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## Fall 2022 • Vol. 19, No. 2

The Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry  
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BCTM exists to provide theological and ministerial resources to enrich and energize ministry in Baptist churches. Our goal is to bring together professor and practitioner to produce and apply these resources to Baptist life, polity, and ministry. The mission of the BCTM is to develop, preserve, and communicate the distinctive theological identity of Baptists.

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## Editorial Introduction

**Adam Harwood, PhD**

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

It has been a personal pleasure and professional honor to serve as director of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry and editor of JBTM since the Fall of 2013. I built on the solid theological and financial foundation established by my predecessors. Dr. Stan Norman founded the Baptist Center and JBTM. Dr. Steve Lemke ably led the Baptist Center and JBTM from 2007–2012, while serving as provost and professor at NOBTS.

The Baptist Center hosted various events on campus in recent years. In October 2014, we hosted a group of translators and scholars to address the topic of Bible Translation as Missions. Revisions of the presentations were published in the Spring 2015 issue of JBTM. Also, two other journal issues were revised and published under the title *Anyone Can Be Saved: A Defense of “Traditional” Southern Baptist Soteriology* (Wipf & Stock, 2016). Presentations from another Baptist Center event hosted on campus were revised and later published under the title, *Infants and Children in the Church: Five Views on Theology & Ministry* (B&H Academic, 2017).

Issues of JBTM are peer-reviewed and available for free online. In addition, every issue since 2003 has been cataloged in the ATLA Religion Database. Thus, the articles and book reviews are accessible to students and researchers worldwide. Some issues of JBTM focused on particular themes, such as the Gospel & Evangelism (Fall 2014), Preaching the Bible (Fall 2016 & Spring 2017); and Complementarianism (Fall 2020). In addition, we also published several unthemed issues which featured articles from scholars representing dozens of institutions in the fields of biblical studies, historical theology, systematic theology, apologetics,

preaching, pastoral ministry, worship, social work, evangelism, missions, and Christian education.

Five individuals served on the Editorial Advisory Board from the Fall of 2013 to the present:

Bart Barber, PhD, First Baptist Church of Farmersville, Texas

Rex Butler, PhD, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Nathan Finn, PhD, North Greenville University

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Malcolm Yarnell, DPhil, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

I am grateful for their counsel, suggestions, contributions, and (in two cases) their service as guest editors. Many of the improvements and achievements at the Baptist Center and JBTM were due to the selfless service of this group.

The reasons for stepping down as director and editor are twofold. First, I was asked to add to my duties as a theology professor the administrative role of divisional associate dean of Theological & Historical Studies. I thought it would be wise to shed these responsibilities before assuming others. Second, I felt that I have accomplished the tasks the Lord put on my heart when I took on the role of director and editor. Thus, it was time to pass the roles to another individual who would steward the resources and opportunity to serve churches and NOBTS constituents. I am thankful the Lord raised up Dr. Thomas Doughty to assume the roles of Baptist Center director and JBTM editor. He is a churchman and scholar. He earned degrees from Blue Mountain College (BS, 2013) and NOBTS (MDiv, 2016; ThM, 2018; PhD, 2021). Presently, Dr. Doughty serves as assistant professor of theology & worldview and associate dean of Leavell College. I am thankful for Dr. Doughty's friendship, partnership in the gospel, and keen mind, and I look forward to seeing how he leads the Baptist Center and JBTM in the days ahead.

This issue of JBTM features ten articles on topics including apologetics, theology, biblical studies, biblical interpretation, ethics, and historical theology. Many of these articles were presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Fort Worth, Texas, November 16–18, 2021. In “Action Apologetics: Charity and Social Justice as Ways of Doing Apologetics,” Timothy S. Yoder of Dallas Theological Seminary proposes a new model of apologetics that he thinks better reflects the way people

actually come to faith in Christ. Rhyne Putman of Williams Baptist University addresses the question, “Does an Affirmation of Sola Scriptura Entail the Regulative Principle of Worship?” Two articles focus on the book of James. Daniel K. Eng of Western Seminary writes on “East Asian and Asian American Reflections on James.” Joseph Pak of Taylor University examines “James’s Call to the Rich to Repent and to the Poor Not to Judge.” J. Alan Branch of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary asks and answers a current ethical-political issue in his article, “Is the Use of Vaccines Developed from Abortion-Derived Fetal Cell Lines Formal or Material Complicity in Evil?”

In “Heaven or *Halakha*: John 14:1–3 Re-examined,” Andrea L. Robinson of Building Church builds a case for “the Father’s house” in the biblical text as a reference to Jesus Christ as the new temple rather than a designation for heaven. Daniel T. Slavich of Cross United Church suggests in “A Credible Witness: A Pluriform Church in a Pluralist Culture” that the church is a faithful witness of the gospel when the church reflects the manifold wisdom of the Triune God. John W. Taylor of Gateway Seminary skillfully answers his question, “Poverty, Prosperity and the Gospel: Is there Economic Good News for the Poor in Paul?” In “Revisiting Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and the Noble Lie,” Terry L. Wilder of Campbellsville University answers scholars who claim that the early church created and accepted forged writings to counter heretical views. Chris Chun of the Jonathan Edwards Center and Gateway Seminary presents his research titled, “Wealth and Poverty in the Life and Thought of Jonathan Edwards.”

The ten articles are followed by a collection of book reviews in the fields of biblical theology, theology and science, historical theology, systematic theology, Christian ethics, and church history. 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.



## Action Apologetics: Charity and Social Justice as Ways of Doing Apologetics

Timothy S. Yoder, PhD

*Timothy S. Yoder serves as associate professor of theological studies at Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas.*

When people speak of Christian apologetics, what they typically have in mind, I believe, is what can be termed *intellectual apologetics*. We conceptualize apologetics as the task of defending the faith by marshaling true and rigorous arguments to establish the existence of God, the inspiration of the Bible, the saving ministry of Jesus, and the truths of the gospel. The models we have in mind are Paul in Athens, interacting with the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, and reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue in Thessalonica. We may think of Justin's debates with Trypho or Matteo Ricci's<sup>1</sup> use of Confucian categories to defend Christianity to Chinese scholars. We may recall Pandita Ramabai,<sup>2</sup> a Hindu scholar whose study of the Christian Scriptures revealed to her the superiority of the Christian religion, or Nabeel Qureshi,<sup>3</sup> a Muslim who came to faith in Christ after a rigorous comparison of the Quran and the Bible (Muhammad and Jesus). Books like Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles*, Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, and Keller's *The Reason for God* characterize this approach.

In addition, the debates and discussions about various types of apologetics typically entail discussions between methods like evidentialism, classical apologetics, presuppositionalism, Reformed

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<sup>1</sup> Vincent Cronin, *The Wise Man from the West: Matteo Ricci and His Mission to China* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2016). Another resource for the lives and contributions of important apologists is Benjamin Forrest, Joshua Chatraw and Alistair McGrath (eds.), *The History of Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Helen Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai: The Story of Her Life* (public domain).

<sup>3</sup> Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

epistemology, and the like.<sup>4</sup> All of these methods of apologetics gather under the umbrella of intellectual apologetics. As important and necessary as intellectual apologetics is, it is important to recognize that other apologetic approaches are valid, useful, and necessary for the task of defending the faith. In this paper, I will begin by outlining five different approaches to apologetics. Then, I will focus on one of them, an approach that I call *action apologetics*.<sup>5</sup>

This reorientation of attention to apologetic approaches (as opposed to methods) is driven by a desire to pay attention to the way that people actually come to the faith. While there are many people who, like Nabeel Qureshi and Pandita Ramabai, come to saving faith because of rational considerations, there are also numerous individuals whose journey to Christ seems to hinge on elements that are not intellectual in nature.<sup>6</sup> Clear evidence of this assertion comes from the regular Testimony feature found in issues of *Christianity Today* magazine since at least 2015. Reading these accounts, I was impressed by the fact that some people testified that the most important elements in their faith journey were not an intellectual argument, but rather the lynchpin was an act of love and charity, a spiritual encounter, an individual's faith story, or even an artistic creation. So, I began to analyze testimonies, paying attention to these broadly sociological or human factors in coming to faith to understand the apologetic task more broadly.

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<sup>4</sup> See Brian Morley, *Mapping Apologetics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015) as an excellent example.

<sup>5</sup> For clarity's sake, I will use the word *method* to signify the different ways of doing intellectual apologetics (like evidentialism, presuppositionalism, etc.). I will use the term *approach* to highlight the different apologetic ways at the higher level of conceptualization (intellectual apologetics, actions apologetics, and the like).

<sup>6</sup> I assert and affirm that saving faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:8) and not something that happened by human work or merit. Salvation cannot be explained in purely human terms, like for instance, the logical power of an argument of natural theology. It is clear, however, that human factors are significant and play a role in the salvation process. Paul was saved due the direct revelation of Jesus on the Damascus road (Acts 9:4–5), but nearly everyone else who comes to faith in the NT (like Lydia in Acts 16:14–15 or the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:29–34) has a human who fulfills some proclamational role in their faith journey. My interests in this paper are in these sociological or human roles found in the various approaches, as opposed to the theological or divine agencies.



Some might object to this project in this way, “Well, it is clear that these sorts of sociological factors are significant for evangelism and making disciples, but this is not apologetics. Apologetics is defending the faith. It means that one must make intellectual arguments for the truth of Christianity. Not everyone who comes to faith needs apologetics, but don’t water down the notion of apologetics to include non-intellectual approaches.” My response to this objection is to argue that while this perception of the nature of apologetics may be one way to interpret Peter’s command to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pet 3:15), in fact, the practice of apologetics in the NT and in church history suggests that apologetics is broader than just intellectual apologetics.<sup>7</sup> This paper places an emphasis on stories, and I think that a consideration of actual accounts of people coming to faith reveals the need to broaden our understanding of apologetics.<sup>8</sup> In addition, it is noteworthy that all of these approaches are aimed at adults who already have a worldview. The conversion from one worldview to another is a kind of change. What is the impetus for this transformation? At times, it is reason and strong arguments, but at other times, the key seems to be a non-cognitive factor. Thus, I think it is fair to call it apologetics. The truth is that *apologetics* (unlike *evangelism*) is not a biblical word, so there is more liberty to stipulate its meaning and application. In the final analysis, I think that the best response to this objection is found in an overview of the five different approaches to apologetics that I have delineated, which is the next section of this article.

### Five Approaches to Apologetics

1. *Intellectual Apologetics* is making truth claims and constructing arguments in support of the rational integrity of the gospel and the Christian worldview as a whole. Intellectual apologetics is inter-disciplinary, as the apologist can utilize evidences and truths

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<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

<sup>8</sup> I will employ approximately twenty stories in this paper, and they range over many years, cultures and traditions within Christianity. It is not a part of my present agenda to consider the many theological differences or to wrestle with the Catholic or Presbyterian or Pentecostal or Baptist distinctives in each testimony. Rather, I am interested in the conditions that led each individual to proclaim their faith in Christ.

from philosophy, science, history, archaeology and any other academic discipline in support of the gospel. The maxim that “all truth is God’s truth” is clearly relevant here. Paul’s address to the Greek philosophers in Acts 17 is perhaps the most frequently-cited biblical example of intellectual apologetics, but Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in John 3 exemplified this approach as Jesus drew theological implications from OT teachings that he expected Nicodemus to know. I have already given several examples of this approach in the beginning of this article. Lee Strobel’s testimony began with his attempt to examine the new Christian faith of his wife. Using the same set of reasoning tools that he employed as a successful criminal and legal journalist in Chicago unexpectedly produced in him the conviction that the claims of Christianity were true. The historicity and credibility of the Bible and Jesus convinced him that he should become a Christian.<sup>9</sup>

2. *Cultural Apologetics* is the effort to make the gospel attractive by employing music, art, and other cultural means. Since it is frequently non-propositional, cultural apologetics operates in the realm of the beautiful, as opposed to the realm of the true. It tends to be more emotional or intuitive than discursive. This approach is exemplified by Nwoye, a character in Chinua Achebe’s book *Things Fall Apart* about an African village that grapples with the message of Christian missionaries.

