2) and the Old Testament's model of ritual atonement (*Barn.* 7.7; cf. Leviticus 16; Heb 9:23–28). These minimal priorities do not result in a mechanical theory of atonement but do stand against purely subjective or dramatic approaches which base reconciliation in human response or demonic defeat. The major themes identified in this study are also found in the *Baptist Faith & Message 2000*, which does not articulate one concrete atonement model but does interpret the work of Christ according to an objective approach. Its article on God the Son notes that "in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin." Its article on Salvation comments that Christ "by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for

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<sup>22</sup> Jenson, "On the Doctrine of Atonement," 1.

the believer.”<sup>23</sup> While affirming diversity in the descriptions and usages of general themes in the work of Christ, then, Christians can follow the Apostolic Fathers in demanding the orthodox confession that Jesus suffered physically for human sin in a substitutionary manner on the cross.<sup>24</sup>

### **Diversity in an Orthodox Work of Christ**

For two millennia, Christians have sought to clarify the meaning of Christ’s atonement. As Robert Jenson explained, with no guiding dogma from the early church, this venture has resulted in innumerable competing theories. Retrieval of the Apostolic Fathers can help contemporary theologians to clarify acceptable and unacceptable descriptions of the broader work of Christ and atonement models specifically. My analysis of five Apostolic Fathers clarifies Jenson’s lament in his reflection on the work of Christ. Despite lacking formal dogma on the atonement, the church (from the earliest generations) has always affirmed essential beliefs: Christ’s relation to God the Father (the God of Israel), his first coming in true human flesh, his blood spilled through crucifixion, and his bodily resurrection. The Apostolic Fathers were comfortable highlighting different themes in the broader work of Christ and using these themes to serve various purposes in the life of the church (praise, exemplar, example, challenge). When explicitly confronting heresy, though, the Apostolic Fathers required the affirmation of Christ’s true flesh and suffering, pointing to a normative objective understanding of Christ’s salvific

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<sup>23</sup> *Baptist Faith & Message 2000*, Southern Baptist Convention, available at <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/>.

<sup>24</sup> Jenson was right to insist on the connection of resurrection with the crucifixion, but a further categorical distinction may help to further clarify the work of Christ in general. Atonement as the doctrine which interprets Christ’s passion on the cross can only be rightly interpreted when it is viewed as a necessary condition of resurrection. The comprehensive work of Christ (revelation, incarnation, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and judgment) points to a divine end for humanity. Given the fallen state of humankind, atonement is necessary, and God has revealed substitutionary suffering as the proper means of overcoming the legal barriers of sin. Continuing to work through human union with Christ, resurrection becomes the means of overcoming the ontological consequences of sin, and judgment becomes the means of achieving the functional end for humanity. The distinction of atonement (on the cross) as a necessary condition but not comprehensive description of the work of Christ makes better sense of the resurrection within the biblical framework as Jenson desired.

work. Although an authoritative working model of atonement was not delivered in the earliest Christian tradition, theologians and pastors are not as unguided as Jenson admitted.



## APPENDIX 1: ANALYSIS OF SELECTED APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Location	English Text	Passage Context	Underlying Concern	Theme	Usage
1 Clem. 7.4	Let us fix our eyes on the <b>blood of Christ</b> and understand how precious it is to his Father, because, <i>being poured out for our salvation, it won for the whole world the grace of repentance.</i>	God has given an opportunity for repentance to those in all ages.	Divisions worthy of repentance.	Blood	Benefits
1 Clem. 12.7	And in addition they gave [Rahab] a sign, that she should hang from her house something scarlet—making it clear that <b>through the blood of the Lord redemption will come to all who believe and hope in God.</b>	God has offers redemption for all through blood.	Divisions	Blood Redemption	Biblical Example
1 Clem. 13.2	Jesus' teaching about humility		Divisions	Teaching	Exemplar
1 Clem. 16.1–2	For Christ is with those who are humble, not with those who exalt themselves over his flock. The majestic scepter of God, <b>our Lord Jesus Christ, did not come with the pomp of arrogance or pride</b> (though he could have done so), but in humility, just as the Holy Spirit spoke concerning him.	Christ as an example of humility.  Citation of Isaiah 53	Divisions	First Coming	Exemplar
1 Clem. 16.17	You see, dear friends, the kind of pattern that has been given to us; for if <b>the Lord so humbled himself,</b>	Christ as an example of humility.  Citation of	Divisions	First Coming	Exemplar

	what should we do, who through him have come under the yoke of his grace?	Isaiah 53			
1 Clem. 19.2	Let us fix our eyes upon <b>the Father and Maker of the whole world</b> and hold fast to <i>his magnificent and excellent gifts and benefits of peace.</i>	Jesus implied as a benefit of the Father's benefits	Created order	Relation to the Father	Benefits
1 Clem. 20.11	All these things the great Creator and Master of the universe ordered to exist in peace and harmony, <i>thus doing good to all things</i> , but especially abundantly to us who have taken refuge in his <b>compassionate mercies through our Lord Jesus Christ</b>	Jesus provides mercies	Created order	Creation	Benefits
1 Clem. 21.1	Take care, dear friends, <b>lest his many benefits</b> turn into a judgment upon all of us	Human Obedience	Obedience	Ambiguous	Benefits
1 Clem. 21.6	Let us fear the <b>Lord Jesus Christ</b> , whose <b>blood</b> was given for us.	Human Obedience	Obedience	Blood	Benefits
1 Clem. 21.8	Let our children receive the instruction that is <b>in Christ</b> : let them learn how strong <i>humility</i> is before God, what <i>pure love</i> is able to accomplish before God	Human Obedience	Obedience	First Coming	Exemplar
1 Clem. 22.8	Furthermore, "many are the afflictions of the sinner, but <i>mercy</i> will surround those who set their hope on the <b>Lord</b> ."	Response to Christ  Citation of Ps 32:10	Obedience	Relation to the Father  Ambiguous	Benefits
1 Clem. 24.1	Let us consider, dear friends, how	Hope of resurrection	Obedience	Resurrection	Benefits

	the Master continually points out to us <i>the coming resurrection</i> of which he made <b>the Lord Jesus Christ the first fruit when he raised him from the dead.</b>				
1 Clem. 26.1	How, then, can we consider it to be some great and marvelous thing, if the Creator of the universe shall bring about the resurrection of those who have served him in holiness	Story of the phoenix Hope of resurrection Citation of Pss	Obedience	Resurrection	Benefits
1 Clem. 32.2	From [Jacob] comes the <b>Lord Jesus according to the flesh</b>	Human Obedience	Obedience	First Coming Flesh	Biblical Example
1 Clem. 32.4	And so we, having been <i>called</i> through his will in <b>Christ Jesus</b> , are not <i>justified</i> through ourselves . . . but through faith	Human obedience	Obedience	Justification Call	Benefits
1 Clem. 33.7	Indeed, the <b>Lord himself</b> , having adorned himself with <i>good works, rejoiced.</i>	Human obedience	Obedience	First coming Ambiguous	Exemplar
1 Clem. 35.1–4	How blessed and marvelous are the <i>gifts</i> of God, dear friends! <i>Life in immortality, splendor in righteousness, truth with boldness, faith with confidence, self-control with holiness!</i> . . . Let us therefore make every effort to be found in the number of those who patiently wait for [the Father], so that we may share in his promised gifts.	Human obedience	Obedience	Life	Benefits
1 Clem.	This is the way, dear friends, in	Christ the way of salva-	Salvation	Salvation	Benefits

36.1f	which we found our <i>salvation</i> , namely <b>Jesus Christ</b> , the <i>high priest</i> of our offerings, the <i>benefactor and helper</i> of our weakness.	tion		High priest Helper	
1 Clem. 37.1	<i>So let us serve as soldiers</i>	Christian service	Response	Salvation	Challenge
1 Clem. 38.1	So in our case <i>let the whole body be saved in <b>Jesus Christ</b></i> , and let each of us be mutually subject to our neighbor, in proportion to each one's spiritual gift.	Christian service	Response	Salvation	Challenge
1 Clem. 42.1–2	The apostles received the <i>gospel</i> for us <b>from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus the Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God</b> , and the apostles are from Christ.	Christ delivered the gospel	Church order	First coming Teaching	Benefits
1 Clem. 42.3	Having therefore received their orders and being fully assured by the <i>resurrection</i> of our <b>Lord Jesus Christ</b> and full of faith in the word of God . . .	Apostles took the gospel	Church order	First coming Teaching Resurrection	Benefits
1 Clem. 44.1	Our apostles likewise <i>knew</i> , through our <b>Lord Jesus Christ</b> , that there would be strife over the bishop's office	Apostles established order	Church order	Ambiguous Revelation	Benefits
1 Clem. 46.1	Do we not <i>have</i> one God and <b>one Christ</b> and one Spirit of grace that was poured out upon us? And is there not one <b>calling in Christ</b> ?	Unity in Christ	Divisions	Relation to the Father Call	Benefits
1 Clem. 49.1	Let the one who has love in Christ	Christian love is based	Divisions	Relation to the Father	Challenge

	<i>fulfill the commandments of Christ.</i>	on Christ's love			
<i>1 Clem.</i> 49.6	In love the Master received us. Because of the <i>love</i> that he had for us, <b>Jesus Christ our Lord</b> , in accordance with God's will, gave his <i>blood</i> for us, and his <i>flesh</i> for our flesh, and his <i>life</i> for our lives.	Christian love is based on Christ's love	Divisions	Blood Life	Benefits
<i>1 Clem.</i> 50.3–7	Those who by God's grace were perfected in love have a place among the godly, who will be revealed <i>when</i> the <b>kingdom of Christ</b> visits us . . . upon those who have been <i>chosen</i> by God <b>through Jesus Christ our Lord.</b>	Christ's love saves	Divisions	Future [kingdom]	Benefits
<i>1 Clem.</i> 58.2	Accept our advice and you will have nothing to regret. For as God lives, and as <b>the Lord Jesus Christ lives</b> , and the Holy Spirit . . . so surely the one who with humility . . . will be enrolled and included among the number of those who are <i>saved</i> <b>through Jesus Christ</b>	Obedience is a sign of receiving the promise of salvation	Obedience	Salvation Life	Benefits Biblical Example
<i>1 Clem.</i> 59.2	Through his beloved servant <b>Jesus Christ</b> , through whom <i>he called us</i> from darkness to light	Obedience is a sign of receiving the promise of salvation	Obedience	Call	Benefits
<i>1 Clem.</i> 59.3	You multiply the nations upon the earth, and from among all of them you have chosen those who love you <b>through Jesus Christ</b> , your be-	Salvation is of God and through Christ	Benediction	Teaching	Benefits

	loved servant, through whom you <i>instructed us, sanctified us, honored us.</i>				
1 Clem. 59.4	Let all the nations know that you are the only God, <b>that Jesus Christ is your servant</b> , and that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture.	Salvation is of God and through Christ	Benediction	Teaching	Benefits
1 Clem. 61.3	We praise [the Father] through the <i>high priest and bene- factor of our souls,</i> <b>Jesus Christ</b>	Salvation is of God and through Christ	Benediction	High Priest Helper	Benefits
1 Clem. 64.1	Finally, may the all- seeing God and Master of spirits and Lord of all flesh, <i>who chose the</i> <b>Lord Jesus Christ</b> , and <i>us through him to be his own special people . . . our high priest and benefactor,</i> <b>Jesus Christ</b>	Salvation is of God and through Christ	Benediction	Call High Priest Helper	Benefits
1 Clem. 65.2	The grace of our <b>Lord Jesus Christ</b> be with you and <i>all people everywhere who have been called by God through him</i>	Salvation is of God and through Christ	Benediction	Call	Benefits
Ign. Eph. 1.1	I welcomed in God your well-beloved name, which you possess by reason of your righteous nature, character- ized by faith in and love of <b>Christ Jesus our Savior</b> . Being imitators of God, once you took on <i>new life</i> through <i>the blood of God</i> you completed perfectly the task so natural to you.	Doxology	Greeting	Salvation Life Blood	Benefits
Ign. Eph. 2.2	It is proper, there- fore, in every way to <b>glorify Jesus Christ</b> , who <i>has</i>	Proper action	Greeting	Salvation	Benefits

	<i>glorified you</i> , so that you . . . <i>may be sanctified</i> in every respect.				
Ign. <i>Eph.</i> 3.2	For <b>Jesus Christ</b> , our inseparable <i>life</i> , is the <i>mind of the Father</i> , just as the bishops appointed throughout the world are in the mind of Christ.	Obedience to the bishop	Church order	Life Relation to the Father	Benefits Teaching Example
Ign. <i>Eph.</i> 5.1	I congratulate you who are united with him, as the church is with Jesus Christ and as <i>Jesus Christ is with the Father</i> , so that all things may be harmonious in unity.	Obedience to the bishop	Church order	Relation to the Father	Teaching Example
Ign. <i>Eph.</i> 10.3	Let us show by our <i>forbearance</i> that we are their brothers and sisters, and let us be eager to <i>be imitators</i> of the Lord, to see who can be the more wronged, who the more cheated, who the more rejected, in order that no weed of the devil may be found among you, but that with complete purity and self-control you may abide in Christ Jesus physically and spiritually.	Imitate Christ in co-suffering	Church order	Passion	Exemplar
Ign. <i>Eph.</i> 11.1	Only let us <b>be found in Christ Jesus</b> , which leads to true <i>life</i> .	Imitate Christ in co-suffering	Church order	Life	Exemplar
Ign. <i>Eph.</i> 18.2	For <b>our God, Jesus the Christ</b> , was conceived by Mary according to God's plan, both from the seed of David and of the Holy Spirit. He was <i>born</i> and was bap-	The mystery of the gospel	Gospel	First Coming Passion	Benefits

	tized in order that <i>by his suffering</i> he might cleanse the water.				
Ign. Eph. 29.3	Consequently all magic and every kind of spell were dissolved, <i>the ignorance so characteristic of wickedness vanished</i> , and the ancient kingdom was abolished when <b>God appeared in human form</b> to bring the newness of <i>eternal life</i> , and what had been prepared by God began to take effect.	The mystery of the gospel	Gospel	First Coming Revelation Flesh Life	Benefits
Ign. Eph. 20.1	I will further explain to you the subject about which I have begun to speak, namely, the divine plan with respect to the <i>new man Jesus Christ</i> , involving faith in him and love for him, his <i>suffering and resurrection</i>	The mystery of the gospel	Gospel	First Coming Flesh Passion Resurrection	Benefits
Ign. Eph. 20.2	Gather together in grace, by name, in one faith and one Jesus Christ, who <i>physically</i> was a descendant of David, who is <i>Son of Man and Son of God</i> , in order that you may obey the bishop . . . [the Eucharist], the antidote we take in order not to die but to <i>live forever in Jesus Christ</i> .	The mystery of the gospel	Gospel	First Coming Flesh Relation to the Father Life	Benefits
Ign. Magn. 1.2	In <b>him</b> <i>we will reach God</i> , if we patiently endure all the abuse of the ruler of this age and escape.	Christ is the way of salvation	Greeting	Salvation Relation to the Father	Benefits



Ign. <i>Magn.</i> 5.2	But the faithful in love bear the stamp of God the Father <b>through Jesus Christ</b> , whose <i>life</i> is not in us unless we voluntarily choose to die <i>into his suffering</i> .	Christ is the way of salvation	Two ways	Life Passion	Benefits Exemplar
Ign. <i>Magn.</i> 6.1	Since they have been entrusted with the ministry of <b>Jesus Christ</b> , who before the ages was <i>with the Father</i> and <i>appeared at the end of time</i> .	Obedience to the bishop	Church order	First Coming Relation to the Father	Teaching Example
Ign. <i>Magn.</i> 7.1	Therefore as the <b>Lord</b> did nothing <i>without the Father</i>	The church should be unified	Church order	Relation to the Father	Exemplar Teaching Example
Ign. <i>Magn.</i> 7.2	Let all of you run together as to one temple of God, as to one altar, to <b>one Jesus Christ</b> , who <i>came forth from one Father and remained with the One and returned to the One</i>	The church should be unified	Church order	Relation to the Father	Exemplar Teaching Example
Ign. <i>Magn.</i> 8.2	For the most godly prophets [of Israel] lived in accordance with <b>Christ Jesus</b> .	Christianity and Israel	Christianity	Covenant	Biblical Example
Ign. <i>Magn.</i> 8.2	Might be fully convinced that there is one God <i>who revealed himself through Jesus Christ his Son</i> , who is his Word that <i>came forth</i> from silence, who in every respect pleased the one who sent him.	Christianity and Israel	Christianity	Revelation Relation to the Father First Coming	Biblical Example Benefits
Ign. <i>Magn.</i> 9.1	In order that we may be found to be disciples of <b>Jesus Christ</b> , <i>our only teacher</i>	Christianity and Israel	Christianity	Teaching	Benefits
Ign. <i>Magn.</i> 13.2	Be subject to the bishop and to one another, as <b>Jesus Christ in the flesh</b>	Clarifying Jesus's experiences	Christianity	Flesh Relation to the	Exemplar

	was <i>to the Father</i>			Father	
Ign. <i>Trall.</i> Sal.	Ignatius . . . at peace in flesh and spirit <i>through the suffering of Jesus Christ</i> , who is our hope when we rise to be with him	Salutation	Greeting	Passion	Benefits
Ign. <i>Trall.</i> 2.1	For when you are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, it is evident to me that you are living not in accordance with human standards but in accordance <b>with Jesus Christ, who died for us</b> in order that by believing in his death <i>you might escape death.</i>	Obedience to the Bishop	Church order	Life Passion	Teaching Example
Ign. <i>Rom.</i> 4.3	But if I suffer [martyrdom], I will be <b>a freedman of Jesus Christ</b> and <i>will rise up free</i> in him.	Ignatius confronting martyrdom	Martyrdom	Resurrection	Benefits
Ign. <i>Rom.</i> 6.1	[Christ] I seek, who <i>died</i> on our behalf; him I long for, who <i>rose again</i> for our sake.	Ignatius confronting martyrdom	Martyrdom	Passion Resurrection	Benefits
Ign. <i>Rom.</i> 7.3	I want the bread of God, which is <i>the flesh</i> of <b>Christ</b> who is of <i>the seed of David</i> ; and for drink I want <i>his blood</i> , which is incorruptible love.	Ignatius confronting martyrdom	Martyrdom	Flesh First Coming Blood	Benefits
Ign. <i>Rom.</i> 8.2	And <b>Jesus Christ</b> , the <i>unerring mouth</i> by whom <i>the Father has spoken truly</i> , will make it clear to you that I am speaking truly.	Ignatius confronting martyrdom	Martyrdom	Revelation Relation to the Father	Benefits
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> Sal.	[A church] that has found mercy and is firmly established in godly harmony and unwaveringly rejoices in the	Salutation	Salutation	Passion Resurrection Blood	Benefits

	<i>suffering of our Lord</i> , fully convinced of <i>his resurrection</i> in all mercy, which I greet in <i>the blood</i> of Jesus Christ, which is eternal and lasting joy				
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> 4.1	(for there is <i>one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ</i> , and on cup that leads to unity through <i>his blood</i> )	Unity in the face of false teaching	Unity	Flesh Blood	Teaching Example
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> 5.2	Because [the prophets] also believed in him, they were <i>saved</i> , since they belong to the unity centered in <b>Jesus Christ</b>	The OT prophets were unified with the church	Unity	Salvation	Benefits
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> 7.2	Become imitators of <b>Jesus Christ</b> , just as <i>he is of his Father</i> .	Ignatius's previous instructions	Unity	First Coming Relation to the Father	Exemplar
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> 8.1	I believe in the grace of <b>Jesus Christ</b> , who will <i>free you</i> from every restraint.	Unity in Christ	Unity	Redemption	Benefits
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> 8.2	Moreover, I urge you to do nothing in a spirit of contentiousness, but in accordance <i>with the teaching of Christ</i> .	Unity in Christ	Unity	Teaching	Benefits
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> 8.2	But for me, the "archives" are <b>Jesus Christ</b> , the unalterable archives are <i>his cross and death and his resurrection</i> and the faith that comes through him; by these things I want, through your prayers, to be <i>justified</i> .	Unity in Christ	Unity	Passion Resurrection Justification	Benefits
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> 9.1	But the <i>high priest</i> , entrusted with the Holy of Holies, is better; he alone has been entrusted with	Unity in Christ	Unity	High Priest Relation to the Father	Benefits

	<i>the hidden things of God, for he himself is the door of the Father, through which . . . enter in.</i>				
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> 9.2	But the gospel possesses something distinctive, namely, the coming of the <i>Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, his suffering, and the resurrection . . .</i> the gospel is the imperishable finished work.	Unity in Christ	Unity	Salvation Passion Resurrection	Benefits
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i> 1.1–2	I glorify Jesus Christ, the God who made you so wise, for I observed that you are established in an unshakable faith, having been nailed, as it were, <i>to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ</i> in both body and spirit, and firmly established in love by the <i>blood</i> of Christ, totally convinced with regard to our Lord that he is <i>truly of the family of David with respect to human descent, Son of God with respect to the divine will and power, truly born</i> of a virgin, baptized by John in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him, truly nailed in the <i>flesh</i> for us under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch ( <i>from its fruit we derive our existence, that is, from his divinely blessed suffering</i> ), in order that he might raise a banner for the ages through his <i>resurrection</i> for	Gospel narrative	Gospel	Passion Blood First Coming Flesh Relation to the Father Resurrection	Benefits

	his saints and faithful people, whether among Jews or among Gentiles, in the one body of his church.				
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i> 4.1	But <b>Jesus Christ</b> , <i>our true life</i> , has power over this.	Warnings against false teaching	False Teaching	Life	Benefits
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i> 8.2	You must all follow the bishop as <b>Jesus Christ</b> <i>followed the Father</i> .	Obedience to the bishop	Church order	First Coming Relation to the Father	Exemplar
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i> 12.2	[greetings] in the name of Jesus Christ and in <i>his flesh and blood, his suffering and resurrection</i> (which was <i>both physical and spiritual</i> ), in unity with God and with you.	Benediction	Benediction	Flesh Blood Passion Resurrection	Benefits
Ign. <i>Pol.</i> 3.2	Wait expectantly for the one who is above time: the Eternal, the Invisible, <i>who for our sake became visible</i> ; the Intangible, the Unsuffering, <i>who for our sake suffered</i> , who for our sake endured in every way.	True teaching	Exhortation	Revelation First Coming Passion	Benefits
Ign. <i>Pol.</i> 5.1	In the same way command my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives <i>as the Lord loves the church</i>	True teaching	Exhortation	Ambiguous	Exemplar
Ign. <i>Pol.</i> 5.2	If anyone is able to remain chaste <i>to the honor of the flesh of the Lord</i> , let him so remain without boasting.	True teaching	Exhortation	Flesh	Ambiguous
Pol. <i>Phil.</i> 1.2	I also rejoice because your firmly rooted faith, renowned from the earliest times, still perseveres and bears fruit to our	Salvation through Christ	Joy	Passion Resurrection Salvation	Benefits

	<b>Lord Jesus Christ</b> , who <i>endured for our sins, facing even death, whom God raised up, having loosed the birth pangs of Hades.</i>				
Pol. <i>Phil.</i> 1.3	Knowing that by grace <i>you have been saved</i> , not because of works, but by the will of God <b>through Jesus Christ.</b>	Salvation through Christ	Joy	Salvation	Benefits
Pol. <i>Phil.</i> 2.1	Believing in the one who <i>raised</i> our <b>Lord Jesus Christ</b> from the dead and gave him glory and <i>a throne at his right hand.</i> To him all things . . . were subjected, whom every breathing creature serves, who is coming <i>as judge of the living and the dead</i> , for whose <i>blood</i> God will hold responsible those who disobey Him.	Gospel narrative	Gospel	Resurrection Judgment Blood Future	Benefits
Pol. <i>Phil.</i> 2.2	But the one who <i>raised him from the dead will raise us also</i>	Gospel narrative	Gospel	Resurrection	Benefits
Pol. <i>Phil.</i> 5.2	If we please him [amb.] in this present world, we will receive the world to come as well, inasmuch as he promised that <i>he will raise us from the dead</i> and that is we prove to be citizens worthy of him, <i>we will also reign with him</i> —if, that is, we continue to believe.	Promises of salvation for those who are obedient	Obedience	Resurrection Future	Benefits Challenge Ambiguous
Pol. <i>Phil.</i> 6.2	We must all stand before the <i>judgment seat of Christ</i> , and each one must account for his own actions.	Live to others as to Christ	Obedience	Judgment	Challenge
Pol. <i>Phil.</i>	Let us serve him with fear and all	Live to others as to	Obedience	Teaching	Challenge

6.3	reverence, just as <i>he himself has commanded</i>	Christ			
Pol. Phil. 8.1	Let us, therefore, hold steadfastly and unceasingly to <i>our hope and the guarantee of our righteousness, who is Jesus Christ, who bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, who committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth;</i> instead, for our sakes <i>he endured all things</i> , in order that we might <i>live</i> in him.	Gospel narrative	Obedience	Justification First Coming Passion Life	Benefits
Pol. Phil. 8.2	Let us, therefore, become imitators of his <i>patient endurance</i> , and if we should suffer for the sake of his name, let us glorify him. For this is the <i>example</i> he set for us in his own person, and this is what we believed.	Suffer for Christ's sake based on his pattern	Obedience	Passion First Coming	Exemplar
Pol. Phil. 9.2	For [the martyrs] did not love the present world but <i>the one who died on our behalf and was raised by God for our sakes.</i>	The martyrs as examples of righteousness	Obedience	Passion Resurrection	Benefits
Pol. Phil. 10.1	Stand fast, therefore, in these things and <i>follow the example of the Lord</i>	Obey based on his pattern	Obedience	First Coming	Exemplar
Pol. Phil. 12.2	Now may the God and Father of our <b>Lord Jesus Christ</b> , and the <i>eternal high priest himself, the Son of God Jesus Christ</i> . . . may he <i>give to you a share and a place among his saints</i> , and to use with you, and to all those under heaven who will yet believe	Future hope in Christ	Benediction	High Priest Salvation Resurrection Relation to the Father	Benefits

	in <b>our Lord and God Jesus Christ</b> and in his Father <i>who raised him from the dead.</i>				
<i>Barn. 2.6</i>	Therefore he has abolished these things, in order that the <i>new law of our Lord Jesus Christ</i> , which is free from the yoke of compulsion, might have its offering, one not made by humans.	The old system of sacrifice does not please God	Pure Life	Covenant/Law	Benefits Biblical Example
<i>Barn. 4.8</i>	And Moses understood and hurled the two tablets from his hands, and their covenant was shattered, in order that the <i>covenant of the beloved Jesus</i> might be sealed in our heart, in hope inspired by faith in him.	The old law of works did not work because of disobedience	Pure Life	Covenant/Law	Benefits Biblical Example
<i>Barn. 5.1</i>	For it was for this reason that the <b>Lord</b> <i>endured</i> the deliverance of his <i>flesh</i> to corruption, so that we might be cleansed by the forgiveness of sins, that is, by his sprinkled <i>blood</i> .	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel	First Coming Passion Flesh Blood	Benefits
<i>Barn. 5.2</i>	For <b>the scripture concerning him</b> relates partly to Israel and partly to us	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation  Citation of Isa 53	Gospel	Passion	Benefits Biblical Example
<i>Barn. 5.3</i>	We ought, therefore, to be exceedingly thankful to the <b>Lord</b> , because he has both <i>made known</i> to us the past and given us wisdom in the present circumstance, and with	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel	Revelation Future	Benefits



	regard to <i>future events</i> we are not without understanding.				
<i>Barn.</i> 5.5	And furthermore, my brothers and sisters, if the Lord <i>submitted to suffer</i> for our souls, even though <b>he is Lord of the whole world</b> , to whom God said at the foundation of the world, “Let us make humankind according to our image and likeness,” how is it, then, that he submitted to <i>suffer at the hand of humans</i> ?	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel	First Coming Passion	Benefits
<i>Barn.</i> 5.6	But he himself <i>submitted</i> , in order that he might <i>destroy death</i> and demonstrate the reality of the <i>resurrection</i> of the dead, because it was necessary that he be manifested in the <i>flesh</i> .	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel	First Coming Life Passion Resurrection Flesh	Benefits
<i>Barn.</i> 5.7	Also, he <i>submitted</i> in order that he might redeem the promise to the fathers and—while preparing the new people for himself—prove, while he was still on earth, that after he has brought about the <i>resurrection</i> he will <i>execute judgment</i> .	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel/OT Fulfilment	First Coming Redemption Resurrection Judgment	Benefits
<i>Barn.</i> 5.8	Furthermore, by <i>teaching</i> Israel and performing extraordinary wonders and signs, he preached and <i>loved</i> them intensely.	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel/OT Fulfilment	Teaching	Benefits
<i>Barn.</i> 5.9	And when he chose his own apostles . . . then he <i>revealed himself to be</i>	Christ served to bring a new way of	Gospel	Revelation Relation to the	Benefits

	<i>God's Son.</i>	salvation		Father	
<i>Barn.</i> 5.10	For if he had not come in the <i>flesh</i> , people could in no way have <i>been saved</i> by looking at him.	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel	Flesh Salvation	Benefits
<i>Barn.</i> 5.11	Therefore <b>the Son of God</b> <i>came in the flesh</i> for this reason, so that he might complete the full measure of the <i>sins</i> of those who persecuted his prophets to death.	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel/OT Fulfilment	First Coming Flesh Judgment Relation to the Father	Benefits
<i>Barn.</i> 5.12–14	It was for this reason, therefore, that he <i>submitted</i> . For God says that the <i>wounds</i> of his <i>flesh</i> came from them . . . But he himself desired to suffer in this manner, for it was necessary for him to suffer on a tree.	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation  Citations of Zech 13:7; Ps 22:20; Ps 119:120; Ps 22:15; Isa 50:6	Gospel	First Coming Passion Flesh	Benefits
<i>Barn.</i> 6.3	But he says this because <b>the Lord</b> has established <i>his flesh</i> in strength.	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel	Flesh	Benefits
<i>Barn.</i> 6.9	But now learn what knowledge has to say: set your hope upon <b>Jesus</b> , who is about <i>to be revealed to you in flesh</i> . For a human is earth suffering, for Adam was formed out of the face of the earth.	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel/OT Fulfilment	Flesh	Benefits Biblical Example
<i>Barn.</i> 6.12	For the <i>scripture</i> <i>speaks</i> about us when he says to the <b>Son</b> . . . These things he said to the <b>Son</b> .	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation	Gospel/OT Fulfilment	Revelation Relation to the Father	Benefits Biblical Example
<i>Barn.</i> 7.7	[Scapegoat]: But what shall they do	Atonement through	Gospel/OT Fulfilment	Judgment	Benefits Biblical

	with the other one? “The other one,” he says, “is cursed.” Notice how <b>the type of Jesus is revealed</b> .	Christ was necessary  Citation of Lev 16:8		Passion	Example
<i>Barn.</i> 7.10	Now how is he like <i>that goat</i> ? The goats are well-matched, fine, and almost identical, for this reason: so that when they see him coming then, they may be amazed at the similarity of the goat. Observe, therefore, <b>the type of Jesus, who was destined to suffer</b> .	Atonement through Christ was necessary  Continuing Day of Atonement narrative	Gospel/OT Fulfilment	Judgment  Passion	Benefits  Biblical Example
<i>Barn.</i> 8.2	Grasp how plainly he is speaking to you: <b>the calf is Jesus; the sinful men who offer it are those who brought him to the slaughter</b> . Then the men are no more; no more is the glory of sinners.	Jesus offered as a sacrifice through the evil of sinners	Gospel/OT Fulfilment	Passion  Judgment	Benefits  Biblical Example
<i>Barn.</i> 8.5	And then there is the matter of the wool on the piece of wood: this signifies that <b>the kingdom of Jesus</b> is based on the wooden <i>cross</i> , and that those who hope in him will <i>live</i> forever. . . Because in his <i>kingdom</i> there will be dark and evil days, in which we will be <i>saved</i> , because the one who suffers in body is <i>healed</i> by means of the dark juice of the hyssop.	Jesus offered as a sacrifice through the evil of sinners	Gospel/OT Fulfilment	Passion  Life  Judgment  Salvation	Benefits  Biblical Example
<i>Barn.</i> 11.11	By this he means that while we <i>descend into the water</i> laden with sins and dirt, we rise up bearing fruit in our heart and with fear	Baptism signified in the OT	OT Fulfilment	Life	Benefits  Biblical Example

	and hope <b>in Jesus</b> in our spirits . . . whoever, he says, hears these things spoken and believes them will <i>live</i> forever.				
<i>Barn.</i> 12.1	The Lord says, “When a tree falls over and rises again, and when <i>blood</i> drips from a tree.” Once again you have a reference about the cross and about the one who was destined <i>to be crucified</i> .	Cross signified in Israel  Possible citation of <i>4 Ezra</i>	OT Fulfillment	Blood Passion	Biblical Example
<i>Barn.</i> 12.8–10	<sup>10</sup> Observe again that it is Jesus, not a son of a man but <b>the Son of God</b> , and revealed <i>in the flesh</i> by a symbol.	Jesus signified in Israel through Joshua  Citation of Exodus 17	OT Fulfillment	Relation to the Father  Flesh	Biblical Example
<i>Barn.</i> 12.10–11	<sup>11</sup> Observe how David calls him “Lord,” and does not call him “son.”	Jesus signified in Israel through David  Citation of Ps 110:1	OT Fulfillment	Relation to the Father	Biblical Example
<i>Barn.</i> 14.4	But how did we receive it? Learn! Moses received it as a servant, <b>but the Lord himself gave it to us</b> , so that we might become the people of inheritance, by <i>suffering</i> for us.	New covenant through Jesus	Covenant	Covenant Passion	Benefits
<i>Barn.</i> 14.5	And he was made manifest in order that they might fill up the measure of their sins and we might receive the <i>covenant through the Lord Jesus</i> who inherited it, who was prepared for this purpose, in order that by appearing in person and <i>redeeming</i> from	New covenant through Jesus	Covenant	First Coming Covenant Passion Redemption	Benefits

	darkness our hearts, which had already been paid over to death and given over to the lawlessness of error, he might establish a covenant in us by his word.				
<i>Barn.</i> 15.9	This is why we spend the eighth day in celebration, the day on which <b>Jesus</b> <i>both arose from the dead</i> and, after appearing again, <i>ascended into heaven</i> .	Sabbath rules	Covenant	Resurrection Ascension	Benefits
<i>Diogn.</i> 7.4–6	On the contrary, [the Creator] sent [the Word] in <i>gentleness and meekness</i> , as a king might send his son who is a king; he sent him <i>as God</i> ; he sent him <i>as a human to humans</i> . When he sent him, he did so as one who <i>saves</i> by persuasion, no compulsion, for compulsion is no attribute of God. When he sent him, he did so as one <i>calling</i> , not pursuing; when he sent him, he did so as one <i>loving</i> , not judging. For he will send him as <i>judge</i> , and who will endure his coming?	Incarnation of the Word	Created Order	First Coming Flesh Salvation Call Love Judgment Relation to the Father	Benefits
<i>Diogn.</i> 8.1	For what person had any knowledge at all of what God was before he came?	Incarnation of the Word	Created Order	Revelation	Benefits
<i>Diogn.</i> 8.5–10	No one has either seen or known him, but he has <i>revealed</i> himself. And he revealed himself through faith, which is the only means by	Incarnation of the Word	Created Order	Revelation Relation to the Father Salvation Creation	Benefits