It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul. He felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul. The words of the hymn were like drops of frozen rain melting on the dry palate of the panting earth.<sup>10</sup>

Dana Gioia, a Christian poet who served on the National Endowment for the Arts, asserted, “Art provides the most immediate and useful way in which God’s voice is heard in the world. Dante,

<sup>9</sup> See the preface of Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) for a short account of Strobel’s testimony. A similar approach is found in Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994), page 104. First published in 1959.

Mozart, Michelangelo, Gaudi, have brought more souls to God than any minister, because they speak to us in a way that is more fundamentally human and memorable.”<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the most poignant example of cultural apologetics comes from the beginning of *Les Miserables* when the recently-paroled Jean Valjean stays overnight at the bishop’s home. Spoiling his generosity, the desperate Valjean steals silver plates and utensils. When he was captured by the gendarmes and brought back to the church to face his crimes, the bishop took pity on Valjean and offered compassion instead of judgment. He asked Valjean why he didn’t also take the candlesticks the bishop had given him. The question was rooted in a false premise (the bishop had made no such offer) but, more importantly, it was an unexpected and shocking picture of the grace of God, and this one action completely changed Jean Valjean’s life trajectory. It is, I think, the single most dramatic account of divine forgiveness in all imaginative literature, and it is the epitome of cultural apologetics.<sup>12</sup> The gospel message is dramatized in an exquisitely artistic way with the result that it is made attractive, desirable, even irresistible.<sup>13</sup>

The strongest biblical example of cultural apologetics is the story of Bezalel and Oholiab, who were commissioned as craftsmen to make various works of art in the tabernacle. In Exodus 31 and 35, the work of these men is described. It is noteworthy that they were filled with the Holy Spirit for their work, which focused attention on its apologetic value. The tabernacle, as well as the temple later on, were purposed to proclaim the glory and character of God. Their beauty displayed the glory and majesty of God and, by extension, his message. Their various artistic works were intended to produce awe and reverence in those who saw them. Rather than an argument in favor of the truthfulness of God’s message, they made attractive the nature and person of God. They

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<sup>11</sup> Cited in Brett McCracken, *Hipster Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 170.

<sup>12</sup> An excellent recent work on this topic is Paul Gould, *Cultural Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Two memoirs that reveal the influence of cultural apologetics are C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956) and also Holly Ordway, *Not God’s Type* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2014). In both individuals, their atheistic, materialistic perspectives were challenged by beauty and artistry that could only be attributed to God.

prompted belief by beauty. The glory of the Lord (that is, his beauty) filled the tabernacle (Exod 40:34).

3. *Personal Apologetics* uses one's own testimony as an example of the faith commitment that is commended to others. In the Bible, Paul shared the story of his dramatic conversion before King Agrippa in Acts 26. Beginning in verse 9, he recounted the details of his testimony with the clear intent that those listening should believe as well. We know that his story made the audience squirm. Festus interrupted Paul with the bizarre comment that his great learning has driven him mad (26:24). Agrippa, showing a bit more restraint, wondered that Paul thought he could convert him in such a short time (26:28). Paul's response revealed his apologetic intention. He wished that all of them would become as he was, a believer in Jesus. The use of testimony as a tool of evangelism and apologetics has been a mainstay of the church throughout its history. Two famous examples from the twentieth century include Chuck Colson's *Born Again* and Nicky Cruz's *Run Baby Run*. The best-selling account of Louis Zamperini's imprisonment by the Japanese during World War II includes an account of his conversion at a Billy Graham rally and the life change that resulted.<sup>14</sup>

Personal apologetics is not intellectual apologetics as such because it is an individual account of one's experience. Experiences can only be rational or discursive if they are generalized or universalized. Of course, one may tell one's testimony and then present arguments why one's own experience of being forgiven and saved can be shared by others. Thus, personal apologetics can be appended to other approaches. On its own, however, it is a subjective, experiential account. This characteristic, of course, is both its strength and weakness. It is a bold statement of the spiritual work done in one's own life, as Paul, Colson, Cruz, and a host of others exemplify. However, the listener can determine that this story and experience is valid only for the testifier and thus conclude that it is irrelevant for him or her.

4. *Power Encounter* is a miraculous, spiritual event in which divine power is wielded to defeat the enemy. This exercise of divine

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<sup>14</sup> Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken* (New York: Random House, 2010). It should be noted that Hillenbrand did not intend the story as apologetics, as she is not a Christian. In that her book contains an account of his testimony, however, it has that function. The Holy Spirit can use this story to draw people to himself, even though we see a difference between Hillenbrand telling Zamperini's story and Luke recounting Paul's.

power is an overwhelming indication of the fact of the one true God, and is, thus, a pathway to faith. Sometimes there is a human agent, as when a person exorcises a demon, while other times God acts without human causality, as in the visions and dreams that Muslims report of Jesus.<sup>15</sup> Power encounter is frequently detailed in the Bible: Moses before Pharaoh in Exodus 7; Elijah and the prophets of Baal in Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3; and, of course, the many miracles of Jesus in the Gospels. Power encounter is still a facet of life today, as people are brought to the faith by means of answered prayers, healings, and other miracles, visions of Jesus, and the kind of spiritual war that is observed in animistic and shamanistic communities.

The account of the conversion of a village of Yanomamo people in the book *Spirit of the Rainforest* is a contemporary example.<sup>16</sup> The spirits that resided in the shaman known as Jungleman begged him not to send them away in favor of the most feared spirit, known as Yai Pada. They said he was the most evil spirit, but in truth he turned out to be not only the most powerful but also the one that was truly gracious, the Spirit of the one true God. When Jungleman realized that Yai Pada was the most powerful and also the best spirit, he sent the other spirits away and became a follower of Yahweh. It should be acknowledged that power encounter often seems to operate with significantly less human agency than the other approaches I have identified. This observation raises some interesting questions about human planning and intentionality with regard to this approach.

5. *Action Apologetics* is the witness to the gospel done by acts of love, sacrifice, and justice. Defense of the faith in this approach is the display of the god-like virtues which overcome the evil and corruption of the world. It is the exhibition of the goodness and grace of God in the world. Personal apologetics is rooted in the experiential and subjective, and power encounter is the transcendental breaking into the natural. Intellectual apologetics is grounded in the truth of God, cultural apologetics in the beauty of God, and action apologetics reveals the goodness of God. The transformation and redemption of humans and even of institutions is a

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<sup>15</sup> Tom Doyle, *Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Mark Ritchie, *Spirit of the Rainforest*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (n.p.: Island Lake Press, 2019).

strong defense of the reality of God who loves sinful humans and wishes to redeem them. Action apologetics mirrors the nature of God and thus persuades by the conquest of love over hate, good over evil, and justice over oppression.

Having given a brief thumbnail sketch of action apologetics to round out the five different approaches to apologetics, I will proceed in the next section to give a fuller accounting of this way of doing apologetics. The reason for highlighting this specific approach in this paper is not because I think it is more important or useful than the other four. It is not a part of my concern here to rank or order the approaches by any kind of standard. I focus my attention on action apologetics because it fits well with current discussions of social justice, and also because I think it is the most underdeveloped of the five approaches.

### **Action Apologetics**

During John the Baptist's imprisonment, he heard accounts of Jesus's activity and sent word asking whether Jesus was in fact the one that they were expecting or if they should look for another. I will not comment on John's motivation for these questions, whether they arose from doubt, differing expectations, or some other factor. What is noteworthy is the manner of Jesus's response. Luke wrote, "At that very time, Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So [Jesus] replied to the messengers, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor'" (Luke 7:21–22). Alluding in part to the prophecy of Isaiah 61, which he proclaimed to be fulfilled in Luke 4:21, Jesus provided proof of his identity as the real Messiah not in terms of the truthfulness of his message, but in terms of actions of mercy and power. The miracles of healing are matched with the gospel proclamation to the poor. The gospel is not just expressed in true propositions, but also by love in action.

In fact, the Bible is full of passages that assert the mission of God's people in terms of goodness and justice, and these passages can be tied to the task of apologetics and evangelism. James 1:26–27 says that true religion is the care of widows and orphans, and Micah 6:8 proclaims what the Lord requires, "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." In the parable of

the sheep and goats of Matthew 25, Jesus provocatively asserted that actions done to the poor and marginalized (to feed the hungry, to provide drink for the thirsty, to take in strangers, to clothe the naked, to take care of the sick, and to visit those in prison) are in fact actions done to him (25:35–40). A dramatic example of this kind of obedience is found in the story of Fr. Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish priest who was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp for his political activity. When a prisoner from the camp escaped, the Nazis declared that ten prisoners would be starved to death in response. Names were drawn at random, and one was a man who pleaded with the Nazis for his life, saying that he had a wife and children to which he longed to return. The Nazis refused, but then Fr. Kolbe stunningly offered to take the man's place, seeing as the priest had no wife or children. The Nazis accepted this exchange. Kolbe was killed, and the other man survived the war, returned to his family and lived a full life into his 90s.<sup>17</sup>

The Bible frequently declares the need for justice for the poor as one of God's primary concerns. In addition to Matthew 25 and James 1 which have already been cited, another key passage is Amos 5. Among the elements of this strongly-worded harangue are these accusations against unjust Israelites. "You trample on the poor and force him to give you his grain" (5:11). "You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts" (5:12). "Hate evil, love good, maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph" (5:15). Acting for the sake of a just society and doing what is necessary to ensure the rights of the poor and oppressed is right because it mirrors God's own concern for those on the margins of society (Pss 12:5; 35:10; 41:1–2; 113:5–8).

It is not enough, however, simply to establish that it is right to care for widows and orphans, the poor and oppressed to ground these requirements as action apologetics. This point is just the first of two threads in the argument. It is also necessary to show that these sorts of actions are indeed a way of defending the faith and representing the gospel. The second strand of my defense of action apologetics is to show that our love for others is an aspect of our witness. These two components together provide a solid biblical foundation for action apologetics.

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<sup>17</sup> An account of Kolbe's sacrifice is given by Paul Mariani in *Martyrs*, ed. Susan Bergman (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 218–23.

In several places in Isaiah and Jeremiah, the Lord chastised the people of Israel for their lack of attention to social justice issues and stressed its importance in pleasing him (see, for instance, Isa 2; 58; and Jer 22). It is instructive to note that the beginning of Isaiah contains the prophecy of the mountain of the Lord where all peoples will come to learn his ways (2:2). God will settle disputes between the nations, and swords will be beaten into plowshares (2:4). What is hinted here is that the justice of the Lord becomes a vehicle for universal proclamation of God's truths. In Jeremiah 22:3, the Lord commands his people, "Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hands of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place" (NIV). If these commands are not kept, the palace will become a ruin (22:5), and the people from many nations will notice it and wonder why the Lord did such a thing to this city. The reason will be that they were not faithful to the covenantal commands (22:8). These two instances in Isaiah and Jeremiah point to a truth that will be made more explicit in the NT. Acts of justice or injustice are a kind of proclamation. Justice and love are a way of proclaiming the Lord's nature to the world, and a failure to do so serves as a negative testimony.

A clearer assertion that moral actions entail a proclamation of God's gospel is found in NT passages like Matthew 5:16 where Jesus identifies his followers as the light of the world, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Jesus also told the twelve that if they love one another, then all men will know that they are his disciples (John 13:35). Paul instructed the Philippian church to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel (1:27), and to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (2:12). If they do so, then they can be "children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which [they] shine like stars in the universe as [they] hold out the word of life" (2:15–16). Jesus announced his ministry and dramatically proclaimed himself the Messiah in Luke 4 by reading from Isaiah 61:1–2 that the good news is preached to the poor, the imprisoned are freed, the blind are healed, and the oppressed are released (Luke 4:17–19). This passage is an important affirmation that the gospel message is closely associated with acts of love and social justice.



It is not sufficient to make only a theological case for action apologetics. We need to consider our history and, specifically, how the gospel has spread in areas and communities that were not Christian. An instructive answer comes from the way that ancient Romans were converted to Christianity. The story of how the Roman Empire, which persecuted the church so strenuously in the first two hundred years of its existence, became in fact Christian is a great historical puzzle. There is no lack of historians wishing to weigh in on it. One contemporary voice in this discussion is Rodney Stark, who uses sociological tools to bolster the traditional elements of historiography. Stark names two important factors that contributed to the success of the gospel in overcoming Roman opposition. One is how Christians cared for the sick, particularly those suffering from the plague. While the famous physician Galen escaped the plague by moving out of the city, Christians stayed to care for the sick and dying, even those without family connections. Their testimony of selfless love and altruism was a vivid contrast, and it paved a path for Romans to reject their old gods in favor of Jesus.<sup>18</sup> A second factor was the status of women in early Christianity as compared to pagan Rome. Stark's chapter on the role of women in *The Rise of Christianity* is rich and full of interesting reflections on things like birth rates and exogamous marriages, topics that go beyond the arena of action apologetics. However, Stark is convinced that the rise in status for women in the church and the leadership roles that they played contributed significantly to the Christianization of Rome.<sup>19</sup> These two factors, the courageous and compassionate care of the sick and neglected, even at great personal cost, and the opportunity for women to play a more meaningful role in society, exemplify two of the aspects of action apologetics—personal sacrifice and love, and a commitment to social justice.

Two contemporary conversion stories illustrate the unique dynamic of action apologetics. The first is the story of Rosaria Butterfield, who became a Christian despite her background as a lesbian professor and outspoken advocate for the LGBTQ agenda.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 85–88.

<sup>19</sup> Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 128.

<sup>20</sup> Rosaria Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (Pittsburgh: Crown and Covenant, 2012).

She published an editorial in the local paper that minced no words in affirming her political and ethical agenda. A wave of letters pro and con came in her direction, but one of them stood out. It was from a local pastor, who did not agree with her editorial but nevertheless invited her to dinner. The letter was kind and respectful, and Rosaria couldn't get it out of her mind. Eventually, she accepted the invitation. To make a long story short, they became friends and, after many conversations, she became a Christian. The intellectual conversations were a clearly a part of her testimony but so was the loving outreach of a Christian stranger, who extended hospitality and friendship to a person whose worldview was quite different. It is easy to see in this pastor a contemporary reflection of the Good Samaritan.

A second example is also dramatic but in a different way. One of the most famous examples of Christian ministry in the 1950s and 60s was the work of David Wilkerson, a country preacher from the Midwest, in the ghettos of New York City to violent gang leaders. Wilkerson brazenly encountered Nicky Cruz, one of the most dangerous and feared gang leaders in the city. As Wilkerson approached, Cruz immediately threatened, "You come near me, and I'll kill you!" Just as quickly, Wilkerson responded, "Yeah, you could do that. You could cut me up into a thousand pieces and lay them in the street, and every piece will still love you."<sup>21</sup> The courage and authenticity of Wilkerson broke through the tough exterior, and after a series of interactions, Cruz gave his heart to Jesus.

Two other contemporary examples are instructive. A lot of attention has been paid to two rather significant individuals who are engaged in social justice initiatives with important success. Kevin Bales has written several books highlighting the scourge of human trafficking. He founded an organization called "Free the Slaves," which is making a real difference in our world. His work has inspired an impressive series of results, including important legislation and a small army of workers trying to rid the world of slaves. His goal is to rid the world of slavery, and he has a plan that is making a difference. Bryan Stevenson opened a small legal practice in the South, and it became his passion to work for the release of individuals (typically African Americans) who were wrongly

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<sup>21</sup> David Wilkerson and Elizabeth Sherrill, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (New York: Berkley, 1962).

convicted and unjustly sentenced to life sentences or the death penalty. His book *Just Mercy* inspired a movie of the same title, and Stevenson's work is providing an important corrective to racist judicial decisions.<sup>22</sup> Both Bales and Stevenson are Christians. Bales is a Quaker, and Stevenson is an evangelical. However, neither do the work that they do explicitly in the name of Jesus. Their efforts to alleviate evil in the world are commendable, brave, and greatly needed. There is little doubt of their heroism in these regards. However, I believe that it falls short of apologetics. It is the kind of work that needs to be done but from a gospel perspective, it is missing a necessary piece. For it to be action apologetics, the work needs to be more directly linked to Jesus and presented in the context of the gospel.

### *Christianity Today* Testimonies

I will conclude this paper on action apologetics with two testimonies from *Christianity Today*. They exemplify well this approach—that acts of love, charity, and social justice can prove to be a proclamation of the gospel. The first story is of David Nasser, a boy who grew up amid the Iranian Revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini in the 1970s. His family's situation was violent and chaotic, but they managed to emigrate to the United States, settling in Texas. But their new life wasn't much better for a teenager who didn't fit in. David was bullied constantly and felt fragile and insecure. Things were starting to change, however. People at a local church had volunteered to help at his father's restaurant during a moment of crisis, and he was deeply touched by their kindness. David attended a youth rally and most of his classmates ignored him, except one very popular football player who shared his Bible during the study. The youth group began to visit David, sharing their faith. These acts of love led David to read the Bible, and when he came to the story of Peter stepping out of the boat, he knew that this act of faith was what he needed to do. Eventually, his whole family became Christian. The turning point in the story

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Bales' most recent book *Blood and Earth* by Kevin Bales (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2016) and also *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2016).

was the unexpected acts of Christian kindness in a world of hurt and pain.<sup>23</sup>

Juliet Liu Waite's testimony begins when her grandparents and their children (who are Juliet's aunts, uncles, and her mom) were helicoptered out of Saigon, South Vietnam, as that city fell in 1975. Her grandmother had been a 20-year translator and assistant to the US military there, and the family made a harrowing escape from the war-torn country in the closing days of the Vietnam War. They had left with only the clothes on their back, and they suffered separation and near starvation in refugee camps before finally arriving in Indiana to start their lives over. It was there that a small church acted on their conviction that God was leading them to sponsor a refugee family. The church found them housing and provided food, clothing, and furniture. Despite not knowing the language, this refugee family loved going to church to experience the generosity and love of the church. Eventually, three generations, including Juliet (who was born in the US) became Christians. They were saved by the gospel that was first communicated to them through acts of love and charity, as this church met their physical needs in Jesus's name. Now a pastor, Juliet marvels at the story that began before she was even born. Here are her words,

Each time I heard my aunties recount this story, in my child's mind I pictured my mother's family coming across the sea, journeying through the waters. These were the waters of their Exodus, the waters of their own baptism, the waters that God would part in order to show himself as their Deliverer. This was their Passover story—the night they were rescued from certain death by a God who protected them when they had no home, and numbered them among his people.

This is also *my* story. I grew up knowing that I *existed* because somewhere in the world, a group of people believed that a merciful God was asking them to show mercy to those who needed it. I grew up knowing that this sort of

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<sup>23</sup> David Nasser, "I Escaped from Iran, but Not from God," *Christianity Today*, January/February 2019, available at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/january-february/david-nasser-escaped-iran-not-god.html>.

God was a God worth trusting. His mercy echoes down through the generations.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Juliet Liu Waite, "The Waters of Their Exodus," *Christianity Today*, December 2018, pp. 79–80.



## Does an Affirmation of *Sola Scriptura* Entail the Regulative Principle of Worship?

Rhyne Putman, PhD

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Evangelicals universally claim the sufficiency of Scripture as the foundation of their beliefs and practices but have significant disagreements about how we should apply this concept—especially in the ministry of the local church. While all evangelical churches share common practices in worship—worship through song, the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments—they vary widely in their musical preferences, preaching styles, and how they administer baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

We read the same Bible, but we “do” church in distinctive ways. We are not just dealing with different texts or interpretations of biblical passages related to Christian worship; we are dealing with different hermeneutical approaches to these texts. We work from competing methodological frameworks. Since the dawn of the Reformation, Protestants and evangelicals have chosen broadly between two similar but competing principles: the *normative principle* and the *regulative principle*.

According to the normative principle, normally associated with Lutheran and Anglican traditions, “we may do whatever God has not forbidden” in worship. For “high church” Anglicans, this may mean swinging a thurible in procession. For a “low church” charismatic, this may mean telling the gospel through a dramatic performance. The normative principle, often associated with pragmatism in worship and church organization, reigns supreme in most contemporary evangelical churches.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 432. One might suggest, as R. J. Gore does, that many evangelical free churches really embrace a “pragmatic principle.” See R. J. Gore, *Covenantal Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 9–10.

In stark contrast to the normative principle, the regulative principle states that “in worship, we may only do those things which God has commanded us to do.”<sup>2</sup> As Ligon Duncan explains it, the regulative principle is “an extension of the Reformational axiom of *sola scriptura*. As the Bible is the final authority in faith and life, so it is also the final authority in how we corporately worship.”<sup>3</sup> Presbyterian and Reformed theologians have been debating how this axiom should be applied for centuries. Some pastor-theologians within Reformed traditions also apply this principle to every aspect of the church’s government and practice, including its organization, membership, and polity.

Christians from both hermeneutical and theological frameworks raise valid concerns about worship. Those in the “regulative principle” camp cite concerns about pragmatism and idolatrous worship that values enthusiasm and entertainment more than obedience to God. Those who oppose the regulative principle cite concerns about contextually irrelevant, legalistic worship devoid of the Spirit’s leadership. Christians on both sides of these debates should be concerned about all of these things.

All evangelicals affirm the sufficiency of Scripture—or at least give this doctrine lip service—but a much smaller number affirms the regulative principle. Some pastors and theologians make the strong claim that the doctrine of *sola scriptura* necessarily entails the regulative principle of worship. Others make the weaker claim that the regulative principle of worship is more consistent with *sola scriptura* than other approaches like the normative principle. In this paper, I will argue that the regulative principle in its various forms is closely related to how one defines the sufficiency of Scripture and explore whether the regulative principle as it is traditionally conceived is a necessary correlate of *sola scriptura*.

## I. The Development of the Regulative Principle

Like *sola scriptura*, the regulative principle developed in response to the practices of late medieval Roman Catholicism. The Reformers recognized that the cult of the saints, the adoration of Mary, and the use of icons went beyond the bounds of biblical

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<sup>2</sup>Michael C. Griggs, *Worship According to the Word: An Introduction to the Regulative Principle of Worship* (n.p.: 5th Kingdom Ministries, 2019), 8.

<sup>3</sup>Ligon Duncan, *Does God Care How We Worship?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020), 11–12.



worship. They recognized that tradition was being raised to the level of revelation, given weight equal or superior to Scripture (a position Heiko Obermann calls “Tradition II,” or a two-source theory of revelation). The Reformers also saw unjust burdens being placed on the backs of worshippers with rituals and practices that had no strong support in the biblical text. Most importantly, they were convinced that many of the religious practices of medieval Catholicism could be accused of violating the first and second commandments.

In 1544, Calvin wrote and presented *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* to Charles V and the Diet of the Holy Roman Empire. Calvin there asserted that the Protestant Reformation was first and foremost about a return to “the pure and legitimate worship of God” commanded by God in the Scriptures.<sup>4</sup> For Calvin, God has rejected “all human devices which are at variance with his command.”<sup>5</sup> The specific “human devices” Calvin had in mind included the use of icons, the veneration of the saints, and the five sacraments of Rome that were not ordained by Scripture (i.e., confirmation, healing, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, and marriage). Though he did not use the term “regulative principle,” Calvin certainly set the stage for the concept when he wrote, “God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word.”<sup>6</sup>

Again, the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) does not use the term “regulative principle” but does suggest the idea in its discussion of the second commandment. Question 96 asks, “What is God’s will for us in the second commandment?” The answer? “That we in no way make any image of God *nor worship him in any other way than [what] has been commanded in God’s Word.*”<sup>7</sup> The framers of Heidelberg recognize that it is not enough simply to worship the one true God. This God must also be worshipped in the manner he has revealed.