	<p>which one is permitted to see God. . . . And after conceiving a great and marvelous plan, he communicated it to <i>his child</i> alone. . . . when he revealed it through his beloved child and made known the things prepared from the beginning, <i>he gave us everything at once, both to share in his benefits and to see and understand things</i> that none of us ever would have expected.</p>				
<i>Diogn.</i> 9.2-3	<p>He did not hate us, or reject us, or bear a grudge against us; instead he was patient and forbearing; in his mercy he <i>took upon himself our sins</i>; he himself <i>gave up his own Son as a ransom for us</i>, the holy one for the lawless, the guiltless for the guilty, the just for the unjust, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else but his <i>righteousness</i> could have covered our sins?</p>	Gospel narrative	Gospel	<p>Passion Redemption Justification Relation to the Father</p>	Benefits
<i>Diogn.</i> 9.5	<p>O the sweet exchange, O the incomprehensible work of God, O the unexpected blessings, that the sinfulness of many should be hidden in one righteous person, <i>while the righteousness of one should justify many sinners!</i></p>	Gospel narrative	Gospel	<p>Justification Relation to the Father [9.4]</p>	Benefits
<i>Diogn.</i> 9.6	Having demon-	Gospel nar-	Gospel	Life	Benefits

	strated, therefore, in the former time the powerlessness of our nature to obtain <i>life</i> , and having now revealed <b>the Savior's power</b> to save even the powerless, he willed that for both these reasons we should believe in his goodness and regard him as <i>nurse, father, teacher, counselor, healer, mind, light, honor, glory, strength, and life</i> , and not be anxious about food and clothing.	rative		First Coming Teacher	
<i>Diogn.</i> 11.2	Indeed, does anyone who has been rightly taught and has come to love <b>the Word</b> not seek to learn exactly the things <i>openly made known</i> by the Word to disciples? To them the Word <i>appeared and revealed these things</i> , speaking quite plainly as he did so; though not understood by unbelievers, he explained them to disciples who, being regarded as faithful by him, learned the mysteries of the Father. This is why he sent the Word, namely, so that he might <i>appear to the world</i>	The Son of God is the revealed Word	Revelation	Revelation First Coming	Benefits
<i>Diogn.</i> 11.5	This is the <b>Eternal One, who today is accounted a Son</b> , through whom the church is enriched <i>and grace is unfolded and multiplied among the saints</i> . This grace gives <i>understanding, reveals mysteries</i> , announces seasons, rejoices over the	The Son of God is the revealed Word	Revelation	Revelation First Coming Relation to the Father	Benefits

	faithful, is given to those who seek				
<i>Diogn.</i> 12.9	Furthermore, <i>salvation is made known</i> , and apostles are instructed, and the Passover of <b>the Lord</b> goes forward, and the congregations are gathered together, and <i>all things are arranged in order</i> , and the Word rejoices as he <i>teaches</i> the saints, the Word through whom the Father is glorified.	The Word brings salvation	Gospel	Salvation Revelation Creation Teaching	Benefits
1 Clem. 46.7	Why do we tear and rip apart the <b>members of Christ</b> , and rebel against our own body, and reach such a level of insanity that we forget that we are members of one another?	Divisions hurt the body of Christ	Divisions	Ambiguous	Correction of behavior
1 Clem. 47.7	With the result that you <i>heap blasphemies upon the name of the Lord</i> because of your stupidity, and create dangers for yourselves as well.	Divisions hurt the body of Christ	Divisions	Ambiguous	Correction of behavior
1 Clem. 59.1–2	Let [the disobedient] understand that they will entangle themselves in no small sin and danger	Disobedience is a sign of being outside the call of Christ	Obedience	Ambiguous	Correction of behavior
Poly. 7.1	For everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is antichrist; and whoever does not acknowledge the testimony of the cross is of the devil; and whoever twists the sayings of the Lord to suit his own sinful desires and claims	Reject those who reject Jesus	Gospel	Flesh Passion Teaching Resurrection Judgment	Correction of Doctrine



	that there is neither resurrection nor judgment—well, that person is the firstborn of Satan.				
<i>Barn.</i> 5.12–14	It was for this reason, therefore, that he <i>submitted</i> . For God says that the <i>wounds</i> of his <i>flesh</i> came from them . . . But he himself desired to suffer in this manner, for it was necessary for him to suffer on a tree.	Christ served to bring a new way of salvation  Citations of Zech 13:7; Ps 22:20; Ps 119:120; Ps 22:15; Isa 50:6	Gospel	First Coming  Passion  Flesh	Correction of Doctrine
<i>Barn.</i> 7.2	If, therefore, <b>the Son of God, who is Lord</b> and <i>is destined to judge</i> the living and the dead, <i>suffered</i> in order that his wounds might give us <i>life</i> , let us believe that the Son of God could not suffer <i>except for our sake</i> .	Atonement through Christ was necessary	Gospel	Relation to the Father  Judgment  Passion  Life	Correction of Doctrine
<i>Ign. Eph.</i> 7.1–2	For there are some who are accustomed to carrying about the Name maliciously and deceitfully while doing other things unworthy of God. . . . There is only one physician, who is both <i>flesh and spirit</i> , born and unborn, God in man, <i>true life in death</i> , both from Mary and from God, first <i>subject to suffering</i> and then beyond it, <b>Jesus Christ our Lord</b> .	Warnings about false teachers	False teachers	Salvation  Flesh  Life  Passion	Correction of Doctrine
<i>Ign. Eph.</i> 9.1	You have covered up your ears in order to avoid receiving the things being sown by them . . . hoisted to the heights by the crane of <b>Jesus</b>	Ephesians withstood false teachers	False Teachers	Passion	Correction of Doctrine

	<b>Christ</b> , which is the <i>cross</i>				
Ign. Eph. 16.2	Now if those who do such things physically are put to death, how much more if by evil teaching someone corrupts faith in God, <b>for which Jesus Christ was crucified.</b>	Warnings about false teachers	False Teachers	Passion	Correction of Behavior
Ign. Eph. 17.1	The Lord accepted the <i>ointment upon his head</i> for this reason: that <i>he might breathe incorruptibility</i> upon the church. Do not be anointed with the stench of the teaching of the ruler of this age, lest he take you captive and rob you of the life set before you.	Warnings about false teachers	False Teachers	Passion Salvation	Correction of Doctrine
Ign. Magn. 10.1–3	For whoever is called by any other name than this one does not belong to God . . . It is utterly absurd to profess Jesus Christ and to practice Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity, in which every tongue believed and was brought together to God.	Relation of Christianity and Israel	Christianity	Covenant	Correction of Behavior
Ign. Magn. 11.1	I want to forewarn you . . . to be fully convinced about the <i>birth and the suffering and the resurrection that took place during the time of the governorship of Pontius Pilate. These things were truly and most assuredly done by Jesus Christ, our only hope, from which may none of you ever</i>	Clarifying Jesus's experiences	Christianity	First Coming Passion Resurrection	Correction of Doctrine

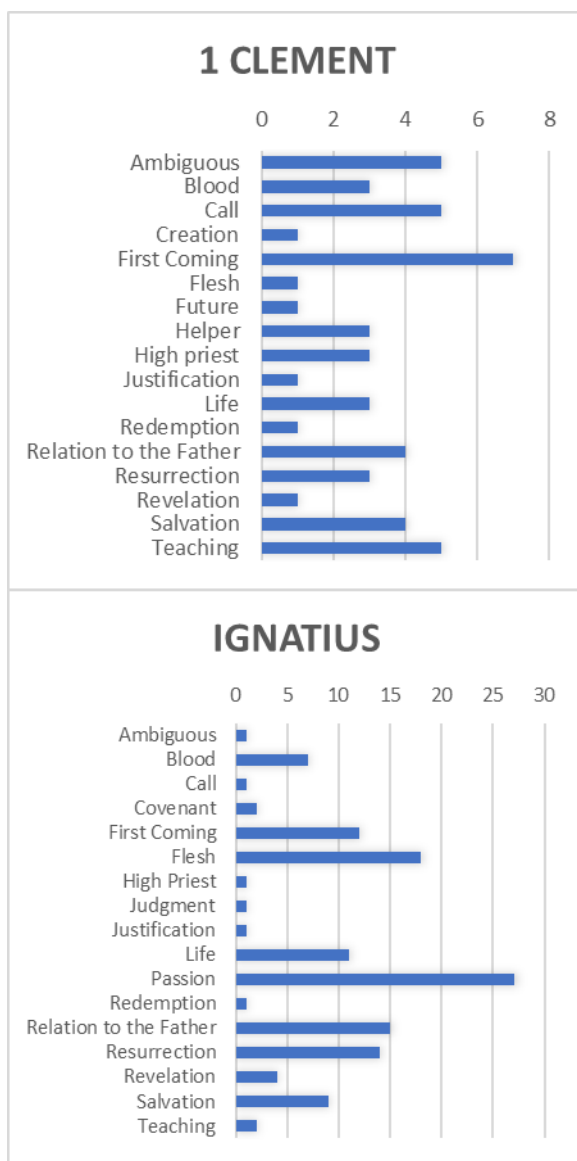
	be turned aside.				
Ign. <i>Trall.</i> 6.1–2	I urge you, therefore—yet not I, but <b>the love of Jesus Christ</b> —partake only of Christian food, and keep away from every strange plant, which is <i>heresy</i> . These people, while pretending to be trustworthy, <i>mix Jesus Christ with themselves</i> —like those who administer a deadly drug with honeyed wine	Danger of false teaching	False teachings		Correction of Doctrine
Ign. <i>Trall.</i> 8.1	You, therefore, must arm yourselves with gentleness and regain your strength in faith (which is the <i>flesh</i> of the Lord) and in love (which is the <i>blood</i> of Jesus Christ).	Danger of false teaching	False teachings	Flesh Blood	Correction of Doctrine
Ign. <i>Trall.</i> 9.1–2	Be deaf, therefore, whenever anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the family of David, who was the son of Mary; who really was <i>born</i> , who both ate and drank; who really was persecuted under Pontius Pilate, who <i>really was crucified</i> and died while those in heaven and on earth and under the earth looked on; who, moreover, really was <i>raised from the dead</i> when his Father raised him up. . . . Apart from him we have no true <i>life</i> .	Danger of false teaching	False teachings	First Coming Flesh Passion Resurrection Life	Correction of doctrine
Ign. <i>Trall.</i> 10.1	But if, as some atheists (that is, unbelievers) say, <i>be suffered in appearance</i>	Danger of false teaching	False teachings	Flesh Passion	Correction of doctrine

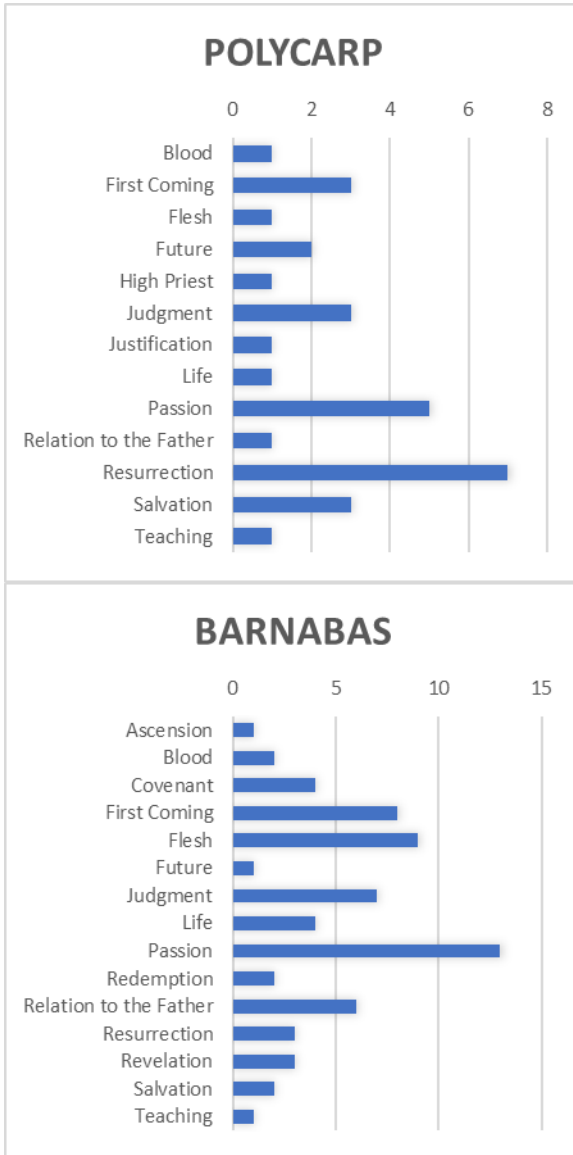
	<i>only</i> (while they exist in appearance only!), why am I in chains?				
Ign. <i>Trall.</i> 11.2	For if they were [from the Father], they would appear as branches of the cross, and their fruit would be imperishable—the same cross by which he, through his <i>suffering, calls</i> you who are his members.	Danger of false teaching	False teachings	Passion Call	Correction of doctrine
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> 3.3	Do not be misled, my brothers and sisters: if any follow a schismatic, they will not inherit <b>the kingdom of God</b> . If any hold to alien views, they disassociate themselves from the <i>passion</i> .	Danger of false teaching	False teachings	Passion	Correction of Doctrine
Ign. <i>Phld.</i> 6.1	But if either of them fails to speak about <b>Jesus Christ</b> , I look on them as <i>tombstones and graves of the dead</i> , upon which only the names of people are inscribed.	Judaism and Christianity are dead without Christ	Unity	Life	Correction of Doctrine
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i> 2.1	For he <i>suffered all these things</i> for our sakes, in order that we might <i>be saved</i> ; and he truly suffered just as he <i>truly raised</i> himself—not, as certain unbelievers say, <i>that he suffered in appearance only</i> (it is they who exist in appearance only!). Indeed, their fate will be determined by what they think: they will become disembodied and demonic.	Gospel narrative against heretics	Gospel	Passion Salvation Resurrection	Correction of Doctrine
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i>	For I know and believe <i>that he was in</i>	Gospel truth against here-	Gospel	Flesh	Correction of Doc-

3.1–3	<i>the flesh even after the resurrection . . . and after his resurrection he ate and drank with them like one who is composed of flesh, although spiritually he was united with the Father.</i>	tics		Resurrection Relation to the Father	trine
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i> 4.2	For if these things were done by our Lord <i>in appearance only</i> , then I am in chains in appearance only. . . . Only let it be in the name of Jesus Christ, so that <i>I may suffer together with him!</i> I endure everything because he himself, who is the perfect human being, empowers me.	Gospel truth against heretics	False teachings	Flesh Passion	Correction of Doctrine
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i> 5.1–2	Certain people ignorantly deny him, or rather have been denied by him, for they are advocates of death rather than of truth. . . . For what good does it do me if someone praises me but blasphemes my Lord by not confessing that he <i>was clothed in flesh?</i> Anyone who does not acknowledge this <b>thereby denies him completely</b> and is clothed in a corpse.	Gospel truth against heretics	False teachings	Flesh Passion	Correction of Doctrine
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i> 5.3	Indeed, far be it from me even to remember [opponents' names], <i>until such time as they change their mind regarding the passion, which is our resurrection.</i>	Gospel truth against heretics	False teachings	Flesh Passion Resurrection	Correction of Doctrine
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i>	Let no one be misled. Even the	Gospel truth against here-	False teach-	Blood	Correction of Doc-

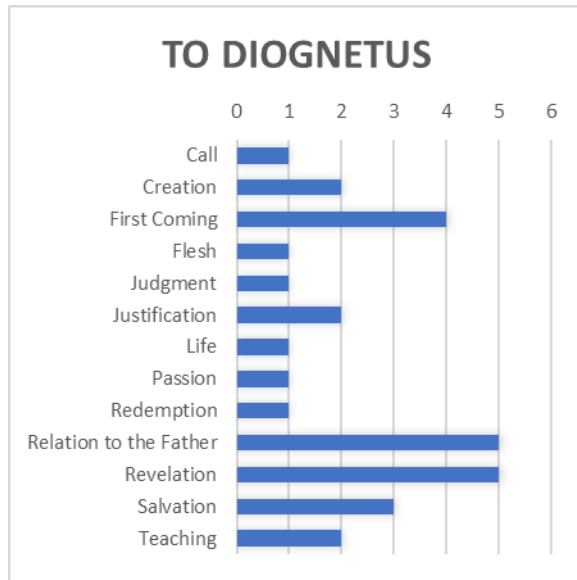
6.1	heavenly beings and the glory of angels and the rulers, both visible and invisible, are <b>subject to judgment</b> if they do not believe in the <b>blood of Christ</b> .	tics	ings	Judgment	trine
Ign. <i>Smyrn.</i> 6.2	They abstain from Eucharist and prayer because they refuse to acknowledge that the Eucharist is the <i>flesh</i> of our <i>savior</i> <b>Jesus Christ</b> , which <i>suffered for our sins</i> and which the Father by his goodness <i>raised up</i> .	Gospel truth against heretics	False teachings	Flesh Salvation Passion Resurrection	Correction of Doctrine

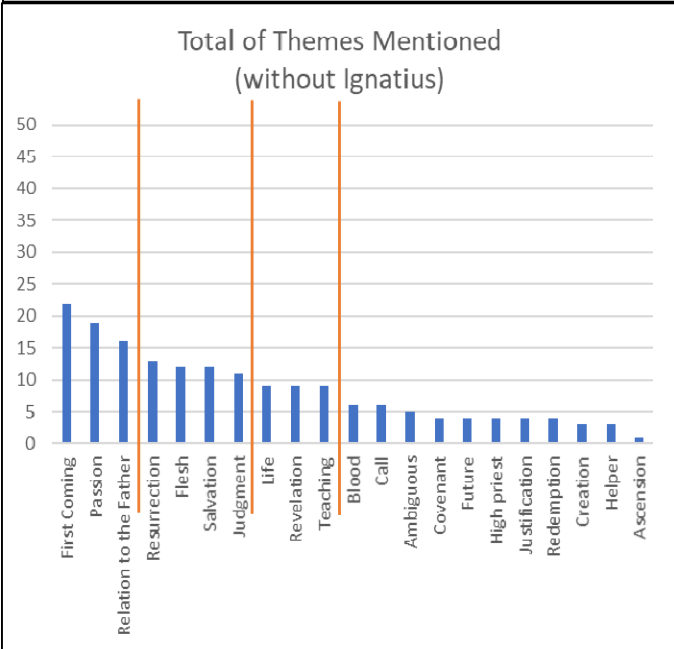
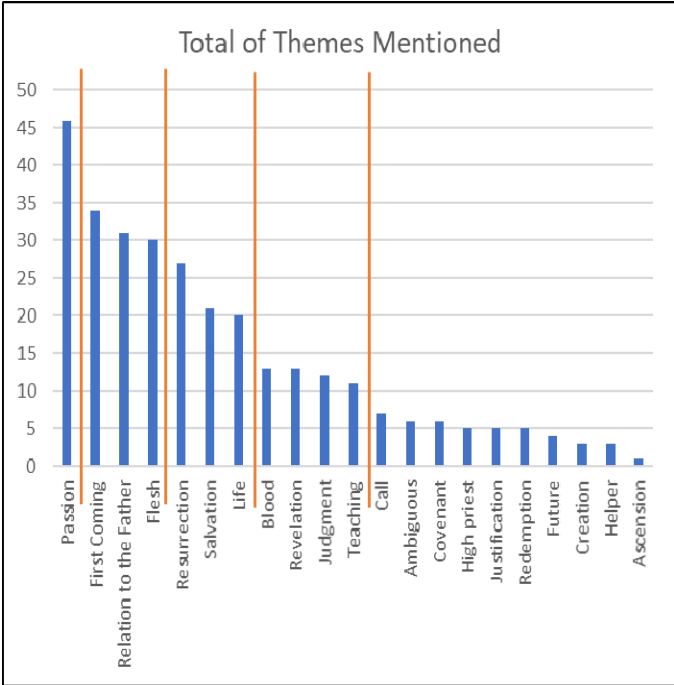
## APPENDIX 2: GRAPHS











## “He Who Is and the Angel of Him Who Is”: Nicene and Post-Nicene Views of Christophanies

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### Introduction

Historically-oriented biblical scholars seek Christ in all Scripture. Such a study benefits from a comparison of the Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers’ understandings of divine appearances in the Old Testament. Further examination of how the fathers from different eras applied their interpretations to their Christology, Trinitarian doctrines, and polemics against heresies can inform the contemporary discussion of Christ in the Old Testament.

During the second and third centuries of the church, the fathers read the Old Testament and found Christ in the divine appearances to the patriarchs and heroes of Israel. These appearances, or Christophanies, seemed to be effective proofs of Christ’s deity and pre-existence as well as the plurality of Persons in the Godhead. According to James Borland in *Christ in the Old Testament*, “the Ante-Nicene period . . . was one in which the Christians believed that the Lord Jesus Christ was the one who appeared in the Old Testament Christophanies.”<sup>1</sup>

In their christophanic interpretations, however, the Ante-Nicene fathers introduced problematic concepts such as the extreme transcendence of God the Father and the subordination of God the Son. The Arians pressed such convictions to their logical extremes, arguing that if the Father were invisible while the Son was visible in the Old Testament, then the Father would possess a higher nature than the Son. Thus the Ante-Nicene interpretation

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<sup>1</sup> James A. Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 150.

of the divine appearances as Christophanies, so it seemed, undermined the orthodox assertion that the Son is consubstantial with the Father.

Scholars such as H. P. Liddon and James Borland contended that Post-Nicene fathers, in their rejection of Arian exegesis, departed from their predecessors' positions, which seemed to diminish rather than enhance Christ's divinity. Augustine, in particular, insisted that theophanies in human form were appearances by angels created specifically for their missions, to represent God to the biblical forefathers of the faith. He pointed to many of the same theophanies cited by earlier fathers, but he maintained that the appearances to Abraham and Moses were the work of angels, whether themselves speaking or doing or representing the person of God (*On the Trinity* 3.27).

Upon closer investigation, however, church fathers of the Nicene and Post-Nicene eras continued to promote christophanic interpretations of the divine appearances in the Old Testament. Eusebius of Caesarea, for example, insisted that divine appearances to Abraham, Jacob, and Isaiah were manifestations of the Son of God, not angelic appearances. Also, Athanasius argued that Christ's divinity was evidenced in these appearances by the worship offered up by Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre, by Moses at the burning bush, and by the myriads seen by Daniel in his vision of the Ancient of Days. Fourth-century fathers, including the Cappadocian fathers, Hilary of Poitiers, and Ambrose of Milan, provided other examples of christophanic exegesis.

### Ante-Nicene Views of Christophanies<sup>2</sup>

During the second and third centuries, as apologists and other church fathers took up the cause of Christ against opponents without and heretics within the church, they found in the Christophanies effective proofs of Christ's deity and pre-existence as well as the plurality of Persons in the Godhead.<sup>3</sup> Borland observed

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<sup>2</sup> This section summarizes the findings in Rex D. Butler, "The Son of God Appeared to Prophets and Patriarchs: Ante-Nicene Views of Christophanies," *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 18.1 (Spring 2021): 63–84, available at <https://www.nobts.edu/baptist-center-theology/journals/journals/jbtm18a.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> William Graham MacDonald, "Christology and 'The Angel of the Lord,'" in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 325. See also Benedict Kominiak, *The Theoph-*

that the Ante-Nicene Fathers “are especially helpful in their comments regarding the theophanies in human form. In most cases, these early writers merely argued that Christ was the one who appeared in these theophanies. They did not attempt to develop a regular theology regarding such occurrences.”<sup>4</sup>

The earliest and most prolific church father to explain the divine appearances in the Old Testament as Christophanies was the second-century apologist, Justin Martyr (c. 110–165). In doing so, he advanced his own defense of the Christian faith aimed at pagan intellectuals and Jews and also prepared the way for later apologists.<sup>5</sup> Justin utilized Christophanies as arguments for Jesus’s divinity, his pre-existence, and the plurality of the Persons of the Godhead. At the same time, however, he promoted some ideas that became questionable in Post-Nicene times, for example, the subordination of the Son and the extreme transcendence of the Father in contrast to the Son. Benedict Kominiak, however, assured Post-Nicene readers that they must not equate Justin with Arius: “For the heresiarch, the Word is a creature of God; for Justin, He is the Son of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Kari Kloos, in her major work on theophanic interpretations, connected Justin to Novatian of Rome, both as proponents of what she called the polemical-doctrinal strand of exegesis. Fathers following this exegetical approach focused on the Son’s identity as the subject of the Old Testament theophanies. In their opposition to Judaism and heresies, such as Marcionism, Docetism, Adoptionism, and Modalism, they sought to establish the continuity of God’s work in the Old and New Testaments through the work of the Son in both, to maintain the plurality and the distinctions among the Persons of the Godhead, as well as to defend the divinity of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Kloos assembled another cluster of Ante-Nicene fathers around the spiritual strand of exegesis, which valued “the likeness of the theophanies to the incarnation, sharing a common purpose

*anies of the Old Testament in the Writings of St. Justin* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press: 1948), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament*, 146–47.

<sup>5</sup> MacDonald, “Christology and the ‘Angel of the Lord,’” 325.

<sup>6</sup> Kominiak, *The Theophanies of the Old Testament in the Writings of St. Justin*, 67.

<sup>7</sup> Kari Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God: Augustine’s Transformation of Early Christian Theophany Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 41–42, 95.

of uniting human beings to God through faith.”<sup>8</sup> As proponents of this exegetical approach, she identified Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian of Carthage, and Origen of Alexandria. These fathers also interpreted the divine appearances christologically and used them to point “toward the incarnation to see God in the life of faith.”<sup>9</sup>

The positive outcomes of christophanic interpretations, however, often were accompanied by problematic concepts such as the extreme transcendence of God the Father and the subordination of God the Son.<sup>10</sup> In the fourth century and beyond, the Arian heresy called into question previous views of divine appearances in the Old Testament. The Arians argued that “if the Father was invisible, while the Son had been seen in the Old Testament . . . the Father thus possessed a distinct and higher nature than the Son.”<sup>11</sup> For this reason, historical theologians would expect that Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers departed from their predecessors’ positions, which seemed to diminish rather than enhance Christ’s divinity.<sup>12</sup>

### Views of Christophanies during the Nicene Era

Modern commentators often assert that “the Arian controversy led to a modification of that estimate of the Theophanies which had prevailed in the earlier Church.”<sup>13</sup> Ante-Nicene fathers had broached the possibility of a subordinate, begotten Son and had emphasized the extreme transcendence of the invisible Father, which required the mediation of the visible Son. As Borland observed, “If the Father was invisible, while the Son had been seen in the Old Testament, the Arians argued, the Father thus possessed a distinct and higher nature than the Son.”<sup>14</sup> Liddon added, “The Arians endeavoured to widen this personal distinctness into a deeper difference, a different of Natures. Appealing to the often-assigned ground of the belief respecting the Theophanies which had prevailed in the ante-Nicene Church, the Arians argued that the Son had been seen by the Patriarchs, which the Father had not

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<sup>8</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 45.

<sup>9</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 50–65, 71.

<sup>10</sup> Sanders, *The Triune God*, 225.

<sup>11</sup> Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament*, 151.

<sup>12</sup> Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament*, 154.

<sup>13</sup> H. P. Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978), 57.

<sup>14</sup> Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament*, 151.

been seen, and that an Invisible Nature was distinct from and higher than a nature which was cognizable by the senses.”<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the biblical terminology that attributed these divine appearances to the Angel of the Lord raised concerns among later interpreters. Liddon noted that “the earlier Church teachers had clearly distinguished as Scripture distinguishes, between the Angel of the Lord, Himself, as they believed, Divine, and the Father.”<sup>16</sup> As John J. Lias recognized, however, “the prevalence of the Arian heresy caused this idea to be abandoned in later fathers, from a fear that it might derogate from a belief in the true Divinity of Jesus Christ.”<sup>17</sup>

In spite of such legitimate concerns among modern scholars, however, some church fathers continued to pursue christophanic interpretations of divine appearances throughout the Nicene era. Such interpreters included Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers, and others associated with the Arian controversy.

### Eusebius of Caesarea

Although he occupied a significant place in the Constantinian state-church and played a pivotal role in the Council of Nicea, Eusebius of Caesarea has been described as “the last representative of pre-Nicene theology.”<sup>18</sup> He continued Justin Martyr’s interpretation of theophanies as divine appearances of the Logos, “concerning himself with the work of mankind’s salvation even before the Incarnation.”<sup>19</sup> Among the Christophanies addressed by Eusebius were the divine appearances to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre, to Jacob at Peniel, to Moses in the burning bush, to Joshua as the Commander of the Lord’s army, to Isaiah in the temple, and to Daniel in the court of the Ancient of Days.

In Eusebius’s view,

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<sup>15</sup> Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 57.

<sup>16</sup> Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 57.

<sup>17</sup> J. J. Lias, *The Book of Judges*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, ed. J. J. S. Perowne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886) 101.

<sup>18</sup> Sébastien Morlet, *La ‘Démonstration évangélique’ d’Eusèbe de Césarée* (Paris: Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 2009), 440–41; cited by Bogdan G. Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology: The Christological Exegesis of Theophanies,” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 69, Pt. 2 (October 2018): 592.

<sup>19</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Eclogues* 1.10, trans. Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 593.

The Lord God is said to have appeared as an ordinary man to Abraham as he sat by the oak of Mamre, yet he worshipped him as God. . . . Since reason would never permit that the immutable essence of the Almighty be changed into human form, even by illusion, or that Scripture would falsely invent such a story, who else could be so described as appearing in human form but the preexistent Word.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, Eusebius insisted that “Christ himself, the Word of God,” not only appeared at Mamre in Genesis 18 but also called Abraham in Genesis 12 and instituted the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 15.<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere, in Genesis 22, the account of Jacob in Peniel, according to Eusebius, “He that was seen by Jacob was none other than the Word of God.”<sup>22</sup>

In his exegesis of Exodus 3, the divine appearance to Moses in the burning bush, Eusebius departed from traditional views in multiple ways.<sup>23</sup> First, he proposed a distinction between the appearance of the Angel of the Lord, whom Moses saw, and the voice of the Lord himself, which Moses heard. As biblical examples of what he suggested, Eusebius cited Isaiah or Jeremiah: “a man was seen, and God prophesied through him that was seen, as by an instrument.”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Eusebius distinguished the verbs used in the story: “the angel *appeared*, while the Lord *spoke* to Moses.” Furthermore, “the Lord dispenses his teaching as through an interpreter.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, Eusebius postulated an Angel/Logos appearance to Moses.

Eusebius’s second variation from traditional exegesis was what Bogdan Bucur called “his peculiar theory that Moses was spiritually inferior to the patriarchs, a mere beginner, ‘not fit for aught

<sup>20</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* 1.2.7, trans. Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 23.

<sup>21</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* 1.4.12.

<sup>22</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Proof of the Gospel* 7.2, trans. W.J. Ferrar, *The Proof of the Gospel Being the Demonstratio Evangelica of Eusebius of Caesarea* (London, SPCK, 1920).

<sup>23</sup> Bogdan G. Bucur, “‘God Never Appeared to Moses’: Eusebius of Caesarea’s Peculiar Exegesis of the Burning Bush Theophany,” *Journal of the Bible and Its Reception* (2018): 235–27.

<sup>24</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 5.13, trans. Ferrar.

<sup>25</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Eclogues* 1.9, trans. Bucur, “‘God Never Appeared to Moses,’” 242. See also Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 596.



than angelic visions.”<sup>26</sup> Apparently, Eusebius demoted Moses from God’s prophet and lawgiver to a “mere neophyte.”<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere, he claimed that “throughout all of Scripture God is not even once said to have appeared to Moses,” only through the mediation of the Angel of the Lord or fire and cloud or other intermediaries.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Eusebius demoted Moses to a position lesser than the more exalted patriarchs, such as Enoch, Noah, and Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are said to have seen God “face to face.” This innovative exegesis<sup>29</sup> reflected Eusebius’s anti-Jewish polemics as he placed Moses “in the same category as the people of Israel, as spiritually inferior to the patriarchs,” while “establishing the church as the heir of the spiritually advanced ‘Hebrews’ of old.”<sup>30</sup>

Elsewhere, Eusebius reported the divine appearance to Moses’s successor, Joshua, at Jericho. In a traditional christophanic interpretation of this appearance, Eusebius described Joshua’s visitor as “commander-in-chief of the Lord’s army, as leader of the angels and archangels and the heavenly powers and accorded the second place in universal rule as the power and wisdom of the Father,” yet visible “only in human form.”<sup>31</sup> However, in seeming contradiction of his later interpretation of Moses’s divine encounter in the *Eclogues* and *Demonstration of the Gospel*, he identified Joshua’s visitor with “the one who spoke also to Moses.” In both appearances, the Lord identified himself as divine when he instructed Moses and then Joshua: “Remove your sandals, for the place where you stand is holy ground.” Furthermore, “there are additional proofs that this really is the being named the Word of God

<sup>26</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 5.13, trans. Ferrar; see also Bucur, “‘God Never Appeared to Moses,’” 242.

<sup>27</sup> Bucur, “‘God Never Appeared to Moses,’” 244.

<sup>28</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Eclogues* 1.9, trans. Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 596. See also Bucur, “‘God Never Appeared to Moses,’” 244–45.

<sup>29</sup> Bucur acknowledged that Eusebius’s exegesis was innovative, yet he also connected it to an earlier tradition that included Justin Martyr, the Fourth Gospel, and the Pauline epistles. Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 597.

<sup>30</sup> Bucur, “‘God Never Appeared to Moses,’” 249. See also Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* 1.4.6, 10, 15; and *Proof of the Gospel* 1.5.

<sup>31</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* 1.2.11.

and Wisdom, who existed before the world and assisted the God of the universe in the fashioning of all created things.”<sup>32</sup>

Eusebius also perceived Christophanies among the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. To Isaiah, the Lord of hosts appeared in the temple, where the prophet had often preached. This Lord of hosts, in Eusebius’s estimation, was not the “unbegotten and invisible and incomprehensible divinity,” whom no one has seen other than the Son. Instead the Lord of hosts whom Isaiah saw was “‘the only-begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father,’ who stepped down from his own exalted position, and, lowering himself from that position, made himself visible and comprehensible to humanity.”<sup>33</sup>

Following his identification of Isaiah’s vision with the Son, Eusebius proceeded to list earlier Christophanies in the Old Testament: to Abraham at Mamre (Genesis 18); to Isaac at the Well of Oath (Genesis 26); to Jacob at Peniel (Genesis 32) and at Bethel, or Luza (Genesis 35); to Moses at Sinai (Exodus 33); and to Ezekiel in a vision (Ezekiel 8). He ascribed all these visitations “to one and the same agent, the Logos; since ‘nobody has ever seen God’ (John 1:18) or ‘the Father’ (John 6:46).”<sup>34</sup>

Finally, Eusebius turned his attention to the Christophany envisioned by Daniel in the court of the Ancient of Days. The Son of Man, who “came with the clouds of heaven,” could not be identified as anyone else than “our Savior, the God-Word who was in the beginning with God.” In his “ultimate incarnation,” the Son of Man, the divine Word of God, “appeared at the beginning of the Roman Empire in the form of a man, of a nature like ours, whose deeds and sufferings accorded with the prophecies” of a miraculous birth, extraordinary deeds and teachings, death and resurrection, and ascension into heaven. In other words, after a history of divine appearances, Daniel in his prophecy recorded Christ’s “final sovereignty” in his vision of the Son of Man before the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* 1.2.13–14.

<sup>33</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Commentary on Isaiah* 6.1, trans. Jonathan J. Armstrong, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, *Ancient Christian Texts*, gen. eds. Thomas C. Oden and Gerald L. Bray (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 27.

<sup>34</sup> Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 594.

<sup>35</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* 1.2.24–26. See also Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 594.

Among the Nicene fathers, Eusebius of Caesarea provided the most complete survey of Christophanies in the Old Testament. Following in the footsteps of Justin Martyr, Eusebius also attributed to God the Father the characteristics of extreme transcendence, immutability, and invisibility so that only by the agency of the Logos could the heroes of the Old Testament perceive the divine appearances.

### **Athanasius of Alexandria**

Athanasius is the church father whose name is most closely associated with Nicene orthodoxy. And yet in his fight against the Arians, as Bogdan Bucur recapped:

He has no hesitation in rehearsing the pre-Nicene argument for the divinity of the Son: Christ is pre-existent and divine and, as such, always already the object of human and angelic worship, because Abraham worships him in his tent (Genesis 18), Moses worships him at the burning bush (Exodus 3), and Daniel sees him as the Ancient of Days, seated on the divine throne and attended to by thousands upon thousands of angelic ministers (Dan. 7:10).<sup>36</sup>

Because the Savior was worshiped by Abraham, Moses, Daniel, and others even before his incarnation and crucifixion, according to Athanasius, “it is plain that even before He became man, He was King and Lord everlasting, being Image and Word of the Father.”<sup>37</sup> To believe otherwise, Athanasius insisted, was to revive the adoptionist heresy of Paul of Samosata, who denied Christ’s pre-incarnate divinity.

Athanasius, reflecting Eusebius’s view that God spoke but appeared as angel, utilized the Angel/Logos construction in his interpretation of various divine appearances.

For Zacharias saw an Angel; and Isaiah saw the Lord. Manoah, the father of Samson, saw an Angel; but Moses beheld God. Gideon saw an Angel, but to Abraham appeared God. And neither he who saw God, beheld an Angel,

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<sup>36</sup> Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 599. See also Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 1.38.5.

<sup>37</sup> Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 2.13.1, trans. John Henry Newman, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1892; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012), 355.

nor he who saw an Angel, considered that he saw God; for greatly, or rather wholly, do things [that are originate] by nature differ from God the Creator.<sup>38</sup>

Athanasius continued, giving special attention to the divine appearance to Moses at the burning bush:

But if at any time, when the Angel was seen, he who saw it heard God's voice, as took place at the bush; for the Angel of the Lord was seen in a flame of fire out of the bush, and the Lord called Moses out of the bush, saying, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, yet was not the Angel the God of Abraham, but in the Angel God spoke. And what was seen was an Angel; but God spoke in him.... But what God speaks, it is very plain He speaks through the Word, and not through another. And the Word, as being not separate from the Father, nor unlike and foreign to the Father's Essence (*οὐσιας*), what He works, those are the Father's works, and His framing of all things is one with His; and what the Son gives, that is the Father's gift. And he who has seen the Son, knows that, in seeing Him, he has seen, not Angel, nor one nearly greater than Angels, nor in short any creature, but the Father Himself. And he who hears the Word, knows that he hears the Father; as he who is irradiated by the radiance, knows that he is enlightened by the sun.<sup>39</sup>

Even though Athanasius utilized the Angel/Logos terminology in his discussion of divine appearances in the Old Testament, he avoided any suggestion of subordination or inferiority of the Son to the Father. William Graham MacDonald recognized Athanasius's problematic views, asserting that such language "seemed to strengthen the case for Arianism. If the human body of Jesus was not created at his birth but pre-existed, then surely this condition as a creature can be presumed always to have been true." But, MacDonald continued, "Athanasius countered by teaching that the Word only took the clothing of an angel as an external form, but in nature he was not homogeneous with angels."<sup>40</sup> Athanasius continued his diatribe against the Arians, claiming that if they

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<sup>38</sup> Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 3.25.14.

<sup>39</sup> Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 3.25.14.