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, trans. H. Beveridge (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1844), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, 16–17.

<sup>6</sup> Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Heidelberg Catechism q-a. 96, italics mine. “Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them” (Exod 20:4–5a). Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the Christian Standard Bible.

The Belgic Confession (1561) of the Dutch Reformed Church is concerned with religious liberty in worship: “We reject *all human innovations* and all laws imposed on us, in our worship of God, which bind and force our consciences in any way.”<sup>8</sup> The author of this confession, Guido de Brés (1522–1567), presented this document to Philip II in a failed attempt to secure toleration for Reformed churches in Spain. The future martyr asserted that Reformed Christians obeyed the just laws of government in every way but asserted that the government could not impose elements of worship on Christians not prescribed by Scripture.

The more mature formulations of the regulative principle grew out of the seventeenth-century controversy between “high church” Anglicans and Puritans. Charles I provoked a series of religious civil wars (the Bishops’ Wars) when he attempted to enforce the use of *The Book of Common Prayer* in all the churches of England and authorized serious consequences for those who refused. It is in this context that the Westminster divines drafted this statement about the regulative principle:

The light of nature shows that there is a God, who has lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and does good unto all, and therefore is to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, *that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.*<sup>9</sup>

Natural revelation may bring with it an inward awareness of God’s existence, but it is wholly insufficient for establishing the true worship of God. Left to natural revelation alone, the true worship of God is exchanged with the false worship of idols (Rom 1:20–22). God is worthy of worship and total obedience, and the only true way to obey God in worship is to follow his prescriptions for worship without deviation or unnecessary supplements.

For the Westminster divines, the regulative principle is closely linked to their claim about Scripture’s sufficiency: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory,

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<sup>8</sup> Belgic Confession, art. 32, italics mine.

<sup>9</sup> *Westminster Confession of Faith* 21.1; cf. 1689 *Baptist Confession of Faith* 22.1.

man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men."<sup>10</sup> The Westminster divines suggest that everything needed for obedience in the Christian life is either directly stated by Scripture or is a *reasonable inference from what Scripture says*. As Robert Letham notes, "The regulative principle, as expressed by the Assembly, does not reduce the Bible to a commandment manual whereby worship is to be shaped exclusively by explicit commands."<sup>11</sup>

The confession does make this qualification about worship and church governance: "There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed." The precise nature of these "circumstances" has been a tremendous source of tension and debate in the Reformed tradition.

Some Presbyterian and Reformed theologians distinguish these circumstances from the "elements" of worship. The elements refer to those essential components of Christian worship prescribed by Scripture, elements that are deemed to have religious significance (e.g., preaching, singing, sacraments, offering, etc.). John Owen (1616–1683) defined the essential elements or "principal institutions" of worship as "the calling, gathering, and settling of churches, . . . prayer, with thanksgiving; singing of psalms; preaching the Word; the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Supper of the Lord; discipline and rule of the church collected and settled."<sup>12</sup>

Circumstances, by contrast, are not prescribed by Scripture and are non-religious in nature.<sup>13</sup> Circumstances "common to human actions and societies" may include things like meeting time, place, dress, etc. Brought into contemporary ecclesiologies, circumstances may involve the use of human resources in staffing a church,

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<sup>10</sup> *Westminster Confession of Faith* 1.6.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Letham, "Does the Regulative Principle Demand Exclusive Psalmody?" *9Marks Journal* (Jul–Aug 2013): 49.

<sup>12</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 15:477.

<sup>13</sup> John M. Frame, "A Fresh Look at the Regulative Principle," in *John Frame's Selected Writings*, vol. 3 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2016), 253.

using music licensing groups to legally acquire music for worship, or following local protocols for public assemblies in the middle of a pandemic.

Presbyterian theologians have long disagreed about what aspects of worship are properly called “elements” and which are properly called “circumstances.” For example, some place the use of instruments in worship in the category of “circumstance” while others assert instruments add an additional element to worship that goes beyond the bounds of what is prescribed in Scripture.<sup>14</sup>

<b>Elements of Worship (Essence)</b>	<b>Circumstances of Worship (Accidents)</b>
1. The calling and gathering of the church.	1. Where Christians gather for worship.
2. The reading and preaching of Scripture.	2. The time of the service.
3. The administration of the sacraments.	3. How often the sacraments are administered.
4. Calling publicly on the Lord in prayer and singing.	4. The order of worship.
5. The collection of alms and offerings.	5. Sitting/standing for prayers and worship.
6. Church discipline (if necessary).	6. The specific forms/formulas of prayers.
	7. Instrumental music / musical style (?)

Others, like John Frame, reject the distinctions between elements and circumstances altogether, claiming that this distinction is “not warranted by Scripture” and that it is more Aristotelian than biblical. Frame affirms the Westminster Confession but broadens the definition of the regulative principle to include the entirety of the Christian life, and he is generally dismissive of the traditional regulative principle.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Gore, *Covenantal Worship*, 30–32. Gore lists Edmund Clowney (1917–2005) as a representative of the instrumental music as “circumstance” category and John Girardeau (1825–1898) as a representative of the traditional position that instrumental worship adds an element to the service.

<sup>15</sup> Frame, “A Fresh Look,” 255–59.

## II. Two Principles, Two Views on *Sola Scriptura*

The sufficiency of Scripture is the formal principle of Protestant and evangelical theology. While the Bible does not explicitly teach this principle, it is a clear inference of what Scripture does say about its own inspiration: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, *equipped for every good work*” (2 Tim 3:16–17, emphasis mine). If Scripture provides believers with what they need for “every good work,” then it is a sufficient guide for Christian faith and practice.

Yet there is disagreement among Protestants and evangelicals about how this claim should be applied. For one stream of evangelical Christians sometimes labeled “biblicists,” the sufficiency of Scripture means the Bible is the *only source of knowledge about God and his world*. This “only-sourceist” position is also called *nuda Scriptura* or “solo Scriptura.”<sup>16</sup> The only-sourceist, often spotted in free church traditions, finds little or no value in creeds or confessions, functionally placing the ultimate authority for biblical interpretation in the hands of individual interpreters. Only-sourceists may claim to have “no creed but the Bible,” even if they miss the performative contradiction in their own creed.

Many of the early proponents of the traditional regulative principle appeared to presume an only-sourceist view. Proponents of exclusive psalmody claim that only psalms lifted directly from the pages of Scripture should be used in Christian worship. In their *Admonition to Parliament* (1572), the Puritan clergymen John Field (1545–1588) and Thomas Wilcox (1549–1608) called on the English government to reject additions to worship not explicitly found in the biblical text—including readings from the Nicene Creed.<sup>17</sup> *The Westminster Directory for Public Worship* (1644) ruled out the celebration of Christian holidays because they have “no warrant in the

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<sup>16</sup> This biblicist position is sometimes called *nuda Scriptura* or “solo Scriptura.” See Timothy George, “An Evangelical Reflection on Scripture and Tradition,” *Pro Ecclesia* 9 (Spring 2000): 206.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Farley, “What is ‘Biblical’ Worship? Biblical Hermeneutics and Evangelical Theologies of Worship,” *JETS* 51.3 (2008): 593. As Farley notes, “the authors clarify that they do not reject but rather affirm the doctrine contained in the creed. Thus, accurate theological content is not a sufficient condition to warrant its liturgical use.”

word of God.”<sup>18</sup> Many within the Reformed tradition use the New Testament’s silence on instrumental worship as justification for its strict prohibition.

Only-sourceism could also be used to defend the normative principle of worship. As Scott Aniol rightly observes, “For some people, the Bible is like a list. God gave us a list of things that he wanted us to do, and a list of things he wanted us to avoid, and so if something is not on the list, God doesn’t care about it.”<sup>19</sup> If the Bible is in fact the *only source* of knowledge about God, it must provide an exhaustive list of parameters. Taking the normative principle to its logical conclusion, any practice could be acceptable if it fell outside the exhaustive list of biblical prohibitions. But this would lead to absurd conclusions. Just because the Bible does not explicitly prohibit nudist churches does not mean they are a good, God-honoring idea! (Apparently, these really do exist, but I am happy to report I have no firsthand experience with them.) Just because the Bible does not explicitly prohibit this activity in the assembly does not mean one could reasonably argue that this is a faithful application of the biblical text!

A better way of understanding the sufficiency of Scripture and one more faithful to the broader Reformation tradition is to say that the Bible is the (1) *supreme source of knowledge about God and his world* and (2) *the only norm for assessing this knowledge*. For the “only-normist,” Scripture is the *norma normans non normata* (“the norming norm that is not itself normed.”) Only-normism does not discount the possibility of knowing \*something\* about God from general revelation, tradition, reason, or religious experience, but it does dictate that the written word of God is a vastly superior resource for knowing about God and his will. (James Leo Garrett Jr. helpfully described this position as *scriptura suprema*.) Only-normism also claims that Scripture is the only sufficient standard for assessing these other sources and practices because Scripture alone is inspired and Scripture alone is infallible and inerrant.

The Reformers did not take the sufficiency of Scripture to mean “only-sourceism.” They recognized that tradition, reason, and experience all have a proper place in Christian thought and practice. What they did reject, however, was a prominent Roman

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<sup>18</sup> *The Westminster Directory for Public Worship* (1644), appendix.

<sup>19</sup> Scott Aniol, *Sound Worship: A Guide to Making Musical Choices in a Noisy World* (Fort Worth, TX: Religious Affections Ministries, 2010), 28.

Catholic view in late medieval theology that the tradition of the church is functionally equivalent to special revelation. They asserted the *material sufficiency* of Scripture, meaning that Scripture provides everything necessary to know God, to be obedient to him, and live as a faithful follower of Christ. Tradition is not another source of revelation.

The Reformers likewise affirmed the *formal sufficiency* of Scripture, the idea that every believer can read and make sense of Scripture with the aid of the Spirit. Because Scripture is its own norming norm, no divinely instituted magisterium is required for making sense of the biblical text.<sup>20</sup> As Timothy Ward explains, this Reformation doctrine of the formal sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contains within itself all “the means by which the Lord can lead us into greater covenant faithfulness.”<sup>21</sup>

But do either of these competing views of the sufficiency of Scripture entail an affirmation of the traditional regulative principle of worship? If we were to define the sufficiency of Scripture in the sense of “only-sourceism,” the idea that Scripture provides *an exhaustive description of all Christian belief and practice*, we may try and make the argument that the traditional regulative principle is the necessary logical consequence of that view:

1. Scripture details and prescribes every essential aspect of Christian belief and practice.
2. Corporate worship is essential to the beliefs and practices of Christians.
3. Therefore, Scripture details and prescribes every essential aspect of corporate worship.

But even this argument does not entail the regulative principle in its stronger traditional form, that “we may only do those things which God has commanded us to do.” In order to make this argument, another premise must be added:

1. Scripture details and prescribes every aspect of Christian belief and practice.

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<sup>20</sup> Mark D. Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand: The Relation of Authority and Interpretive Method in Luther's Approach to Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 252–74; Anthony N. S. Lane, “*Sola Scriptura? Making Sense of a Post-Reformation Slogan*,” in *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*, ed. Philip E. Satterwaite and David F. Wright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 300–12.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009), 115.

2. Any belief or practice not detailed in or prescribed by Scripture is prohibited.
3. Corporate worship is essential to the beliefs and practices of Christians.
4. Therefore, any belief or practice related to Christian worship that is not prescribed by Scripture is prohibited.

The prohibition of all beliefs and practices not detailed or prescribed in Scripture may be an appropriate inference of the only-sourceist understanding of *sola scriptura*, but it is not a logically necessary consequence of it.

The traditional definitions of the regulative and normative principles can be mischaracterized in ways that no proponent of these respective positions would ever accept. No champion of the regulative principle is so restrictive in his application of the principle that he would suggest that we should not sit in pews or that we cannot wear red to church if Scripture does not expressly command it. And no serious-minded proponent of the normative principle would suggest that rolling around in the floor and making animal noises has a proper place in Christian worship—even if the Bible does not strictly prohibit such behavior. Both caricatures presume an “only-sourceist” view of the sufficiency of Scripture. Whether one states we can do anything the Bible does not prohibit or we can do nothing it does not strictly command, the common assumption is that Scripture is exhaustive in prescriptions for the Christian life.

But what of the only-normist position? Does it entail either the regulative or normative principles of worship? In short, no. The only-normist definition neither entails a command-only approach or a prohibition-only approach to the interpretation of passages related to Christian worship. Instead, it is simply applied like this:

1. Scripture is the supreme source and only norm for Christian faith and practice.
2. Corporate worship is essential to the beliefs and practices of Christians.
3. Therefore, Scripture is the supreme source and only norming norm for Christian corporate worship.

Scripture may not be the only source for understanding Christian worship and practice, as we can learn from the liturgy and praxis of the church throughout history. Still, God’s written word is a superior resource. Furthermore, Scripture is the only norm for assessing the church’s practices throughout history. Tradition can



help us reflect on what Scripture means regarding worship and show us various ways Scripture has been applied in different epochs and ecclesial contexts, but any aspect of tradition can be overruled by Scripture if it's judged not to conform to its divinely inspired pattern. This approach, I would suggest, was at the heart of Calvin's initial foray into the ideas that would become the regulative principle. He was not denying that tradition has some place in the worship of the church—as even his alternate order of worship included recitations of the creeds—but he was clear that any tradition that represented a significant mutation of the biblical practices (such as prayers to the saints) must be summarily rejected.

### III. How Scripture Directs the Worship of the Church

In the worship of the church, our ultimate concern is not whether the Bible explicitly commands us to do something or whether it expressly prohibits us from doing something. Instead of asking “What does the wording of the Bible expressly tell us to do?” or “What does the Bible free us to do?” we should ask “How can we be faithful and obedient to the pattern of divine revelation in our worship and church practices?” This seems to be the question most important to an only-normist view of *sola scriptura*.

*First, Scripture is sufficient for regulating the whole Christian life—including corporate worship and a lifestyle of worship.* John Frame is correct when he observes that Scripture provides “God’s regulative principle for all areas of life. . . . The sufficiency of Scripture is for all of life, not merely for one segment of it.”<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, all of life should be an act of Christian worship (Rom 12:2). This is what Frame calls “worship in the broad sense.”<sup>23</sup> Scripture provides everything we need to live a lifestyle of worship, even if it does not exhaustively detail every aspect of our lives.

*Second, the written word of God has much to say about how God should be worshipped.* Questioning the internal logic of the traditional regulative principle should not result in an ecclesiological free-for-all. *How* we worship is just as important as *whom* we worship. Ligon Duncan has demonstrated that God’s concern for how he is worshipped is a pervasive theme throughout the Bible.<sup>24</sup> God had no

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<sup>22</sup> Frame, “A Fresh Look,” 248.

<sup>23</sup> Frame, “A Fresh Look,” 249; cf. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, 42–43.

<sup>24</sup> Duncan, *Does God Care How We Worship?* 19–53.

regard for Cain's offering (Gen 6:4). Nadab and Abihu were consumed with fire because they offered an "unauthorized fire . . . which he had not commanded them to do" (Lev 10:1). Saul disobeyed God with his sacrifice of the Amalekite livestock (1 Sam 15:21–23). God expresses anger through the prophet Jeremiah to the children of Judah who "built high places to Baal on which to burn their children in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, *something I have never commanded or mentioned*; I never entertained the thought" (Jer 19:5, emphasis mine; cf. 32:35). Out of deference to the second commandment, we cannot worship God *through* the worship of images. We cannot and should not exchange the worship of the Creator for the worship of created things, nor should we ascribe prayers to created persons.

*Third, in recognition of the sufficiency of Scripture, the most important question is not whether Scripture commands or prohibits a practice but what is the intent of biblical authorship in matters related to worship.* The problem with both traditional concepts of the regulative principle and the normative principle is that they overlook the specific hermeneutical function of individual biblical texts, trying to squeeze them into an interpretive one-size-fits-all approach. Does Luke intend to *prescribe* specific worship practices in his account of the early church? Was Paul's primary speech act in his instruction to the Colossians to teach and admonish "one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts" (Col 4:16) a prohibition of the instrumental worship of the Temple and the Tabernacle? Or was he saying something more about the importance of making disciples through the worship ministry of the church? The Bible contains complex speech acts that are more than commands and prohibitions, so the question for every text related to worship is, "What is the author doing with these texts?"

*Fourth, while Scripture is sufficient for communicating God's design for Christian worship, it allows room for Spirit-led improvisation.* The New Testament is the founding document of the Christian church, but it is not a church-planting manual. It does not detail how each local congregation is to be organized, how church business meetings are to be run, or a specific order of worship to be used in public gatherings. This is, in part, because of the occasional nature of New Testament documents. The epistles do not establish churches; they are penned to already-established churches. Nowhere does Paul offer a systematic ecclesiology, though we can make

reasonable inferences about how churches were ordered and what they practiced from what he writes to them. When we look at the New Testament, we see a model for how Spirit-led contextual ministry can take place, especially in the different ways the apostles ministered to predominantly Jewish and predominantly Gentile audiences (1 Cor 9:19–23).

The lack of specificity in the New Testament regarding worship does not lead us to the conclusion that worship is unimportant or without any kind of guiding restraints. (Paul’s instruction regarding the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11 and the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 make it clear that the church’s worship should have appropriate parameters!) Even if the normative and regulative principles are found lacking, we still must do what Scripture requires of us and nothing that it prohibits.

*Fifth, the sufficiency of Scripture may make room for certain practices and features in worship not explicitly commanded by biblical authors, but the sufficiency of Scripture also means that those things not commanded by Scripture are not binding on the whole church.* Just as we cannot add to the sufficient revelation of God provided in Scripture, we cannot add or burden followers of Jesus with additional elements or requirements in Christian worship. Paul’s Galatian opponents demanded circumcision from Gentile converts. Luther’s Roman opponents demanded indulgences in exchange for time out of purgatory. What Scripture does not require of us is not binding on all believers. Churches under the sufficiency of Scripture have the freedom to employ a Christian calendar and worship God through instrumental music (traditional or contemporary), but these cultural trappings are by no means a prerequisite for Christian faithfulness.

*Sixth, the sufficiency of Scripture in regulating worship does not rule out the possibility of more expansive liturgies like those practiced by the early church.* The liturgical practices of the early church may not always have developed directly from the commands of Scripture (à la the traditional regulative principle), but they did grow out of a robust theological engagement with the message of Scripture. Michael Farley details a very distinct approach to the regulative principle drawn not only from “explicit NT commands and examples of particular apostolic worship practices but also from general theological principles and patterns in Scripture.”<sup>25</sup> Farley explains that even liturgical practices not directly drawn from NT commands

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<sup>25</sup> Farley, “What is ‘Biblical’ Worship?,” 596.

can also embody biblical truth, and that these practices have typological relationships with the patterns and practices of Israel.

*Finally, Scripture provides us with sufficient wisdom for worship planning.* Even if the Bible does not directly engage with every instance and issue a believer may face, it does provide sufficient guidance for who we should be and how we should respond to unforeseen circumstances. As Aniol notes, “The Bible is not a list of commands and prohibitions. It is not an encyclopedia of specific instructions for how to please God. Instead, the Bible is an all-sufficient guide for developing a God-pleasing worldview.”<sup>26</sup> We may not face the same exact circumstances as ancient Israelites or first-century Christians, but we share a worldview shaped by God’s special revelation that helps us answer the challenges unique to our moment in history.

In the same ways that the Bible does not give exhaustive instruction for Christian ethics but does provide us with a sufficient guide for God-honoring decisions and wise living, Scripture provides us with a sufficient guide for God-honoring, wise worship. Instead of limiting our hermeneutical approach to worship to either the regulative principle or the normative principle, we can broaden our approach to include multiple dimensions. Scripture is sufficient for worship planning in three ways: the deontological dimension, the teleological dimension, and the ontological dimension.

*Deontology* speaks of duty and obligation, and Christians are under an obligation to obey (1) the explicit commands of Scripture and (2) the explicit prohibitions of Scripture. We must not disobey where Scripture gives us direct commands or prohibitions in the area of Christian worship.

*Teleology* denotes an end or purpose in what we do. Even if Scripture does not directly speak to a matter like the use of dramas or solos in a worship service, it is sufficient in providing us guidance for making decisions about these activities. What purpose or end do they serve? Do they ultimately magnify the Lord or the person performing them? Do they serve a special function that the preached word or corporate singing cannot fulfill? In some instances, these may be appropriate and useful practices; in others, they would not be. If I may rephrase 1 Cor 10:31: “Whether you perform skits, solos, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of

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<sup>26</sup> Aniol, *Sound Worship*, 30.

God.” If God cannot be honored by these activities, then wisdom and prudence would tell us it is best not to employ them. We may err on the side of caution with these matters.

Finally, the *ontological* dimension is about the character of the worshipper. God is far more concerned about the virtue of the worshipper than he is about the song selection or the order of worship used. The Bible speaks as much, if not more, to the heart of the worshipper as it does the practice of worship itself: “Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ” (Col 3:23–24).

While God does care deeply for how he is worshipped, it is easy to get lost in the weeds when debating which specific worship practices (traditional or contemporary) are biblically commanded or permitted. The silence of Scripture on these matters seems to suggest that biblical authors are less concerned about whether worship is accompanied by music or whether its language is restricted to Scripture. Their primary focus is on whether worship is directed toward the right object (God), for the right reasons (to glorify and honor God), and from the right heart (a contrite heart, a cheerful heart). God-focused, Christ-exalting, and Spirit-empowered worship are prioritized over any tradition or custom. For these ends, Scripture is a completely sufficient and reliable guide.



## East Asian and Asian American Reflections on James

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### Introduction

In this article, I offer reflections on how East Asian culture and the Asian American experience highlight particular aspects of the Epistle of James. This article will put forth certain elements to further the discussion about the study of this epistle.<sup>1</sup>

The article will proceed in four parts. First, we will explore the circumstances of the primary hearers of James as *diaspora*, drawing parallels with the experience of those in the Asian diaspora. Second, we will explore the collectivistic identity of Asian cultures and its influence on decision-making, as we discuss the concern for the community's well-being in James. Third, we will discuss how James uses shame to motivate his hearers, showing affinity with the ways Asian cultures often use this approach. Fourth, as we examine the values of loyalty and reciprocity in both Asian and Asian American cultures, we will discuss the call for *friendship with God* as a major thrust of the Epistle of James.

### The Diaspora

The opening of James designates the recipients of the letter as *the twelve tribes of the diaspora*. This term *diaspora* evokes an association with the minority experience shared by many of Asian descent around the world. A *diaspora* is an identifiable people group that has been scattered; those who are outside of their ancestral homeland and among those who are different from them. In James 1:1, the reference to the *twelve tribes* suggests that the epistle's recipients are Jews who are living outside Palestine.

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2021 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Fort Worth, Texas.

It is especially notable that James 1:27 contains a call to care for orphans and widows. This affirmation echoes a repeated Old Testament command that typically includes the *alien* and *stranger* as well (See Exod 22:21–22; Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11; 24:19–21; Ps 145:9; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Ezek 22:7; Zech 7:10). The epistle’s omission of the *alien* or *stranger* is significant, as it suggests that the hearers of the epistle are themselves the aliens.