<sup>40</sup> MacDonald, "Christology and 'The Angel of the Lord,'" 326.

compared the Son with created Angels, they repeated the heresies of Valentinus and Carpocrates, infamous Gnostics: “of whom the former said that the Angels were one in kind with the Christ, ad Carpocrates that Angels are framers of the world. Perchance it is under the instruction of these masters that they compare the Word of God with the Angels.”<sup>41</sup>

Athanasius, therefore, did not hesitate to explain Old Testament divine appearances christophanically or to apply Angel/Logos terminology to these interpretations, even in the face of the Arian controversy. The pre-existence of Christ, demonstrated by these Christophanies, proved his divinity even before his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. In every appearance cited by Athanasius, the Word was not separate nor of a different essence (*οὐσίας*) than the Father.

### Views of Christophanies during the Post-Nicene Era<sup>42</sup>

#### Eunomius and the Cappadocian Fathers

Eunomius, briefly bishop of Cyzicus, was a principle leader of the Anomoeans, a sect within Arianism. This extreme faction asserted that the Father and Son are unlike or dissimilar (*anamoios*) in essence. Thus, they rejected both the *homoousios* of Nicene orthodoxy and the *homoiousios* offered up as a compromise with Arianism. In reaction against such a compromise, the term *anamoios* was taken up with renewed vigor by Aetius and Eunomius. These two men were so closely associated with the Anomoeanism that the movement later came to be called Aetianism or Eunomianism.<sup>43</sup>

Although Eunomius fell outside Nicene orthodoxy, his discussion of the divine appearance at the burning bush was a radical version of Eusebius’s view that Moses beheld the Angel of the Lord, while he heard the voice of the Lord himself. Eunomius maintained that “the one that sent Moses was He Who Is, while

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<sup>41</sup> Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 1.56.

<sup>42</sup> For other Post-Nicene fathers not discussed here, see Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius, John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrus, Gregory of Elvira, Phoebadius, and Jerome. Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 607–9 and footnotes 62–72.

<sup>43</sup> Everett Ferguson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2d edition (New York: Routledge, 1999), s.v. “Aetius,” “Anomoeans,” “Eunomius,” by R. P. Vaggione.

the one through whom he sent and spoke, is the angel of Him Who Is, but God of everything else.”<sup>44</sup>

In his own exegesis of the burning bush narrative, Basil of Caesarea rebutted Eunomius with an “affirmation about Christ as ‘the truly Existing One’ and ‘the source of being for all beings’” and added that the names “‘the angel’, ‘the Lord’, and ‘God’ all refer to the Son.”<sup>45</sup>

It is written that the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the bush burning with fire. After mentioning the angel at the outset of the narrative, scripture introduces the voice of God when it says that he said to Moses: *I am the God of your father Abraham*. A little further on, the same one said: *I am He Who Is*. So, then, who is this one who is both angel and God alike? When he named himself *He Who Is* before Moses, he is understood to be none other than God the Word, who *was in the beginning with God* [John 1:2].<sup>46</sup>

Basil’s brother, Gregory of Nyssa, issued his own treatise *Against Eunomius*, in which he declared that Eunomian theology was a departure from Christianity. Like Basil, Gregory turned to both Exodus 3 and John 1 for the scriptural basis of his argument:

Indeed, the great John, announcing the Only-begotten God in his own proclamation in every way ensures that his account allows no access to the idea of non-being in connection with him that is: he says that he was in the beginning, that he was with God, that he was God, that he was Light and that he was forever Life and Truth and all good things, and that he was never at any time lacking any excellence, he who is the fullness of all good things and is in the bosom of the Father (cf. John 1:1–4, 14–18). . . . Therefore, if Moses rules that it should be for us a short of mark of true deity that the only thing we know about God is this, that he is . . .

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<sup>44</sup> Eunomius of Cyzicus, cited by Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 3.9.32, trans. Stuart G. Hall, *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III*, eds. Johan Leemans and Matthieu Cassin (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 210.

<sup>45</sup> Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 602.

<sup>46</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 2.18, trans. Mark Delcogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, ed. David G. Hunter (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 155–56; cited by Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 602.

then, in these circumstances we declare the whole sophistic argument, that the one who truly is, once was not, to be nothing but a perversion of Christianity and a turning to idolatry.<sup>47</sup>

Elsewhere, in his *Letter to Theophilus*, Gregory listed the divine appearances that he interpreted as Christophanies. Along with the usual appearances to the patriarchs, Moses, and Joshua, he included: “he who conversed with Job from out of the whirlwind; he who appeared on an exalted throne to Isaiah; the being in human form described in Ezekiel’s writings; later on, he who struck down Paul in the light, and, before that, he who appeared on the mountain in sublime glory to those with Peter.”<sup>48</sup> As Bucur summed up Gregory’s view of the divine appearances: “It is quite clear that Gregory bases his argumentation on the traditional theology of theophanies as christophanies, building on the undisputed assumption that the one and the same Son appeared to the patriarchs and prophets of old and, later, appeared in the flesh and revealed his divine identity to his disciples.”<sup>49</sup>

### Hilary of Poitiers

Known as “Athanasius of the West,” Hilary staunchly defended orthodoxy against the Arians and their supporter Emperor Constantius II. Kari Kloos aligned Hilary, along with Justin and Novatian, with the polemical-doctrinal strand of theophanic interpretation. According to Kloos, these church fathers interpreted divine appearances christologically in order to defend the Christian faith against Judaism, in Justin’s case; heretics such as Marcion, Docetists, and Monarchians; and, in Hilary’s case, Arians and Homoians. For Hilary, as for Justin and Novation, a literal christological interpretation provided a proof of the incarnation. Hilary, however, “strips his interpretation of any hint of subordination

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<sup>47</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 3.6; cited by Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 603.

<sup>48</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter to Theophilus*. As Bucur pointed out, “Gregory of Nyssa also uses theophanies on a second theological front, namely in his anti-Apollinarian polemics.” Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 603.

<sup>49</sup> Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 604.

between the Son and the Father, focusing instead on how the Father and Son act together in their distinct offices.”<sup>50</sup>

In his treatise *On the Trinity*, Hilary cited the christophanic texts in Genesis and Exodus to support the divinity of the Son. For example, in his exegesis of Genesis 16, the divine appearance to Hagar, Hilary focused on the use of three words: angel, Lord, and God. He noted that in the text, an “angel” appeared to Hagar, but she called the angel “Lord” and stated later that she had seen “God.”

What says the Scripture of Him Who is called the Angel of God, yet speaks words which belong to God alone? . . . He Who is called the Angel of God is also Lord and God. The Son of God is also, according to the prophet, the Angel of great counsel” [Isa. 9:6, LXX: *μεγάλης βουλής ἄγγελος*].<sup>51</sup>

Hilary further argued that “the title of Angel informs us of His office, not of His nature” (*On the Trinity* 5.11), so that the one appearing to Hagar should not be understood as inferior. Kloos explained: “Thus the agent in Genesis 16 is distinguished as an angel by his work and not his nature, just as the Son is distinguished from the Father in creation by office and not by his divine nature.”<sup>52</sup>

In this way, Hilary developed the polemical-doctrinal strand of theophanic exegesis by interpreting the term “angel” as a reference to Christ’s office, not his subordination, avoiding the prior errors of Justin and Novatian. Thus, Hilary helped to lay a foundation for Augustine’s break from christological interpretations of Old Testament theophanies.

### Ambrose of Milan

The other Post-Nicene church father who influenced Augustine’s theophanic exegesis was his mentor, Ambrose of Milan. Whereas Hilary followed the tradition of polemical-doctrinal concerns, according to Kloos, Ambrose pursued the spiritual strand

<sup>50</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 79, 81, 95.

<sup>51</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity* 4.23, trans. E.W. Watson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 9, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1892; reprint Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012), 78. See also Bucur, “A Blind Spot in the Study of Fourth-Century Christian Theology,” 609 n. 71; and Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 82.

<sup>52</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 82.



of interpretation that was concerned less with who appeared in Old Testament theophanies and more with how and why God appeared, following in the tradition of Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen.<sup>53</sup>

Ambrose added an important idea to the spiritual exegesis:

God can only be seen by choosing to appear, and not out of necessity. Thus it lies in God's will, not God's nature, to be seen. Further, God assumes a form (*species*) which is visible while the divine nature remains invisible. Finally, even this sight requires grace to be seen; a theophany is fundamentally a privileged, exceptional revelation given by grace only in the rarest circumstances.<sup>54</sup>

In his *Exposition of the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke*, Ambrose explained:

For if [God] does not wish, He is not seen; if He wishes, He is seen. So God appeared to Abraham because He wished it; to another, because He did not wish it, He did not appear. The Heaven was seen to open by Stephen when he was stoned by the people, and Jesus was seen standing on the right hand of God, and He was not seen by the people. Isaias saw the Lord of Hosts, but another could not see Him, because He appeared to whom He pleased.<sup>55</sup>

Ambrose continued:

So it is necessary to agree that, although none has ever seen God the Father, the Son was seen in the Old Testament; and let the heretics cease to give His beginning as from the Virgin, because He was seen before He was born of the Virgin; or it surely cannot be disproved that either the Father, or the Son, or, indeed, the Holy Spirit, if there is a vision of the Holy Spirit, is seen in that appearance.<sup>56</sup>

Through his exegesis of Luke 1, Ambrose continued the christological interpretations of previous church fathers, but he also

<sup>53</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 96.

<sup>54</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 96. See also Andrew Malone, *Knowing Jesus in the Old Testament? A Fresh Look at Christophanies* (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2015), 69.

<sup>55</sup> Ambrose of Milan, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke* 1.24, trans. Theodosia Tomkinson (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1998), 19–20.

<sup>56</sup> Ambrose of Milan, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke*, 1.25.

included the possibilities of appearances by God the Father and even the Holy Spirit (“since we received the Spirit also seen as a dove,” Luke 1:25). Furthermore, Ambrose excluded the problematic subordination of the Son to the Father by asserting that Christ’s “mission to make the Father known, ultimately in the incarnation, shows not the Son’s subordination but his *kenosis*, ‘descending’ into the world in order to enter human hearts.”<sup>57</sup>

Another innovative contribution of Ambrose to the history of theophanic exegesis is his Trinitarian reading of the divine appearance to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre. According to Ambrose, when Abraham responded to the theophany, he “saw Three and adored One.”<sup>58</sup> As Kloos observed, “For Ambrose this is symbolic of the distinction of Trinitarian persons and of the unity of the divine nature.”<sup>59</sup> And yet Ambrose did not abandon a christological interpretation of this event:

For the Father did not appear to Abraham, nor did Abraham wash the feet of God the Father, but the feet of Him in Whom is the image of the man that shall be. Moreover the Son of God saith, “Abraham saw My day, and rejoiced.” It is He, therefore, Who sware by Himself, [and] Whom Abraham saw.<sup>60</sup>

Ambrose also provided a christological interpretation of the burning bush theophany:

This is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, Who appeared to Moses in the bush, concerning Whom Moses saith, “He Who is hath sent me.” It was not the Father Who spake to Moses in the bush or in the desert, but the Son.

Kloos concluded: “In this context Ambrose asserts the Son’s equality and denies that his actions make him inferior to the Father (*De Fide* 2.8.71). . . . Ambrose establishes the foundation for Augustine’s interpretation of the theophanies in stressing the unity of the Trinity’s action in the world and in articulating how God is

<sup>57</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 93. See also Ambrose of Milan, *On the Christian Faith* 5.7.98, trans. H. DeRomestin, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 10, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1892; reprint Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012), 296.

<sup>58</sup> Ambrose of Milan, *On the Christian Faith* 1.13.80.

<sup>59</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 93.

<sup>60</sup> Ambrose of Milan, *On the Christian Faith*, 2.8.72.

seen by assuming a created form. . . . However, in interpreting particular theophany narratives, Augustine will eventually adopt Ambrose's Trinitarian framework and break from Ambrose's christological readings."<sup>61</sup>

### **Augustine's Views of Divine Appearances in the Old Testament**

After centuries of mostly christophanic interpretations of the divine appearances in the Old Testament, Bishop Augustine of Hippo "gave the chief impulse to another current of interpretation in the Church."<sup>62</sup> Augustine's revision to the traditional christological approach was necessary, he believed, to avoid its misappropriation by Arian factions, who could have exploited earlier tendencies toward subordinationism.<sup>63</sup> Although Athanasius, Hilary, and Ambrose had avoided subordination in their christophanic interpretations, Augustine built upon their work and took his exegesis in a new direction.

In his early writings, however, Augustine followed the lead of previous fathers in claiming that the Son appeared in the Old Testament theophanies. He put forth his sole example of christophanic exegesis in his treatise *Contra Adimantum*. In this anti-Manichaean polemic, Augustine argued against Adimantus for the continuity of the Old Testament and the New Testament. In so doing, he focused on the Son's identity and activity in the world:

The Son himself, who is the Word of God, made the Father known to those he wished not only in latter times, when he deigned to appear in the flesh, but also before, from the founding of the world, whether by speaking or by appearing, either through some angelic power or through some creature.<sup>64</sup>

Here, Augustine clarified that the Word's appearance occurred through the mediation of an angel or a created being, which informed his later interpretations.

Furthermore, he compared theophanies to prophecies, stressing that visible appearances and prophetic oracles both can be at-

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<sup>61</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 93, 94.

<sup>62</sup> Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 57.

<sup>63</sup> Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 225.

<sup>64</sup> Augustine, *Contra Adimantum* 9.1, trans. and cited in Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 118–19.

tributed to God or to the angelic or human being who mediates the message.

In certain passages scripture itself testifies that an angel was seen, where it says God was seen. So in that struggle with Jacob, the one who appeared was also called an angel. And when he appeared in the bush to Moses; and again in the desert, when he then led the people out of the land of Egypt at the time what he received the law, God spoke to him.

. . . For as the Word of God is in the prophet, it is said correctly 'The prophet said' and also 'The Lord said,' because the Word of God, who is Christ, speaks truth in the prophet. In this way also he himself speaks in the angel when the angel announces truth, and correctly it is said 'God said' and also 'God appeared'; and yet the scriptures are also correct in saying 'the angel said' and 'the angel appeared,' since one thing is said regarding the person of God who dwells in the creature, and the other is said about the person of the creature who is serving God.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, Augustine began his approach to theophanic exegesis with an emphasis on the appearances of the Son, but he deviated from previous church fathers in significant ways that foreshadowed his later works. First, he insisted that invisibility as a divine attribute belonged to the Son, who is truly God, as well as to the Father. Second, if the Son appeared in the Old Testament, he did so through the intermediate agency of a created being. An angel represented the Son, speaking and acting with Divine authority.<sup>66</sup>

Augustine explained the honors and authority accorded to such an angel with the illustration of an earthly ambassador, who is temporarily placed in the position of the master whom he represents. In the same way that an earthly ambassador receives the honor and authority of his master, so an Angel spoke and acted with divine authority and received divine honors.<sup>67</sup> Augustine as-

<sup>65</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 121.

<sup>66</sup> Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 58. See also Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 121; and Sanders, *The Triune God*, 225.

<sup>67</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity* 3.4.23, trans. Edmund Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. 1, vol. 5 (New York: New City Press, 1991), 141–42. See also Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 59.

served that the angel was not the one addressed as “Lord” but God, who inhabited him, and he rejected any idea of subordinationism based on the use of the term “Angel”.<sup>68</sup>

Augustine cited the Book of Hebrews to establish the distinction between the dispensations of the Old and New Testaments. In the former, the visible phenomena and verbal utterances were the work of angels (Heb 1:13a). In the latter, the word now is delivered through the Son (Heb 2:1). The word of salvation was spoken through the Lord, not through angels.<sup>69</sup>

In his later writings, Augustine departed from prior christological approaches to theophanic interpretations in several innovative ways. For example, he posited that a divine appearance could be attributed not only to the Son, but also to the Spirit or the Father or even to all Three.<sup>70</sup> As Augustine explained in his treatise *On the Trinity*:

The first thing to be done in sorting out this tangled question is to ascertain, with God’s help, whether it was the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit who appeared under these created forms to the fathers; or whether it was sometimes the Father, sometimes the Son, sometimes the Holy Spirit; or whether it was simply the one and only God, that is the trinity without any distinction of persons.<sup>71</sup>

Fred Sanders reckoned that “Augustine’s judgement is that we do not have clear enough warrant to say what is actually happening in these most mysterious events of the Old Testament.”<sup>72</sup>

Then Sanders went on to explain that Augustine’s “more substantive reason for rejecting the idea that these are appearances of the Son” is “the uniqueness of the visible mission of the Son in the incarnation. If the Father sent the Son repeatedly during the old covenant, it derogates in some way from the uniqueness of the

<sup>68</sup> Augustine, *Sermon 7.6*, trans. Edmund Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. 3, vol. 1 (New York: New City Press, 1991), 236. See also MacDonald, “Christology and ‘The Angel of the Lord,’” 327.

<sup>69</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity* 3.4.22.

<sup>70</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 2d ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 273.

<sup>71</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity* 2.3.13.

<sup>72</sup> Sanders, *The Triune God*, 225. Another question Sanders asked is “where the Old Testament Jesus got the body he appeared to the patriarchs in,” adding “that surely calls for some speculation.”

incarnational sending.” In other words, the incarnation event must be singular and unprecedented.<sup>73</sup> Augustine phrased the question in this way:

Finally, we shall see what we have set out to ascertain, whether the Son and the Holy Spirit were also being sent of old, and if they were, how such sending differed from the one we read of in the gospel; or whether neither of them was sent until the Son was made of the virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit appeared in the visible shape of a dove and tongues of fire.<sup>74</sup>

Kari Kloos, in her summary of *De Trinitate*, provided a suitable conclusion to this discussion of Augustine’s exegesis of theophanies. Augustine “asserts that: (1) God is signified and not seen in the theophanies, since the divine substance is invisible, including that of the Son, (2) any of the Trinity could be signified by a theophany, (3) the theophanies are likenesses of the incarnation as part of God’s dispensation to be revealed and to save human beings through physical, tangible means, and (4) the theophanies provide an occasion to reflect on the desire for the spiritual vision of God that is deepened by faith in Christ but not realized in this life.”<sup>75</sup>

Augustine asked the two questions represented by the polemical-doctrinal and spiritual strands of exegesis: Who? and Why? He revised the answers provided by previous exegetes in important ways. To the first question, as already explained, he replied that a divine appearance could be attributed to the Son, to the Spirit, to the Father, or even to all Three. His answer to the second question recognized the innate desire of the reader of the theophanies “to see God more clearly than is possible in this life.”<sup>76</sup>

### Conclusion

H. P. Liddon, lecturing at Oxford University in 1866, asserted that Augustine’s general teaching “that the Theophanies were not direct appearances of a Person in the Godhead, but Self-manifestations of God through a created being . . . has since be-

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<sup>73</sup> Sanders, *The Triune God*, 225. See also MacDonald, “Christology and “The Angel of the Lord,”” 335.

<sup>74</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity* 2.3.13.

<sup>75</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 162.

<sup>76</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 204.

come the predominant although by no means the exclusive judgment of the Church.”<sup>77</sup> Both Gordon MacDonald and James Borland agreed with Liddon’s assessment that “Augustine’s theology held sway in the Western Church for centuries after his death,” even “for over a millennium.”<sup>78</sup> MacDonald, however, spoke approvingly of Augustine’s “calm view,” while Borland argued against it.

Borland’s argument against Augustine’s exegesis focused on his use of the Book of Hebrews. Borland insisted that Augustine mistakenly grouped together the appearances of the Lord and the Angel of the Lord and that he misunderstood such texts as Hebrews 1:13–14 and 2:1–4. Borland explained, “But these verses should not be construed as disallowing Christ from intermittently fulfilling the office of a servant. Being God, Christ is certainly above all angels, yet when He partook of human nature He was made ‘a little lower than the angels’ as to rank.” Borland concluded: “It may befit God’s purposes for the Son to minister in the capacity of a servant from time to time. This Augustine failed to see.”<sup>79</sup>

After a millennium or more since Augustine changed the trajectory of theophanic exegesis, however, a christological approach has regained strength among theological academics and lay Christians. Andrew Malone, a critic of christological interpretations of divine appearances, gave some credit to James Borland for popularizing the term “Christophanies.”<sup>80</sup> And Fred Sanders, another critic, admitted: “At the popular level, many conservative Christians have so high a regard for [Christophanies] and such certainty about the identification of the pre-incarnate Christ as the subject of them that they seem to serve as an indicator of a high Christology and a robust Trinitarianism.”<sup>81</sup>

Having reviewed the patristic fathers’ interpretations of the Old Testament divine appearances in relation to the incarnation,

<sup>77</sup> Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 58–59. He added: “...and if it is not unaccompanied by considerable difficulties when we apply it to the sacred text, it certainly seems to relieve us of greater embarrassments than any which it creates.”

<sup>78</sup> MacDonald, “Christology and ‘The Angel of the Lord,’” 327; Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament*, 154.

<sup>79</sup> Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament*, 153.

<sup>80</sup> Malone, *Knowing Jesus in the Old Testament?* 19.

<sup>81</sup> Sanders, *The Triune God*, 226.

we have come full circle from Justin's christological exegesis to the popular view of Christophanies held by many contemporary, conservative Christians. Along the way, careful orthodoxy required us to jettison the subordinationism and extreme transcendence held by Justin and other early exegetes. We have learned to ask not only Who is the subject of the theophany, but also How and Why did God communicate in such a personal, visible way to the men and women of old. The answer perhaps was best expressed by Kari Kloos, who gave insightful consideration of this subject: "Through various signifying encounters one is elevated in faith to a greater communion with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, which in turn is a lifelong journey toward the vision of God with the saints in eternity. As part of this whole dispensation, the theophanies prepare for this ultimate vision by indicating who God is and how this God may be found. They exemplify the desire to seek God's face, both in the present and the ever more."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God*, 204.



## Sharing in the Distributed Body of Christ: Luther's Eucharistic Reading of Philemon 6

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### Introduction

Philemon 6 is one of the more obscure and variously understood passages in the New Testament. Thus, when the interpretation of such a passage by a figure of the stature of Martin Luther is practically ignored over the course of history, one is left curious and puzzled.<sup>1</sup> Luther took a eucharistic approach to Philemon 6, understanding Philemon's fellowship of faith to refer to his sharing in the distributed body of Christ in the Lord's Supper. When Luther read Philemon 6, he understood the *koinōnia tēs pisteōs* as referring to Philemon's sharing in the literal body of Christ through the Lord's Supper. Luther's understanding of this passage is relatively unique within church history.<sup>2</sup>

This dearth of engagement with Luther's view provided the impetus for this article, which aims to understand Luther's eucharistic reading of Philemon 6 in light of his understanding of the role of the Supper in the life of the Christian community. My thesis is that Luther's commentary on Philemon 6 has been largely ignored because it originates in a polemical context wherein he takes aim at the "tropical subversion" of contemporaries like Zwingli and Oecolampadius. Nevertheless, while a polemical context may be true, an investigation of Luther's interpretation of

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<sup>1</sup> Lutheran scholar John G. Nordling noted Luther's contribution to understanding Philemon 6 in his article, "Luther's Contributions to Commentary Writing: Philemon as a Test Case," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 81 (2017): 19–36. Prior to Nordling, few have explored the significance of Luther's interpretation for understanding Philemon 6.

<sup>2</sup> To be sure, I am not arguing or suggesting that Luther's understanding of the Lord's Supper is unique within church history. Instead, I am arguing that his interpretation of Philemon 6 is relatively unique given how he relates it to the Lord's Supper.

Philemon 6 can be beneficial for those seeking to ascertain how he understood the importance and function of the Supper for fellowship in the church. By reading Luther's interpretation of Philemon 6 in the broader context of his writings on the nature of the Eucharist, my hope is that we will be compelled to not dismiss his helpful insights simply because they surface in the context of his quarrels of the Lord's Supper.

To this end, my article will begin with a brief survey of recent interpretations of Philemon 6 to set the stage for the presentation of Luther's eucharistic interpretation. From here, I will consider Luther's theology of real presence, which influences his eucharistic interpretation. Then, Luther's unique interpretation of Philemon 6 will be detailed, especially in light of the conceptual parallels between his interpretation of Philemon 6 and Philippians 1:5 and his work, *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods*. The article will then move to an evaluation of Luther's interpretation, which will seek to demonstrate the coherence of his interpretation in light of his underlying eucharistic theology. I will conclude the article with some brief thoughts on how a recovery of a robust understanding of the Lord's Supper might play a greater factor in shaping the corporate identity and ethics of Christian community, even if Luther seems to pull the right practice out of the wrong text.

Obviously, this article has to be limited in scope, considering how many large topics it touches in the life of Luther.<sup>3</sup> The primary concern here is to evaluate Luther's contribution to the interpretation of Philemon 6 and recover some of the benefits of his understanding of the Eucharist for the present generation, especially as it relates to understanding the phrase *koinōnia tēs pisteōs*. As I hope it will become clear, it is not the uniqueness of Luther's

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<sup>3</sup> See the following resources for helpful details on other aspects of Luther's theology: Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Lubomir Batka, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology 10 (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010); Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011); Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

reading of Philemon 6 that makes it particularly valuable, but rather how he demonstrates a theological reading through a eucharistic lens aims to benefit the church of Jesus Christ. One can readily disagree with Luther on real presence and still appreciate his concern for the Lord's Supper and its role in the life of God's people.

### Philemon 6 in Historical Perspective

Philemon 6 falls within the thanksgiving section (Phlm 4–7) of Paul's letter to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and the church in Philemon's house (Phlm 2). While verses 4–5 and 7 are relatively uncontroversial, verse 6 has presented interpreters with a number of difficult decisions.<sup>4</sup> In his book, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ*

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<sup>4</sup> Each of the following commentaries register uncertainty or comment on the difficult of obtaining the meaning of verse 6: Robert Black and Ronald McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2004); John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Philemon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos, 2008); Michael F. Bird, *Colossians and Philemon*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009); David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); Robert W. Wall, *Colossians & Philemon*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993); Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Epistle to Philemon*, ed. Maurice J. Dickson, William P. Evans, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1884); George Barlow and Robert Tuck, *I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James*, The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1892); Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1991); James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1937); Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, ed., *The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible Commentary Series 34C (New York: Doubleday, 2000); Markus Barth, *The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

and the Law in Pauline Theology, N. T. Wright referred to Philemon 6 as “a thorn in the exegetes’ flesh.”<sup>5</sup> Wright detailed the “full range of problems” faced by the interpreter, highlighting, among five interpretive questions, the need to understand Paul’s use of *koinōnia*. Wright asked, “Does *hē koinōnia tēs pisteōs sou energēs genētai* refer to a deepening of Christian fellowship (NEB), or to an activity, perhaps evangelism (as NIV, and perhaps RSV)?”<sup>6</sup> To answer this question, one must begin by considering the various proposed readings of the phrase, *hē koinōnia tēs pisteōs sou energēs genētai*. Peter O’Brien listed these six ways this key phrase has been read and understood:<sup>7</sup>

1. Deeds of Faith View - “the kindly deeds of charity which spring from your faith.”
2. Communication/Evangelism View - “the communication (to others) of your faith.”
3. Christian Fellowship View - “your fellowship with other Christians created by faith.”
4. Union with Christ View - “communion (with Christ) by faith,” i.e., faith-communion with Christ.
5. Contribution/Partnership View - “the faith in which you participate,” i.e., your share in the faith.
6. Mutual Interchange View - “the participation of other Christians in your faith.”

These various readings are complicated by the ambiguous “syntactical connections” and the “semantic possibilities” of words such as a *koinōnia*.<sup>8</sup> For decades, the majority of recent commentators have worked from assumptions based upon the

<sup>5</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). See also, Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 389, “This verse is universally recognized as the most difficult in Philemon.” See also Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 44, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1998), 279, “The exact meaning of verse 6 is difficult to determine.” Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 318–20.

<sup>6</sup> Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 51.

<sup>7</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 279–80. The proposed translations come from multiple authors recorded in O’Brien’s WBC commentary. The categorizations of the proposed translations and their respective views are the work of the present author.

<sup>8</sup> David Pao writes, “These readings are the result of various possible syntactical connections between elements within this verse as well as the semantic possibilities for a number of its key terms.” See Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 369.

works<sup>9</sup> of scholars like J. Y. Campbell,<sup>10</sup> H. Seeseman,<sup>11</sup> and G. Panikulam,<sup>12</sup> which led many to assume that because the apostle Paul used “*koinōnia* and its cognates” in contexts related to the gospel, union with Christ through the Spirit, the observance of the Lord’s Supper, and financial collections, he must have had some “theology of *koinōnia*” in mind.<sup>13</sup> Participation was at the heart of this *koinōnia* theology, drawing upon a supposed relationship between the *koinōnein* word group and the *metechein* word group. Until recently, this word group connection was relatively unchallenged, yet a recent study by Norbert Baumert has offered a significant critique of the *koinōnein* / *metechein* relationship. Essentially, according to A. T. Lincoln,<sup>14</sup> Baumert’s study<sup>15</sup> argues that while *metechein* can be demonstrated to mean “to have a part or share in, to participate in,” there is no conclusive evidence of *koinōnein* carrying a similar meaning. Lincoln writes, “Instead the notion of having something in common, of association, community is constantly in play,”<sup>16</sup> which would seem to eliminate the various readings of Philemon 6 that favor an understanding of *koinōnia* as participatory. Baumert and Lincoln, however, are not without their own critics. Paul Avis challenges Lincoln’s conclusions, which are based upon Baumert’s findings, referencing the difficulty of adopting a merely “things in common” understanding of *koinōnia* in passages like 1 Corinthians 10:16–18. In light of these obscure and various readings, Luther’s unique interpretation of Philemon 6 is worthy of consideration, but first, the details of

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<sup>9</sup> These works do not all agree on all usage of *koinōnia* in the New Testament, but rather, agree that there is at least some degree of participation implicit in it.

<sup>10</sup> J. Y. Campbell, *Koinōnia and Its Cognates in the New Testament*, JBL 51 (Leipzig: Officin Haag-Drugulin AG, 1932).

<sup>11</sup> H. Seesemann, *Der Begriff Koinōnia Im Neuen Testament*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche (Stuttgart: A. Töpelmann, 1933).

<sup>12</sup> G. Panikulam, “Koinōnia in the New Testament: A Dynamic Expression of Christian Life” (Stuttgart: Biblical Institute, 1979).

<sup>13</sup> See Andrew T. Lincoln, “Communion: Some Pauline Foundations,” *Eccelesiology* 5, no. 2 (May 2009): 136–37.

<sup>14</sup> Lincoln, “Communion,” 141–43.

<sup>15</sup> Norbert Baumert, *Koinonein und Metechein – Synonym?: Eine Umfassende Semantische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Lincoln, “Communion,” 141.

his eucharistic theology at the time of his lecture on Philemon must be explored.

### Luther's Eucharistic Theology in the late 1520s

Luther's understanding of the Eucharist evolved over time. For this article, however, it is essential to consider Luther's thinking about the Eucharist during the time in which his unique interpretation of Philemon 6 appeared. From 1527 to 1529, Luther produced some of his most important and engaging material on the Eucharist. In between the writing of *The Body and Blood of Christ – Against the Fanatics, That These Words of Christ, “This is My Body,” Etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics*, and *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, not to mention Luther and Zwingli's Marburg Colloquy,<sup>17</sup> Luther lectured on the book of Philemon toward the end of 1527. With some of the most important statements on the Eucharist appearing during this timeframe, we can assume that the polemical context shaped Luther's interpretation of Philemon 6.<sup>18</sup>

At the beginning of his wrestling with the Eucharist, most scholars find that Luther was focused on the nature of the words of institution. However, by the timeframe of his Philemon lectures, Luther was embroiled more in controversy over the presence of

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<sup>17</sup> Regarding the purpose of Marburg, Olson writes, “Perhaps the most unfortunate incident in Luther's interactions with fellow Protestants happened in October 1529 in the German city of Marburg. It was a conference known as the Marburg Colloquy, and the ardently Protestant prince Philip of Hesse had brought Luther, Zwingli, and Martin Bucer of Strasbourg there to try to achieve a consensus about the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.” Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 394. On the success of the meeting, Crawford writes, “Luther's prescience that the colloquy would do little to change anyone's views proved true. No new arguments appear in the notes from the meeting, merely a rehashing of the disputed points discussed already in print.” Matthew R. Crawford, “Martin Luther's Theology of the Lord's Supper,” in *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology 10 (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 217. The great irony, of course, is that, as will be seen, Luther viewed the supper as a sign of Christian “fellowship and love.” Ironically, that which was supposed to be a sign of Christian fellowship turned into a matter of great division for Luther.

<sup>18</sup> Even if Luther's interpretation of Philemon 6 is influenced by his polemical context, there is still value in studying his view. As will become clear in the conclusion, Luther's interpretation of Philemon 6 reinforces on of the more practical points of significance for his view of Eucharist.

“the true body and blood of Christ” in the elements. The first substantial work by Luther on the real presence was found in the first portion of his work, *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ—Against the Fanatics*. In this work, Luther was answering critics like Andreas Karlstadt, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Oecolampadius.<sup>19</sup> This work, which was a collation of sermons from Luther, and *That These Words of Christ, “This is My Body,” Etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics* served to draw clearer lines of delineation between Luther and the memorialist fanatics. It was not until his work, *Confessions Concerning Christ’s Supper*, that Luther made a comprehensive argument for the doctrine of the real presence.

If taken together, one can synthesize the arguments of these core documents on the real presence in four arguments, which Gordon Jensen helpfully summarizes in his chapter “Luther and the Lord’s Supper” in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*.<sup>20</sup> Jensen wrote, “The first argument Luther made for ‘real presence’ was to counteract the tendency to split the physical form from the spiritual presence of Christ.”<sup>21</sup> The resistance to Luther’s doctrine was partly due to his opponents’ understanding of John 6:63, which reads, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” Luther, however, according to Jensen, did not allow for John 6 to shape his reading of the passages that dealt specifically with the Eucharist. Instead, Luther understood that John 6 was not concerned with the elements of the Supper or the nature of Christ’s presence therein. Luther’s focus on the specific passages that reference the Supper and his emphasis on the person of Christ formed the “foundations” of his arguments against the fanatics.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For a helpful summary of the major opponents of Luther’s view of real presence, see Geoffrey Bromiley, *Historical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 283–94; Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma: (1300–1700)*, *The Christian Tradition A History of the Development of Doctrine* 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 158–61.

<sup>20</sup> Kolb, Dingel, and Batka, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, 326–29.

<sup>21</sup> Gordon Jensen, “Luther and the Lord’s Supper,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Lubomir Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 326.

<sup>22</sup> Crawford, “Martin Luther’s Theology of the Lord’s Supper,” 211.

Luther's second argument, according to Jensen, centered on Jesus' words of institution. Whereas his opponents held variegated opinions<sup>23</sup> about the referent and meaning of the word *est* in the Latin phrase *hoc est corpus meum*, Luther held that their positions were theologically and grammatically implausible.<sup>24</sup> Instead, Luther insisted that "every single word should be permitted to stand in its natural meaning" with "no deviation" being "allowed unless faith compelled it."<sup>25</sup> Jensen further noted that for Luther, "The plain meaning could not be easily dismissed. Christ is truly present in the bread and wine."<sup>26</sup>

Luther's third argument was related to his understanding of the ubiquity of Christ as God. Crawford noted that "Luther's view required that Christ be present physically everywhere, every time that the Lord's Supper was celebrated according to the Scriptures."<sup>27</sup> While Christology was mentioned above, it is here in this argument that Luther's view of the body of Christ becomes most clear.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, it is this argument that must be understood if one wishes to ascertain the relationship between his interpretation of Philemon 6 and his theology of the real presence. For Luther, it

<sup>23</sup> Jensen recounts, "Karlstadt had argued that 'this' does not refer to the bread; Zwingli insisted that these words were to be interpreted as 'this [bread] represents my body'; while Oecolampadius interpreted it as, 'This is a figure of my body.'" Jensen, "Luther and the Lord's Supper," 327.

<sup>24</sup> An example of the critics is seen in this quote by Zwingli, who wrote, "It has already become clear enough that in this context the word 'is' cannot be taken literally. Hence it follows that is must be taken metaphorically or figuratively. In the words: 'This is my body,' the word 'this' means the bread, and the word 'body' means the body that is put to death for us. Therefore, the word 'is' cannot be taken literally, for the bread is not the body and cannot be... Necessarily, then, it must be taken figuratively or metaphorically: 'This is my body,' means, 'The bread signifies my body,' or 'is a figure of my body.'" Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine: A Companion to Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 651.

<sup>25</sup> Crawford, "Martin Luther's Theology of the Lord's Supper," 211.

<sup>26</sup> Jensen, "Luther and the Lord's Supper," 327.

<sup>27</sup> Crawford, "Martin Luther's Theology of the Lord's Supper," 213.

<sup>28</sup> On the impact of the doctrine of real presence on Christology, MacLeod writes, "Lutherans, insisting on a literal acceptance of the word, 'This is my body,' spoke of it as physical: the body of Christ is received, in, with and under the elements. This had clear implications for Christology. If there were to be a physical presence of Christ in the sacrament, then his humanity must be in some sense omnipresent." Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 196–97.



was not acceptable to divide up the hypostatically united person of Christ.<sup>29</sup> In other words, it was not right to speak of the humanity of Jesus as doing something that the deity of Jesus did not do or experience. There was, then, a communication of qualities, or *communicatio idiomatum*. Christ was to be spoken of as a whole person. Therefore, if Christ was “at the right hand of God,” and God’s “hand” was everywhere, Luther concluded that Christ in his humanity, not simply his deity, was also everywhere. The obvious attack on this doctrine came from Zwingli, who challenged the idea that such a doctrine of ubiquity would essentially place the body of Christ in every piece of bread, not simply the bread of the sacrament. Luther, however, argued that while in a sense Christ was everywhere, he was specifically present in the bread of the Eucharist.<sup>30</sup>

Luther’s final argument was related to Christ’s promise. Jensen believes that this argument was most important to Luther, noting how he was faithful to affirm the belief that Christ promised to “be present in the bread and wine” without venturing into exactly how he was present.<sup>31</sup> Luther explained the presence of Christ in terms of *unio sacramentalis*, or sacramental union, which suggested an “inter-penetrating” presence of body and bread. However, while the reality of Christ’s real presence in the elements was vehemently defended by Luther, a clear presentation of the particulars of such a presence evaded him.

In summary, Luther believed that in some real sense, though different from the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, Christ was present in the elements of the Eucharist. If one partook of the Supper, regardless of faith, they were partaking of Christ and either receiving blessing or curse. As will be explored in the following sections, this concept of participation in the real

<sup>29</sup> According to Donald MacLeod, “The term ‘hypostatic union’ encapsulates three truths: that Christ is one person; that the union between his two natures arises from the fact that they both belong to one and the same person; and that this one person, the Son of God, is the Agent behind all of the Lord’s actions, the Speaker of all his utterances and the Subject of all his experiences.” MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, 189.

<sup>30</sup> See Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 306–8; Jensen, “Luther and the Lord’s Supper,” 326–28; and Crawford, “Martin Luther’s Theology of the Lord’s Supper,” 213–14, for more details on the Luther’s doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ and its relationship to his controversy with Zwingli.

<sup>31</sup> Jensen, “Luther and the Lord’s Supper,” 328.

body of Christ through the Supper impacted Luther's understanding of its importance and function in the church

### Luther's Eucharistic Interpretation of Philemon 6

As mentioned above, in the history of the interpretation of Philemon 6, Luther's interpretation has received little attention. Admittedly, he does not offer much, but what is offered is intriguing. The following is Luther's entire comment on *koinōnia tēs pisteōs* in Philemon 6:

[*And I pray that*] *the sharing [of your faith may promote the knowledge]*. This is what he wants to say: "I give thanks and pray for the love and faith of which I hear, namely, that this faith and love may grow and become more effective from day to day, in that you acknowledge all the good that is in you in Christ Jesus." *The good*, that is, the universal faith which you and I have and which all those who are with you have, the same faith, the universal faith that is shared by all the saints who are in your church, the faith that is especially present in you. This *sharing* is not spiritual, as some say; but it means that everyone has [what everyone else has], that he has the body which you have, which even I have. Here he speaks of faith, which is a thing distributed among many; that is, the body is something distributed in that bread which you and I have. But such people are tropical, or, more precisely, topical, subverters.<sup>32</sup>

For Luther, those who would suggest a spiritual *koinōnia* as opposed to a literal *koinōnia* are "tropical" or "topical subverters." The idea of a "tropical" or "topical subverter" goes back to his polemical work against Zwingli and Oecolampadius, who he believed were subverting the clear meaning of the word *koinōnia* by interpreting it as a "trope" or an example of figurative speech. Specifically, Luther uses the language of tropical/topical subversion in *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*. Written approximately two months after his lectures on Philemon, *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* is generally considered to be the "most detailed and

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<sup>32</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 29: Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1999), 96–97.

the most profound of Luther's treatises on the Lord's Supper."<sup>33</sup> The following is an extended comment from Luther on "tropical" readings versus literal readings in particular regard to the language of *koinōnia*:

We have already proved that such a backward-referring and awkward trope cannot exist in Scripture or in any language but is a pure fiction. According to the nature of Scripture and all languages, if the word "*participation*" [or "communion" or "fellowship"] is to become a trope, it must point forward to a spiritual participation, or a new and different participation, beyond the old, physical participation, just as "body and blood" must mean a spiritual or different body and blood if they become a trope or if they should not mean the physical blood and body. In this passage, therefore, "participation" must mean simply a physical participation or distribution; or if it is a trope, it must mean a new, spiritual participation, in which case the text would have to read, "The bread which we break is a spiritual participation of the body of Christ." But if "body" here is to be a real trope, it must mean the spiritual body of Christ, which is the church. In brief, the text would read thus: "The bread which we break is a spiritual distribution of the Christian Church," with the signification, "Wherever this bread is broken, there the Christian Church is distributed," and then horrors far more horrible would follow.<sup>34</sup>

Commenting on Luther's refutation of spiritual readings of *koinōnia*, Jaroslav Pelikan wrote, "He took the word 'participation' in 1 Cor 10:16–17 to mean 'communication' or 'distribution,' and he argued that the use of the term 'body of Christ' as a metaphor for the church would make no sense whatever in this context."<sup>35</sup> For Luther, *koinōnia* was literal participation in some substance or action. Therefore, when Luther interpreted Philemon 6, which spoke of a "sharing," he was hermeneutically bound to reject a spiritual or mystical understanding of *koinōnia*. And, to be fair to

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<sup>33</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 37: Word and Sacrament III*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 158.

<sup>34</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 37: Word and Sacrament III*, 350–51.

<sup>35</sup> Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor*, *Luther's Works* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1959), 152.

Luther, he was consistent with his literal interpretation of *koinōnia*. Of the twelve places that the word occurs in the Pauline corpus,<sup>36</sup> Luther consistently interpreted the term as pertaining to literal participation. *Koinōnia* was never reduced to a mere spiritual experience.

For Luther, then, *koinōnia tēs pisteōs* referred to Philemon's common participation in the distributed body of Christ with other Christians in the Eucharist. Luther gave little explanation for his interpretation apart from his allusion to the tropical subversion practiced by his spiritualizing opponents. Luther's lecture on Philemon, then, provides hardly any substantial guidance on what compelled his eucharistic reading. If one is going to gain any clarity on what lies behind his particular reading, they must look at another Pauline passage that bears a striking similarity to Philemon 6; namely, Philippians 1:5.

In Philippians 1:5, Paul speaks of the Philippians' *tē koinōnia hymōn eis to euaggelion*. Without drawing a parallel between the two passages, Luther interpreted Philemon 6 and Philippians 1:5 similarly, even if he gave greater attention to Philippians 1:5. On November 1, 1545, in a sermon on Philippians 1:3–11, Luther sought to encourage a younger generation of believers who had been spared many of the difficulties of the reformation that the previous generation had endured.<sup>37</sup> In doing so, Luther spoke of the "brotherhood of the gospel" in contrast to the "fraternities of the Roman Catholic Church." In speaking of the brotherhood of the gospel, Luther stated,

We preach a different brotherhood, saying: "Let me speak about the blessings of the Gospel of Christ and of Baptism; they will accomplish it." How do I attain this? Hear the Gospel; let all who receive the Gospel be baptized. That is how Christ makes you partakers of His merits: His suffering, death, resurrection, and eternal life. You have the seals: Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, the Gospel, Absolu-

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<sup>36</sup> See Luther's comments on Rom 15:26; 1 Cor 1:9; 10:16; 2 Cor 6:14; 8:4; 9:13; 13:14; Gal 2:9; Eph 3:9; Phil 1:5; 2:1; 3:10.

<sup>37</sup> While this sermon takes place at a much later time than Luther's core documents on his doctrine of the real presence, most scholars agree that his position did not change after his work, *Confessions Concerning Christ's Supper*. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that this sermon was given in doctrinal continuity with Luther's lecture on Philemon 6 in 1527.

tion. Once we have received that, all the other brotherhoods fall away.<sup>38</sup>

As noted in the quote, the “seals” of this gospel brotherhood were the sacraments and the Word. As will become clearer below, Luther viewed participation in the “Sacrament of the Altar” as a great equalizer among the people. It had an identity-shaping force behind it, which fundamentally changed the way Christians related to one another.

Luther continued,

With respect to offices it is different—there one person can speak better or rule better than another. But I do not have a better Baptism, faith, or Christ. In this brotherhood, all are made brothers and sisters in the same grace. It is the same Baptism, Eucharist, Absolution. This is what delights my heart and makes it glad. Here, we are all together in one and the same brotherhood, namely, the Gospel, a great brotherhood extending throughout the world. Christ Himself calls us brothers: “Tell My brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me” [Matt. 28:10]. In Galatians, Paul writes: “If you are Christ’s, then you are children of God and heirs, and therefore fellow heirs with Christ” [cf. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7]. He has given us this honor: that He calls us brothers and sisters. Ah, Lord God, who can fully express what He has done? Every one of us should almost die from joy, if we are able to believe it and say, “I am a brother or sister of Christ.”<sup>39</sup>

According to Pelikan, in this sermon on Philippians 1:3–11, Luther “self-consciously returned to the theme of the last section of his 1519 treatise on *The Blessed sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods*.”<sup>40</sup> It is here that the parallel between Luther’s eucharistic interpretation of Philemon 6 and Philippians 1:5 comes to light. Luther understood that a Christian’s participation in the Eucharist was an action of the “brotherhood of the gospel.” The Supper was a familial practice that obligated participants to one another in a way vastly different from

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<sup>38</sup> Martin Luther, “Sermon for the Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity, Philippians 1:3–11,” in *Luther’s Works: Sermons V*, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown, trans. Wade R. Johnston, vol. 58 (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2010), 317.

<sup>39</sup> Luther, “Sermon for the Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity,” 317.

<sup>40</sup> Luther, “Sermon for the Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity,” 313.

the fraternal orders of the Catholic Church. Whereas there was a hierarchy within the fraternities of Luther's days, the church knew no such hierarchies. The Supper (like baptism) was a great equalizer of the people. No one was better off in the community than another on account of good works, education, or social status. Everyone had the common experience of participation in Christ through the Supper. Belonging was not a matter of entitlement but rather sharing in Christ.

Luther concluded the first section of the treatise on the Blessed Sacrament by commenting on the mutual interchange of the people through the Supper. He stated

In conclusion, the blessing of this sacrament is fellowship and love, by which we are strengthened against death and all evil. This fellowship is twofold: on the one hand we partake of Christ and all saints; on the other hand we permit all Christians to be partakers of us, in whatever way they and we are able. Thus by means of this sacrament, all self-seeking love is rooted out and gives place to that which seeks the common good of all; and through the change wrought by love there is one bread, one drink, one body, one community. This is the true unity of Christian brethren. Let us see, therefore, how the neat-looking brotherhoods, of which there are now so many, compare and square with this.<sup>41</sup>

For Luther, participation in the sacrament resulted in "fellowship and love." He goes on to define fellowship and love in terms of mutual care and identity. As one reads this statement, it is not hard to see how such an understanding of the Eucharist could creep into his interpretation of a passage on fellowship in a book all about caring for others in the body of Christ. Whether or not Philemon 6 has the act of the Supper in mind, principally speaking, no one can doubt that the concept of fellowship and love are present in the text.

Prior to his conclusion of the first section, Luther made explicit reference to the nature of the fellowship of the sacrament, explaining that

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<sup>41</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 67.

To receive this sacrament in bread and wine, then, is nothing else than to receive a sure sign of this fellowship and incorporation with Christ and all saints. It is as if a citizen were given a sign, a document, or some other token to assure him that he is a citizen of the city, a member of that particular community. St. Paul says this very thing in I Corinthians 10[:17], “We are all one bread and one body, for we all partake of one bread and of one cup.”<sup>42</sup>

Covenantal fellowship was always in view in the Eucharist for Luther. How could Philemon have shared in the “sure sign of his fellowship with Christ and Onesimus” and not regarded him as “more than a brother.” While it is most probable that Philemon had yet to partake of the Supper with Onesimus before reading Paul’s letter, even if Paul does not have the Supper in mind when he refers to fellowship, one can certainly imagine a faithful Christian like Onesimus regularly enjoying the Supper. And if so, Paul’s instruction would have had implicit significance for such an observation in the presence of Onesimus, the one now seeking “a sure sign of fellowship” through Philemon’s obedient response to the letter.

Elsewhere, speaking again of the relationship of corporate fellowship to the sacrament of the altar, Luther wrote,

This fellowship consists in this, that all the spiritual possessions of Christ and his saints are shared with and become the common property of him who receives this sacrament. Again all sufferings and sins also become common property; and thus love engenders love in return and [mutual love] unites. To carry out our homely figure, it is like a city where every citizen shares with all the others the city’s name, honor, freedom, trade, customs, usages, help, support, protection, and the like, while at the same time he shares all the dangers of fire and flood, enemies and death, losses, taxes, and the like. For he who would share in the profits must also share in the costs, and ever recompense love with love.<sup>43</sup>

The thought of a person’s “sufferings and sins” becoming the “common property” of the community that shares in the sacrament of the altar points strikingly to Luther’s ecclesiastical as-

<sup>42</sup> Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 35: *Word and Sacrament I*, 51.

<sup>43</sup> Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 35: *Word and Sacrament I*, 51–52.

sumptions in his interpretation of Philemon 6. The suffering of Onesimus the slave now became the suffering of Philemon as they partook of the same body. The inherent reciprocity of the Supper in Luther's theology transcends the mere debate about real presence.

Finally, Luther declared,

In this sacrament, therefore, man is given through the priest a sure sign from God himself that he is thus united with Christ and his saints and has all things in common [with them], that Christ's sufferings and life are his own, together with the lives and sufferings of all the saints.<sup>44</sup>

Against this backdrop, it is much easier to see the parallel between Philemon 6 and Philippians 1:5. The brief, private correspondence between Paul and Philemon was predicated upon their fellowship in the gospel, their "sharing of faith." The reality of this *koinōnia* factored heavily into Paul's instruction to Philemon. Onesimus, as a believer in Christ, was now a participant in the distributed body of Christ. As Luther explicated the book of Philemon, he understood this, even if he did not explicitly tie Paul's actions to a eucharistic reading of Philemon 6.

By implication, then, according to Luther, the "fellowship of the gospel" in Philippians 1:3–11 and the "sharing of the faith" in Philemon 6 were one and the same. As believers ate the distributed body of Christ, the fundamental trajectory of their relationship with Christ and other believers changed. The blessings of Christ and the saints, as well as the sufferings and sorrows of the like, were communicated to those who ate the bread and drank the cup. One could not be indifferent to those things signified and communicated in Christ's Supper. To willingly share in the body and blood of Christ was to obligate oneself to Christ and his people. Following Luther's understanding of Philemon 6 as a eucharistic interchange, Paul was moved to function as a Christ figure in the reconciliation of Onesimus and Philemon. In this next section, Luther's understanding will be evaluated in light of Paul's correspondence with Philemon.

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<sup>44</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 35: *Word and Sacrament I*, 52.



### An Evaluation of Luther's Eucharistic Interpretation

Thus far, this article has argued that Luther's eucharistic interpretation of Philemon 6 makes sense in light of his understanding of the community-creating impact of Christ's Supper. This was seen not only in Luther's sermon on Philippians 1:3–11 but also in the polemical background of that sermon. In 1519, Luther attempted to undermine the sectarian fraternal orders of the Roman Catholic Church by arguing for the Lord's Supper as a primary ground of Christian community. In the sermon on Philippians 1:3–11, Luther's point was to show that there was no greater order (fraternity) of fellowship than the fellowship of the gospel. For, through baptism and the sacrament of bread and cup, believers were "one bread, one drink, one body, one community." In his lecture on Philemon 6, then, Luther understood the phrase *koinōnia tēs pisteōs* as obligating Paul and Philemon to address the plight of Onesimus. The Supper was not simply an act of memory, but an act of commitment, of covenant to one another, to those who partook of Christ.

Therefore, when one reads 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 in light of Luther's understanding of the Eucharist, a mere "having in common" reading of *koinōnia* makes little sense. It was not that the Corinthian church simply ate the same bread and drank the same cup but that they also shared a common corporate experience of union with Christ in his life, death, and resurrection, which Paul explains in explicitly participatory terms elsewhere (Rom 6:1–14, Col 3:3).<sup>45</sup> The saints at Corinth did not simply pull for the same team, they were also participants on the team through the Supper, and they were obligated to care for one another, which was Luther's point in his lectures on Philemon.

The corporate care that Christians obligate themselves to in Christ's Supper was embodied by Paul in his correspondence to Philemon. It began in verses 8 and 9, where Paul disregarded his apostolic right to command Philemon and chose to "appeal" to him instead for the sake of the magnification of Christian love, which they share in the Supper. Furthermore, just as Philemon

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<sup>45</sup> For excellent studies on the participatory nature of the Christian life, specifically related to the death and resurrection of Christ, see Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Robert C Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

had the “right” to relate to Onesimus in an authoritative manner, so also, Paul possessed such an apostolic right over Philemon. Yet, the practice of brotherly love, which was rooted in the sharing of their faith, was to be valued over apostolic authority. Paul continues in verses 10 through 12, moving from an embodiment of Christ-like love to an embodiment of Christ-like mediation and intercession.<sup>46</sup> The rhetorical impact of Paul’s actions is nearly incalculable.<sup>47</sup> Paul refers to Onesimus as “my child” and “my very heart.” Of course, if Onesimus could be regarded as Paul’s “child” and “very heart,” how much more could he be regarded as a child of God, an object of the heavenly Father’s affection? Surely Philemon would not dare to withhold absolution from Onesimus while partaking of the body of Christ, which promised him absolution from his sin as a child of God.

Paul continues in verses 13 through 16 to demonstrate a selfless disregard for his own legitimate needs to accommodate Philemon while pointing him to the divine activity of God in temporarily drawing Onesimus away from Philemon. Paul saw God parting Onesimus from Philemon to fundamentally and forever transform their relationship. Onesimus left as a mere slave, but he returned as a “beloved brother,” who had the same Father, participated in the same Body, and was filled with the same Spirit.

Paul’s treatment of Philemon was intended to be paradigmatic for how Philemon was to treat Onesimus. Paul himself knew what it was like to be an outsider coming into a community of people that he deeply wronged. Yet, just as the community in Jerusalem received their former persecutor, so also Philemon was to receive the formerly “useless slave” Onesimus as an equal and valuable member of the Christian community. For Luther, Paul intended

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<sup>46</sup> The reciprocal nature of the Lord’s Supper in Luther’s theology easily coheres with the rest of the account in Philemon. Quoting Luther, Vanhoozer writes, “What Christ has done for us with God the Father, that St. Paul does also for Onesimus with Philemon.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Imprisoned or Free? Text, Status, and Theological Interpretation in the Master/Slave Discourse of Philemon,” in A. K. M. Adam, Stephen E. Fowl, Francis Watson, and Kevin Vanhoozer, *Reading Scripture with the Church: Toward a Hermeneutic for Theological Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 86.

<sup>47</sup> Regarding Paul’s language, Wright wrote, “This is rhetoric in service of the underlying theology: Onesimus is in Christ, Christ by his spirit is in Onesimus, and that is foundational to the appeal Paul makes to Philemon.” N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 4:1, Christian Origins and the Question of God (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 21.

Philemon, as one who had experienced and participated in the distributed body of Christ, to reevaluate his relationship to Onesimus in light of his participation in the same body. As Philemon reconciled to Onesimus, the reconciliation of God in Christ was dramatized for the church, thus deepening their understanding and awe of the reconciling grace of God in Christ (Phlm 6–7), which was promised to them in the Supper.

Admittedly, while other commentators have avoided Luther's eucharistic reading, they have made a similar argument to those that he made regarding the communal sharing of the believers. This is precisely the argument that Douglas Moo makes in regard to Philemon 6 when he writes, "We summarize our exegetical decisions in this verse in a paraphrase: 'Philemon, I am praying that the mutual participation that arises from your faith in Christ might become effective in leading you to understand and put into practice all the good that God wills for us and that is found in our community; and do all this for the sake of Christ.'<sup>48</sup> The key difference is between the two types of participation. For Luther, it is an actual participation in the body of Christ through the Supper that forms the basis of Christian community and shapes not only their ethic but also their epistemology. For Moo, it is a participation in a shared belief in Christ as Lord and Savior that shapes the community's behavior and knowledge of the gospel. The problem for Moo, and others, however, is that they tend to struggle to articulate just exactly how one participates in the faith of others. Luther, however, whether one agrees with him or not, did not struggle to give expression to the form of participation. Instead, he saw a direct relationship between the Supper and the believer's relationship with others. Criticize, if one may, Luther's eucharistic understanding of Philemon 6, but at least there was a coherence between how he spoke of Christian fellowship and its relationship to the practices in the life of the church. With more recent understandings of Philemon 6, one is left feeling the need to participate in the faith of others, but without any clear guidance regarding how to participate. Luther, on the other hand, offered the Lord's Supper as not merely a sign of Christian participation but as an act of Christian participation that directed Christian behavior.

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<sup>48</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 394. See Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 51.

### Conclusion

In this article, I set out to demonstrate the coherence of Luther's eucharistic interpretation of Philemon 6 in light of his polemical context while recovering the practical, theological benefits of his unique reading. It is beyond dispute that controversy often shaped Luther's exegesis. Luther was a passionate polemicist, but this should not be used to dismiss the beneficial implications of his interpretations, even when they might not be grounded in the specific text under investigation. While unique exegetical findings in places like Philemon 6 might not be sound by modern standards, true insights can be found in such work.

Did Luther's regard for the importance of the doctrine of the real presence skew his interpretation at times? Certainly. Unfortunately, Luther's propensity for overstatement in this regard seems to cause some modern interpreters to overlook his eucharistic reading of Philemon 6 as nothing more than polemic. Yet, after a close look, I do not believe Luther was simply trying to score points for his understanding of the Eucharist. In fact, as best as we can tell, he never references Philemon 6 again in all his writings. Instead, I propose that, in the heat of eucharistic debate, he was seeking to integrate the theology of his treatises with his exegetical work on Philemon. The intention of his exegesis of Philemon 6 was not to find a proof-text for theological purposes; rather, it was also to demonstrate how the reality of corporate participation in the distributed body of Christ should impact Christian relationships, especially among those with differing societal rank. By overlooking Luther's eucharistic interpretation of Philemon 6, interpreters have forfeited not only a practical example of what it means to "share in the faith" of others, but they have also missed the opportunity to appropriate the theology of the Lord's Supper for instruction regarding the life of the Christian congregation.

Even for those who reject Luther's understanding of the Supper, I believe the implications of his interpretation of Philemon 6 are beneficial for the church. By interpreting Philemon 6 as having eucharistic significance, Luther provided the church with a practical way to demonstrate Christian fellowship and love in circumstances where relationships need reconciliation. Even amid his fights, we should see the strength of his argument not only against the spiritualizing hermeneutic of the memorialist but also for the role of Christ's Supper among Christians.

For all the implications that his interpretation of Philemon 6 provides for Christian fellowship, Luther did not fully explore the import of common participation among Christ's people in the church. Luther readily acknowledged that Paul was not instructing Philemon regarding the freedom of Onesimus as a slave in the kingdom of man. He continued to see Onesimus as being owned by Philemon despite his changed status in the kingdom of Christ.

To be fair, however, even if Luther did not personally see the implications of his doctrine of mutual participation in the distributed body of Christ for social transformation in the temporal kingdom, he certainly understood its implications for Christians in the spiritual kingdom. The image of a slave and his master breaking the bread and sharing the cup as equals before Christ and in His church is striking.

The Supper truly is a great equalizer of people in the kingdom of God. By it, we acknowledge that we do not belong to Christ or one another on account of anything that we have done, whether good or bad. We have simply received what has been accomplished for us by Christ through faith. So, while through observance of the Lord's Supper, we continue to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes, we must also remember that our participation is corporate, obligating us to care and serve one another, as their burdens have become our burdens through our mutual sharing in Christ. When we gather to break the bread and share the cup, we are not simply remembering the finished work of Christ; we are also committing to do unto others as God in Christ has done for us. We are declaring hope to one another and to the world as those who have entered into hope through the gospel. We are feasting together on the blessings of Christ by eating the bread and drinking the cup in anticipation of the coming marriage supper of the Lamb.

Luther's eucharistic interpretation of Philemon 6 may have been wrong in some exegetical ways, but the theological principles and practical doctrine that rise from his interpretation are worthy of redemption and reflection. As we partake of the Supper with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we are not only declaring the death of Christ until He comes, we are also declaring that we are a part of one body, the body of Christ. Therefore, with Luther, we can say that as we share the bread and drink the cup, we are not only acknowledging our fellowship with others for whom Christ

gave himself, we are visibly obligating ourselves to the selfless expression of divine love.

# Reformation Boundaries: The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone and Ecumenical Rapprochement

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## Introduction

Martin Luther staked more than the doctrine of justification by faith on the early writings generally associated with the beginning of the Reformation in Germany. His “Ninety-Five Theses” and three early treatises touch in some respects on the doctrine that would later be credited with shaping the Reformation, but they relate to the offenses of the papacy in decidedly ecclesiological and sociological terms as well.<sup>1</sup>

Ecclesiologicaly, Luther writes of the overreaching power of the pope and the harm done to the faith of the people, while sociologically, he relates the horrors of poverty and politics born of Rome’s failings.<sup>2</sup> His prefaces to Romans and Galatians demon-

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, “The Ninety-Five Theses: Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences Commonly Known as the 95 Theses,” 1517, in *Select Works of Martin Luther* (OakTree Software, 1983); “An Open Letter to The Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate,” 1520, in *Works of Martin Luther: With Introductions and Notes*, vol. 2, trans. C. M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915); *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520*, trans. A. T. W. Steinhäuser, rev. Frederick C. Ahrens and Abdel Ross Wentz, available at [www.onthewing.org/user/Luther%20-%20Babylonian%20Captivity.pdf](http://www.onthewing.org/user/Luther%20-%20Babylonian%20Captivity.pdf); “The Freedom of a Christian,” 1520, in *Luther’s Works: Career of the Reformer*, vol. 31, ed. Harold J. Grimm, trans. W. A. Lambert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Luther, “The Ninety-Five Theses,” 41–50; “Letter to the Christian Nobility.” Here he writes that the princes “should not permit their land and people to be so sadly robbed and ruined, against all justice,” 2.1; *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, where he condemns “lucrative and profitable schemes,” 25–26; “Freedom of a Christian,” Luther describes how, “the name of the Roman Curia is today a stench throughout the world, papal authority languishes, and Roman ignorance, once honored, is in ill repute,” 7.

strate more exclusive concern with explicitly theological matters as he wrestles with the text of Scripture, interpreting texts according to his rediscovery of faith's role in the Christian life.<sup>3</sup> Yet who would question whether his interpretation of Scripture applied to the church and culture as well as to doctrine?

Completely untangling Luther's thoughts as to whether justification by faith (JbF) comprises his sole concern regarding the issues listed above falls outside of the proper scope of history. His impact on his contemporary followers and the later adherents of Lutheranism, however, could reveal significant insights concerning the role of JbF in Luther's intent for the church in Germany, especially in its relation to the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). More specifically, a comparison of the discussion on justification between Luther and Philip Melanchthon and the RCC in the sixteenth century could be examined in light of the conciliatory *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)* made by twentieth-century Lutherans and Catholics.<sup>4</sup> This series of comparisons would help in drawing conclusions about the relative importance of the doctrine of justification for Luther, Melanchthon, and Lutherans in general.

A question will aid understanding of the above topic: what does a comparison between the *JDDJ* and the sixteenth-century discussion on justification (among Luther, Melanchthon, and the RCC) reveal about the significance of justification in Lutheran doctrine? Assuming that great similarity on justification between the two eras correlates with greater significance attributed to the particulars of that doctrine, the research below indicates that JbF is the main distinguishing mark of the Lutheran church against the

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther, "Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans," 1545, trans. Andrew Thornton, in *Select Works of Martin Luther* (OakTree Software, 1983); *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Theodore Graebner (OakTree Software, 1949).

<sup>4</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 1997, in "The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective," (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1999), available at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=339>, pp. 49–60. The *JDDJ* was drawn up in 1997, built on previous discussions between Catholic and Lutheran scholars. Section 3 of the preamble offers a list of those writings for the reader's consideration, but since the concern of this paper is more with the finished product, these works are not given here. See the Appendix for the main body of the text of the *JDDJ*.



RCC.<sup>5</sup> This conclusion, however, does not mean that JbF is the only key distinguishing mark for the Lutheran church. The following thesis should thus be affirmed: Luther's understanding of JbF represents a necessary but not sufficient condition for unity between Lutheran and Roman Catholic church bodies.

Luther and Melancthon represent the beginning of the expressly Lutheran understanding of justification, so the first section encapsulates a summary of their views for comparison. Three points along the doctrinal frontline between Lutherans and the RCC serve as snapshots of contention over JbF: the Council of Trent, the Second Vatican Council, and the *JDDJ*. A preliminary evaluation of this comparative analysis with potential implications for ecumenism rounds out the body of the paper. The conclusion seeks to restate and clarify the validity of the thesis.

### Luther and Melancthon on Justification

Martin Luther epitomizes the Protestant Reformation in history, but he personally did not think he would make as significant an impact without Philip Melancthon. He once stated concerning the Reformation movement in Germany, "Our case will go on, so long as its living advocates, Melancthon [sic], and other pious and learned persons, who apply themselves zealously to the work, shall be alive; but after their death, 'twill be a sad falling off."<sup>6</sup> Melancthon, whom Timothy J. Wengert calls the "speaker of the Reformation," played a key role in promoting Luther's Reformation in Germany by his adapting its contents to humanist rhetoric at Wittenberg.<sup>7</sup> Yet the two did not always agree, holding divergent views even on justification at points. An examination of each Reformer's views on the contentious points of JbF offers a backdrop

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<sup>5</sup> Willingness to preserve a doctrine over a great length of time in the face of repeated external assaults demonstrates the importance and centrality of the doctrine in question. Conversely, allowing shifts in the doctrine (not contemporary restatements of the same) indicates a doctrine's subservient role in shaping a group's priorities.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, "Table Talk," 1566, trans. William Hazlitt, in *Select Works of Martin Luther* (OakTree Software, 1983), XIX. See also XXIV, XLV, CCCXXI, DCXXXV, DCLXXIV, DCCXXII, DCCXCIII, and DCCCII for other example of Luther's praise for Melancthon.

<sup>7</sup> Timothy J. Wengert, *Philip Melancthon, Speaker of the Reformation: Wittenberg's Other Reformer* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 118–40.

for discussing the historical interactions between Lutherans and Catholics over this doctrine.

### Martin Luther

The phrase *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesia*, attributed to Luther concerning JbF, lacks direct support from his own writings but may nonetheless sum up his position on the matter.<sup>8</sup> The uncertainty springs from Luther's prolific but informal presentation of arguments and responses to his critics. The lack of certainty at this point restrains a comprehensive summary of Luther's doctrine of JbF as much as the limitation of space. Nonetheless, Alister McGrath provides a clear enough picture of Luther's position on justification to clarify the nature of the conflict with the RCC. Luther's own words will be used to accentuate this picture.

Luther's milieu concerning the Christian concept of justification was more complex than a debate over the merits of faith versus works. The Middle Ages had seen the development of at least two primary schools of thought concerning justification: the *via moderna* and the *schola Augustiniana moderna*.<sup>9</sup> The former's covenantal framework and somewhat optimistic anthropology led to a view that God blessed with salvation those who did *quod in se est*.<sup>10</sup> The relationship between the two schools and their influence on Luther proves difficult to decipher, but Luther was influenced more significantly by the *via moderna* as the predominant view of his day.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Luther's development of his own view of justification leads to a decisive break with the *via moderna* but not necessarily with the *schola Augustiniana moderna*, which employed Augustinian conceptions of human nature, sin, and grace.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 143. McGrath translates the Latin as "the article by which the church stands or falls" and attributes the thought to Luther but does not cite him directly.

<sup>9</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3d. ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 186–207.

<sup>10</sup> Literally, "what is in you." In modern English vernacular might render *quod in se est* as "your best" or "to the best of your ability."

<sup>11</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough*, 2nd ed. (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 83–94. McGrath argues that the *schola Augustiniana moderna* does not have clear historical representation at Wittenberg although it may have had some influence on Johann von Staupitz.

<sup>12</sup> McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 173–78; see also p. 84.

Luther appears to have rediscovered Augustine largely on his own and in response to what he saw as abuses in the RCC. In fact, Luther relates his story as one enlightened first by Scripture, attributing his positions to Paul. He claims that the preacher, by expounding the law, “will lead people to a recognition of their miserable condition, and thus they will become humble and yearn for help. This is what St. Paul does.”<sup>13</sup> This conclusion meshes well with Luther’s recounting of his tower experience also. He claims that after the truth concerning the justice of God broke in on him, he read Augustine and found that the church father also “interpreted ‘the justice of God’ in a similar way, namely, as that with which God clothes us when he justifies us.”<sup>14</sup>

The above perspective makes more plausible the assertion that Luther was seeking to correct the *via moderna*, the most prevalent understanding of justification in the RCC. Simultaneously, there would have been significant numbers of Catholics from the *schola Augustiniana moderna* that would have understood justification very nearly on Luther’s terms. As McGrath points out, even the RCC’s understanding of justification according to the *via moderna* differed, at least originally, from a concept of works-based salvation.<sup>15</sup> So what then was the fault line between Luther and the RCC as concerns justification?

### Philip Melancthon

The other Wittenberg Reformer, though highly esteemed by Luther, possesses a less-than-stellar reputation to this day.<sup>16</sup> Even

<sup>13</sup> Luther, “Preface to Romans,” 21st paragraph. In the opening of this preface he also warns against “any teacher who uses these words differently, no matter who he be, whether Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Origen or anyone else as great as or greater than they.”

<sup>14</sup> Martin Luther, “Luther’s Tower Experience: Martin Luther Discovers the True Meaning of Righteousness,” trans. Andrew Thornton, in *Select Works of Martin Luther* (OakTree Software, 1983).

<sup>15</sup> McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 139. The above conclusion is also supported by the fact that Augustinian influence was not homogenous within the RCC (206). A variegated understanding of Augustine across the various communities that made up the church make more likely that Luther rediscovered the early church father’s position on justification subsequent to drawing his own conclusions. These same conditions also increase the likelihood that there were others within the church who held to very similar views of justification to Luther’s already.

<sup>16</sup> Wengert, *Philip Melancthon*, 9–14. Here Wengert offers a variety of stereotypes concerning Melancthon, from “*Leistretter*, the one who treads lightly or,

Luther compares him to Jeremiah by saying, “that prophet stood always in fear.”<sup>17</sup> Melanchthon’s difference in temperament receives notoriety in church history, in spite of the fact that he boldly implemented Luther’s reforms during the latter’s period of exile.<sup>18</sup>

Melanchthon’s reputation has much to do with his irenic inclination. When Erasmus led many to abandon Luther’s cause, Melanchthon remained friendly with Erasmus’s cohort while staunchly supporting his Wittenberg colleagues, chiefly Luther.<sup>19</sup> After Luther’s death, Melanchthon came under fire for his part in the compromising “Leipzig Interim” and became associated with a faction that was supposedly pitted against the original positions of Luther.<sup>20</sup> At stake in this paper, however, is Melanchthon’s position on JbF specifically as compared to Luther’s.

Mark Seifrid documents correspondence between Melanchthon and Luther in which the former presses the question, “don’t you allow that one may say that the human being is primarily righteous through faith, and in a lesser way through works?”<sup>21</sup> Luther does not concede Melanchthon’s point, insisting that works have no role in justification.<sup>22</sup> Rolf Schäfer maintains that Melanchthon held to the idea that justification involved the forensic and “effective change” of the believer even in his first edition of *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession* in 1531.<sup>23</sup>

to capture the full negative force of the words, pussyfoots around” (9, emphasis original) to the man with a temper “like a fleeting cloud,” (13).

<sup>17</sup> Luther, “Table Talk,” XXIV.

<sup>18</sup> Justo González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 2, *The Reformation to Present Day* (Peabody, MA: Prince, 1999), 39.

<sup>19</sup> González, *The Story of Christianity*, 2:43. See also p. 52 for a brief account of Melanchthon’s influence on Luther in seeking to keep the door of reconciliation open with the RCC.

<sup>20</sup> González, *The Story of Christianity*, 2:90, 172–75.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Melanchthon, *Weimarer Ausgabe: Tischreden*, 6:149, 16–34, quoted in Mark A. Siefid, “Luther, Melanchthon and Paul on the Question of Imputation: Recommendations on a Current Debate,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbards and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 139–40.

<sup>22</sup> Siefid, “Luther, Melanchthon and Paul,” 140–41. Eventually, Siefid notes, Melanchthon would move towards Luther on this matter.

<sup>23</sup> Rolf Schäfer, “Melanchthon’s Interpretation of Romans 5.15: His Departure from the Augustinian Concept of Grace Compared to Luther’s,” in *Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) and the Commentary*, ed. T. J. Wengert and M. P. Graham (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 104. Note that the actual text

By the publication of the 1540 version of *The Apology*, Melanchthon affirms unequivocally that “confidence in the merit of love or of works is excluded in justification.”<sup>24</sup> He does, nonetheless, leave the door open for some potential concessions:

In order, therefore, to deliver pious consciences from these labyrinths of the sophists, we have ascribed to repentance [or conversion] these two parts, namely, contrition and faith. If any one desires to add a third namely, fruits worthy of repentance, i.e., a change of the entire life and character for the better [good works which shall and must follow conversion], we will not make any opposition.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, while Melanchthon’s view on justification clearly mirrors Luther’s, he leaves room for continued dialogue concerning the role of works in the Christian life.<sup>26</sup>

of *The Augsburg Confession* does not betray this position. See Philip Melanchthon, *The Augsburg Confession: A Confession of Faith Presented in Augsburg by certain Princes and Cities to His Imperial Majesty Charles V in the Year 1530*, in *The Role of the Augsburg Confession: Catholic and Lutheran Views*, ed. Joseph A. Burgess. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 171, 176–79.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Melanchthon, *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, 1540*, trans. F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau (Boston: IndyPublish.com, 2005), 23.