Also, the designation *twelve tribes* in James suggests that these diaspora Jews identified with hope for the restoration of the nation of Israel. They probably face the disgrace of being far from their sacred land, scattered among the nations, longing for restoration. Jewish expectation for restoration was widespread enough that E. P. Sanders suggests that references to *twelve* “necessarily” refers to the restoration of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

The identification of the audience of James being *the twelve tribes in the diaspora* highlights their inhabiting of two worlds. Much like the modern immigrant and refugee, some of James’s hearers have voluntarily moved out of their homeland, while others were forced out. As an unfamiliar people in an unfamiliar place, their ethnicity made them marginalized. While diaspora Jews had some rights, they never collectively had the full rights of citizenship.<sup>3</sup> This liminality and marginalization parallel the experience of modern minority Americans.

Consideration of the minority experience also provides context for James’s concern for the poor and lowly. In James 1:9, the lowly one is exhorted to boast in exaltation, a future hope in view of the “great reversal.” The lowly, while marginalized now,<sup>4</sup> will receive a high position later. Also, after James 1:27 intimately connects piety with caring for orphans and widows, the two movements of James 2 discuss the *treatment of the poor*. Despite the difficulties that the diaspora Jews face, they are exhorted to imitate God’s character (Ex 22:21; Deut 10:17–18; Ps 68:5; Isa 1:16–17) and provide for the helpless.

The identification of James’s hearers as Jews outside their sacred homeland also provides context for the exhortation in 4:8:

<sup>2</sup> E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 98.

<sup>3</sup> See the discussion of diaspora Jews in Carl H. Kraeling, “The Jewish Community at Antioch,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51 (1932): 130–60.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Dibelius points out that all of Israel became “poor” after losing their national strength. See Martin Dibelius, *James*, trans. Michael A. Williams, 11th ed., Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 39.



*Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.* Like many modern immigrants and refugees, the diaspora hearers probably experience the stigma of distance from their land. The command to *draw near* is remarkable, since these Jews are far away from the center of their faith, unable to approach the temple. Their physical distance likely impacts their view of their relational distance from God. The exhortation echoes Zechariah 1:3 and Malachi 3:7, where the Lord extends the opportunity: *return to me, and I will return to you.* The assurance of *nearness* to God in the context of repentance communicates a restored and favorable relationship.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, James 4:8 teaches these minority hearers that they do not have shame before God. They can draw near to God despite their physical distance from their beloved land. Most remarkably, God will draw near to them in a favorable relationship.

### Collectivistic Identity

In this section, we will explore the evidence of a collectivistic culture that saturates the text of James. The priority of the community in James resonates with those in Asia with a collectivistic rather than individualistic identity.

First, the epistle uses familial language. James repeatedly refers to his audience as *my brothers* (1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19),<sup>6</sup> sometimes even adding *beloved* (1:16, 19; 2:5). More familial language appears, with God as the *Father* (1:17, 27; 2:21; 3:9), and even as a birthing mother (1:18). In this way, James has an affinity with the family-centric identities of East Asian cultures. Asians and Asian Americans often have two or three generations living in the same household. Also, family friends are often called by familial titles, like *uncle* or *sister*.

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<sup>5</sup> For more on this connection, see the discussion in Peter H. Davids, “The Good God and the Reigning Lord: Theology of the Epistle of James,” in *Reading the Epistle of James: A Resource for Students*, ed. Eric F. Mason and Darian R. Lockett, Resources for Biblical Study 94 (Atlanta: SBL, 2019), 119.

<sup>6</sup> The address *my brothers* is so prevalent in James that its absence is remarkable in the sections of James 4:13–17 and 5:1–6, which some scholars view as apostrophe. For more on this view, see Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 37A (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 312; Matthias Konradt, *Christliche Existenz nach dem Jakobusbrief: eine Studie zu seiner soteriologischen und ethischen Konzeption*, SUNT 22 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 159–62.

Second, the commands in James are largely lived out in horizontal relationships—the community.<sup>7</sup> He famously determines whether one's faith can save by examining how one approaches a needy brother or sister (2:14–17). James affirms that true commitment to God is demonstrated through caring for the fatherless and the widow (1:27). Conversely, James condemns selfishness and jealousy, associating these vices with the demonic (3:14–16). These collectivistic values are similar to those found in East Asian cultures, which generally place the family and people group before the individual. Striving for community harmony is a central tenet of Confucianism.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, James exhorts his hearers to actions that unify the community. In 1:17, heavenly wisdom is demonstrated in the greater good of the collective. James affirms the peacemakers (3:17) and denounces quarreling (4:1–2). Regarding the use of the tongue, James condemns its use for cursing others (3:8–9), exhorting his hearers to only use it for beneficial speech (3:9; 4:11; 5:9).

The calls for uniting the community are climaxed in the closing of the Letter of James. The command to restore one wandering in James 5:19–20 would likely resonate with the epistle's marginalized minority hearers. Like many modern diaspora communities, the hearers of James probably placed a high value on *inclusion*. These marginalized Jews receive assurance that their physical distance from their homeland does not disqualify them from eschatological salvation. They are called to look after one another as they endure their trials and await the coming of the Lord.

Third, in motivating his hearers, James uses examples that would resonate with his Jewish hearers: figures from the Old Testament. As the Jews considered their heritage, they repeatedly looked to their ancestors in the past to move them to action. James continues this tradition, naming four exemplars in particular

<sup>7</sup> James contains the highest concentration of imperative forms in any NT document. See the chart in William C. Varner, *James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Lexington, KY: Fontes, 2017), 21–22.

<sup>8</sup> The collectivism of Confucianism is epitomized by the philosophy of the five relationships: (1) ruler-subject, (2) father-son, (3) husband-wife, (4) older-younger, and (5) friend-friend. Ultimately, however, Confucianism promotes harmony on the greatest scale: between humans and nature, heaven and earth. See Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 44, 134–35, 170–78.

and appealing to the prophets in general.<sup>9</sup> He appeals to Abraham and Rahab as examples of a faith that saves (2:23–25), the prophets and Job as examples of endurance and patience (5:10–11), and Elijah as an example of one praying (5:16–18).

The act of giving honor to ancestors and forefathers in James has an affinity with the family-centric cultures of east Asia. Ancestors are venerated, with photos of them prominently placed in the home and regular trips to visit their resting places. Parents often motivate their children by recalling stories from the past or appealing to the wishes of their grandparents or great-grandparents.<sup>10</sup> The appeal to ancestors is especially seen in the Asian diaspora, where those in the immigrant generation often attempt to motivate the native-born generation to make decisions that are consistent with their hopes of immigrating to the new land.

Furthermore, James's examples of past figures point to faithfulness in the face of injustice. These examples would resonate with North American minorities, who, like the minority hearers of James, often look to the past. For example, Harriet Tubman is often remembered among African Americans and César Chávez among Latino Americans. These figures endured in their causes despite the difficulties they faced. Similarly, the hearers of James, identifying with their ethnic heritage, are called to see the prophets as an example to them.

However, while they find an echo in Asian cultures, the appeals to ancestral exemplars in James are set within the context of a right relationship with God. For example, Abraham and Rahab are examples of action, but James is sure to point out that their deeds give life to their faith in God. Indeed, this right relationship with God is expressed by the designation of Abraham as a *friend of God* (2:23–24). James cites the prophets and Job, not as examples of virtue, but as examples of perseverance in loyalty to God. Even the example of Elijah is upheld as a call for the people to pray to God.

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<sup>9</sup> For a treatment of the function of the named exemplars in the epistle of James, see Robert J. Foster, *The Significance of Exemplars for the Interpretation of the Letter of James*, WUNT 2/376 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> For a comparison of particular ancestor veneration traditions in Asian cultures, see Roger Janelli and Dawnhee Janelli, *Ancestor Worship and Korean Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 177–96.

A final note about collectivism in James is pertinent here. In James 1:18, James writes about the Jews that God *brought us forth by the word of truth*. Echoing the language of the election of Israel in the Hebrew Bible, James affirms that his hearers are members of God's chosen people, his precious possession. However, James does not leave room for ethnocentrism. The word of truth, which includes the gospel message, is for all people.<sup>11</sup> The language of firstfruits in 1:18 leaves open the possibility that other people groups outside Israel can be included in the family. James and his Jewish Christian hearers are set apart for God, but the Father of Lights has room for others.

### Shame as a Means to Motivate

In this section, we will examine James's use of shame, which is illustrative of shame in the ancient world and shows affinity with modern eastern cultures. In particular, we will examine how James uses shame as a rhetorical strategy to motivate his hearers to particular actions.

An honor-based culture places a priority on the collective rather than the individual. *Honor* is a positive value that is connected with how one is viewed within the group—it is communicated as esteem or social worth. When one meets the expectations of a particular group, the individual has honor. Honor can come in two ways. It can be *ascribed* through one's family, such as being from the house of David. It can also be *achieved* through actions that build a good reputation, such as battling valiantly in war.<sup>12</sup>

Within an honor-based culture, *shame* is a response to the failure to meet the group's expectations. Like honor, shame can be ascribed through one's family or achieved through actions. People

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<sup>11</sup> The interpretation of James 1:18 is debated, and space does not allow for a full treatment here. Its referent could be (1) the creation of humans, (2) the birthing of Israel, or (3) the begetting of Christians. See Dale C. Allison Jr, *James: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 280. Either way, the point regarding the designation of *firstfruits* pointing to other people groups still stands.

<sup>12</sup> The term *honor* comes from the Latin *honos*, which was the name of a deity who granted soldiers courage for battle. See Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Origins of Honour," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 94 (1997): 230.

would have shame if their past actions fall outside what is acceptable in the collective.<sup>13</sup>

The use of honor and shame is prominent in the Epistle of James. First, James appeals to esteem and a good reputation to motivate his hearers. An honor-based society places a priority on the esteem of the collective. This comes out in James's call to consider the honorable name by which they are called in 2:7. As the rich oppress the weak, they blaspheme the name by which the hearers are called—presumably the name of Jesus. While it is unclear how the rich blaspheme the honorable name, James reminds his hearers that they themselves bear this name. The good name ascribed to them, that of Christ, forms their identity. They bear this very name—they are Christians. Any reviling of the name of Christ impacts the collective.

The collectivistic value of a good reputation in the culture of the readers of James makes the appeals to the examples of Abraham and Rahab especially poignant. These two figures from Israel's past are juxtaposed in the argument of James, which is very notable for honor-based cultures, particularly East Asian cultures that practice ancestor veneration. As James discusses the need for a Jesus-follower to have faith that works together with deeds, the appeal to Abraham, the celebrated patriarch, is unsurprising. Abraham was justified and honored with the title *friend of God* (2:23–24). However, the honor-based hearers of James would likely be surprised by the parallel example of Rahab, the Canaanite harlot. In several ways, Rahab is unlikely to receive honor from the epistle's hearers. Yet Rahab is upheld as an example of faith that cooperates with deeds, in the same way that Abraham is. By placing the honored Abraham and shameful Rahab in the same category, James supports his argument that justification by God comes by the same standard, regardless of whether one has ascribed honor. Both figures, whether esteemed or not, are justified with faith that saves.<sup>14</sup>

Second, James motivates his hearers by using *shame*. By calling out those who show partiality to the rich (2:1–11), James is engag-

<sup>13</sup> I have argued elsewhere that a poignant example of previous actions leading to shame is the audience of Jesus's parable in Luke 15:1–2. See Daniel K. Eng, "The Widening Circle: Honour, Shame, and Collectivism in the Parable of the Prodigal Son," *The Expository Times* 130, no. 5 (2019): 193–201.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed examination of the interplay between Abraham and Rahab in James 2, see Foster, *Exemplars*, 59–127.

ing in public shaming. He urges his hearers to disassociate with those who oppress them and drag them into court (2:6). If they show the rich partiality, they dishonor the poor man and are labeled as lawbreakers (2:6, 9). After all, James earlier points out that the rich will be humiliated while the lowly will be exalted (1:10–11).<sup>15</sup> By castigating those who side with the rich, James publicly declares that their actions are shameful.