<sup>25</sup> Melanchthon, *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, 112; brackets original. Just previous to the above quotation, Melanchthon also lists eleven dogmas that are “clearly false, and foreign not only to Holy Scripture, but also to the Church Fathers” (111). By this attestation one sees the tension in which he holds JbF alone and seeks to make room for a fuller understanding of the role of good works as somehow necessary to the life of the believer.

<sup>26</sup> Melanchthon’s conciliatory tendencies may also have been more in line with Luther than many assume. See Martin Luther, *The Letters of Martin Luther*, trans. Margaret A. Currie (London: MacMillan, 1908), 225–27. In a letter dated June 29, 1530, Luther writes to Melanchthon, “I have received your Apology, and wonder at your asking how far one may yield to the Papists. For my part I think too much has been conceded. If they do not accept it, what more can we do. . . . I find I have not answered your question very fully as to how much should be conceded to the adversary. But you do not say definitely what they expect from us. I am as ready as ever to grant them everything if they only leave us a free gospel, but I cannot give up the gospel.” He expresses a similar concern in another letter a few months later: “For I am convinced that you will concede nothing which could injure the confession and the gospel. . . . But we must abide by our old agreement—to concede everything in the interests of peace which is not at variance with the gospel and our recent confession” (250). While Luther shows concern with Melanchthon’s irenic approach, he apparently desires to build bridges with the RCC where possible.

Later in his *Loci Communes*, Melanchthon further clarifies his understanding of justification:

“Justification” means the remission of sins, reconciliation, or the acceptance of a person unto eternal life. To the Hebrews “to justify” is a forensic term, as if I were to say that the Roman people “justified” Scipio when he was accused by the tribunes, that is, they absolved him or pronounced him to be a righteous man. Therefore Paul took the term “justify” from the usage of the Hebrew word to indicate remission of sins, reconciliation, or acceptance.<sup>27</sup>

In rounding out the concept of JbF, he offers five descriptions of faith: (1) “assent to the entire Word of God,” (2) assent to “the free promise of reconciliation” in particular, (3) “trust in the mercy of God” for Christ’s sake, (4) trust as an action of the will, and (5) “the power of laying hold of the promises and applying them to oneself.”<sup>28</sup> In summary, Melanchthon identifies JbF with the very essence of the gospel: “man receives the remission of sins and reconciliation for the sake of Christ the Mediator, by faith, that is, by trusting in the promise of God’s mercy for his sake and not because of our human virtues.”<sup>29</sup>

In general, Melanchthon seems to stay very close to Luther on JbF. While McGrath argues that Melanchthon “abandoned” Luther’s concept of “the personal union of Christ and the believer in

<sup>27</sup> Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes, 1543*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 86.

<sup>28</sup> Melanchthon, *Loci Communes, 1543*, 91. The role of the will in faith falls outside the scope of this paper, but see Locus 4 (41–46) where Melanchthon speaks of “Human Powers or Free Choice.” In short, he sees human freedom as overwhelmed by the weight of sin, thus faith would be an exercise of the will only in response to the Holy Spirit’s work.

<sup>29</sup> Melanchthon, *Loci Communes, 1543*, 96. See also Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes, 1555*, trans. and ed. Clyde L. Manschreck (1965; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 141–74. In this later edition of the *Loci*, Melanchthon does not significantly change his position of JbF, but he does offer a more extensive explanation on why faith alone is the exclusive condition for justification because faith alone definitively blocks out all human merit from the question of justification. The 1521 edition of the *Loci Communes* has been described as “little more than a presentation of the chief points of the narrative of salvation” and as such likely adds little to the current discussion; see Alister McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 127.

justification,<sup>30</sup> that language probably overstates his case. He implies that Melanchthon held to Luther's understanding of union with Christ and eventually rejected it, or at least moved away from it. While some of Melanchthon's statements in *The Apology* are compatible with the concept of union with Christ, they relate primarily to the imagery of the church as the body of Christ and to joining with Christ by participating in the eucharist.<sup>31</sup> These points hardly demonstrate strong connections to the explicit teaching of Luther concerning unity with Christ by faith.<sup>32</sup>

Ambivalence on Melanchthon's part towards one point of Luther's theology hardly demonstrates a radical departure from it. Suspicions of such a departure may ignore the degree of Melanchthon's concern with having his words reflect reality accurately.<sup>33</sup> McGrath's position also fails to take account of Melanchthon's devotion to Luther, whose writings the former equated with those of early church fathers.<sup>34</sup> The more likely explanation for the differences in the two Reformers' views can be summed up in their divergent personalities. As Wenger argues, not only did Luther and Melanchthon have different temperaments, they had different worldviews that affected their respective views of JbF.<sup>35</sup>

### The Doctrinal Frontline

Despite their differences, Luther and Melanchthon represented the proto-Lutheran position on JbF as an essentially unified front. Their lives from 1517 onward consisted largely of skirmishes along theological front lines. The Council of Trent represents a

<sup>30</sup> McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 255. McGrath does not show where Melanchthon departs from Luther on this matter but argues that contemporary interpreters of Luther have recovered this aspect of his doctrine of justification.

<sup>31</sup> Melanchthon, *The Apology*, 52, 179.

<sup>32</sup> Luther, *Galatians*. See notes on Galatians 2:20. To McGrath's credit, Melanchthon's failure to engage Galatians 2:20 demonstrates at least an ambivalence toward the concept of union with Christ.

<sup>33</sup> G. R. Evans, *Philosophy and Theology in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1993), 121.

<sup>34</sup> Wenger, *Philip Melanchthon*, X.85.

<sup>35</sup> Wenger, *Philip Melanchthon*, X.85–88. See, in particular, where Wenger writes, "This difference also affected their view of justification by faith alone. Even when the two agreed on the forensic nature of justification, their approach betrayed disparate intentions. For Luther God's decree destroyed evil and comforted the weak. For Melanchthon God educated, made certain and comforted the simple" (X.87).

major challenge from the RCC on justification. The Second Vatican Council, in turn, served as a historical milestone for these confrontations. Finally, the *JDDJ* concretized a kind of ceasefire over the doctrine of justification between the Lutheran church and the RCC. What role does JbF play in each of these confrontations, and how have they conversely impacted this important Reformation doctrine?

### The Council of Trent on Justification

The Council of Trent (1545-63) convened under the auspices of the nineteenth ecumenical council and in response to the Reformation.<sup>36</sup> The council began under tumultuous socio-political circumstances with the religious and secular leaders at odds and subsequently spent more time in recess than it did working on its declarations. Yet out of this maelstrom was born the “modern Catholic Church.”<sup>37</sup> As Roger Olson explains, to the RCC, “Trent was a magnificent achievement that defined dogma and unified the church against the heresies of the many Protestant sects. To Protestants . . . it was a reactionary power play by the papacy that . . . condemned as heresy the very gospel the Reformers were attempting to recover.”<sup>38</sup>

McGrath describes Trent as “the definitive response of the Catholic church to the Reformation.”<sup>39</sup> The council dealt with necessary moral reforms of its own and, most pertinent to this paper, clarified the position of the RCC on the doctrine of justification. The crystallization of its once disparate views invigorated scholarship, which in turn shored up the connections of Catholic doctrine to medieval and classical scholarship.<sup>40</sup> Trent represents a departure from previous bulls and condemnations of heresies in that the council formulated an affirmation of Catholic teaching on

<sup>36</sup> The Council of Trent was counted as the nineteenth ecumenical council by the RCC, though admittedly not by the Reformers.

<sup>37</sup> González, *The Story of Christianity*, 121.

<sup>38</sup> Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 444.

<sup>39</sup> Alister McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, 2nd ed. (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 133.

<sup>40</sup> McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 133–34.



justification before moving on to condemn the views of the Reformers.<sup>41</sup>

The positive statement of justification set out by the Council of Trent consists of a view of justification centered on transformation, or infusion, rather than imputation. Thus justification consists of “a translation, from that state wherein man is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace, and of the adoption of the sons of God, through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Saviour.”<sup>42</sup> The Tridentine position on justification furthermore describes how believers “are not only reputed, but are truly called, and are, just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to every one as He wills, and according to each one’s proper disposition and co-operation.”<sup>43</sup> Thus the Council of Trent affirmed a position in direct opposition to that of the Reformers.<sup>44</sup>

The uncompromising opposition of Trent to the Reformers becomes even clearer in the canons on justification. Here the council anathematizes all who hold a view of justification seen as implying “that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the [sic] grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will.”<sup>45</sup> This canon and most of its companions are unveiled assaults on the Reformers’ understanding of justification. Yet McGrath points out a significant accomplishment of the Tridentine formulations in that they abandoned much me-

<sup>41</sup> McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 338. McGrath explains that the immediate result of the council was still a wide range of perspectives on justification.

<sup>42</sup> J. Waterworth, ed. & trans., *The Council of Trent: The canons and decrees of the sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent, 1547* (London: Dolman, 1848), 32.

<sup>43</sup> Waterworth, *The Council of Trent*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> Much of the distinction between Trent and the Reformers seems to have been in their definitions of justification, rather than its theological content. The RCC insisted at Trent that sinners received justice into themselves in justification and reduced sanctification to a part of justification (Waterworth, *The Council of Trent*, 34). Even at Trent there was a recognition, however, that the sanctifying element of justification was intended to increase in the believer (p. 37). This conflation of justification and sanctification is still extant in the contemporary *Catechism of the Catholic Church: with Modifications from the Editio Typica* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 535–36.

<sup>45</sup> Waterworth, *Council of Trent*, 45.

dieval language concerning justification in favor of more explicitly scriptural and Augustinian formulations.<sup>46</sup>

### The Second Vatican Council

The First Vatican Council, three hundred years after Trent, did nothing to improve the Catholic posture toward the Reformation's stance on JbF alone.<sup>47</sup> The Second Vatican Council (1962-65; Vatican II), however, represents a softening towards Protestantism, though not doctrinally, at least not directly. Instead, Vatican II eliminated barriers to discussion between Catholics and Protestants that had stood for four hundred years.<sup>48</sup> Dramatic socio-political changes in the RCC's environment led to a reevaluation of its ecclesiology and self-understanding. As a result, the RCC began to describe itself as (1) a communion, (2) the "people of God," and (3) a "charismatic community."<sup>49</sup>

Jaroslav Pelikan claims that the twentieth century sparked ecclesiological introspection across Christendom as the doctrine of the church developed into the conspicuous vehicle of the Christian gospel in a sense it never had before.<sup>50</sup> A renewed emphasis on the preeminence of Scripture and the responsibility of the church to proclaim served as another plank for ecumenical discussions as Catholics began making use of Protestant resources in "preaching and theology."<sup>51</sup> The RCC even admitted a certain degree of communion with non-Catholics in Vatican II.<sup>52</sup>

Another element that served to fuel the conciliatory nature of Vatican II was an *ad fontes* movement reminiscent of the one that birthed the Reformation.<sup>53</sup> This approach led to new insights and

<sup>46</sup> McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 133.

<sup>47</sup> Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 596. He calls Vatican I an "almost reactionary council in that it rejected innovative proposals of modernists in the church and tightened the control of tradition over biblical and theological scholarship."

<sup>48</sup> Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 596.

<sup>49</sup> McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 250-51.

<sup>50</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)*, vol. 5 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 282.

<sup>51</sup> Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture*, 5:309.

<sup>52</sup> Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture*, 5:312.

<sup>53</sup> James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought: The Twentieth Century*, vol. 2, 2d. ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000), 233. Sadly, in this case,

attitudes toward the role and authority of Scripture, along with various other changes of perspective for the RCC as concerned its place in the world.

One of the most important of these concerns the nature of the *Decree on Ecumenism*, which maintains that “one need not have an agreement on every theological opinion or doctrine as the necessary condition of unity among the churches.”<sup>54</sup> Other ecumenical elements were born during this period,<sup>55</sup> but Vatican II epitomizes the attitude of the RCC toward what it has begun to see as its wayward protestant children. Yet the discussion on justification was mostly sealed. That seal would soon melt under the heat of ecumenical fervor.

*The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*

The *JDDJ*, a conciliatory document on the doctrine of justification, was born of much discussion concerning the ecumenical inclinations discussed above surrounding Vatican II.<sup>56</sup> The opening paragraph of its preamble reads:

The doctrine of justification was of central importance for the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century. It was held to be the “first and chief article” (1) and at the same time the “ruler and judge over all other Christian doctrines.” The doctrine of justification was particularly asserted and defended in its Reformation shape and special valuation over against the Roman Catholic Church and theology of that time, which in turn asserted and defended a doctrine of justification of a different character. From the Reformation

most of the sources that ballooned in popularity were the older sources of the RCC.

<sup>54</sup> Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 246.

<sup>55</sup> For example, Livingston and McGrath both acknowledge the work of Hans Küng engaging Karl Barth on the topic of justification. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 247–48; McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 414–15. Küng argues that Barth’s Neo-orthodox conception of justification is compatible with Catholic doctrine. For another contemporary example of this sort of conciliatory work on justification, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Salvation as Justification and Theosis: The Contribution of the New Finnish Luther Interpretation to Our Ecumenical Future,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 74–82.

<sup>56</sup> See Joseph A. Burgess, ed., *The Role of the Augsburg Confession: Catholic and Lutheran Views* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) for an example of the sort of dialogues alluded to in the background leading up to the *JDDJ*.

perspective, justification was the crux of all the disputes. Doctrinal condemnations were put forward both in the Lutheran Confessions and by the Roman Catholic Church's Council of Trent. These condemnations are still valid today and thus have a church-dividing effect.<sup>57</sup>

The preamble's statement intends "to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ."<sup>58</sup> This common understanding does not seek to limit the individual characteristics of either of the subscribing groups, so a basic examination of their agreements and differences follows.

The nature of the agreements and disagreements contained within the *JDDJ* boil down to each side's estimation of justification as "an indispensable criterion, which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ."<sup>59</sup> The Lutheran church's criterion of justification does not differ essentially, though it may practically, from that of the RCC. Essentially both hold that "God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ."<sup>60</sup> This formulation of justification as forgiveness highlights two concerns from opposite sides in a complementary manner. The Lutheran conviction that forgiveness of sins comes totally of grace and not works coexists here with the Catholic conviction that forgiveness is accompanied by certain benefits that are directly associated with justification. The source of tension remains, if only subjugated to the point of union. The same approach unfolds concerning *JbF*.

Both sides likewise affirm a complementary understanding of justification as "by faith and through grace," in which

sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life. They place their trust in God's gracious

<sup>57</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 49. The validity of the condemnations refers most likely to the fact that the mutual anathemas had not been officially repudiated.

<sup>58</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 50.

<sup>59</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 53.

<sup>60</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 54.

promise by justifying faith, which includes hope in God and love for him. Such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works. But whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it.<sup>61</sup>

Here the Lutheran vision of faith as a gift from God that trusts in his work alone as the sole prerequisite for salvation meets the Catholic concern to keep love and good works somehow wedded to faith. Thus, the same sort of subterranean tension exists within the joint affirmation as one wonders how the unity will be sustained. For example, the explanation of the Catholic position that follows the above-cited passage states explicitly that “in justification the righteous receive from Christ faith, hope, and love and are thereby taken into communion with him.”<sup>62</sup> Does this statement mean that the Catholic proponents are smuggling in a righteousness that belongs to the believer prior to receiving justification, which is then the cause of it?

The *JDDJ* seeks to avoid a naive or facile marriage of the two perspectives in question by recognizing the incompleteness of the agreement embodied in the joint statement. While affirming the legitimacy and significance of the basic harmony concerning justification, the “remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification” between the two groups, while still significant, are acceptable.<sup>63</sup>

### Evaluation and Implications

The goal of the paper thus far consists in providing a long view, if only an overview, of the divide between Lutherans and Catholics on the doctrine of justification, particularly the matter of JbF. Previous sections are sprinkled with commentary, but the following one offers an evaluation of the *JDDJ* within its broader historical context by seeking to compare it with the spirit and theology of the Reformers. A plausible explanation of the current status of the justification debate between Lutherans and Catholics follows

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<sup>61</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 55.

<sup>62</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 55.

<sup>63</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 59. For further reading on the potential of the *JDDJ*, see Ted M. Dorman, “The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: Retrospect and Prospects,” in *Journal of The Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 3 (September 2001): 421–34.

the evaluation. Then some implications for ecclesiology are drawn from the justification debate.

*The Joint Declaration in Broader Historical Context*

The *JDDJ* succeeded in developing a statement concerning justification that large swaths of Lutherans and Catholics can agree on. The value of their persistent cooperation may payoff in further ecumenical developments accompanied by untold blessings of unity. None of these benefits, however, guarantee the truthfulness or historical fidelity of their endeavor. Serious concerns have been expressed as to whether or not the *JDDJ* accurately represents a historically Lutheran perspective on justification. The *JDDJ* does indeed represent historical Lutheranism well but maybe not in the way originally intended by the Joint Declaration.

While “the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding basic truths,”<sup>64</sup> the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church’s Missouri Synod raises questions as to what remains closed after this openness.<sup>65</sup> The Commission doubts that the historical differences between Lutherans and Catholics are given serious enough consideration in the *JDDJ*, which manifests itself in a loss of integrity on both sides.<sup>66</sup> Justification in the Lutheran tradition consists of a forensic declaration of righteousness by God on behalf of the sinner, while the Catholic tradition affirms justification as an effective transformation by which the sinner actually becomes righteous. In

<sup>64</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 59.

<sup>65</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective,” (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1999), 7, available at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=339>. The Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church is not a member of the Lutheran World Federation, which cooperated with the Vatican in producing the *JDDJ*. Also, the responses written to the *JDDJ* came from the Departments of Systematic Theology Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne and Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis. The copyright belongs to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, however, so the points made in the article are attributed to this Commission, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>66</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “Joint Declaration,” 7.

the Commission's estimation, this key difference remains unsettled in the *JDDJ*.<sup>67</sup>

The Commission also argues that the RCC has changed its understanding of justification since Vatican II without actually retracting its positions as laid out at the Council of Trent.<sup>68</sup> Yet, at a later point, written by a different group within the Commission, they maintain that "the statement that 'Christ is not a lawgiver in the manner of Moses' allows the traditional Roman evasion that the ceremonial but not the moral law is excluded from justification."<sup>69</sup> This position leaves the door cracked for the Catholic side to include works of the moral law in the requirement for justification alongside faith. As noted above, these sorts of tensions are evident throughout the *JDDJ* and may or may not represent an attempt to secure an underhanded doctrinal foothold. The affirmation that "whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it,"<sup>70</sup> however, makes the prospect of subterfuge unlikely.

The Commission also protests that in the *JDDJ*, "justification was demoted from its position of unique, overarching criterion to one among others" by the Catholic side.<sup>71</sup> In reality, justification as a criterion does possess a unique position for the RCC. The distinction for Lutherans, however, supersedes uniqueness in favor of exclusivity. As stated above, JbF represents a necessary but not sufficient criterion for unity between Lutherans and Catholics precisely because Catholics would include other criteria alongside justification, while JbF holds sway over all other criteria for Lutherans. Robert Kolb claims that for Lutherans, justification "is not merely a doctrinal concept; it cannot be reduced to merely a dogmatic statement on the page."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations, "Joint Declaration," 8. See also 17–19.

<sup>68</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations, "Joint Declaration," 10. If this is the case however, one wonders about the applicability of the Commission's previous critiques. If the RCC has actually shifted in some degree toward a Reformation understanding of JbF, then the affirmation of the *JDDJ* bears greater credibility and without either side sacrificing historical integrity.

<sup>69</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations, "Joint Declaration," 15–16.

<sup>70</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 55.

<sup>71</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations, "Joint Declaration," 16.

<sup>72</sup> Robert T. Kolb, "Contemporary Lutheran Understandings of the Doctrine of Justification: A Selective Glimpse," in *Justification: What's at Stake in the*

The Finnish Lutheran church, represented by Simo Kiviranta and Timo Laato, also offers some perspective on this point of the *JDDJ*. Kiviranta and Laato claim that “Luther and the Lutheran Confessions are unambiguous. When justification is taught purely, all other doctrines also ‘stand.’ But if justification is lost, the entire Christian heritage is in a deep state of depravity.”<sup>73</sup> On this view, they also question the role of justification as a criterion in the *JDDJ*, asking “where did it go?”<sup>74</sup> The concerns of the Lutherans represented here reflect Luther’s agreement with Melanchthon that they concede anything and everything necessary, except the gospel.<sup>75</sup>

Whether or not Luther’s gospel has been conceded in the *JDDJ*, however, proves a much more difficult matter to discern. As noted earlier, Melanchthon certainly associates the gospel directly with JbF, which makes it more likely that Luther does the same. But does that necessarily mean that JbF makes up the whole of the gospel for Luther and Melanchthon? Recognizing JbF as a key, or even the key, in the Christian gospel is not the same as concluding that they are one and the same thing. The language employed earlier may prove useful again here. JbF is a necessary element of the gospel, without which it would cease to be good news. That reality does not make JbF a sufficient element in and of itself to comprise the whole gospel.

But would Luther and Melanchthon have affirmed the *JDDJ* had it been offered to them? Though the answer to this question cannot be found, an argument can still be made towards answering it. Either one or both of them would have plausibly accepted the *JDDJ*. For Melanchthon, the *JDDJ* lines up favorably with his early thought, in which he sought to make allowances for a close connection between faith and good works. Beyond that, his conciliatory desires sometimes even put him at odds with Luther, so he may have desired such a statement.

*Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 166. The reason Kolb gives for this assertion is that “Justification is something that God does to a sinner.” This view helps to explain why Lutherans cannot let the criterion argument go.

<sup>73</sup> Simo Kiviranta and Timo Laato, “*JDDJ* and Its Official Discussion in the Finnish Lutheran Church: A Clarification or an Obscuration?” *Logia* 25, no. 1 (2016): 33.

<sup>74</sup> Kiviranta and Laato, “*JDDJ* and Its Official Discussion,” 37.

<sup>75</sup> Martin Luther, *The Letters of Martin Luther*, 225–27.



The argument for Luther's acceptance of the *JDDJ* mirrors the one for Melanchthon's acceptance somewhat. After all, Luther did agree with Melanchthon that they should concede anything and everything but the gospel itself for the sake of reconciliation with the RCC. Luther, however, was also the one who told Melanchthon that too much had already been conceded to the papists.<sup>76</sup> The argument may be supplemented, however, by applying a framework for understanding the role of doctrine as a means of demarcation between groups.

*Doctrine as Social Demarcation*

Space will not allow a thorough review of McGrath's understanding of doctrine, but some of his conclusions are certainly pertinent to the argument of this paper.<sup>77</sup> Essentially, McGrath sees doctrine as performing the social function of demarcating between Christian churches in the absence of other social markers such as geography or ethnicity. As pressures to preserve a self-identity intensify, churches use doctrines as tools to segregate themselves from churches they feel threaten their identity. He believes that understanding this function of doctrine can open vistas for "ecumenical rapprochement."<sup>78</sup>

In the context of this paper, McGrath's observation helps to envision the major difference between Luther and Melanchthon's context and the present discussion on justification. As McGrath says,

Ecumenical agreement on the doctrine of justification involves the recognition that doctrinal matters which were, as a matter of historical contingency, essential to the self-definition of either Lutheranism or Roman Catholicism at the time of the Reformation need no longer be regarded as

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<sup>76</sup> "I have received your *Apology*, and wonder at your asking how far one may yield to the Papists. For my part I think too much has been conceded. If they do not accept it, what more can we do," Luther, *The Letters of Martin Luther*, 225 (emphasis original).

<sup>77</sup> For more details on his understanding of doctrine as a means of demarcation, see Alister McGrath, *A Scientific Theology*. Vol. 3, *Theory* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 75–76. For a broader application of McGrath's theory, see Alister McGrath, *Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).

<sup>78</sup> Alister McGrath, *The Science of God: An Introduction to Scientific Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 192–93.

having this function. The self-identity of Lutheranism is no longer perceived to be shaped by this doctrine.<sup>79</sup>

Though McGrath may seem to downplay the importance of the doctrine of justification by applying a sort of relativism, he argues that the recognition of this social function “in no way weakens” the truth claims of the doctrine in question.<sup>80</sup>

In other words, the uncompromising division on both sides concerning the doctrine of justification in the sixteenth century had a social dimension that ought to be recognized and applied to the current justification debate.<sup>81</sup> Given the diminishing need for the doctrine of justification to play the role of social demarcator between Lutherans and Catholics, might Lutherans now lower their collective guards concerning the preeminence of justification as a criterion? Many already have, but, for now, there seem to be other kinks in the ecumenical project that would need to be addressed.

### **Ecclesiology: Sacraments and Ministry**

Tired of endless doctrinal skirmishes, much of the contemporary Christian church longs for the unity it surrendered in previous generations. Just as the widespread ecclesiological concerns of the twentieth century fueled the ecumenical spirit that gave rise to Vatican II, the current ecumenical work on the doctrine of justification demonstrates ecclesiological concern. The following are observations that aid in the further development of the above arguments concerning the Reformation conception of justification.

First of all, the role of justification in the Lutheran and Catholic conceptions of the sacraments further complicates any agreement that is reached on justification. JbF, as a necessary but insufficient condition for unity between the two churches, requires the acceptance of a system. As long as justification influences the Lutheran and Catholic understandings of the sacraments in different directions, unity for the two churches beyond the *JDDJ* will prove difficult.

On a similar note, justification plays a key role in the Lutheran understanding of the priesthood of the believer as well as the roles

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<sup>79</sup> McGrath, *The Science of God*, 192–93.

<sup>80</sup> McGrath, *The Science of God*, 192–93.

<sup>81</sup> For more information on the role doctrine played in demarcation between churches in the sixteenth century, see McGrath, *Genesis of Doctrine*, 44–46.

of Lutheran ministers. This position seems likely to clash with the highly developed concept of professional ministry employed in the RCC. As long as the Lutheran church insists on the priesthood of every believer and encourages ministers to marry, there will be a protracted conflict with a RCC that insists on penance and confession whilst denying marriage to its priests.

A glimmer of ecumenical hope exists on the front of ministry and sacraments in that Vatican II encourages the involvement of lay people in ministry within the church. Similarly, the willingness of the Catholic Church to begin using the vernacular instead of Latin for mass demonstrates the potential growing significance of Vatican II for ecumenism.

### Conclusion

A comparison of Luther and Melancthon serves as the beginning of the expressly Lutheran understanding of justification in this paper. The Council of Trent, Vatican II, and the *JDDJ* are used as snapshots along the doctrinal frontline between Lutherans and the RCC in order to better understand their interactions concerning JbF. The evaluation of this comparative analysis and its potential implications for ecumenism are accomplished in three sections above: an examination of the *JDDJ* in its broader historical context, the exploration of McGrath's "doctrine as social demarcator," and a discussion concerning the role of justification in Lutheran ecclesiology.

The research goal was to discover what a comparison between the *JDDJ* and the sixteenth-century discussion on justification reveals about the significance of justification in Lutheran doctrine. The willingness among Lutherans to preserve Luther and Melancthon's original conceptions of the doctrine of justification over time in the face of prolonged resistance demonstrates the importance and centrality of JbF. Furthermore, the research indicates that JbF is the distinguishing mark of the Lutheran church against the RCC. As is explained above, however, there are other distinguishing marks for the Lutheran church, such as their ecclesiology in general and their positions on the sacraments and the priesthood of all believers in particular. The thesis of the paper is thus affirmed: Luther's understanding of JbF represents a necessary but not sufficient condition for unity between Lutheran and Roman Catholic church bodies.

The Christian unity that has been widely pursued for much of the last century demonstrates the desire of the church to be made whole. Justification in both Lutheran and Catholic traditions has implications for wholeness. May the continued discussion lead to a deeper faith in Christ and broader unity in him.

## Watch with Me: The Pastors of Port William in the Writings of Wendell Berry

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Wendell Berry (b. 1934) has lived and farmed on Lane’s Landing in Port Royal, Kentucky, since 1964.<sup>1</sup> Educated at the University of Kentucky and Stanford University, he spent time in both Italy and France as a Guggenheim Foundation Fellow in the 1960s, followed by a teaching stint at New York University’s University College in the Bronx.<sup>2</sup> Upon returning to Kentucky, Berry taught at the University of Kentucky from 1964–1977 and 1987–1993 and, with his wife Tanya, purchased Lane’s Landing and expanded it for their farm to over 100 acres. During this time he has written poems, essays, and fiction, choosing not to specialize in one specific area but rather deciding that each genre functions in its own specific, and much needed, tool of choice.<sup>3</sup> His most famous

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<sup>1</sup> There is significant overlap between Berry’s life and that of Andy Catlett. See the timeline in Wendell Berry, *What I Stand On: The Collected Essays of Wendell Berry 1969-2017* (New York City: Library of America, 2019) 1:767–85; Matthew R. Horton, “‘Remembering’ the Wayward: Wendell Berry’s *The Wild Birds*, the Possibilities of Membership, and the Short-Story Cycle Genre,” *South Atlantic Review* 69.2 (2004): 51n3. Berry’s novel *Remembering* captures much of Andy’s life as well with some mirroring Berry’s life. See Wendell Berry, *Remembering: A Novel* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Biographical material adapted from Jane Margaret Hedahl Schreck, “Wendell Berry’s Philosophy of Education: Lessons from Port William” (PhD diss., University of North Dakota, 2013), 15, and *What I Stand On*, 1:767–85.

<sup>3</sup> When asked why, Berry responded, “All my work comes from my loves and hopes. My essays come from a desire to understand what I love and hope for and to defend those things; they pretty much constitute a single long argument in defense. This has sometimes been laborious and dutiful work and I have sometimes grown very tired of it. My work as a fiction writer and poet, in spite of the difficulties always involved, has been increasingly a source of pleasure to me—it is my way of giving thanks, maybe, for having things worthy of defense.” Wendell Berry, “Toward a Healthy Community: An Interview with

work—or infamous work, depending on the reader—is his 1977 book, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*. In the book, Berry argues that, among other things, good farming is a community and spiritual discipline that the agribusiness of today does not and cannot replicate.<sup>4</sup>

Berry's premise of community and agriculture are captured most pointedly in the fictional community of Port William. Port William, modeled after his hometown Port Royal, is a rural farming community that does not now remember "why it was built where it is, or when, or how."<sup>5</sup> The earliest document is a letter that Burley Coulter has which dates before the Civil War.<sup>6</sup> With the rarity of early documents about the town, Caroline Perkins believes this theme "underscores the importance among the people of Port William of keeping alive the memory of their ancestors through stories and the passing on of cultural wisdom that has accumulated over many generations. The origins of Port William itself may be lost in time, but the people continue in the awareness of a deep historical context."<sup>7</sup> It is in this theme that Berry captures the importance of belonging and remembering in the people who make up the "membership."

"The membership" refers to a group within Port William, that of farmers and townspeople, who are intimately connected with one another through work and life in general.<sup>8</sup> The membership

Wendell Berry," in *Conversations with Wendell Berry*, ed. M. A. Grubbs (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1997/2007). Quoted in Schreck, "Wendell Berry's Philosophy of Education," 17.

<sup>4</sup> The most recent edition is Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Wendell Berry, *A Place on Earth* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2001), 26. A helpful timeline can be found in Caroline Courtney Perkins, "Living Responsibly in Community: Wendell Berry's Port William Fiction" (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Dallas, 2000), 28–31.

<sup>6</sup> Berry, *Remembering*, 106–107.

<sup>7</sup> Perkins, "Living Responsibly in Community," 31.

<sup>8</sup> Horton observes, "Through friendships and marriages spanning several generations, the characters that populate this town strengthen their ties to each other. What results is the reciprocal coexistence of individual and communal health. Baker agreed that the Port William narratives 'demonstrate work as a calling, the bonds of neighborliness, the generational transmission of cultural knowledge, the love and care of place, and the relationship of personal growth with membership in community.'" Horton, "'Remembering' the Wayward," 27. He quotes from Bernard Baker, "Responsibilities at Home: Wendell Berry's

does not include just the living but also the dead, and D. Brent Laytham believes it is a theological motif connected with Paul's description of the church in 1 Corinthians 12.<sup>9</sup> Obtaining membership within "the membership" is something that is given rather than earned, where "belonging always comes as a gift."<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps one of the more vivid pictures of acquiring membership as a gift is found in the account of Elton Penn's purchase of Jack Beecham's land.<sup>11</sup> In the story "It Wasn't Me," Elton Penn, with the help of lawyer Wheeler Catlett, purchases the land once owned by Jack Beechum. Jack left behind two wills upon his death, and only one was recognizable by the law according to Wheeler, which meant that, although Jack intended to leave the property to Elton, the land was left to Clara Pettit, Jack's daughter, and her husband who do not live in Port William. Wheeler is faced with the obligation of the law to see that Clara receives what is rightfully hers, while also facing his obligation to Old Jack to "see to it" that the farm is cared for and preserved.<sup>12</sup> Despite Wheeler's attempt to persuade the Pettit's to give the farm to Elton and his wife Mary, an auction takes place. Elton has a limited amount of money, but with Wheeler's help he is able to purchase the land and "guarantee the line of succession on which their membership depends."<sup>13</sup> Thus, Elton becomes a permanent member of the Port William community then when he "sees how he can accept his place in the procession of inherited stewardship, promote the good of the land, and be enriched by what he receives in return."<sup>14</sup> The membership grows and, as a result, is stabilized.

Quest for the Simple Life," (PhD diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1992), 234.

<sup>9</sup> D. Brent Laytham, "The Membership Includes the Dead?: Wendell Berry's Port William Membership as *Communio Sanctorum*," in *Wendell Berry and Religion: Heaven's Earthly Life*, eds. Joel James Shuman and L. Roger Owens (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), 173.

<sup>10</sup> Laytham, "The Membership Includes the Dead," 174.

<sup>11</sup> Wendell Berry, *That Distant Land: The Collected Stories* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2004), 266–88.

<sup>12</sup> Horton, "Remembering the Wayward," 35–37.

<sup>13</sup> Horton, "Remembering the Wayward," 37. See also Richard P. Church, "Of the Good that has Been Possible in this World: Lawyering in Port William," in *Wendell Berry and Religion: Heaven's Earthly Life*, eds. Joel James Shuman and L. Roger Owens (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), 50–52.

<sup>14</sup> Horton, "Remembering the Wayward," 26.

But what is also stabilized is that of the “place,” that of Port William. Bernard Baker rightly comments that Berry does not necessarily have a nostalgia-like feel for an agrarian lifestyle for people, but “rather a pervasive sense of the loss of wholeness that occurs when human interdependence with nature is no longer keenly experienced, and no longer helps to determine individual action and public policy.”<sup>15</sup> Changes arrive in Port William in the area of abandonment, where people find it more difficult to make a living farming and leave for greener pastures outside of Port William.<sup>16</sup> The people who make up the “membership,” though, are not only connected together with one another with the work that they do, but also they are connected to the place itself.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, the emphasis upon “membership” and “place” stands in distinct contrast to the various pastors that appear in the Port William stories. Typically, when a pastor appears in Port William they never stay long, rarely visit the membership outside of a death within the group, and are neither portrayed nor viewed well by the characters. There is perhaps some overlap with Berry’s experience with pastors in Port Royal, with The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary roughly an hour drive, who attend school, do their pastoral responsibilities, graduate, and leave.<sup>18</sup> In personal correspondence, Kyle Childress remarks that the pastors were good and dedicated, but they did not enter into the community. The process of the pastor graduating and moving on occurred repeat-

<sup>15</sup> Baker, “Responsibilities at Home,” 320.

<sup>16</sup> Perkins, “Living Responsibly in Community,” 38.

<sup>17</sup> See the brief account of Nettie Banion in Wendell Berry, *The Memory of Old Jack* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 1999), 10–12.

<sup>18</sup> The Baptist Seminary of Kentucky was founded in 1996 and began after the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention. Tanya Berry helped start the seminary because, according to Wendell and Tanya’s daughter Mary, the community was unable “to get ministers out here who understood what we were trying to keep going. She, in response with other people, started this kind of alternative Baptist seminary.” John Pattison, “Episode 4: The Berry Center—An Interview with Mary Berry and Dr. Leah Bayens,” *The Membership: A Wendell Berry Podcast*, (MP3 podcast), iTunes, January 24, 2019, <https://www.membershippod.com/episodes/2019/1/24/episode-4-the-berry-center-an-interview-with-mary-berry-and-dr-leah-bayens>. For the history of the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, see “History & Partnerships,” <https://bsk.edu/history/>.



edly for the congregations in the area for generations.<sup>19</sup> The same occurs in Port William as well.

This essay examines how Wendell Berry portrays the pastor within the Port William world by examining each work that includes a pastor in the Port William storyline. The account is briefly retold, followed by an examination of how “the membership” interacts with the pastor. By examining the work of Berry's fictional world and the representation of the pastors therein, some implications will be drawn that will contribute to the pastoral theology of vocation and calling.<sup>20</sup>

### Brother Preston's Visit

Brother Preston is introduced in *A Place on Earth*, when Virgil Feltner is declared “missing in action” during World War II. It is a story, told in many different parts and different angles of grief, hope, and charity amongst the membership. *A Place on Earth* ultimately recounts how Mat and Margaret Feltner, Virgil's parents, Hannah Feltner, Virgil's wife, little Margaret, Virgil's daughter, and the membership grieve the loss of Virgil and how they press forward in their lives.<sup>21</sup>

News has finally spread throughout Port William that Virgil was declared “missing in action,” and the town, by that noon of Tuesday, has “quietly set the young man's life into the past tense of the town's consciousness. The town has begun to speak and think of him by the act of memory alone. To speak of him in the present tense becomes the private observance of his family—the enactment of their hope.”<sup>22</sup> Brother Preston arrives on Wednesday, walking in the rain through the town that has shut down because of the weather and, ominously, when he arrives at the Feltners he sees no sign of life there either. He is nervous, as indicated by the tendency that he cannot stand still after knocking on their door, but ironically is put at ease when Margaret Feltner answers the door and welcomes him inside. Brother Preston “senses that she

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<sup>19</sup> Kyle Childress, email message to author, March 17, 2021.

<sup>20</sup> I am omitting the potential discussion of Jayber Crow here for the sake of space, but more work could be done on examining how Jayber Crow embodies a pastor to the Port Williamites who regularly occupy his barbershop chair.

<sup>21</sup> See the helpful analysis by Jeffrey Bilbro, “A Form for Living in the Midst of Loss,” 89–105.

<sup>22</sup> Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 94.

has anticipated him, foreseen his coming and his purpose, but greets him now on her terms, not his."<sup>23</sup> When Margaret asks Nettie to call Mat in from the barn, Brother Preston once again feels the completeness of the Feltners and his own solitude while sitting in their home.

Out of the sound of her voice—not speaking to him now, remote from him—and out of the look and atmosphere of the room where he sits, there comes to him the sense of the completeness of this household, the belonging together of Mat and Margaret Feltner, the generosity of these people, in which there is maybe no need for him. He feels himself alone here. He is alone in his mission which, whole in itself, surrounds him with its demands, and isolates him. Uneasiness coming over him, a swift tremor, he thinks of the burden of his duty. And then, as though under the pressure of his own hand, he knows his old submission to the mastering of this duty, and knows he will do it.<sup>24</sup>

Brother Preston, Margaret, and Hannah wait and make small talk waiting for Mat to come from the barn, and Brother Preston looks closely at both Margaret and Hannah hoping, but also fearing, to know their thoughts of grief. Yet neither, it seems, expects to be comforted here. Hannah's face is composed and quiet, and Margaret shows no mark of grief. When Mat finally arrives the small talk resumes among them, with Brother Preston almost feeling as if he is failing at the duty which has brought him to the Feltner home, but then when a break in the conversation happens Brother Preston seizes on the opportunity and says, "My friends, I've come because I know of your trouble."<sup>25</sup>

From here Brother Preston continues in haste "like a man walking before a strong wind, moved no longer by his intention but by the force of what he is saying."<sup>26</sup> But as he continues with his hopeful words of encouragement his eyes become detached from his hearers, as if he is speaking from his pulpit, and he senses there is something "failing between" the Feltners and himself.

It is as though in the very offering of comfort to them he departs from them. And now he is hastened also by an ur-

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<sup>23</sup> Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 95.

<sup>24</sup> Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 96.

<sup>25</sup> Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 98.

<sup>26</sup> Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 98.

gency of haste. He feels that the force of his voice is turning back toward himself, that he is fleeing into the safe coherence of his own words, away from those faces shut between him and their pain. He speaks into the silence like a man carrying a map in a strange country in the dark.<sup>27</sup>

Mat only half listens at the beginning, and then finally tunes him out when he begins to think of the difficulty of the situation for Margaret and Hannah. Brother Preston continues to beckon them to think of the “Heavenly City” where the final hope abides. As he prepares to leave them, he looks again at Hannah and is reminded of Isaiah 40:7, and stands up abruptly to leave them with his words.

After leaving the Feltners, Brother Preston heads to the church where is the pastor and finds Uncle Stanley Gibbs there cleaning the building in preparation for the Wednesday-night prayer meeting. He walks down the aisle and sits on the bench near the pulpit and begins to reflect on the meeting he just had with the Feltners. To his dismay the meeting was not a conversation that he hoped it would be, but it was a sermon.<sup>28</sup>

That is the history of his life in Port William. The Word, in his speaking it, fails to be made flesh. It is a failure particularized for him in the palm of every work-stiffened hand held out to him at the church door every Sunday morning—the hard dark hand taking his pale unworn one in a gesture of politeness without understanding. He belongs to the governance of those he ministers to without belonging to their knowledge, the bringer of the Word preserved from flesh.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 98.

<sup>28</sup> Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 101.

<sup>29</sup> Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 101. In *Hannah Coulter*, Brother Preston suffers the same examination. “On Sunday morning and Sunday night and on prayer meeting night, which was Wednesday, we would go to church and receive, it might be, a true blessing of consolation from some passage of Scripture, from one of the good old hymns, or from being together. Brother Preston would struggle again with his terrible duty and need to bring comfort to the comfortless, to say something in public that could answer the private fear and grief that were all around him, and he would mostly fail. We would shake his hand at the door as we went out, trying, I suppose, to console him for his wish to help what only could be endured.” Wendell Berry, *Hannah Coulter* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2004), 46.

After sitting there for some time, Uncle Stanley returns and begins to prepare the fire for the evening. Stanley builds the fire, carries in two more buckets of coal, and sits down to rest “with utter familiarity toward the place”<sup>30</sup> Brother Preston, not wanting to appear rude or unfriendly, goes to sit back near the old man and, by keeping about four or five feet between them, hopes that the distance will keep the conversation to mere formalities so that he can leave in a few minutes. Of course, Uncle Stanley does not realize this gesture, and he quickly begins a conversation on the subject of one’s “call” in life with Brother Preston.

### **Brother Wingfare’s Prayer**

Brother Wingfare enters into the Port Royal story upon the passing of Old Jack Beechum in *The Memory of Old Jack*. Old Jack has passed away at the hotel where he was living since moving from the farm, and Mat Feltner finds him one morning in the rocking chair in his room.<sup>31</sup> Mat takes it upon himself to make the necessary funeral arrangements. He first notifies the membership of Jack’s passing, calls the undertaker, and finally Jack’s daughter and son-in-law, Clara and Gladston, who live in Louisville. In order to provide Clara and Gladston enough time to travel from Louisville, the funeral is arranged for two days after Jack’s passing. Mat reassures her he was taking care of the necessary arrangements. Finally, all that was left to do was to let the preacher know. To his surprise, Mrs. Hendrick had already notified Brother Wingfare, who was walking up to meet Mat at the moment Mat was beginning to leave his house.

Berry describes Brother Wingfare as a seminary student recently established in the Port William community, with his new wife, as “a pale, slightly plump, impeccable young man, very new to his profession, very eager to please both God and man, a difficulty of which he had not yet encountered either extreme.” Brother Wingfare did not know Old Jack, but states his sympathy for his loss of life and offers the encouraging phrase “the Lord knows of our affliction and is our refuge in the hour of trouble.”<sup>32</sup> Mat, of course, welcomes in Brother Wingfare, and Berry provides the

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<sup>30</sup> Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 102.

<sup>31</sup> Berry, *Old Jack*, 147.

<sup>32</sup> Berry, *Old Jack*, 150.

inner thoughts of Mat as he hold the screen door open for Brother Wingfare.

He wanted to like the boy, and felt somehow protective of his eagerness to serve, this shy, pale, painfully polite young fellow, so new and vulnerable, it seemed, to whatever might come next. And yet he was vaguely offended and put out to see him undertake upon any occasion the solemn presumptions of his office.<sup>33</sup>

Mat, then, puts his arm around the young man and begins to make the necessary arrangements for Jack's funeral.

After Mat begins to set the day for the funeral, he then begins to walk the preacher through the service arrangements. Mat insists upon a "simple graveside service, nothing else."<sup>34</sup> Berry notes that Mat knows he must be careful, because it is certainly not what Brother Wingfare expected. Mat tries to ease the apparent tension that has been formed in Brother Wingfare by leaning forward on his elbow and smiling at him, informing Brother Wingfare that Old Jack was not a churchly man, but one of unconfined righteousness who stuck with the membership until the end, did not like a lot of fuss made for him, and they wanted to honor that for him even now. Brother Wingfare senses the authority in Mat's voice that does not allow his mind to wander, but he knows that his seminary training has not prepared him for this event. "He was supposed to be the spiritual authority. But he knew that he was receiving orders. And he was afraid that he was taking orders."<sup>35</sup> Mat asks him to read Psalms 23, 24, 28, 90, 104, and 121. When he closes the Bible, Brother Wingfare asks if he wants any remarks, but Mat declines both the remarks and a prayer at the end. He invites the young preacher to stay for a meal, but Brother Wingfare denies and asks when Jack's family will arrive so that he may speak with them.

The day of Old Jack's funeral is bright, and Mat believes that everything is going according to the arrangements that have been made. There are a few chairs at the graveside, only three rows, and several men of the town are there in the back as well. His dealings with the Pettitt's have been cordial, but he is eager for the service to begin. Mat reasons that if he were to speak at the funeral, he

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<sup>33</sup> Berry, *Old Jack*, 150.

<sup>34</sup> Berry, *Old Jack*, 151.

<sup>35</sup> Berry, *Old Jack*, 151.

would mention the “fields beyond the grave,” but Brother Wingfare steps between the seated listeners and begins to read from the Psalms.

Everything is still going according to plan, and when Brother Wingfare reaches Psalm 121, “‘Good!’ Mat thinks, ‘Let him stop there and that will be fine.’”<sup>36</sup> The preacher, unfortunately, does not stop there and begins to pray.

“O Lord,” he says, “our gracious and merciful Heavenly Father, we are gathered here on this beautiful early autumn day to commit to thy hands the spirit and to the earth the body of our beloved father and kinsman and friend, Mr. Jack Beechum. O Lord, it is a sad and sorrowful journey that we must make to the graveside of our departed loved ones, but we know that thou hast provided comforts there to erase forever from our hearts the memory of our sufferings here.”<sup>37</sup>

Mat, Berry remarks, takes, for the first time, the prerogative as the oldest in the membership, and turns his back to the service and begins to gaze at the fields.

Brother Wingfare continues with the prayer, a rather long prayer, by telling the Lord that Old Jack was not a churchman and seldom attended, but that he is comforted to know, through conversations with Clara, that Old Jack trusted in Jesus Christ as his Savior. He speaks of the blessed relief that all any man must do to obtain eternal salvation is to believe in the saving power of Jesus Christ to escape the eternal torments of Hell, and that the hearers can find comfort knowing that Old Jack is now in heaven. Salvation is only attainable to the living, not to the dead, so there is still time for any present to believe, and Brother Wingfare exhorts his hearers to believe. He thanks the Lord for the grace given to the United States of America, the harvest that is happening now in the community, and the autumn day. “And having thus notified the Almighty of so much, the truth or error of which He presumably already knew, Brother Wingfare concludes by imploring special blessings upon the heads of the bereaved mourners in their hour of sorrow.”<sup>38</sup> Brother Wingfare pockets his Testaments, shakes

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<sup>36</sup> Berry, *Old Jack*, 159.

<sup>37</sup> Berry, *Old Jack*, 159.

<sup>38</sup> Berry, *Old Jack*, 160.

the hands of the Petitts, and the people begin to disperse as the funeral concludes.

### The Lives and Place of the People

Examining the stories of Brother Preston and Brother Wingfare allow us not only to draw some pointed conclusions about the lives of the Port William pastors, but of the membership as well. What is it about the Port William pastors that are so insufferable that, each time they appear, the reader expects some type of shortcoming or criticism by one from the membership?<sup>39</sup> For example, Burley Coulter sharply critiques Brother Preston's ministry in Port William in a letter to Nathan. While standing outside one day with Jayber Crow, Burley sees Brother Preston, "Brother Piston" as Burley calls him, make his way to the Feltner home, and Burley knows the speech that is coming. It appears that Brother Preston had already spoken the message to Burley, though Burley effectively tuned him out.

While he was having his say I sat there and thought my thoughts. Here in a way he'd come to say the last words over Tom. And what claim did he have to do it? He never done a day's work with us in his life, nor could have. He never did stand up in his ache and sweat and go down the row with us. He never tasted any of our sweat in the water jug. And I was thinking: Preacher, who are you to speak of Tom to me, who knew him, and knew the very smell of him?<sup>40</sup>

The point, I think, of Burley's comments is not so much that Brother Preston did not work with them down the tobacco rows nor that Brother Preston did not know Tom the way Burley did; rather, it is the lack of the pastoral responsibility to be among the people of the congregation.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> For example, see Berry, *Hannah Coulter*, 97.

<sup>40</sup> Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 104.

<sup>41</sup> Burley continues, "And there he sat in your granddaddy's chair, with his consolations and his old speech. Just putting our names in the blanks. And I thought: Preacher, he's dead, he's not here, and you'll never know what it is that's gone." Berry, *A Place on Earth*, 104.

Perhaps it comes from viewing the pastorate as professionalized that Berry is butting against.<sup>42</sup> Sean Michael Lucas aptly connects Berry's view of economics, science, and agriculture, to Berry's critique of the Christian church who is primarily focused on "ushering anemic souls in a disembodied state to 'the good place'" and failing to care for the here and now.<sup>43</sup> The professional ministry, as Lucas argues, is woefully inadequate because the professional minister "can do nothing else except religious ministry and thus does not contribute to the life of the community."<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the professional minister never stays but is mobile in that he is always looking to advance. "Young ministers, sent by their seminaries to train in rural places, never feel called to remain in a rural place, to unite their lives with others in the local community for life."<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, the progression of viewing a rural congregation, or even a youth group, as "training" for some bigger church or some better type of ministry is all too common and is a failure to the local church and the believers that make-up its membership.<sup>46</sup> The examples of Brother Preston and Wingfare provide here, I believe, the self-examination and reflection that is warranted. Indeed, as Childress has said, Berry helps ministers to "re-member our vocation—to become a member again of the body of Christ, the community of Christ, in a particular place."<sup>47</sup> This idea of becoming a member of the body of Christ and the community of Christ is what is lacking in the pastors of Port William.

There is a recurring event in both Brother Preston and Brother Wingfare's interaction with the Feltners. In both interactions between the preachers and the Feltners, each conversation takes place only during a time of grief. The first in the Port William

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<sup>42</sup> John Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*, Revised (Nashville: B&H, 2013).

<sup>43</sup> Sean Michael Lucas, "God and Country: Wendell Berry's Theological Vision," *Christian Scholar's Review* 32.1 (2002): 79.

<sup>44</sup> Lucas, "God and Country," 79.

<sup>45</sup> Lucas, "God and Country," 80. Lucas quotes Berry, "It is a fact that in the more than fifty years that I have known my own rural community, many student ministers have been 'called' to serve in its churches, but not one has ever been 'called' to stay."

<sup>46</sup> Lucas also notes the connection with Jayber Crow as, perhaps, Berry's ideal church as being a "community." See Berry, *Jayber Crow*, 205.

<sup>47</sup> Kyle Childress, "Remembering Our Vocation: Wendell Berry and Ministry" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Antonio, TX, 17 November 2016), 4.



timeline is Virgil's death with Brother Preston, and the second is the death of Old Jack with Brother Wingfare. There may have been instances when the ministers conversed with his parishioners outside of both grief and the church services, but Burley's critique suggests perhaps not.<sup>48</sup> It would do well for us to remember a central calling in the pastoral vocation is caring for souls outside of times of grief and personal turmoil. Harold L. Senkbeil urges the pastor to remember that "Jesus bled and died to purchase every one of those people as his own, and he has placed them into your care and keeping to tend them in his name and stead."<sup>49</sup> Thus, one should learn here from the pastors of Port William not to become isolated and secluded but to live among the people.

Furthermore, it would be prudent for the minister to intend to stay for the duration of their ministry, or unless the Lord calls them elsewhere. Berry's critique of ministers having felt the call to serve in a rural community's church but never feeling the call to stay is valid to an extent. Ministers should never view a rural community as the training ground for something greater on down the road, for that demeans the people and the mission of God within the local church. God can, and does, "call" someone away from the service of a particular congregation.<sup>50</sup> I do not think Berry's main criticism here is that a pastor leaves a congregation for another.<sup>51</sup> Rather, it appears that, still, the criticism is pointed at the pastor who stays only for a time, never involves himself in the lives of his people, and then leaves because he feels little connec-

<sup>48</sup> Burley's critique is primarily leveled at Preston's thoughts of the "Hereafter," but see Perkins for an explanation of Burley's remarks. Perkins, "Living Responsibly in Community," 61.

<sup>49</sup> Harold L. Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor's Heart* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), 77.

<sup>50</sup> "It is the leisure of the person who knows that every moment of our existence is at the disposal of God, lived under the mercy of God." Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2019), 51.

<sup>51</sup> An example may be the short story "A Desirable Woman" in *A Place in Time* was dedicated to Dave and Tanya Charlton who are longtime friends of the Berry family. Dave was a long tenured pastor at First Baptist Church of New Castle, KY and eventually left for the First Christian Church in Shelbyville, KY. Tanya has been the person who typed out Berry's manuscript onto the computer. In this account, the pastor and his wife are viewed here most favorably. It is excluded because the story takes place outside of Port William. See *A Place in Time: Twenty Stories of the Port William Membership* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2012), 48–68.

tion with them. Church history is filled with numerous pastor who stayed with the same congregation for an extended amount of time. But perhaps even better than those ministers who are known in church history are the ones that are only known to the Lord and to the congregation of whom that pastor faithfully served.<sup>52</sup> Within the world of Port William, a place where Berry imagines what a health place and thriving community would look like, there is one character that stands out almost as the model-pastor: Ptolemy Proudfoot.<sup>53</sup>

### Tol's Flock

Ptolemy Proudfoot, or Tol as he is affectionately known in Port William, married later in life to Miss Minnie, the local school-teacher.<sup>54</sup> One morning after breakfast Tol goes back to “the shop” when he hears the hens squawking out of fear from a chicken snake. Tol debated on catching the snake and letting him eat some mice, but the “cowsucker is a grouchy kind of snake,” and when Tol tried to grab his tail the snake coiled up and threatened to bite Tol’s hand.<sup>55</sup> After becoming frustrated, Tol grabbed “Old Fetcher,” his ten-gauge shotgun he inherited from his father, returned to the shop, and promptly shot a hole in the wall and missed the snake. After reloading it and setting it aside, visiting with his nephew Sam Hanks who came for a post hole digger, and turning to some work, Thacker Hample is seen walking up the ridge.

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<sup>52</sup> A good example of the unknown ministers can be found in Ian H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750–1858* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1994). Of course, it can be argued that just by Murray’s naming them provides some type of “notoriety,” but the fact is that these men likely have no other name recognition outside of this work. Reference is made to them because they were the pastor of the church at that time, and no other information is provided about them.

<sup>53</sup> For a helpful analysis of Port William, its health, and how the themes may be seen in higher education, see Jack R. Baker and Jeffrey Bilbro, *Wendell Berry and Higher Education: Cultivating Virtues of Place* (University Press of Kentucky: Lexington, KY, 2017).

<sup>54</sup> Wendell Berry, *That Distant Land* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2004), 25–37.

<sup>55</sup> Berry, *That Distant Land*, 79.

Thacker Hample, known as Nightlife, is in a figure of states as he ascends on Tol's land and grabs the shotgun.<sup>56</sup> The fit came on when Nightlife went to the Goforth Church for their annual revival and took it upon himself to arrange the service for the third night. When Nightlife told the preachers of his plans and they indicated the service would go on as they planned, Nightlife "threw a reg'lar fit," flung down his Bible, threw open his arms with a loud and contemptuous laugh, and told the young preachers that it was Jesus's church and not theirs. Tol was elected to deal with Nightlife, since he was the biggest and kindest, and he convinced Nightlife to go home. Now that Nightlife had Tol's shotgun, Tol knew better than to try and confront him in the state he was in, so Tol begins to follow him looking for the opportunity to help when it was possible.<sup>57</sup> During the journey Tol is joined by five other men who "are bound to Nightlife and to each other by blood and land and history."<sup>58</sup> They follow him for twenty-four hours before the situation finally resolves itself and Tol is allowed to preach the sermon he wanted to give in the Goforth Church, and they all gather to eat breakfast at Tol's house.

Throughout this story Tol is seen as the model pastor, carefully following Nightlife as he goes through his state of fit. The reader is provided a glimpse of Nightlife's sermon; Nightlife "wanted to tell what it was like to be himself,"<sup>59</sup> and the text he chose was Matthew 18:12.<sup>60</sup> Nightlife understood it from the viewpoint of the sheep "who could imagine fully the condition of being lost and even the hope of a rescue, but could not imagine rescue itself."<sup>61</sup> He continues,

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<sup>56</sup> "They called Thacker Nightlife on the theory that he could not tell daylight from dark, and was therefore liable to conduct his nightlife in the daytime." Berry, *That Distant Land*, 82.

<sup>57</sup> "Tol had thought of calling out to Nightlife, but had rejected the thought. The presence of Old Fetcher made it hard to know what to say. Tol had known Nightlife as long as Nightlife had been in this world to be known, but when one of his spells was on him, Nightlife was a stranger to everybody. There was no telling, then, what he might or might not do." Berry, *That Distant Land*, 85–86.

<sup>58</sup> Perkins, "Living Responsibly in Community," 85.

<sup>59</sup> Berry, *That Distant Land*, 78.

<sup>60</sup> How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeks that which is gone astray?

<sup>61</sup> Berry, *That Distant Land*, 121.

“Oh, it’s a dark place, my brethren,” Nightlife said. “It’s a dark place where the lost sheep tries to find his way and can’t. The slopes is steep and the footing hard. The ground is rough and stumble and dark, and overgrown with bushes and briars, a hilly and a holler place. And the shepherd comes a-looking and a-calling to his lost sheep, and the sheep knows the shepherd’s voice and he wants to go to it, but he can’t find the path, and he can’t make it.”

The others knew that Nightlife knew what he was talking about. They knew he was telling what it was to be him. And they were moved.<sup>62</sup>

Tol, then, represents the pastor as he carefully walks and follows after Nightlife. The five men with him, who are bound together with Nightlife, are a mix of people with some who enjoy the company and want to be there and other who, at times, do not want to be there or enjoy the company. Yet, Tol is patient with them as he models the pastor following the one who is lost. The story climaxes at the end with a type of baptism (the rainstorm), followed by the sermon, and then a type of communion (the meal) at the end.<sup>63</sup> Tol models well the idea that a minister is always on duty.<sup>64</sup> Yet, he is bound to Nightlife through blood, land, and history. The pastor would do well to watch and see Tol’s example and heed the implied warnings from Brother Preston and Wingfare.

### Conclusion

This article began with an emphasis on the idea of “place” and “membership” within the world of Port William. Families in Port William stay, commit themselves to the place and people there, work together, eat with one another, and live in their community. The people who make up the membership are bound together with the work of the land, by family, and by life. What unites them together is Port William, and the way of the rural lifestyle.

Yet, the pastors who occupy the pulpit within the community never quite understand the way of life. Brother Preston, as well-meaning as he could be, did not live within the community and

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<sup>62</sup> Berry, *That Distant Land*, 121–22.

<sup>63</sup> I am indebted to Kyle Childress for this connection.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2008), 192.

among the people. He appears to be more of an outside observer who speaks into the lives of the people during church services or at the death of someone, but nothing more. Brother Wingfare takes it upon himself to offer more than what is requested by Mat Feltner at Jack Beechum's funeral and, by default, does not pay honor to Old Jack or others from the membership. It also appears that Brother Wingfare does not live among the people either, given the fact that he does not know Jack or that he almost takes offense with Mat's request. Tol, on the other hand, provides the best example of what Berry envisions how a pastor should serve: he serves carefully, gently, and faithfully among the community, because he is in the community and has committed to staying.



## The Southern Baptist Convention and World War II

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### Introduction

On December 7, 1941, the world changed when the United States was attacked at Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces.<sup>1</sup> The following day, the United States officially declared war on Japan. On December 11, Germany and Italy reacted to this declaration by entering the fight against the United States, the United States also declared war on these two countries.<sup>2</sup> People across the United States grew angry over the attack at Pearl Harbor. How would religious leaders react from the pulpit? Denominations worldwide were faced with a challenging task, ultimately finding themselves having to discuss the problem and reality of evil. One denomination that voiced its opinion was the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

### The Southern Baptist Convention's Reaction to Pearl Harbor and the United States' Entrance into World War II

With a membership of over five million in 1940, the SBC was one of the largest Protestant denominations in the world and the largest in the United States.<sup>3</sup> One prominent figure who addressed the attack on Pearl Harbor was George Truett, who then served as the pastor for the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. On December 14, 1941, Truett addressed his congregation in a sermon titled, "The Lord Reigneth." He immediately opened up his sermon preaching: "Our situation undoubtedly calls for a fresh re-

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<sup>1</sup> This article was drawn from the author's 2018 PhD dissertation completed at University of the Free State, South Africa, and he extends special thanks to his doctoral supervisor, Dr. Dolf Britz.

<sup>2</sup> David Kennedy, *The American People in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 98–99.

<sup>3</sup> Social Service Commission, "Embezzlement of Power," Annual SBC 1941, May 14–18, 1941, 448, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1941.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1941.pdf).

examination by us all, of all our standards and ways of life. Especially do our hearts need to be searched to the depths as to the motivations that actuate us in our response to and participation in the world situation, as we have it on us now.”<sup>4</sup>

Truett recognized that feelings of anger and revenge were prevalent in his church. He understood patriotism was going to grow, and he even encouraged it. He stated, “A man who doesn’t love his country is in a bad fix, and his country’s in a bad fix to have such a man around.” For Truett, patriotism was what made Americans so special, and he felt that patriotism was connected to religious freedom and democracy. The opposing forces of the Axis powers were anything but lovers of liberty. Freedom was at war with tyranny. Truett stated, “The domineering, tyrannical reign of a few over the vast masses, the destruction of freedoms more precious than life are involved in this great conflict: freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of religion. Freedom, freedom in its noblest sense.” Truett believed Nazism and the Japanese led by their emperor were a direct threat to America and all of its ideals. He argued that his church needed to find refuge in God. He felt his church could find peace in God and his sovereignty on the earth. He preached, “We are under God, we’re under His authority, we’re under His dominion, we’re under His guidance and government, and He governs by great principles and righteousness.”<sup>5</sup> While the future was unknown in 1941, Truett felt confident that God would overcome the darkness.

Truett was not the only member with strong opinions on entering the conflict. At the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1942, Chas A. Jones called the Convention to urgent prayer. Jones served the denomination as the general secretary and released the following statement:

The seriousness of the world situation has not abated but has grown worse. Our own nation has been forced into active participation in this terrible war by the sinister attack of the Japanese upon Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. And

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<sup>4</sup> George Truett, “The Lord Reigneth” (sermon, First Baptist Church of Dallas, Dallas, TX, December 14, 1941), available at <http://digitalcollections.baylor.edu/cdm/search/collection/fa-gwt>.

<sup>5</sup> Truett, “The Lord Reigneth.”



today the United States is engaged in an all out war to protect its own people and its democratic principles.<sup>6</sup>

Jones appeared optimistic and assured the people that God's "blessing" could fall upon the United States if the country was willing to embrace him as the ultimate Creator and King. Comparing ancient Israel to the United States, Jones explained the nation could be under "judgment for their overall lack of faith."<sup>7</sup> Jones portrayed the consensus as individuals and the country, in general, should be repentant and seek to honor and worship God.

The SBC made plans to establish "Christian leaders" in schools and churches throughout the world once the war was over to teach the principles of Christianity. The convention was adamant that these moral principles tied to Christianity could drastically change one's "ideals and influence one's overall character."<sup>8</sup>

While looking toward the future was admirable, the fact remained that the war was far from over. The SBC found itself suffering, especially in foreign missions. Overseas missions were severely impacted in 1942 when the Japanese placed several SBC missionaries in "prison or internment" camps throughout China and the Philippines.<sup>9</sup>

With their nation at war and some of their fellow church members imprisoned, tensions grew both in the church and across the nation as many Americans became extremely hostile towards the Japanese due to Pearl Harbor. According to the Home Mission Board of the SBC, Jesus Christ was the answer to all of the world's problems. In the 1942 annual meeting, the Home Mission Board declared, "If there ever was a period in world history when we needed light—divine light—it is today. The world is in spiritual darkness. Christianity is face to face with two inexorable facts—force and suffering."<sup>10</sup> As a Christian body, the denomination felt

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<sup>6</sup> Chas A. Jones, "Call to Prayer for a Just and Righteous Peace," Annual SBC 1942, May 16–20, 1942, 45, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1942.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1942.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Jones, "Call to Prayer for a Just and Righteous Peace," 45.

<sup>8</sup> Jones, "Call to Prayer for a Just and Righteous Peace," 45.

<sup>9</sup> Foreign Mission Board, "Missionaries in Prison and Internment in China and Manila," Annual SBC 1942, May 16–20, 1942, 170, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1942.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1942.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Home Mission Board, "Christ is the Answer," Annual SBC 1942, May 16–20, 1942, 252, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1942.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1942.pdf).

its obligation was to honor God in all aspects of life. Likewise, the SBC realized it must pray earnestly for peace.

### **Prayer for Just and Righteous Peace**

With war a reality, humanity needed to rely on faith. Faith connected to peace and peace connected to God's standard of living. In 1942, the SBC released six focal points for a *Just and Righteous Peace*:

1. The hour calls for deep searching of heart on the part of individuals and nations that we may discover wherein we have departed from God's way.
2. The hour calls for deep penitence and prayer for divine forgiveness for our sins both individual and corporate. When will nations come to know that "Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34)
3. The hour calls for unwavering faith in the power of God to change the hearts of men and to guide in the affairs of nations. The hope of a new world order, more in keeping with God's plan, is to be found in individual regeneration by the Holy Spirit through faith in the atoning death of Christ. Only redeemed men can build a Christian social order. As God's people we need to give more earnest heed to Christ's command: "Seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness." He promises the necessary material blessings to those who make it their supreme life purpose to establish his kingdom and righteousness upon the earth.
4. A just and righteous peace must provide for spiritual, intellectual, political and economic freedom. And we reaffirm our age-long contention that the complete separation of Church and State is absolutely necessary to spiritual liberty. These freedoms are not favors to be granted but are God-given and inalienable. And we plead that the liberties shall be guaranteed to all peoples.
5. As a great Christian body we must prepare our people to play their part intelligently in the new order which must follow this war. Our churches and our Christian schools must give the world a better leadership for the new day ahead.

The world sorely needs leaders of Christlike character, with Christian ideals and motivated by Christian principles.

6. We would call upon our own people and upon all true Christians everywhere to join us in prayer and most earnest endeavor to bring these things to pass, so far as they are consistent with the will and purpose of our God.<sup>11</sup>

Righteous peace could only come from God. Southern Baptists knew individuals and entire nations needed to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ. A common theme appeared, which was “Christ or Chaos.” Peace was only in Jesus Christ. The Axis forces symbolized chaos and darkness. While acknowledging the darkness prevalent in the world, the SBC sought to confront the Axis forces. Part of engaging the Axis forces meant facing them on the battlefield, though the question remained: Could a great Christian body justify war?

### **An Argument for War**

While the SBC accepted the fact that their nation was at war, could the denomination condone military force against the Axis powers? By 1942, the SBC taught that their God must confront the darkness. The SBC presented three main arguments to defend the use of military force. First, it was widely believed God’s will would be carried out on earth regardless of the situation. Second, the SBC felt religious freedom and democracy were worth fighting for. In fact, the SBC felt religious freedom must be defended, or their religion could cease to exist. Third, the SBC and many of its members felt their nation had an obligation to assist governments that could not protect themselves.

### **Man’s Freedom & God’s Will**

C. P. Herring, a North Carolina SBC pastor, taught that God’s will was connected to the current conflict. In an article titled “Why God Does Not Stop the War,” Herring wrote, “It is not difficult to see that war is out of harmony with all that we know about God and his will for mankind.” Herring explained his God

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<sup>11</sup> Chas A. Jones, “Call to Prayer for a Just and Righteous Peace,” Annual SBC 1942, May 16–20, 1942, 45–46, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1942.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1942.pdf).

“was good, merciful, filled with righteousness and loving.”<sup>12</sup> He said God was not a dictator and allowed his creation to act according to free will. He wrote:

Men are not machines, but moral beings. They are free to choose their own war, and accountable for their choices. This freedom makes it possible for them to be patriots or traitors, heroes or cowards, according to the right or wrong use of their freedom. Furthermore, the power to choose good or evil is an essential factor in man's capacity for fellowship with God; even as his choice of good is an essential factor in qualifying him for such fellowship.<sup>13</sup>

War taught many valuable lessons. Most importantly, destruction was possible if humanity ignored God and his ways. Mankind was dead in their sin (Rom 3:10–11) and needed God for anything good or righteous to occur. Instead of blaming the war on “politics, or economics,” Herring explained the world needed to take accountability. He wrote, “The trouble, therefore, is not with systems, but with man who in their selfishness, greed, and godlessness make and sustain them (political, economic disasters).”<sup>14</sup> Herring’s view argued mankind’s free will and lack of obedience to God and his ways caused destruction and war. Instead of blaming God for not stopping the war, this pastor asserted humanity was to obey God to avoid conflict. While the Christian God was loving and filled with righteousness, a lack of faith and obedience would result in judgment from their holy Creator.

George Truett believed firmly that God’s will was carried out during this Great War. In his sermon titled “What We Do and Do Not Know About This Earthly Life,” he preached, “What need we have now of patient submission to God and for the constant appeal of our deepest hearts to Him, for His light and His leading.” Truett emphasized that one needed to surrender all aspects of their life to God. World War II indeed challenged everyone, yet this was no excuse to ignore God, his ways, and his will. He stated, “We are not to quarrel with God. We are not to contend with

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<sup>12</sup> C. P. Herring, “Why God Does Not Stop War,” *Biblical Recorder*, July 8, 1942, available at <http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Wakeforest/default.aspx#panel=search&search=11>.

<sup>13</sup> Herring, “Why God Does Not Stop War.”

<sup>14</sup> Herring, “Why God Does Not Stop War.”

God.” Truett argued one must constantly pray and rely on God in times of uncertainty. Complete submission to God’s will was the only hope one had. If one trusted God in all aspects of life, a sense of peace would overcome them; fear could cease to exist. He preached,

We are to seek above all to find out His will and our prayer day and night is, must be, Let God defend the right. And we can pray that prayer with all conscientiousness. And we can commit to ourselves, submit ourselves, yield ourselves with unresisting and unreserved commitment to Him, unafraid because His will is always right, and better still, His will is always safe and always best for us, whatever it may be.<sup>15</sup>

For Truett, God was sovereign and would carry out his will against sin. He urged his congregation to “pray for what was right” in the sight of God, not man. For many, what was right, was what the Americans stood for, freedom of religion and democracy.

### **Religious Freedom and Democracy**

At the 1942 annual convention, the Home Mission Board felt America and its ideals were at war with the Axis powers and their ways. It was stated, “If the Axis powers win, then totalitarianism will dominate the world. This ideology defies the state and enslaves the individual. In such a world Christianity would have no place, and the missionary who carries to the world Christianity would have no place, and the missionary who carries the Gospel of redeeming grace to lost men would find every door in the world closed.”<sup>16</sup> The Home Mission Board felt the civilized world was at stake. According to them, the United States and its allies were the only hope the world had if peace prevailed. On this, they emphasized, “We fight for the rights of mankind. For all that has been secured for us in the struggle of the past two thousand years.”<sup>17</sup> It was apparent; this war was not just American democra-

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<sup>15</sup> George Truett, “What We Do And Do Not Know About This Earthly Life” (sermon, First Baptist Church of Dallas, Dallas, TX, July 12, 1942), available at <http://digitalcollections.baylor.edu/cdm/search/collection/fa-gwt>.

<sup>16</sup> Home Mission Board, “Christ is the Answer,” Annual SBC 1942, May 16–20, 1942, 252, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1942.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1942.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Home Mission Board, “Christ is the Answer,” 252.

cy against Nazism. For the SBC, this war was necessary for the mere existence of Christianity.

Like the Home Mission Board, the Social Service Commission (SSC) of the denomination had strong opinions on the war. The SSC was confident in the future, releasing the following statement: “No Red Cross ambulance, no hospital, no church building is free from the attacks of dropping bombs and rolling tanks. We did not start this war but now it is ours. We will end it.”<sup>18</sup> Feeling forced into the conflict, the SSC felt there was no other way to end the war except to fight it until the end.

This group felt Christianity was at stake and required a defender. Communism, Nazism, and the dictatorship of the Axis forces could very well destroy the Christian religion. The SSC declared,

Truths to be potent and powerful must have leaders who are willing to fight, and, if need be, die in their defense. Let us, therefore, as a great religious organization not sit idly by and expect God to win this war or rebuild our civilization at its triumphant end. God left the cause of Christianity in the hands of men; and God expects to this day that men and women, upright, fearless, brave and strong, will carry on the cause of Christianity in the perpetuity of our civilization.<sup>19</sup>

The SSC justified war. A conflict of good versus evil was underway. However, God’s will and the fight for religious freedom were not the only justifications for war. Many leaders felt foreign policy, or a lack of American involvement had led to the ongoing conflict.