Later, James motivates his hearers to have faith accompanied by deeds by using the example of demons. In 2:19, James reinforces his repeated assertion that *faith without works* is dead. It is this faith, according to James, that characterizes the demons. It is inadequate to believe that God is one—the demons also believe this (2:19). This faith, as defined as the belief in one God (monotheism) is not enough for salvation (2:14). The hearer of James, who may be content with their faith but not displaying deeds, would be shamed by this jarring association with demons.

Furthermore, James publicly calls out two groups in parallel sections in 4:13–17 and 5:1–6, which are connected by the opening phrase *come now*. In the first of the two sections, James publicly castigates merchants who have the means to travel and conduct business. Calling their actions *boasting in arrogance*, he condemns them for presuming their plans without submitting them to the will of God. Next, James reserves his harshest public shaming for the rich who live luxurious lives but cheat their workers out of fair wages. In this condemnation, James does not give a call for repentance—they will experience fiery retribution in the end (5:3).

Third, James's use of name-calling is remarkable in an honor-based culture. Pejorative labels are found several times in the epistle. He calls his interlocutor an *empty person* (2:20), and those who are quarreling he calls *adulteresses* (4:4). As he urges his hearers to repent, he labels his hearers *sinner*s and *double-minded* (4:8). In honor-based cultures, many of which tend to use indirect or subtler words, these labels are jarring.<sup>16</sup> James's direct style and use of these names demonstrate the urgency of the situation.

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<sup>15</sup> Regarding the connection between the fate of the rich and the eschatological exaltation of the lowly in James 1:10–11, see the discussion in Hubert Frankemölle, *Der Brief Des Jakobus: Kapitel 2–5* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994), 635.

<sup>16</sup> Jackson W. makes the case that Paul uses an indirect method of communication in Romans because of his sensitivity to honor and shame. See Jackson

In the first instance in 2:20, James interacts with an interlocutor in a diatribe-style exchange, insisting that the type of faith that saves is accompanied by deeds. He gives the negative example of demons, who have a particular faith, but no deeds. Then, he appeals to Abraham and Rahab, who have the faith that is working together with deeds. James introduces these examples with a question: *do you want to be shown that faith apart from deeds is useless?* In this question, he addresses his interlocutor as *kene*—an empty, senseless, foolish person. James’s use of this pejorative label gets his hearers’ attention as he urges them to pay attention to the examples of Abraham and Rahab.

James appears to have his fury reach a pinnacle by resorting to using a pejorative label again in 4:4. He calls his hearers *moichalides*—adulteresses. By using a term reserved for unfaithful women who cheat on their husbands, James echoes the imagery of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God (see, for example, Ps 73:27, Hos 4:12–14, Ezek 23:37). James castigates those who quarrel because of their selfish desires. They are following the world rather than following God—they have cheated on God.

Again, James uses name-calling in 4:8, with the commands to *cleanse your hands* and *purify your hearts*. He calls his hearers *sinner*<sup>17</sup> and *double-minded*. The latter term is repeated from 1:8, where he described a man wavering in allegiance to God. Coupled with the commands to *cleanse* and *purify*, which echo the description of the one who can approach God in Psalm 24:3–4, James uses the pejorative labels to motivate his hearers to be loyal to God alone, seeking purification. Even with their marginalized minority experience, the diaspora hearers are not beyond hope. If they repent, they can still be acceptable to God and approach him (4:8). As discussed above, the stigma of their distance from their homeland has not disqualified them from connecting with God.<sup>18</sup>

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W., *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes: Honor and Shame in Paul’s Message and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 26–27.

<sup>17</sup> James D. G. Dunn calls the term *sinner* a “factional term,” when referring to Jews whose actions made them excluded from the community. See “Pharisees, Sinners, and Jesus,” in *Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1988), 277.

<sup>18</sup> Notably, Matt Jackson-McCabe makes the case that, by using the labels *adulteresses*, *sinner*, and *double-minded*, the author of the epistle distances himself from his audience. See Matt Jackson-McCabe, “Enduring Temptation: The

While many westerners would bristle at the thought of their pastor calling them names, James exhorts his hearers with this approach. This method of motivation, set in the context of an honor-based culture, shows an affinity with approaches in East Asian cultures. In such cultures, one's status and how one is viewed is a profound motivator. Regarding Chinese culture in particular, Jackson Wu writes that "face must be protected and given in order to maintain harmony in a group."<sup>19</sup> If individuals receive pejorative labels, they are motivated to change their behavior. Asian parents often label their children *lazy* or *useless* to motivate them.<sup>20</sup>

Ultimately, through his appeals to a good reputation, public shaming, and pejorative names, James's exhortations demonstrate the honor-and-shame culture of the author and his hearers. These aspects have an affinity with East Asian cultures, and the methods of motivation would resonate with those in such Asian and Asian American contexts. James urges his hearers to eschew worldliness, look to figures in their heritage as examples of saving faith, and adhere to the righteous ways of God.

### Loyalty and Reciprocity

In this section, I will explore the dynamics of loyalty and reciprocity in the Letter of James. As discussed above, the collectivistic nature of the ancient Near East has much continuity with East Asian cultures and the Asian American experience. A significant element within such societies is the value of *allegiance*.

James affirms that one's allegiance should be to God. He exhorts his hearers to remain loyal to him, even amid trials. Much like in Jewish Wisdom literature and the Deuteronomic choice between life and death, James exhorts his hearers to choose the better of two options. It is those who endure in loyalty to God

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Structure and Coherence of the Letter of James," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (December 1, 2014): 173–74.

<sup>19</sup> Jackson Wu, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation Through Honor and Shame* (Pasadena: William Carey International University Press, 2013), 151.

<sup>20</sup> For examples, see Amy Chua, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 52; Irene Chung and Tazuko Shibusawa, *Contemporary Clinical Practice with Asian Immigrants: A Relational Framework with Culturally Responsive Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 147; Gail Ukockis, *Women's Issues for a New Generation: A Social Work Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 266.



who will receive a favorable verdict at the eschaton (1:12; 2:12–13; 3:1; 4:12; 5:9).

In a manner akin to the Confucian value of loyalty in friendship, the exhortations in James indicate the ancient value of pledged fidelity between parties. Confucius affirmed the virtue of allegiance and faithfulness in relationships (for example, see *Analects* 1.8; 2.20; 7.24; 9.25; 15.6). In the world of James, commitment to one's relationships makes up the fabric of society. Relationships were built, not on fondness, but on an agreement for the benefit of both parties. Typically, loyalty to one party would preclude friendship with an opponent or competitor. James urges his hearers to turn away from friendship with the world (4:4) in order to be friends with God. After all, they cannot be friends with both simultaneously.<sup>21</sup> Like their celebrated patriarch Abraham, he wishes for them to be called *friends of God* (2:23).

The value of allegiance in James's epistle is epitomized by the command in 1:6. Here, James urges his hearers to ask God in wisdom by asking in faith (or faithfulness), not *disputing*. The term for disputing (*diakrinō*) is often rendered as *doubting*.<sup>22</sup> However, the term *doubt* generally communicates skepticism or distrust about the likelihood of an event. In James 1:6, *diakrinō* is used in contrast with *faith* or *faithfulness*. Thus, a more appropriate translation in this context may be *disputing*.<sup>23</sup> James exhorts his hearers to ask in faith, showing single allegiance to God. Therefore, one who *disputes* does not display this loyalty. This rendering is corroborated by 1:6b–8, which refers to this *disputing* person as unstable, tossed by the waves of the sea, and double-minded. James calls for singular loyalty to God, who gives wisdom to those who show this pure commitment.

In the ancient world, loyalty was tied to *reciprocity*. James communicates the ideal of reciprocity in the hypothetical scenario in-

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed discussion on ancient friendship and its expression in the epistle of James, see Alicia J. Batten, *Friendship and Benefaction in James*, Emory Studies in Early Christianity 15 (Dorset: Deo, 2010), 9–54, 145–76.

<sup>22</sup> For example, the term is translated as *doubting* in the NIV, ESV, and CSB. See the same term used in Mark 11:23 and Romans 4:20.

<sup>23</sup> For more on the translation of this term, see Peter Spitaler, "James 1:5–8: A Dispute with God," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71 (July 2009): 560–79; Stanley E. Porter and Chris S. Stevens, "Doubting BDAG on Doubt: A Lexical Examination of Διᾱκρίνω and Its Theological Ramifications," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 30 (2017): 43–70.

volving a rich man and a poor man entering the synagogue in chapter 2. Showing favoritism to the rich man, the subjects of the scenario anticipate future reciprocation. The hypothetical situation described in 2:1–4 draws on the ancient dynamics of *reciprocity* and *patronage*.<sup>24</sup> In Greco-Roman culture, if one had low status and influence, one could seek the favor of a patron, someone with higher status and influence for goods and services. Patronal relationships were held together by mutual obligation. Clients promised future support to their patrons, often in the form of political influence.

This principle of reciprocity is also prevalent in many cultures influenced by Confucianism.<sup>25</sup> For example, in the Japanese culture, gifts or acts of service are often given through the principle of *giri* (duty, obligation).<sup>26</sup> Many Asian Americans are compelled to bring a gift to the home of a host, as the host offers hospitality. The concept of reciprocity undergirding the hypothetical scenario in James 2:2–4 would resonate with those in East Asian cultures.

Ultimately, James condemns the hearers' attempts to create social obligation through denouncing the favoritism shown to the rich. In a manner akin to the dichotomist paradigm illustrated by the appeals to friendship with God over the world, James pleads with his hearers not to align themselves with the rich—they are the ones who oppress their workers (5:4) and drag them into court (2:6).

The reception of James's condemnation of favoritism to the rich among East Asian cultures would be profound. Rather than helping those who can help them in return, the hearers of James

<sup>24</sup> This hypothetical scenario illustrates the prevalence of ancient patronage, which involved two parties of unequal status in a reciprocal relationship. For a primer on patronage and the New Testament, see David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 95–156.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of Confucian ethics and their compatibility with the Bible, see Gregg A. Ten Elshof, *Confucius for Christians: What an Ancient Chinese Worldview Can Teach Us about Life in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 46–52.

<sup>26</sup> Takie Sugiyama Lebra and William P. Lebra, *Japanese Culture and Behavior: Selected Readings* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 162–165. For more on the concept of obligation in Asian cultures, see Virstan B.Y. Choy, “Decision Making and Conflict in the Congregation,” *People on the Way: Asian North Americans Discovering Christ, Culture, and Community*, ed. David Ng (Valley Forge: Judson, 1996), 251.

receive the message that they are to associate with the helpless—those who are poor. These are the ones who will receive favor in the end (2:5) and be called *friends of God* (2:23).

### Conclusion

The identification of the primary hearers of James as members of the *diaspora* opens up avenues of research and discussion. By keeping the situation of the hearers in view, certain aspects of culture and the unique experiences of migration begin to resonate more deeply. Also, the continuity of cultural elements like collectivism and shame between the ancient Near East and Asian culture brings out more topics of inquiry as we seek to explore this enigmatic epistle.



## James's Call to the Rich to Repent and to the Poor Not to Judge

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### Introduction

One of the key messages of James is a call for repentance to the rich and perseverance to the poor. James is calling rich false believers who are hearers of the Word only to repent so they may be saved from the eschatological judgment. At the same time, he is calling poor believers not to judge the oppressive rich believers but instead pray for them and turn them from their apostasy. I will first provide the historical and literary context of the letter and then discuss James's calls to the rich and to the poor in turn.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Here is a brief overview of James's message to the rich and the poor. He warns the rich of the coming judgment because of their evil deeds such as their failure to help those in need (2:14–26), even dragging some into courts (2:6), withholding due payments to their poor hired workers (5:4), falsely accusing them and taking their livelihood (5:6). James wants the rich and the rest of the false believers in his audience to recognize their need to turn their laughter into mourning and draw near to God in repentance (4:8–10). Otherwise, they will face God's eternal judgment (5:1–6). As for the poor, James exhorts them to persevere in their trials which primarily stems from their economic hardships. Though the rich are largely responsible for this, James does not allow the poor to speak evil against them or even judge them because God is the judge, not them (4:11–12). Their task is to consider their hardships as pure joy (1:2), accept trials as means to grow into maturity (1:4), take pride in their high position before God (1:9), be patient in their suffering until Christ returns (5:7–8), refuse to grumble against the rich (5:9), and expect God's reward to those who remain patient (1:12; 5:11). James wants the church to come together confessing their sins to one another and praying for one another, providing healing and forgiveness of sins (5:13–18), turning the apostates back from their wandering from the truth so their souls may be saved from death (5:19–20). For this to happen, the poor believers should not take vengeance or bear a grudge against their rich neighbors (Lev 19:18; Jas 5:7–11) but instead love them enough to turn them back from their apostasy to save their souls (5:20).