### **Helping Defenseless Nations**

Another just cause for war was assisting those who could not help themselves. George Truett and John Sampey both held to this position. Both leaders criticized their nation’s involvement in Europe following the First World War. Both figures felt their country left Europe too early and left the continent vulnerable to another Great War. The SBC also remained critical of US trade

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<sup>18</sup> Social Service Commission, “A Democratic War,” Annual SBC 1942, May 16–20, 1942, 91, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1942.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1942.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Social Service Commission, “Truth Must Have Defenders,” 91.

relations with Japan. Truett challenged his congregation with the following scenario:

If you and I were out here in the street and saw some bullying, braggart, boastful man trampling a helpless little woman, or a helpless little child and you and I should fold our hands and say, "I don't believe in war, I don't believe in interfering in other people's business," and let the child be slaughtered and the woman destroyed, manhood has left us, that's all. We have to have regard.<sup>20</sup>

Truett felt the United States could have prevented World War II by not leaving Europe. He was not alone in his thinking; Sampey maintained, "The United States was unprepared for the attack by Japan."<sup>21</sup> Allowing the Japanese to control much of East Asia and allowing them to bully the Chinese and other defenseless nations caused a conflict that would occur no matter what.<sup>22</sup> At the 1940 annual convention, the SBC taught blood was on America's hands for supplying the Japanese with oil and weapons. It was stated, "One of the things most distressing to all Christians and all other peace-minded citizens in America, is that most of the munitions and munition materials used in Japan in her ruthless invasion and butchery of China have gone to Japan from America."<sup>23</sup> The SSC remained concerned,

Since that time the shipment of arms, munitions and munition material to Japan could have been controlled, could have been stopped, and our government can give no excuse for the continuation of a policy that allows this traffic to continue whereby America remains the source of death-dealing missiles and materials to be used by an imperialistic and ruthless nation against a peace-loving nation of democratic ideals. Such a policy ought to cease without delay.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Social Service Commission, "Truth Must Have Defenders," 91.

<sup>21</sup> A. Ronald Tonks, *Duke McCall: An Oral History* (Nashville: Field, 2001), 46.

<sup>22</sup> Tonks, *Duke McCall*, 46.

<sup>23</sup> Social Service Commission, "War and Peace," Annual SBC 1940, June 12–16, 1940, 87, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1940.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1940.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Social Service Commission, "War and Peace," 87.

Studying such positions was alarming for Americans, as the writing was on the wall that a great conflict would likely occur. In Europe, the continent was vulnerable to a massive conflict, as was Asia. The United States failed in their foreign policy after World War I, and this continued into the 1930s, when the United States continued supplying the Japanese with items to further their destructive military campaign. Valuable lessons were learned. Democracy was at odds with totalitarianism. Small defenseless nations needed strong powers to defend them as they could not defend themselves. Ignoring foreign affairs made the world a ticking time bomb. If the SBC could learn one lesson from World War II, it would be choosing either *Christ or Chaos*.

### Follow Christ

Following the death of Truett, the new leader at the pulpit for the First Baptist Church in Dallas was W. A. Criswell. Criswell became the ideal replacement for Truett in the First Baptist Church. Like Truett, Criswell held strong opinions regarding the war overseas.

Preaching in December 1944, Criswell urged his people to “repent of their sin” and find their “way back to God.”<sup>25</sup> The preacher insisted humility was the key, as there was a need for hope and peace in the world. Criswell insisted that the “President, military leaders, legislators, senators, and all leaders must humbly seek God’s will if they wanted to have everlasting peace and victory in the war overseas.”<sup>26</sup> Referencing how widespread war propaganda was at the time, Criswell stated the following regarding his favorite cartoon:

I have seen many cartoons in this war, but the most impressive cartoon I have seen in this war was one of Uncle Sam down on his knees at the mourners bench, with his hands clasped and his head bowed, and underneath my text: “If My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their

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<sup>25</sup> W. A. Criswell, “The Way Back to God,” (sermon, First Baptist Church Dallas, December 31, 1944), available at <https://www.wacriswell.com/sermons/1944/the-way-back-to-god/?keywords=way+back+to+god+1944>.

<sup>26</sup> Criswell, “The Way Back to God.”



wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”<sup>27</sup>

Criswell challenged his congregation to examine their hearts; he “challenged his church and informed them that their nation was affected by sin like any other country on earth.” His solution was simple, return to God, repent and “seek Him,” and the nation could “survive the evil it faced.” Comparing the United States to Sodom and Gomorrah, Criswell warned his people that they must “walk side by side with Jesus Christ and humble themselves to have any hope in the ‘war-torn’ world.”<sup>28</sup>

In 1945, with the war slowly coming to an end, Criswell stated, “We are paying in blood, in toil, in tears, and in death. But, young people, there is another and a new day coming. We have learned at so great a price a lesson we shall never forget.”<sup>29</sup> Criswell informed his congregation that without Christ, disasters would continuously happen in their own country. The message was clear: God would not forget their sins, and America was just as guilty as other nations.

### **Moral Evil & the Post War-World**

In August 1945, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on the nation of Japan. Combined with the mass casualties carried out by the US Army in constant air raids, hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians lost their lives.<sup>30</sup> One thing was evident: the atomic bomb and the devastation that it caused forever changed the world. Warfare changed with this new weapon of mass destruction. Humankind was confused when faced with the reality of war and evil. Not only did the atomic bomb shock the world, but the fact that millions of Jews were also exterminated simply because of their race was a challenge every soul was faced with considering. Racism was prominent across the globe, even in the United States.

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<sup>27</sup> Criswell, “The Way Back to God.”

<sup>28</sup> Criswell, “The Way Back to God.”

<sup>29</sup> W. A. Criswell, “Victorious Surrender,” (sermon, First Baptist Church Dallas, January 21, 1945), available at <https://www.wacriswell.com/sermons/1945/victorious-surrender/?keywords=vctorious+surrender+1945>.

<sup>30</sup> Kennedy, *The American People in World War II*, 424.

## World War II and Its Influence on Civil Rights

Aware of the blatant racism occurring globally towards Jews, in 1945, the Southern Baptist Convention addressed the issue of racial equality. At the time, approximately nine million Baptists resided in the southern portion of the country. The SBC noted that out of these nine million Baptists, over three million were African American.<sup>31</sup> Under the name of Jesus Christ, the SBC sought to establish a relationship with their fellow Christian brethren. The denomination knew this was no easy task as segregation was prevalent and a way of life.

In the annual meeting of 1945, the SBC addressed racial discrimination towards African Americans. For instance, the Convention declared education should be “equal” for African Americans compared to white children. Additionally, the Home Mission Board said political freedom and “fairness” should be established within the African American community. Likewise, the Board declared that African Americans should have the right and opportunity to serve in all military branches. The Convention set additional goals for African Americans in “employment services, civil justice, and housing.”<sup>32</sup>

The conclusion was that if the Convention was to bear the fruit of Jesus Christ, then the SBC needed to address inequalities. While such ideas were admirable, not everyone shared the same sentiment. The Civil Rights era would not come to fruition for several more years. Nevertheless, the convention knew racism was at odds with their Christian Bible, including the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Due to the racism in the United States as well as the intentional extermination of Jews and other groups by Nazi Germany, the SBC could no longer ignore racial inequality. On issues such as race, the *Statement of Principles of Peace* played an integral part in the denomination.

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<sup>31</sup> Home Mission Board, “Epochs of Home Mission,” Special Meeting 1945, 247, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1945.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1945.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Home Mission Board, “Epochs of Home Mission,” Special Meeting 1945, 247, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1945.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1945.pdf).

### Statement of Principles

Presented in the annual Convention of 1944, the *Statement of Principles of Peace* sought to define the SBC's overall mission.<sup>33</sup> It served as a foundation for the beliefs and principles the denomination tried to teach across the world. In 1944, the tenets were:

1. We believe that the command of Jesus, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” is a condemnation of the policy of isolation on the part of any nation. No nation is justified in seeking to separate itself from the rest of the world—its needs, its problems or its life. We are inevitably members one of another.
2. Believing that God has created all men free and equal and has given to them certain inalienable rights which must ever be respected, we assert the right of all nations, both great and small, to self-government, and the obligation of the strong to protect the weak, whether small nations, racial minorities, or underprivileged peoples, in the exercise of their God-given freedom.
3. In order to guarantee security for all nations against aggression, invasion or attempted domination by any other nation, we believe an international organization should be set up which by economic sanctions, or if necessary, by police force, shall restrain any such attempt.
4. Believing in the worth of every individual, we deplore race prejudices and hatreds as undermining the respect to which every individual is entitled and as destroying the spirit of good will, which must be the foundation of enduring peace. This is true whether we consider racial tensions in our nation or in international relationships.
5. Many nations are retarded in their development because of poverty and lack of economic opportunity. The erection of tariff barriers for the protection and enrichment of stronger nations may be a serious hurt to weaker nations as military invasion.

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<sup>33</sup> Executive Committee, “Southern Baptists and World Peace,” Annual SBC 1944, May 16–18, 1944, 149, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1944.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1944.pdf).

6. Every principle of Christianity and democracy demands the right of every individual to freedom of worship and the right to follow the dictates of his own conscience in respect to religion. The historic position of Baptists requires that we shall in all ways and at all times be apostles of absolute religious liberty for all mankind. This includes both the right to worship and also the right to evangelize and teach. Religious liberty is an inherent right and is not a privilege granted by governments. We must continue to insist that either toleration or restricted freedom of worship is a denial of this right. We earnestly contend that no peace terms will be adequate which either deny or obscure the principle of true religious liberty.<sup>34</sup>

By declaring the Statement of Principles, the SBC showed its desire to grow into a religious body that exemplified peace and love. Statement four demonstrated this attitude towards race relations. Releasing a formal statement condemning racism and bigotry was a big step for a nation covered in a history of slavery and current racial segregation. True peace came from Christianity. For Christianity to thrive, a great revival needed to occur.

### Revival

Following World War II, the United States entered the Cold War and feared a nuclear attack. The legendary Billy Graham, a Baptist, became one of the world's most influential preachers. Graham found much success preaching at crusade meetings in cities such as Los Angeles, Boston, and New York City. Graham regularly referenced war and nuclear attacks and urged the American people to repent of their "sin and trust in Jesus Christ."<sup>35</sup> Referencing the fall of France to the Germans, Graham informed the people of Los Angeles in 1949 that this could happen to them if they neglected God and his ways.<sup>36</sup>

His message was simple: "We need a revival." Graham found success in his message and gained many followers, eventually

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<sup>34</sup> Executive Committee, "Southern Baptists and World Peace," Annual SBC 1944, May 16–18, 1944, 149, available at [http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC\\_Annual\\_1944.pdf](http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1944.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Billy Graham, *Revival in our Time: The Story of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Campaigns including Six of his Sermons* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1951), 70.

<sup>36</sup> Graham, *Revival in our Time*, 73.

packing entire baseball and football stadiums.<sup>37</sup> The post-war world appeared to long for hope, love, and identity. Preachers such as Graham capitalized on these opportunities to share the message of Jesus Christ. Like Graham, the SBC Foreign Mission Board realized the need for spiritual rebirth in its own country and sought to establish home missions in places such as “Arizona and California.”<sup>38</sup>

Not only was the United States changing, but the whole world was also. The once “Christian friendly China” was transforming. Communism became the enemy of Christianity, and missionaries and pastors were forced out of the country and often arrested.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the Soviet Union continued to show that it was unwilling to embrace any ideas conflicting with their dictating government. Hence, Christians would suffer at the hands of Soviet soldiers, often being killed or imprisoned for their faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>40</sup> In a sense, communism would be the direct enemy of Christianity as nations such as China and Russia viewed religion as an immediate threat to their governments.

### The Fear of Communism

For many Christians, communism was evil. Billy Graham felt this way in the 1940s as “he described communism as the worldview of the devil.”<sup>41</sup> While perhaps many disagreed with Graham and his feelings towards communism, one could not argue that religious freedom was in danger in communist-run nations. From Russia to Romania, communism was alive, and Christians were suffering.

Richard Wurmbrand was a man who was tortured and beaten by both the Nazis and the Russians. Wurmbrand “explained living through Nazi occupation made him tough and prepared him for the future beatings he would endure under Russian communism.” Wurmbrand, a Romanian Christian leader, “was an important figure in the underground Church.” The underground church was an

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<sup>37</sup> Graham, *Revival in our Time*, 70–72.

<sup>38</sup> Robert A. Baker, *The Southern Baptist Convention and Its People 1607–1972* (Nashville: Broadman, 1974), 347.

<sup>39</sup> David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing* (Lanham, MD: Regnery, 2003), 59.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ* (Bartlesville, OK: Living Sacrifice, 1998), 55.

<sup>41</sup> Alan Scot Willis, *All According to God's Plan: Southern Baptist Missions and Race 1945–1970* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 58.

establishment of Christians that met secretly to worship Jesus Christ. The Russian government strictly forbade this practice, and Wurmbrand was arrested in 1948 and imprisoned.<sup>42</sup>

Sadly, this was a common theme under Russian rule. Believers of Christ had few liberties and lacked simple religious freedom. Wurmbrand wrote, “Thousands of believers from churches of all denominations were sent to prison at that time.”<sup>43</sup> Nazi Germany had left an enormous impact on Stalin and led to his unwillingness to allow religious freedom in his country. He feared any uprisings would include threats from Christians.

Duke McCall was a Southern Baptist who viewed communism as a direct threat to Christianity. He wrote, “Under communism, the individual has no basic rights which may not be usurped by the state.” McCall argued that “communism did not value individual human liberty and welfare.” According to him, communism was the complete opposite of Christianity. Christianity focused on humanity made in God’s image, but communism had little room for this form of thinking. McCall pointed to “Karl Marx as the founder of Russian communism” and emphasized that Marx “taught religion could not co-exist with communism.”<sup>44</sup> According to McCall, communism was a system of slavery providing no hope to its adherents.

Southern Baptist Professor H. C. Goerner looked towards Christian role models. Goerner felt several American leaders, in particular, valued the importance of Christ. One of these was General Douglas MacArthur, who made a heartfelt speech that all Americans needed to analyze. Once the Japanese officially surrendered, General MacArthur declared:

Military alliance, balance of power, League of Nations all in turn fail. We have had our last chance. If we do not now devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advance in science, art, literature, and all material

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<sup>42</sup> Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ*, 33.

<sup>43</sup> Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ*, 33.

<sup>44</sup> Duke K. McCall, *God’s Hurry* (Nashville: Broadman, 1949), 32, 34, 35, 37.

and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.<sup>45</sup>

For Goerner, MacArthur's speech summed up his opinion on humanity. The only hope a government or person had was to follow Jesus Christ. He believed "God Himself" could transform lives and entire nations into followers of Christ.<sup>46</sup> For this Baptist, failing to follow Jesus would lead to ultimate destruction.

In 1946, R. C. Campbell, SBC pastor of the First Baptist Church in Columbia, South Carolina, released a book titled *Keeping the Foundations*. Campbell addressed the importance of religious liberty. According to Campbell, the United States needed to continue its foundation and embrace religious liberty. He wrote, "Freedom of choice frees men from the corruption of state churches, the hands of which are stained by blood of saints and martyrs. Where religious liberty is not found, spiritual thralldom is the rule."<sup>47</sup> Campbell argued religious liberty needed to emphasize a complete separation of church and state.<sup>48</sup> On the importance of religious liberty, he wrote,

Religious liberty is based upon the principle of direct approach to God without the interference of men. God gives one and all the free right to come directly to him without the encumbrances of deputies, proxies, priests, or popes. Baptists are inevitably and unalterably opposed to every form of sponsorial religion. Everyone must repent himself, believe for himself, be baptized for himself, and account to God for himself. What institution, however venerable, what individual, however powerful or wise, what tradition, however hoary with the age, has any right to come between the individual soul and God?<sup>49</sup>

Whether it was communism, or any form of dictatorship, McCall, Goerner, and Campbell recognized the only hope a nation had was within the teachings of Jesus Christ. Campbell emphasized a government could never force a doctrine on humanity. It needed to be people themselves who elected to follow Jesus Christ for a true conversion to occur. If a nation embraced Chris-

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<sup>45</sup> McCall, *God's Hurry*, 28.

<sup>46</sup> McCall, *God's Hurry*, 28.

<sup>47</sup> R. C. Campbell, *Keeping the Foundations* (Nashville: Broadman, 1946), 179.

<sup>48</sup> Campbell, *Keeping the Foundations*, 180.

<sup>49</sup> Campbell, *Keeping the Foundations*, 181.

tianity, good things could follow; if a country lived contrary to the teachings of Jesus, that nation needed to prepare for God's righteous judgment. For a nation to become Christian, individual conversions had to occur from all parts of the country.

### Conclusion

The Southern Baptist Convention has long been considered a great Christian denomination. Studying this organization during World War II, it is evident that Jesus Christ remained its members' focal point. The denomination believed God was active, as evidenced by his judgment, will, and sovereignty during the war years. Part of his judgment was to face darkness head-on and fight for the existence of Christianity. Many died, and others were imprisoned for their faith. However, one thing remained strong was faith and trust in Jesus Christ. The Southern Baptist Convention was required to discuss evil and proclaim Jesus Christ as the only way out of evil. They did this as preachers such as Truett urged people to repent and seek forgiveness and guidance from God.

Like the whole country, the SBC also was forced to address the topics correlated to civil rights. The denomination could not preach against evil yet find itself hypocritical in its own racial relations. World War II impacted the denomination and the future of the denomination regarding racial equality. The convention released strong statements during and after the war years found in the *Prayer for Just and Righteous Peace* and the *Statement of Principles for Peace*.

Likewise, the SBC realized a conflict like World War II was possible in the growing tension with Russia. For this reason, pastors preached earnestly, begging their people to have a saving relationship with their Lord and Savior. Communism was at odds with democracy. For most Christians, communism was the definition of evil, providing no religious freedom.

Overall, World War II allowed the denomination to discuss the problem of evil. The SBC did so, and they had the proper explanation. For them, evil existed and would remain until Jesus Christ returned. For the SBC, the only way to defeat evil was to trust in God.



## Book Reviews

*Changed into His Likeness: A Biblical Theology of Personal Transformation.*

By J. Gary Millar. *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 55, edited by D. A. Carson. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021. 288 pages. Paperback, \$28.00.

I have been asking biblical scholars for a biblical theology of change for several years. Perhaps that is why I was excited about Millar's new book and somewhat disappointed by the final product. However, while the work is described as a biblical theology of change (27), it does not provide a biblical theology of change *as such*. Millar does not, and does not intend to, address the question of what it means, in biblical terms, for change to occur. Millar's project is to provide a significant biblical theology of regeneration. He argues that the work of regeneration is both progressive in time and more than merely forensic (8–13). His focus is on the nature of the personal transformation in the believer brought about by the Holy Spirit rather than on change itself. The assumption that grounds Millar's argument is that "people are . . . yearning for change. . . . Everyone wants his or her life to be better. Everyone wants the world to be a better place" (2). He opens the book by introducing three fundamental questions: "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?" (1). These questions set up a fourth question that is the core intention of his project: how do we get there? How do human beings *achieve* the change that they so ardently desire? "What will our experience of this change process be like?" (242). The brief version of his answer is that "It will be a mixed experience of discomfort and joy as we ride the roller coaster of repentance and faith, of mortification and vivification, of being humbled and lifted up, of being disciplined and commended, until the day when we are like Christ and see him as he is" (242).

The first two chapters of Millar's book offer a whirlwind tour of the psychology of change and philosophical and theological anthropologies, at the end of which he concludes, "Psychotherapists are surprisingly vague about what is really the holy grail of their discipline" (54). He also points out that

It is fair to say that just because the text speaks to and about people as ‘wholes,’ that does not rule out any kind of dualism or any kind of distinction between our bodies and our personalities or spiritual faculties. The Bible was not written by Platonists, but we must be careful not to throw the philosophical baby out with the bathwater or, for that matter, the baby out with the philosophical bathwater. (54)

He ends by suggesting a “Christian Aristotelian Platonism” that “comes very close to the idea of ‘substance dualism’ or ‘integrative dualism’” (54). Similar views are well-represented in the history of Christian thought, perhaps most prominently by Thomas Aquinas. However, there is an important line between this view and historical versions of substance dualism.

Chapters three and four offer the biblical meat of the book as Millar traces themes of personal moral transformation through the Scripture. Chapter three follows the theme in the Old Testament through the stories of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, Ruth, Naaman, Ahab, Manasseh, Nebuchadnezzar, Job, and the nation of Israel as a moral community. In the end, Millar concludes that “change or transformation is both necessary and deeply desirable, but remains elusive until the new covenant . . . is set up by the coming Messiah” (122). This chapter includes an impressive list of biblical figures, but it is notable that Joseph and Daniel—perhaps two of the best example Old Testament of *holiness* (at least)—are left out. Further, as the chapter progresses, the reader realizes that what Millar is looking for is not signs of personal change or transformation, but signs of the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit (113–22). This gives a more plausible explanation for his claim that “change” remains elusive throughout the Old Testament.

Chapter four continues to follow this theme through the New Testament. The central question of this chapter is, “what precisely is [the difference that Jesus makes]? What has changed?” (123). He traces this theme through the gospels, the letters of Hebrews, James, Peter, and John, but the most significant focus of the chapter—appropriately for his theme—is on Paul (144–63). He concludes that

There is a rich vein of material dealing with the ways in which God transforms us now, while we await his appearing....it is important that we realize that when it comes to the real-time change God makes through the gospel...the

New Testament articulates a doctrine of transformation that is multi-faceted, extravagant and immeasurably rich. (172)

Chapter five surveys three theological approaches to understanding personal transformation. Millar identifies 'inner life focused,' 'Christological,' and 'pietistic' approaches. Chapter six briefly outlines his conclusions about personal transformation. He identifies the focus on inner life with a range of theologians extending from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas, C. S. Lewis, and James K. A. Smith. While he sees this as an important element of a full-fledged theology of personal transformation, he does not see it as sufficient (192). He associates the Christological approach specifically with John Calvin, and he claims that "there is a sense in which Calvin completely changes the discussion of personal change" (197). For Millar, Calvin's emphasis on Christological change enables later Pietistic thinkers, such as John Owen and John Wesley, to develop their own versions of this view that can emphasize the complexity of personal transformation. Millar concludes that "personal change...involves decisively altered behavior, consistently modified thinking, choices and decisions, and permanently reshaped character" (215). A biblical-theological understanding of personal change must recognize that it is God's work, which is triune in nature, flows from the human union with Christ, is word-driven, necessarily involves repentance and faith, involves the individual's relation to both God and community, happens *in* time but also over *an extended period of* time, and is comprehensive in nature (216–42).

While Millar's book provides a helpful biblical-theological analysis of the nature of regeneration through union with Christ, it falls short in some areas as a biblical theology of personal transformation or personal change. Millar begins with a vague definition of the kind of change he is searching for: "change 'involves making something different, either by stopping something you're already doing that is not working, or doing something new that is more constructive and effective'" (4). From the beginning of the book, he recognizes that personal change is complex, but he never adequately clarifies his question. For instance, one practicing psychologist suggests that personal change has occurred when "in some way something in the person has so fundamentally changed that they simultaneously grieve the loss involved in this change and rejoice in it" (Wayne Smith, PSYD, personal conversation). Ultimately, on either of these definitions, it still seems that some

Old Testament figures, Naaman especially, did change. Millar acknowledges that some of these examples *seem like* personal change, but he rejects them as the kind of change he is looking for. This is the reader's first hint that Millar is focused on a theology of *regeneration* rather than simply a theology of change or personal transformation.

Overall, Millar's book is a helpful discussion of personal transformation throughout the scriptures. His thesis is overly vague, and his focus is not clear until halfway through the book. Still, his analysis of biblical texts is intriguing, and his categorization of approaches to transformation is helpful. Taken as a biblical theology of regeneration, this book is a fine addition to the New Studies in Biblical Theology series. However, we still need a biblical theology of change *as such*.

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*The Fool and the Heretic: How Two Scientists Moved beyond Labels to a Christian Dialogue about Creation and Evolution.* By Todd Charles Wood and Darrel R. Falk. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 201 pages. Paperback, \$16.99.

The Colossian Forum is a Christian fellowship of academics and laypersons with the mission "to equip leaders to transform cultural conflicts into opportunities for spiritual growth."<sup>1</sup> The organization has been active for almost a decade, offering workshops, small group resources, and books to help lead evangelical Christians to reconciliation on complex topics, including politics, sexuality, cosmic origins, and gender. *The Fool and the Heretic* narrates the intentional fellowship of two evangelical professional scientists who disagree vehemently on the topic of biological evolution. This entry in The Colossian Forum's resource list is written at the popular level and provides readers with an introduction to the theological implications of scientific methods. The primary purpose is not to convince the reader of a particular conclusion on evolution but to demonstrate the potential for spiritual fellowship between Christians who continue to disagree. The facilitator of

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<sup>1</sup> "Why the Colossian Forum? Why Now," The Colossian Forum, available at <https://colossianforum.org/about-us/mission-vision-our-story/>.

the series of meetings, Rob Barrett (PhD, applied physics; PhD, theology), edited the book with alternating chapters between the representatives and provided questions at the end of each main chapter “for study and reflection” by the reader or a small group.

*The Fool and the Heretic* pits a proponent of young-earth creationism against a leader in Christian acceptance of biological evolution. Todd Charles Wood (PhD in biochemistry, University of Virginia) argues throughout that despite the strong scientific evidence for biological evolution, Christians must read Genesis 1–11 (and later genealogies) as history and thus seek new scientific interpretations of the age of the earth and processes leading to human origins. Wood is presented in the book as a potential “fool” for resisting the evolutionary process and allowing biblical authority to direct his scientific inquiry. Darrel R. Falk (PhD in genetics, University of Alberta) argues that biological evolution, when God’s directing agency is maintained, is consistent with the Bible’s presentation of cosmic and human origins. Falk is presented in the book as a potential “heretic” for risking the rejection of the plain reading of Christian Scripture. From the beginning of their meetings through the completion of the book’s publication, both interlocutors insist that the other’s position is dangerous to the Christian worldview and church (35–36, 45–46). Wood and Falk concluded their meetings, agreeing that the other was still a “mortal enemy” (164).

In alternating chapters, each author outlines what they believe is at stake in the debate over cosmic origins. Wood is concerned about protecting the trustworthiness and authority of Scripture, and Falk is concerned about protecting the Christian witness in the laboratory. The authors review their earliest meetings together, with Wood acknowledging that other creationists have practiced bad science (82) and Falk admitting his fault in telling Wood that he did not understand evolutionary theory (93). Each author makes a theological case for their position, with Wood rejecting methodological naturalism in the sciences because of his Christian worldview (106) and Falk advocating a figurative reading of Genesis 1–11.

The conflict reaches its climax with a discussion of Wood’s research method. Unique among young-earth creationists, Wood accepts much scientific evidence used to support biological evolution but attempts to find discontinuity within accepted evolutionary teaching to form divergent hypotheses which are consistent

with biblical evidence. Falk questions whether Wood is actually practicing science: “Most people don’t know the depth of the evidence [in favor of evolution], but Todd does and he holds out anyway. That concerns me, because it implies that the analytical minds that God has given us cannot be trusted to lead us to anything that approximates truth” (133). Wood admits that he cannot “really test evolution directly.” Still, he notes that his interpretations are just as valid as those of evolutionists if they are consistent with biblical and scientific evidence (154). In the end, both authors reject the titular labels of “heretic” and “fool” for their opponent but remain steadfast in their position.

*The Fool and the Heretic* is successful in offering lay Christians an example of fellowship amid theological and scientific disagreement. Still, it does not provide readers with a firm direction on the material or formal topics. In discussing what was accomplished through the meetings between Wood and Falk, editor Rob Barrett concluded, “By God’s grace, these two Christians were granted better instincts: love, trust, and vulnerability. As Darrel and Todd have lived out their calling, they have accomplished something unusual. They have gained an ability to ask an honest question and to attempt an honest answer” (190). On the difficulty of disagreement, no clear methods are recommended for future conflict. Barrett explicitly admitted that the positive results of the two author’s meetings could not have been produced through a “technique or formula” (102). This raises concerns about the fruitfulness of The Colossian Forum’s broader purpose and method. The book could have been strengthened with more material endnotes directing readers to further scientific and theological exposition. Such notes would help readers with their own deliberations regarding biological evolution or Christian engagement with the sciences and help avoid a reductive treatment of potential Christian approaches. For example, there is no reference to old-earth creationism or potential readings of Genesis 1–11 outside of Falk’s general “figurative” approach. The Colossian Forum’s aims are needed in today’s tense culture, Christian and otherwise. *The Fool and the Heretic* provides a helpful anecdotal example for the potential of unity in the face of disagreement on the topic of origins but

leaves the reader with little instruction if they are embroiled in such disagreement themselves.

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*Go Now to Shiloh: A Biblical Theology of Sacred Space.* By N. Blake Hearson. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020. 192 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.

The story of the Bible is closely connected to sacred spaces. From Eden to the new Jerusalem, the biblical narrative makes consistent reference to places of divine significance, and those places often drive the story of Scripture. In *Go Now to Shiloh*, N. Blake Hearson examines how the Bible presents holy places throughout the metanarrative of Scripture. His work categorizes various types of sacred space in the Old Testament and explores how the concepts surrounding such spaces are applied to Jesus in the New Testament.

Hearson begins by observing the nature of sacred spaces in the Old Testament. The places where characters in the biblical text encountered God possessed different degrees of significance. Hearson employs the metaphor of smoke signals, cell phones, and phone booths to describe holy places in the Old Testament. “Smoke signals” are those places where God manifests himself, but the connection to the site is temporary making the sacred nature of the site limited to the duration of the revelation of God’s presence (11). The tabernacle functioned as a “cell phone” because sacred space was established by transporting the holy structures and objects to a particular location (12). Places like Shiloh and the Jerusalem temple are seen in Hearson’s metaphor as “phone booths” due to the ongoing nature of their sanctity (13).

Hearson discusses these three types of space throughout the body of his work, though his focus turns to spaces with ongoing holy significance—the “phone booths” from his metaphor—for the majority of the book (57–108). He observes that spaces of ongoing sanctity are made sacred primarily because they are the locations of God’s self-revelation (80). After discussing what makes a space sacred, Hearson turns to the question of how spaces that were once sacred lose their holy status. In chapter five, he considers the cases of Gilgal, Beersheba, Bethel, and Shiloh—all holy

cites in the Old Testament which seem to lose their designation as cites of worship. Hearson argues that “the reasons for God’s rejection of sacred spaces were inappropriate worship and the behavior of the people” (108).

Hearson closes his book with a survey of how sacred space moves from places to the person of Jesus in the New Testament. This brief section examines New Testament texts, primarily from John’s Gospel, for connections with how they develop significant themes of sacred space first introduced in the Old Testament.

One curious claim Hearson makes in his work is that “the historical-critical method has not contributed significantly to the topic of sacred space in biblical literature” (8). Hearson does not defend this claim, nor does he give any helpful definition of what he means by “historical-critical method.” Scholars from a variety of theological backgrounds have written significant volumes on sacred space and many of these works fall within the boundaries of historical-critical methodology. Hearson is transparent that his own work depends heavily upon Sara Japhet, a Jewish scholar who uses the historical-critical method (11).

Hearson’s discussion of how the New Testament demonstrates that the expectations of sacred space transfer from a place to the person of Jesus is similar to the conclusions of other scholars such as Daniel Hays and N. T. Wright, yet he does not interact with other research on this important subject. Though there are multiple evangelical works on how Jesus is the fulfillment of the tabernacle and temple in the past decades, Hearson does not provide any interaction with these publications in the body of his work or in footnotes. In addition to limited interaction with secondary literature, Hearson’s examination of sacred space themes in the New Testament is also limited by the way he rushes through his engagement with the New Testament text. For example, he argues, “Jesus’s work as high priest in the heavenly tabernacle did away with the need for an earthly tabernacle. . . . Heaven is the sacred space” (18). This argument seems discordant with the focus on the presence of the throne of God and the Lamb in the New Heavens and *Earth* making all of the renewed creation holy (see Rev 22:1–5, emphasis mine).

Hearson’s work is a concise and accessible introduction to a biblical theology of sacred space. He writes in a style that makes the work available to a wide audience by using clear language and ample illustrations and metaphors. The brief nature of the work—



while it limits the depth of Hearson's analysis—allows readers to obtain a broad view of major biblical themes in an efficient way. *Go Now to Shiloh* is most useful for pastors and students who wish to familiarize themselves with the concept and theological significance of sacred space in Scripture.

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*The God Who Goes before You: Pastoral Leadership as Christ-Centered Followership.* By Michael S. Wilder and Timothy Paul Jones. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2018. 268 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.

Michael S. Wilder serves as dean of the Jack D. Terry School of Educational Ministries and professor of Educational Ministries at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Timothy Paul Jones serves on faculty at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, as Vice President for Doctoral Studies and the C. Edwin Gheens Professor of Christian Family Ministry. Jones also serves as chair of the department of apologetics, ethics, and philosophy at Southern Seminary. In addition to their teaching and academic experience, Wilder and Jones both have extensive pastoral ministry experience in the local church.

Wilder and Jones wrote *The God Who Goes before You* to bring to light the need for a biblical theology of leadership among the many books available on Christian and pastoral leadership. For Wilder and Jones, there exists a struggle to define “leadership” among leadership practitioners and scholars. Numerous definitions and theories of leadership fail to be undergirded by the exegetical precision that necessitates a biblical-theological approach. What is needed is a definition and model of leadership for pastors that is distinctly Christian and rooted in the Scriptures as a unified whole.

Instead of attempting to define leadership in the abstract and drawing out principles for leadership from isolated texts of Scripture, Wilder and Jones choose to define leadership more concretely, “focusing on the leader’s role and practices within the community” (16). They offer the following definition of leadership: “The Christ-following leader—living as a bearer of God’s image in un-

ion with Christ and his people—develops a diverse community of fellow laborers who are equipped and empowered to pursue shared goals that fulfill the creation mandate and the Great Commission in submission to the Word of God” (16).

Wilder and Jones divide *The God Who Goes before You* into three parts. In Part One, the authors give their biblical-theological vision for leadership by presenting the overarching theme of the book—leadership through “followership.” For Wilder and Jones, this idea of leadership through followership begins with the premise that true Christian leadership is grounded in the reality that “the central leader is Jesus Christ, not any mere human being” (16). In the second chapter, the authors explore the theme of kingship as one of the foundational themes for leadership through followership. Indeed, “Christian leadership is, first and foremost, following the lead of the Sovereign King of all creation” (28). As pastors and Christian leaders devote themselves to leading those who have been entrusted to their care, they must recognize that the people they have been called to lead are created in the image of God and that as king over all creation, God requires justice and stewardship from those he commissions as leaders. The authors give the following charge to readers who are likely to be leaders in the local church setting: “The leadership to which we are called is never sovereignty above or separation from the rest of humanity but stewardship within the community for the glory of God” (31).

In Part Two, Jones continues the book’s exploration of the theme of leadership through followership by examining leadership in the Old Testament. In particular, he explores the old covenant offices of judge, priest, prophet, and king. “Woven throughout these offices,” writes Jones, “was the pivotal analogy of shepherd” (46). In recent literature on leadership among leadership theorists, there has been increased attention given to a leadership typology that encourages pastors and church leaders to identify with one or more of the three Old Testament offices—prophet, priest, and king—as they lead their respective churches and ministries. However, as Jones rightly points out, the Old Testament theocratic offices were not meant to be fulfilled by any human leader. Rather, “the three offices are seen first and foremost as functions that have been fulfilled in Christ and conveyed to the whole people of God through union with Christ” (52). Although the old covenant offices of judge, king, prophet, and priest find their ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Christ, “the authors of the

New Testament *do*, however, apply the metaphor of the shepherd in a unique sense to those who serve as elders or overseers in the church” (111). Jones concludes this section of the book by devoting a chapter to exploring shepherd imagery in the Old Testament.

In Part Three, Wilder continues the scriptural exploration of shepherd imagery in light of the New Covenant. What began in the Old Testament as a calling for leadership more so than a particular office of leadership emerged as a distinct office for church leadership in the New Testament. As the pastor-shepherd obeys God’s calling to lead from among the flock of God, he is to follow the Chief Shepherd as he leads. In this section, Wilder explores shepherding in the New Testament by examining the life and ministry of Jesus in the Gospel accounts. In the final two chapters of this section, Wilder examines the life and scriptural writings of Simon Peter as he is commissioned by Jesus to feed the sheep (John 21:15–23), even in times of great suffering and sacrifice.

The value of this book lies in its exegetical precision and accessibility. Many books in Christian leadership circles today are nothing more than marketplace-driven approaches to leadership with a few Bible verses interspersed throughout. Those in pastoral leadership who are looking for a thorough examination of Christian leadership that takes into account Scripture as a unified and authoritative whole that finds its fulfillment in the Chief Shepherd of Jesus Christ should consider adding *The God Who Goes before You* to their bookshelves. As the authors begin each chapter with strong biblical support for the theme being explored, they then move to practical pastoral application for how the theme intersects the rhythm of life and work for pastors today. True pastoral leadership is followership that is directed and fueled by the way of the cross of Christ. May those of us who are called to lead the flock of God do so by following the One who is ever-present with us and always goes before us.

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*How to Follow Jesus: A Practical Guide for Growing Your Faith.* By Craig Springer. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020. 208 pages. Paperback, \$15.99.

Craig Springer serves as the executive director of Alpha USA, an evangelism program used in over 8,000 churches and ministries throughout the country. He is also the author of *How to Revive Evangelism* (Zondervan, 2021). Before joining Alpha USA, Springer pastored churches in Chicago and Denver.

Stemming from his own discipleship experiences and ensuing feelings of frustration, Springer produces a work that offers “distilled, relevant, practical, life-tested advice on how to follow Jesus” (19). His book represents an alternative to other works on spiritual formation that he deems “heady and impossible or legalistic and impractical” (18). While Springer admits that the content covered is not novel, his presentation of spiritual disciplines offers some fresh approaches.

The book is divided into three sections, each comprising four chapters (except the first section, which also includes an introductory chapter). Broadly, the first section addresses discipleship from an individual perspective. The second section examines discipleship from a communal perspective, identified as spiritual formation within the local church context. The final section begins to move toward the global implications of discipleship in the context of outreach and missions.

Chapter 1 establishes the foundational necessity of the role of the Holy Spirit in the individual’s pursuit of spiritual growth. Springer states that keeping in step with the Spirit is essential to learning how to follow Jesus (24). He lists five promises that facilitate this accomplishment: the Holy Spirit’s presence, peace, power, and protection, and the believer’s perseverance. In summation, Springer states,

The Spirit of God, the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, is living in you, speaking to you and empowering you. You are not alone. You can be filled with his presence and peace. You have power and protection from on high to persevere to the end. Allow him to fill you and lead you and you will be emboldened to live far beyond your own capacities. This is how we keep in step with God’s good Spirit. (36)

Chapter 2 focuses on the spiritual discipline of prayer. Springer posits that prayer is a communicative act rooted in the love that is

essential for experiencing spiritual growth (39). However, Springer admits that there are several mistakes Christians often make that can make engaging in consistent, enlivening prayer more difficult. The first mistake is neglecting one's non-prayer life, which results in a lack of energy to dedicate to prayer. The mistake of praying aimlessly is remedied by writing prayers and following a pattern based on the acronym CHAT: confess, honor, ask, thank. To combat the mistake of praying plastic prayers, Springer challenges readers to "...be courageous with our prayers. We must be vulnerable, honest, and open with what is real and true about who we are. Be willing to share the mess with God" (48). The chapter ends with the encouragement to persevere in prayer even when it is difficult. In chapter 3, Springer highlights the greatest tool for spiritual growth: the Bible. Much of the chapter overviews a simple approach to reading the Bible, labeled the "4step" process. The first step of the process, "read the text," notes the importance of being intentional in Bible reading by using a reading plan and establishing a manageable time commitment for engaging in Bible reading. Step 2, "understand the context," centers on the task of interpretation. Springer's approach to understanding the context of a biblical text is asking the four simple questions, Who? What? When? and Why? (60–61). The third step, "pull out the principle," encourages readers of the Bible to develop transcendent principles of truth from the original context. The final step, "make it personal," involves the task of application. The chapter ends with a reminder that understanding the Bible cannot be accomplished apart from the illumination of God and apart from community (66).

The fourth and final chapter in the first section of the book addresses a threat to spiritual growth. Springer identifies this threat as idolatry and offers his own definition of the term: "turning to something created to get what only the Creator can give" (74). To combat the threat of idolatry, Springer offers a few steps. The first is to recognize the reality that there is a constant battle concerning one's identity in Christ. The follow-up step is to reveal the root of idolatry, identifying the legitimate need behind the idol. The concluding step is to fill exposed needs in a godly way.

The second section of the book shifts to communal aspects related to spiritual growth. In Chapter 5, Springer refutes the notion that spiritual growth can be accomplished effectively through individual efforts alone. The chapter extols the benefits of Christian community found in small groups. To realize these benefits, indi-

viduals must “learn to come out of hiding” (88) from their personal faith closets. Common barriers to engaging in community include overcoming unrealistic expectations about community, making time to be involved in community, not being persistent in locating a small group to join, and not being honest, transparent, and vulnerable in community. To combat this final barrier, Springer offers several guiding questions for use in small groups: How are you doing, really? Where are you at with God? What are you working on in your life right now? (94–95). Chapter 6 acknowledges a stark reality about community: “Biblical community is broken community” (103). Rather than retreating from community, Springer encourages believers to remain and offers advice for doing so effectively, evaluating oneself before criticizing others. His encouragement is to engage others in Christian community with love and grace.

Chapter 7 focuses on the importance of forgiveness in producing effective spiritual growth. Springer lists five mistakes when seeking forgiveness, including forcing forgiveness, equating forgiveness with reconciliation, waiting for an apology, keeping something alive that should die (i.e., an expectation or view), and letting something die that should stay alive (i.e., hope). Chapter 8 highlights the importance of not only confessing sin to God but also confessing wrongs to others. Springer posits that “confession to God alone is not only incomplete, it’s not biblical. Biblical confession always involves another person” (129). The author states simply, “Confess to God for forgiveness. Confess to others for healing” (129). To facilitate confession to others, Springer offers guiding principles. These are to express regret, accept responsibility, make restitution, genuinely repent, and request forgiveness.

The third section of the book shifts the focus and implications of discipleship outward to matters relevant to outreach and missions. This begins in Chapter 9 with a discussion of stewardship. Springer uses the following formula to frame the chapter: “Natural resources released + supernatural strength received = multiplied miracle” (142). The effectiveness of the equation requires both a proper understanding of who owns the resources (God) and releasing those entrusted resources back to God. God provides the supernatural and produces the miracle. However, believers are invited to participate in God’s work. The chapter concludes with two challenges to specifically release money (one of many resources entrusted to believers) back to God and to begin

giving without delay. Chapter 10 encourages the practice of serving. While much attention is given to serving specifically those in poverty, Springer challenges readers to “Serve people in need and you will be blessed” (157). Springer notes that poverty is not limited to just one’s financial circumstances; thus, poverty is a universal condition, irrespective of socio-economic position. He ends by reminding readers that not every need discovered is theirs to fill. In Chapter 11, Springer presents an approach to engaging in evangelism using the analogy of a party. Taking his cue from Luke 14, Springer challenges readers to consider evangelism as offering invitations to a party. To do so effectively requires specific steps. The first is to simply invite others to the party. This is followed by remembering to listen more than speak during an evangelistic encounter. The final step is the reminder that the transformative work of salvation is solely God’s work. The final chapter of the section, Chapter 12, addresses worship. Springer argues that worship is an innate human characteristic. The author offers several reasons to engage in worship. Worship allows the worshipper to “experience more of [God] and to grow in full enjoyment of him” (185). Secondly, worship permits believers to acknowledge God’s worth (185). Finally, worship acts like a compass and serves to help believers assess their spiritual condition (187). When discussing how to engage in worship, Springer acknowledges that “All of life is, or at least can be, worship” (187). To be more practical, he notes that all the previous disciplines covered in his book are effective ways to worship.

Springer’s book does not offer an innovative, ground-breaking approach to spiritual growth. His work provides a simple, accessible introduction to spiritual formation and the spiritual disciplines that lays a foundation for engaging other classics in the field, such as Willard’s *Spirit of the Disciplines* and Whitney’s *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Springer’s work offers alternative approaches to engaging in these classic pursuits, such as his 4step process for Bible reading, and his CHAT acronym for prayer. While Springer’s style is intentionally approachable, light-hearted, and humorous, some instances in the material approach the line of the inappropriate and distasteful, for example, the notion of a post-conversion spiritual “hangover” (18). While such language may resonate with some readers, it poses a potential and unnecessary distraction.

Springer's work is a suitable resource for those seeking an easy, quick, foundational entrée to spiritual formation. However, it is not a comprehensive treatment of the topic. While biblical references are peppered throughout, there are no deep theological discussions of discipleship or spiritual formation. Key spiritual disciplines are presented (prayer, Bible reading, evangelism, worship, etc.) with fresh approaches, but other practices are absent (fasting, silence, solitude, journaling, etc.). The alternative patterns and plans that are presented could benefit those who have been engaged in discipleship for some time and are seeking to refresh their own spiritual formation practices. The discussion guide provided at the end of the book makes it suitable for use in small groups.

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*Miracles Today: The Supernatural Work of God in the Modern World.* By Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021. 304 pages. Paperback, \$24.99.

Craig S. Keener, F. M. and Ada Thompson Professor of Biblical Studies at Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, has given the church and academy a gift through his research and writing in *Miracles Today: The Supernatural Work of God in the Modern World*. Keener is highly regarded for his careful research and insightful writing, especially for his *IVP Bible Background Commentary* (IVP Academic, 1993) and various New Testament commentaries. He has also written biblical-theological treatments on marriage, hermeneutics, and the Holy Spirit. His two-volume work, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (Baker Academic, 2011), was impressive but too expensive—retailing at \$75—for many researchers to purchase and too intimidating—at more than 1,200 pages—for most readers to digest. The present work was intended to update the research, with many of the case studies in the book occurring after 2011, and present the findings in a book of accessible length (238 pages + endnotes).

Keener's 40 chapters and three appendices deal with a wide range of subjects under the category of miracles. In the first three chapters, he defines the term miracle, addresses worldview issues such as skepticism from inside and outside the church about the



legitimacy of miracles today, and answers David Hume's classic objection. In chapters 4–7, Keener offers and defends the use of eyewitness testimony of miracles. Chapters 8–15 deal with healings with medical or video documentation. Chapters 16–31 address issues mentioned in Jesus's inaugural sermon—recovery of sight and the ability to walk, the cleaning of lepers, the restoration of hearing, and eight chapters on raising the dead. Chapters 32–40 concern questions about nature miracles (such as the stilling of storms and multiplication of food), fewer miracles in the west, and grappling with the *absence* of a miracle.

Keener presents testimonies of healings of a wide range of medical ailments, including blindness, broken limbs, various cancers, spinal cord injuries, deafness, infertility, cerebral palsy, muscular sclerosis, and death. His documentation of sources is careful and wide-ranging. Some of the footnotes refer to email testimony received by the author. Such claims should not be dismissed, however, because he is compiling first-hand accounts of people he believes to be credible who offer an account of “special divine action” in their lives (Keener's shorthand definition of a miracle). Other interactions with historical accounts of modern miracles included scholarship from institutions such as Yale, Oxford, Princeton, and the University of Pennsylvania. Thus, it is not only scholars from Charismatic and Pentecostal universities and seminaries publishing these accounts. Keener also cites instances—including primary source documentation—of major Christian figures, such as Augustine, Athanasius, and John Wesley. They refer to instances of healing in their ministries or among pastors or priests in their immediate contexts. For example, on Christmas Day in 1742, Wesley wrote in his journal about praying for a man who appeared to be dead and who gradually recovered after Wesley and other men prayed for the sick man (140).

Keener's treatment of the topic is balanced theologically and pastorally. He does not affirm cessationism—the Christian view that miraculous gifts ceased with the last apostle's death. Rather, Keener points to instances in the Gospels when miraculous events pointed to the coming of the kingdom. Keener acknowledges some false teachings and practices surrounding healings but also speculates whether the denial of miracles could also be considered false teaching (15). God provides healing according to his will, not based only on human desires or requests. Also, Keener explains that God sometimes does not heal, discerning whether God has

healed a person can be difficult at times, and every person who is physically healed will nevertheless eventually die. Keener distinguishes his views from those who wrongly claim that God always heals or that Christians should not seek medical attention. Rather, medical technology should be viewed as God's means of healing for many people today. In addition, he makes a compelling case from Scripture and contemporary missionary accounts that miracles can function as signs that capture the interest of nonbelievers and create an openness to the gospel among unreached people groups (36–37, 203).

Keener's research draws from a wide range of authors and movements globally. He interacts with writings and research on every populated continent. Keener devoted chapter 35 to answering a question that often arises when the question of miracles today is discussed among westerners: "Why don't we see more miracles in the west?" Fewer people live in the west (North America is home to only 8% of the world's population). More significantly, however, westerners have an "antisupernatural mindset" (resulting in fewer miracles, consistent with Mark 6:5–6), and miracles are "less necessary" due to access to advanced medical technologies and a relative abundance of health care workers, miracles of God's common grace (199–203).

Well-written and carefully researched, Keener's book makes a strong case that Christians who believe that the Bible's miracles revealed God's concern for people and accomplished his purposes in the world should also be open to believing that God works in similar ways today and asking God to work in similar ways for the benefit of others and building up of God's kingdom.

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*The Nero-Antichrist: Founding and Fashioning a Paradigm.* By Shushma Malik. Classics after Antiquity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 242 pages. Hardcover, \$99.99.

As is evident in this work and other published articles, one of Shushma Malik's primary research goals is to distinguish between the historiographical images of emperors painted by early historians and the historical person according to material evidence. Her thesis in this monograph is clear from the onset. She argues that

the Nero-Antichrist paradigm was not intended by the authors of prophetic biblical texts but was a retrojection of the writers of later antiquity onto the text that was accepted for centuries and revitalized by nineteenth-century scholars. She begins by explaining why Nero is not likely to be at the forefront of the early church's mind in the first century and then traces the establishment of the Nero-Antichrist paradigm throughout history. In chapter one, Malik briefly explains how Nero became so ingrained in the biblical Antichrist. The resurgence of the Nero-Antichrist paradigm's popularity is not surprising since modern scholars can cite both late-antique historians and theologians and assume these sources to be evidence of biblical authorial intent. However, Malik claims that a reassessment of the paradigm is in order—namely, to analyze the perception of Nero in the first-century Roman Empire via literary and material sources and determine whether the depiction of Nero portrayed by those claiming his role as the Antichrist was a picture the original author and readers would have recognized.

In chapter two, Malik outlines the assumptions of biblical scholars from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and summarizes that their research contains the same methodological problem: “they start with the assumption that Nero is the biblical Antichrist and then use characteristics from both biblical books and accounts of Nero's reign to ‘prove’ it” (25). Instead, Malik presents alternative interpretations of literary and material evidence and compares the characteristics of Nero's reign to other emperors to show that Nero does not stand out as particularly evil among his imperial predecessors and successors. She then briefly discusses the biblical texts relating to Antichrist and illustrates how the conclusions about Nero from the material evidence do not align with the characteristics of the Antichrist, arguing that the characteristics of the Antichrist in Mark, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 John, and Revelation could be just as easily applied to several other Roman emperors. When discussing Revelation, she briefly refutes the three key characteristics of Revelation's Antichrist, which are usually used to ‘prove’ Nero's identification: the beast's mortal wound, his identifying number as 616 or 666, and the beast's placement among the seven kings. However, Malik's goal is to separate the Nero-Antichrist paradigm from first-century biblical authors rather than offer expanded exegesis on biblical passages. Thus, these refutations are relatively short, and further research could be done to analyze these passages using Malik's insights.

In chapter three, Malik begins tracing the history of the Nero-Antichrist paradigm with its rise in late antiquity. She notes the paradigm's connection to millennialism, as millennialists viewed persecution and worldly calamities as evidence of the impending apocalypse. Nero's identification with the Antichrist rose alongside the persecution of Christians since he was the first in a long series of increasingly harsh persecutors. She also argues that the biographies of Nero's life were largely rhetorical, painting Nero in a negative light to contrast him with the ever-popular Augustus. These exaggerated historiographies were then used as fodder by theologians to fuel the fire of the Nero-Antichrist paradigm since their renditions of his character fit the description of the Antichrist so well. In chapter four, Malik investigates the reintroduction of Nero as the Antichrist after centuries of biblical scholars assigned the title to various contemporary enemies. First, she briefly discusses how the nineteenth-century world imagined Rome, claiming that their understanding of Rome was "riddled with anachronisms" (138). She then focuses on three works that caused the paradigm's rise to popularity: Renan's *Antichrist*, Ferrar's *Darkness and Dawn*, and both Wilde's letters and novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. She offers criticisms and explanations for why these authors perpetuated the Nero-Antichrist paradigm before concluding her monograph with chapter five, a final epilogue of the paradigm's continued legacy into the twentieth century.

One weakness of Malik's work is not allowing for two simultaneous conceptions of Nero to exist. Her research shows that the larger Roman society may have viewed Nero positively, but the subculture of Christianity could have easily held different views. While gossip of Nero's day-to-day affairs may not have been known throughout the empire, word of his persecution against Christians in Rome—especially if that persecution included the death of Peter—would have spread like the wildfire of Rome. Malik also assumes that persecution is not significant unless accompanied by legal decrees, but such an assumption comes from a Western point of view that relies heavily on government and law. The majority of Christian persecution throughout history and today is not government-sanctioned but is relationally-driven, whether between political leaders and their subjects, between neighbors, or between family members. Thus, Nero's persecution could have shaken the Christian community throughout the Ro-

man Empire enough to spark the creation of Antichrist imagery in the biblical texts.

Malik's monograph is a historical pursuit of the rise of Nero's assumed association with the Antichrist rather than an in-depth study of whether the historical Nero warranted such an association. As such, her engagement with the biblical texts themselves is limited to a subsection of chapter two and is likely not comprehensive enough to satisfy most biblical scholars. However, her separation of late-antique interpretation of Revelation from that of the original author and audience merits attention and further exegetical research. If Malik's conclusions are correct, then the next logical question is whether the biblical authors meant to indicate someone else in particular or whether, as Malik suggests, their descriptions of the Antichrist were intentionally general, in which case their purposes for writing such generic descriptions also warrants further research.

- Laura Hamilton Hui

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*Positive Psychology in Christian Perspective: Foundations, Concepts, and Applications.* By Charles Hackney. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021. 344 pages. Hardcover, \$45.00.

In some contexts, the words "psychology" and "Christian perspective" are often implied to be hostile in relation to one another. Some reject the term psychology because of its more often-than-not materialist predispositions and assumptions about human nature, relationships, and our experiences of spirituality. Charles Hackney, however, advocates for a mediating position in which the field of psychology *can* be explored and perhaps even *ought* to be explored as Christian pastors or practitioners seek to understand the breadth and depth of human experiences. Hackney also reverses the discussion in a way that follows Mark McMinn's position that, perhaps, the field of psychology needs the church.<sup>2</sup> Throughout this lengthy treatment of the relatively new field of positive psychology, Hackney maintains a keen eye on opportunities to integrate psychology into our understanding of humanity

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<sup>2</sup> See Mark R. McMinn, *The Science of Virtue: Why Positive Psychology Matters to the Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2017), 6–11.

while maintaining a critical eye on what kinds of implications and value judgments are being made by the field that may not comport with a Christian worldview.

Charles Hackney completed his PhD in social psychology from SUNY Albany and is currently an associate professor of psychology at Southern Wesleyan University in South Carolina. Previously, Hackney has taught at Luther College in Regina, Saskatchewan, and served as the chair of the psychology department at Briercrest College and Seminary in Caronport, Saskatchewan. In addition to his work as a professor, Hackney has also written articles relevant to the intersection and integration of psychology and Christianity, including an article co-written with Jonathan Pennington at The Southern Baptist Theology Seminary regarding the Sermon on the Mount, positive psychology, and human flourishing.<sup>3</sup> These other sources are relevant to mention at the onset of the review of this present work because they illustrate the ongoing discussion within the fields of theology and psychology about the possibility of bringing these fields together for the potential betterment of both.

Hackney covers a lot of ground in this book. For example, the reference section of the book consists of 60 two-column pages that includes sources from theology, psychology, philosophy, and sociology, to name just a few. Hackney does, however, do his readers a favor by providing a robust structure to the book consisting of seven separate (but related) sections that examine the big picture, positive subjective experiences, positive cognitions, positive personality, positive relationships, applied positive psychology, and the positive in the negative and the negative in the positive. This breaking down of the information assuredly helps the reader to navigate the information that Hackney is presenting, which would be especially helpful for someone unfamiliar with the field of psychology or someone who is familiar with psychology in general but wants to take the first steps into positive psychology more specifically.

Hackney's work summarizes and disseminates information from positive psychology to Christian readers. Hackney's sum-

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan T. Pennington and Charles H. Hackney, "Resourcing a Christian positive psychology from the Sermon on the Mount," *Journal of Positive Psychology* 12.5 (Sept 2017): 427–35. The article anticipated Pennington's larger treatment of the topic in *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

mary of this information comes across clearly and concisely, which makes the book easily accessible to someone who does not have a background in psychology or mental health, making the book a helpful resource for both pastors and theologians (or perhaps pastor-theologians)<sup>4</sup> that are looking for a resource to understand some of the contributions positive psychology might have for their ministry and theology. Additionally, the book includes a discussion about some of the practical applications of positive psychology in various other areas such as sports psychology, education, the workplace, and faith communities.

Bookending the volume are two parts that are constructive because Hackney situates his readers into the history of psychology and why positive psychology might be a helpful course correction for the field of psychology more broadly as well as a resource for ministers and theologians. At the beginning of the book, Hackney addresses the history of human flourishing by bringing his readers back to what many would consider the source material, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Following this examination, both sequentially and in terms of some influence, Hackney addresses the subject of human flourishing from a theological perspective by drawing on Thomas Aquinas and other contemporary theologians, such as Ellen T. Charry.<sup>5</sup> In this first section, Hackney is successful in situating his readers into the discussion of human flourishing from both philosophical and theological perspectives and in showing how the field of positive psychology succeeds, and in some ways fails to succeed, in being conversant with the discussion of human flourishing more broadly and historically.

Overall, Hackney's work is a significant contribution to the field of Christian psychology and mental health counseling as situates his readers in the discussions within the relative niche—but certainly helpful—field of psychology. The book can also be a helpful resource for someone seeking to understand theological anthropology and looking for source material from the book of nature that is examined from a Christian perspective. One aspect that would have made the book stronger would have been Hack-

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<sup>4</sup> See Todd Wilson and Gerald L. Hiestand, eds. *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> See Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

ney drawing the themes and topics he addressed throughout the book and proposing a Christian vision of positive psychology that is conversant with these topics. He begins the book by examining a theology of flourishing, and the book's ending could have been strengthened by more material on a theology of positive psychology. However, this is not a significant limitation, and the book remains a helpful resource in general.

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*The Southern Baptist Convention & Civil Rights, 1954–1995: Conservative Theology, Segregation, and Change.* By David Roach. Monographs in Baptist History 22, edited by Michael A. G. Haykin. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021. 194 pages. Paperback, \$25.00.

David Roach (PhD in Church History, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is currently pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, Saraland, Alabama, and adjunct professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and other seminaries and colleges. Previously, Roach served as the Chief National Correspondent for Baptist Press. His academic and professional experiences provide essential credentials to research and write about the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and Civil Rights.

When one considers developments related to the SBC and race relations, one highlight is the Resolution “On Racial Reconciliation on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the SBC,” passed in 1995. Roach, however, begins the story four decades earlier with the reaction of Southern Baptists to the landmark Supreme Court decision on *Brown v. The Board of Education*, which called for an end to the concept of “separate but equal” and mandated desegregation. Hence, he explores conservative theology and changes in Southern Baptists’ attitudes toward segregation from 1954 to 1995.

Roach’s thesis runs counter to the common perception that the SBC’s shift away from segregationism was led exclusively by progressives in the denomination. He recognizes the merit of such an assessment that theological moderates criticized segregation, created ministry opportunities for ethnic minorities, and spoke against institutional racism ahead of their mainstream contemporaries. He proposes, however, that conservative theology provided



the necessary motivation for the movement toward racial reconciliation and equality in the convention.

When the progressives relied upon arguments based on evangelical liberalism and the social gospel, their efforts were not successful. But they were more persuasive when they drew upon the biblical doctrines of creation and salvation. And then, when the conservatives gained control of SBC agencies and schools, the movement toward racial equality continued to advance and gain strength, motivated by the same doctrinal beliefs.

To test his thesis, Roach examines the SBC from 1954 to 1995, but in his first chapter, he provides some context with a brief survey of 1945–1954. Southern Baptists supported both racial equality and segregation during this decade, following the prevailing dictum “separate but equal.” Roach reviewed the Baptist state papers to gauge Southern Baptists’ attitudes toward race relations following *Brown v. The Board of Education*. Importantly, all papers spoke of equality and brotherhood. At the same time, few denounced segregation. Speaking about all Southern Baptists, Roach acknowledges that “in the decade following World War II . . . few . . . challenged the segregated system that had dominated the South since the end of Reconstruction” (19).

From 1955 through the 1970s, social progressives took point on racial progress. Roach highlights T. B. Maston, the pioneering ethicist at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Foy Valentine, Executive Director of the Christian Life Commission (CLC) in both Texas (1953–1960) and the SBC (1960–1987). Maston held a neo-orthodox view of revelation, but he knew to apply biblical principles to race relations to convince the mainstream conservatives of his denomination. His protégé Valentine adhered to the social gospel, but he advocated for civil rights with theologically and biblically conservative arguments. Although he was able to make progress in race relations, his support for abortion rights and women in ministry brought his tenure with the CLC to an eventual end in 1987.

During this same time frame, key conservatives who were committed segregationists experienced what Roach calls “racial conversions.” Among the several mentioned, at least two of them, W. A. Criswell and Herschel Hobbs, had possible ulterior motives. Each one believed that he needed to reverse his racial attitude to get elected to a coveted position: Criswell to the presidency of the SBC; Hobbs to the presidency of the Baptist World Alliance.

Roach, however, insists that although social changes influenced these racial conversions, these pastors' conservative theology, especially the doctrine of salvation, also impacted their decisions. At the very least, their conservative theological arguments influenced other Southern Baptists to renounce segregation.

Seminaries also played a role in improving race relations in the SBC. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary took the lead in 1944 when Gordon Offutt became the first African American to graduate from any SBC seminary. Because of Kentucky's Day Law, which prohibited any educational institution from teaching both blacks and whites, Offutt studied in faculty offices or outside the doors of the classrooms. In 1951, however, Southern Seminary defied the law and integrated its classrooms. When a police officer showed up at his classroom, Dr. Wayne Ward threatened him with God's punishment if he attempted to arrest anyone! Although the faculty largely held moderate to liberal theologies, according to Roach, they relied upon biblical doctrines of creation and salvation for their racial views.

In his final chapter before his conclusion, Roach focuses on Richard Land, Valentine's successor at the CLC, now the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. Land identified openly with the Conservative Resurgence and represented a decided shift away from Valentine's evangelical liberalism. But like Valentine, Land also emphasized that race relations would be a key issue in his administration and that faithfulness to the Bible demanded a proactive approach to racial equality. Land insisted that racial justice was an issue of right and wrong, not right and left.

In 1989, Land began planning the 1995 Resolution on Racial Reconciliation. Land realized that the SBC had never acknowledged the convention's complicity in perpetuating racism. He knew that twentieth-century Southern Baptists could not repent on behalf of their forebears, but they could express regret, apologize and ask forgiveness. Land began looking for an appropriate venue to express those sentiments, and he decided on the sesqui-centennial anniversary.

As he did with previous statements and actions by both moderates and conservatives, Roach pointed out that the 1995 resolution presented to and passed by the SBC reflected such biblical truths as our common ancestry (Gen 3:20), God's impartiality (Acts 10:34–35), and God's creation of all humanity (Acts 17:26). Drawing also upon the doctrines of creation and salvation, the

resolution affirmed our unity in Christ, in whom there is neither slave nor free, and the hope that people from every tribe and nation would stand together as joint heirs with Christ.

In his conclusion, Roach presents three implications of his research. First, appeals to the Bible are more effective in bringing about change among Southern Baptists than liberal theology or political pragmatism. Second, the story played out across the SBC as a whole, reflecting similar experiences among individual churches, such as those of W. A. Criswell and Herschel Hobbs. Bringing about changes in churches requires challenging their members to “live up to their biblical convictions” (168). Third, “it should humble Christians today to see how badly Southern Baptists missed the mark of racial justice even though they strove to apply God’s word to every area of their lives. . . . It is cause for thanksgiving though, that the story of Southern Baptists and civil rights also provided hope that looking to the Bible will eventually correct even the most deeply embedded patterns of sin” (168–69).

Roach makes a good case for his thesis that conservative theology, especially the biblical doctrines of creation and salvation, unity and atonement, motivated the SBC’s shift away from segregation toward racial equality and integration. He admits, correctly, that when progressives led the way in this movement, they did so most persuasively when they spoke to their more conservative colleagues from the Bible, not from evangelical liberalism and the social gospel. The implication is that as the SBC goes forward toward racial reconciliation, they need to do so led by the Holy Scriptures and a biblically-based theology.

Certainly, the SBC has far to go in pursuing racial reconciliation since the 1995 resolution. In 2012, Southern Baptists elected the first African American president, Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, Louisiana. As significant as that step was, we have much further to go toward the goal. The past ten years since Luter’s election have brought new challenges and new resolutions: against the Confederate Flag, against the alt-right, and for the limited use of Critical Race Theory. There is no conclusion to the story of race relations in the SBC and the American church, and certainly no happy ending—yet. The greatest need in the church today is recognizing the sin of racism and true repentance, followed by reconciliation. Roach’s study of the history of the SBC and its role in the racial conflict in America is

only one step in this process; reflection must be followed by action.

- Rex D. Butler

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*Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future.* By Gavin Ortlund. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 224 pages. Paperback, \$21.99.

Gavin Ortlund is the senior pastor at First Baptist Church of Ojai in Ojai, California. As Ortlund earned his PhD at Fuller Theological Seminary, he discovered the value of theological retrieval. Ortlund exhorts evangelicals to retrieve the theology of the past to inform twenty-first-century Christians (13).

The author divided his argument into two parts. First, Ortlund argued for Protestants to engage theologians before the Reformation to gain their wisdom instead of neglecting their contributions (20). Theological retrieval is not a new endeavor. Ortlund observed some examples as B. B. Warfield retrieved Augustine's doctrines of grace. Also, Calvin and Luther recovered the early church's theology during the Reformation (28–35). Retrieving classical theologians is needed for evangelicals because Ortlund discovered younger Christians are leaving evangelicalism for the Orthodox or Catholic Church to search for a historical foundation (52). The author believes Protestants resolve the phenomenon by realizing their catholicity to address current theological issues (57–60). Ortlund contends retrieval is beneficial to contemporary theological discussions (69–72), but dangerous study habits could harm the pursuit of Protestant catholicity (73–76).

Part two is four case studies on theological retrieval. First, Ortlund explored the role of imagination through metaphor to compare "God and creation to an author and story in order to explore the nature of the Creator/creation distinction" (90). Second, he explored divine simplicity as a developed doctrine among patristic and medieval theologians, focusing on Anselm and John of Damascus, along with James Dolezal's present defense of divine simplicity (118–19). Third, he suggested a multiform of Christ's penal substitutionary atonement as the umbrella to include other theories. Ortlund explored Irenaeus and Athanasius's recapitulation and Anselm's satisfaction theories compared with the multiform

(145–46). Fourth, Ortlund investigated Gregory the Great’s pastoral philosophy as “the heart of theology and life, blending together his deeply felt monastic ideals with his practical gifts of leadership” (187).

Ortlund supplied a valuable claim for theological retrieval among evangelicals. Not only did his first part cast a broad vision for retrieval, but he provided examples in the second part to understand how it can contribute to theology. While retrieval is not new to scholarship, Ortlund gave three contributions. First, he observed retrieval as a principle from the Reformers since they “affirmed the preservation of the church in every generation; they drew widely from the wisdom of earlier generations, and they summed up their own goal as returning to the purity of the early church” (43). Why should theologians and pastors neglect the study of patristic theologians who contributed to Christianity, including Irenaeus, Hilary of Poitiers, Augustine, and the Cappadocian Fathers? Although the medieval period is considered dark, theology was not silent with Anselm or Thomas Aquinas. Theologians before the Reformers are valid interlocutors who can provide wisdom today as they did for the Reformers (43).

Second, Ortlund made aware of the phenomenon that some young evangelicals have “a profound sense of emptiness and dislocatedness and consequent malaise” that is missing from “evangelical churches and institutions” (52). Those who left an evangelical church for an Orthodox church include Hank Hanegraaff and Jaroslav Pelikan (46). Also, some people have moved to Catholicism, including G. K. Chesterton, Malcolm Muggeridge, Francis Beckwith, and Christian Smith (46–47). Yet, these theologians do not account for the younger generation moving away from the evangelical church (46–52). An exodus from evangelicalism reflects a desire among some people for a historical structure to their Christianity. As Ortlund remarked, “since our culture tends toward an isolation from the past, we must be all the more alert to our need to learn from it, and we may find it to be an especially useful corrective” (65).

Third, while some focus more on the benefits of theological retrieval (69–73), Ortlund named four dangers. The first danger includes a distortion of a theologian’s insight to advance one’s claim prematurely (73). Second, one might artificially use a concept that is inauthentic to the current controversy (73). Third, avoid a re-pristination that treats a theologian as the ultimate authority on a

challenging discussion (74). The fourth danger of theological retrieval includes the use of a minimalist approach to find unity among a variety of past theologians (75). While one could list more dangers, this list contributes to the needed guardrails for retrieval theology that is honest to the theologian's context of writing, advances the challenges of today, and leads to growth in knowing and loving God.

One could find a subject to disagree with in the four case studies, but these cases only demonstrate the value of theological retrieval. Nevertheless, Ortlund's response to people leaving evangelicalism needs strengthening for the local church. Ortlund observed the issue (46–52), but his response concerns scholarship. Ortlund wrote for pastors (14) and how the lack of tradition in the evangelical church caused an exodus (52). The response is to find common ground with ancient theologians (53), engage the ancient texts to strengthen the historical shallowness (57), a catholicity to Protestant theology (59), and not isolate the past from the present (65–66). However, the four responses are from an institution and a personal study perspective instead of a church perspective. Since pastors are a target audience, what can the pastor do to strengthen the church's catholicity? How should the pastor lead the sheep not to isolate the past? Ortlund neglected pastoral principles for theological retrieval.

Overall, Ortlund produced a needed conversation to engage history as theological retrieval. Pastors and theologians will find this work insightful for engaging the ancient faith. Ortlund's chapter on pastoral theology will be of particular benefit for learning balance in ministry. Readers will be encouraged and challenged to learn from the past to gain wisdom for the future.

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*Understanding Spiritual Warfare: A Comprehensive Guide.* By Sam Storms. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021. 333 pages. Paperback, \$22.99.

Sam Storms is the lead pastor for preaching and vision at Bridgeway Church in Oklahoma City, serves on The Gospel Coalition Council, and previously served as president of the Evangelical Theological Society. In writing *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*, Storms hopes to provide Christians with a fundamental understanding of the nature of divine warfare and provide Christians with the necessary tools so they may be delivered from demonic possession and oppression. The primary thrust of Storms' work is to gird Christians with the proper response to divine warfare: "warfare prayer" (312).

Storms divides his work into three primary sections: learning about the demonic, the threat of the demonic, and responding to the demonic. In his first section, Storms begins with a personal encounter he had with a demonic spirit, using his personal experience as a springboard to explain why it is necessary to accept the truth of spiritual warfare. Functioning as an introductory text, Storms lays the foundation for who Satan and his demons are by walking through relevant Scriptures (Gen 3, Isa 14, Ezek 28, and other texts). One beneficial aspect of the first section is the history of Satan and his demons at work in the early church. Walking through how Satan intervened in the history of the church provides a means by which the context of his methods can be ascertained for the contemporary church. Essentially, Satan is at work to "inflict suffering on God's people . . . torment unbelievers . . . [and] destroy the church by any means possible" (110). Knowing how Satan did this in the past gives insight into how he does it today. Furthermore, Storms examines the idea of territorial spirits, those demons who have "special responsibility, authority, and power over specific geographical and political areas" (113). After a survey of biblical evidence related to territorial spirits, Storms concludes that their existence is certainly a possibility and they can possess a strong influence on certain peoples and nations.

In his second section, Storms considers the dangers of the demonic world. One primary threat is the presence of false doctrines embedded into the church by false teachers. Additionally, demonization and oppression play large roles in the threat of the demonic world. What Storms refers to as demonization is often referred

to as demonic possession and is characterized by “a new personality in the victim, . . . fits of rage, self-destructive behavior, . . . [and] an alien voice” (155). One of the most common questions associated with demonization is, “Can Christians be demonized?” Exploring the answer to this question, Storms considered three different options: Christians can have an altered form of demonization, Christians cannot be demonized, and Christians can be demonized. Storms dismisses the first option because “to restrict a demon to a person’s soul and body, excluded from his spirit, is to suggest that there is a rigid, spatial compartmentalization to our beings” (175). On the second option, Storms points to basic biblical doctrines that people point to when considering this question: the fact that Satan was defeated, God provides Christians with divine protection, and the Holy Spirit inhabits the Christian. The last option, the one in which Storms aligns, is that Christians can be demonized.

In his final section, Storms explores how Christians are to respond to the demonic. He discusses how Satan continues to attack the church despite him and his forces having been defeated by Christ. As a result of the work of Christ, Storms argues that Christians have been given authority over the demonic and should engage in what he terms “deliverance ministry” (266). The penultimate chapter serves as a reminder of who the real enemy is and restates the importance of the armor of God. In the concluding chapter, Storms finishes his book with a discussion on imprecatory combat and its significance in spiritual warfare.

*Understanding Spiritual Warfare* contains a wealth of information relevant to Christians. The material is presented in a logical and systematic approach that clearly expresses what spiritual warfare is, who Christians are fighting against, and how Christians can most effectively wage war against the enemy. Overall, the book and its contents are a valuable resource for those seeking a greater understanding of divine warfare. The greatest weakness of the book is that Storms makes his arguments from a charismatic point of view. He asserts in his introduction that he believes in “speaking in tongues, the gifts of prophecy and discerning of spirits, divine healing, and the ministry of casting out demons and providing, in God’s grace and power, deliverance for those who are either demonized or oppressed or solely harassed by the enemy” (xx). His statement presumes that speaking in tongues is in the same category as deliverance from demons, a presumption that many read-



ers would deny. While Storms may not have intentionally meant to insinuate that being a cessationist excludes an individual from believing in demonic spirits and their activity in the world, such a view is reasonably inferred. And while there is a “Bapticostal” movement, the charismatic movement is generally ill-received among Baptists. Most Baptists believe in demonic activity and engage in spiritual warfare, though most Baptists would not self-identify as charismatics. Despite this foundational difference, seminary students, theologians, pastors, and even interested laypeople stand to gain an abundance of worthwhile information from this book.

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