## Historical Context

Injustice and oppression of helpless people whose only economic asset was their labor was widespread in Syro-Palestine in the period immediately preceding the Roman War of AD 66–70.<sup>2</sup> “Large landowners who managed estates *in absentia* manipulated the judicial system, forced smaller land owners to borrow at exorbitant interest rates, foreclosed on land, and added estate to estate.”<sup>3</sup> Those who worked the land were slaves, hired laborers, tenants, or small land owners living in poverty, never more than a step from financial ruin. It is hardly unexpected that such oppression resulted in actual financial ruin for some.<sup>4</sup> Defrauding of workers was vigorously condemned in Jewish literature.<sup>5</sup> In Malachi 3:5, God says that he will be a swift witness against those who oppress the hireling in his wages (See also Lev 19:13; Deut 24:14f.; Jer 22:13; Tobit 4:14). In a striking image, James declares that the withheld wages cry out with the harvesters themselves to the Lord of hosts (5:4).

James sees the pursuit of luxury, wealth, and status as the greed, envy, and thirsty desire for acquisition that results in violence and oppression (4:1–2).<sup>6</sup> The wealthy landowners are guilty of living in luxury (5:2–3, 5), storing up treasures and wealth for their own consumption (5:3), exploiting and withholding just payment from those laboring in their fields (5:4), and oppressing the righteous (5:6).<sup>7</sup> According to Jipp,

James condemns one of the primary features of the ancient economy for the way in which it enables the rich to accu-

<sup>2</sup> Duane Warden, “The Rich and Poor in James: Implications for Institutionalized Partiality,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 2 (June 2000): 251.

<sup>3</sup> Warden, “The Rich and Poor in James,” 251.

<sup>4</sup> Warden, “The Rich and Poor in James,” 251. To a considerable degree, desperation accounts for the brigandage and outbreaks of violence that characterized the period.

<sup>5</sup> Roger L. Omanson, “The Certainty of Judgment and the Power of Prayer: James 5,” *Review & Expositor* 83, no. 3 (1986): 427. Sirach 34:21–22: “The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a man of blood. To take away a neighbor’s living is to murder him; to deprive an employee of his wages is to shed blood.”

<sup>6</sup> Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 171.

<sup>7</sup> Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 171.

multate wealth and capital at the expense of the poor. In addition, he criticizes the wealthy for using the surplus for a wasteful and luxurious lifestyle. James argues that resources are distributed unequally in society because landowners exploit workers, because the rich manipulate the justice system, and because the rich squander their immoral gains on self-indulgence.<sup>8</sup>

The believers James is addressing were not exempted from the economic dynamics between the rich and the poor.

### Literary Context

This article assumes the traditional authorship of the letter by James, Jesus's brother, the dating of the 40s–50s, and the Jewish Christian audience. James is a letter that is often considered Wisdom literature containing disparate injunctions similar to the Proverbs. However, in recent years scholars have found coherent structure in James.<sup>9</sup> The letter seems to owe a great debt to the tradition of Jewish Wisdom writing—a tradition which richly incorporated the “Two Ways” motif.<sup>10</sup> The “Two Ways” is a typical motif or tradition appearing in moral instruction which contrasts positive and negative ways of living in order to illustrate to young students the way of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> The final destination on the way of the fool, or the covenant breaker, is death, but the end of the way of the wise, or the righteous, is life (Deut 30:15: “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity”).<sup>12</sup> In Jewish tradition this motif finds its origins in the cove-

<sup>8</sup> Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 171.

<sup>9</sup> See William C. Varner, “The Main Theme and Structure of James,” *The Master's Seminary Journal* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 115–129 for the scholars who argue for coherent structure in James; Mark E. Taylor and George H. Guthrie, “The Structure of James,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68 (2006): 681–705; Darian R. Lockett, “The ‘Two Ways’ Motif in James’ Theological Instruction,” *Neotestamentica* 42, no. 2 (2008): 269–86.

<sup>10</sup> Lockett, “The ‘Two Ways’ Motif in James’ Theological Instruction,” 274–75.

<sup>11</sup> Lockett, “The ‘Two Ways’ Motif in James’ Theological Instruction,” 274–75. The motif draws upon the image of “ways,” “roads,” or “paths” which in turn become metaphors in Jewish and early Christian literature for a life of righteousness, life/death, or wisdom/foolishness, and, in Greco-Roman literature, virtue/vice.

<sup>12</sup> Lockett, “The ‘Two Ways’ Motif in James’ Theological Instruction,” 274–75.

nantal blessing and curse material of the Pentateuch (Lev 26:1–39; Deut 28; 30:15–20) and in Hebrew Wisdom literature.<sup>13</sup>

Within numerous contrasting ethical commands in James, two clear and simplified options are presented so that the audience is challenged to make a clear choice between them.<sup>14</sup> Lockett points out that the specific ethical issues of control of speech (1:19, 26; 3:1–12; 4:11–12; 5:12), caring for the poor (1:9, 27; 2:2–7, 15–16), the exhortations to endure (1:2–4, 12–15; 5:7–11), exhortations toward love (2:8), mercy (2:13), and humility (1:21; 3:13–16; 4:6–10), and warnings to the rich (1:10–11; 2:2–3; 4:13–17; 5:1–6) are all fully intelligible within the framework of “Two Ways” of life.<sup>15</sup> The final destination or ultimate end of the two ways of living is simply either “death” (1:15; 5:20) or “life” (1:12, 18).

James builds his letter around the polar opposition of two lifestyles, one led in friendship with God, the other in friendship with the world (4:4). This contrast is repeated in different ways throughout the letter: doers vs. hearers only; the poor vs. the rich; wisdom from above vs. earthly, demonic wisdom; faith with works vs. faith without works (or dead faith); helping the poor vs. oppressing the poor; single-minded devotion to God vs. double-mindedness; etc. Not only does James contrast two different ways which end in either death or life, but the text also contrasts the guides along the way— “desire” leads the unrighteous on the “way” to death, while the “word/law/wisdom” combination leads the righteous to life.<sup>16</sup>

It is well known that James has drawn much from Jesus’s teachings. Jesus also ends his Sermon on the Mount by contrasting the two ways (Matt 7:13–27): narrow gate vs. wide gate (vv. 13–14); bad fruit vs. good fruit (vv. 15–20); workers of lawlessness vs. doers of the will of God (vv. 21–23); and hearers only

<sup>13</sup> Lockett, “The ‘Two Ways’ Motif in James’ Theological Instruction,” 274–75.

<sup>14</sup> Lockett, “The ‘Two Ways’ Motif in James’ Theological Instruction,” 282.

<sup>15</sup> Lockett, “The ‘Two Ways’ Motif in James’ Theological Instruction,” 282–83; Huub van de Sandt, “James 4,1–4 in the Light of the Jewish Two Ways Tradition 3,1–6,” *Biblica* 88, no. 1 (2007): 38. “The close resemblances between the different versions of the Two Ways (including Did 1–6, Barn 18–20 and the *Doctrina Apostolorum*) are generally explained in modern research by their — direct or indirect — dependence upon an earlier Jewish Two Ways document which is no longer known to us.”

<sup>16</sup> Lockett, “The ‘Two Ways’ Motif in James’ Theological Instruction,” 282.



vs. doers of the words of Jesus (vv. 24–27). Both Jesus and James are employing the Two Ways tradition familiar to their Jewish audience.<sup>17</sup>

The contrast between the poor and the rich is also a prominent feature in James. Terms for poor almost always carry the idea of oppression as part of their meaning, and it is assumed that the rich who are wicked are the ones who oppress them. That the classification poor and rich in the Bible are more about sociopolitical oppression and spiritual disposition, and less about monetary possessions, is recognized by many biblical scholars.<sup>18</sup>

Another significant feature of James's structure is his use of Leviticus 19:12–18 as the backbone of the epistle.<sup>19</sup> This passage gives several commandments, including commands not to oppress one's neighbor or keep his wages overnight (19:13), not to be partial to the poor and thereby pervert justice (19:15), not to hate your neighbor (19:17), and to love your neighbor as yourself (19:18).<sup>20</sup> Leviticus 19:18 also commands the people of God not to bear a grudge against a brother, as does James 5:9.

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew's Gospel uses economic matters to offer the reader a stark moral-theological choice between two kinds of people: those who show their love of God and neighbor by their deployment of money and power, and others who show their failure in love by their idolatrous pride and greed. These two kinds of people follow one of two ways, one leading to life, the other to destruction (cf. 7:13–14, 24–27; 25:31–46). This "two ways" dichotomy can be seen in later Christian writings as well (Stephen C. Barton, "Money Matters: Economic Relations and the Transformation of Value in Early Christianity," in *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception*, ed. Bruce W Longenecker and Kelly D. Liebengood [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 44–45).

<sup>18</sup> Todd Scaewater, "The Dynamic and Righteous Use of Wealth in James 5:1–6," *Journal of Markets and Morality* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 228.

<sup>19</sup> Scaewater, "The Dynamic and Righteous Use of Wealth in James 5:1–6," 228. Leviticus 19:17–18, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."

<sup>20</sup> Scaewater, "The Dynamic and Righteous Use of Wealth in James 5:1–6," 228.

## Call to the Rich False Believers to Repent

### Why the Rich Addressed in James Are False Believers among James's Audience

James is not addressing all rich believers but the rich and self-deceived false believers in his audience and is issuing a strong warning against their oppression of their poor brothers. There are many indicators of this within the letter.<sup>21</sup> Just to mention a couple of those indicators, first, in 4:13–5:6, James rebukes two different classes of people among the audience, the self-sufficient merchants who make business plans with no regard to God's will (4:13–17)<sup>22</sup> and the rich landowners who are abusing the poor (5:1–6). Second, in his letter James issues strong warnings to those whose deeds and words show that they are self-deceived about their religion (1:22–27). As Rhee observes, orthopraxis as well as orthodoxy was always part and parcel of salvation, especially in the face of the constantly lurking double threats of apostasy and heresy which were judged not only by belief (theology) but also by behavior (ethics).<sup>23</sup>

James 1:22 states, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." Brosend argues that this is a thesis statement of the letter of James and the remainder of the letter is

<sup>21</sup> Joseph K. Pak, "A Case for James's Condemnation of the Rich in James 5:1–6 as Addressing False Believers within the Believing Community," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 63, no. 4 (2020): 721–37.

<sup>22</sup> The soliloquy of the merchants in 4:13 seems to echo the soliloquy of the rich in the parable of the rich fool who makes plans to enjoy his life without regard to God and to the poor (Luke 12:17–19).

<sup>23</sup> Helen Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty, and Early Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 74–75; Mariam Kamell, "8. The Economics of Humility: The Rich and the Humble in James," in *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception*, ed. Bruce W Longenecker and Kelly D. Liebengood (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 169–70: Those who are on the way of life, the humble, do not blame God for their own failures in the face of temptation (1:13–16), do not judge others by their looks (2:1, 4), remember God's imminence, and as a result, avoid complaining and slandering (5:9). In contrast, those who are on the way of death, the selfish and arrogant, are threatened by their imminent downfall (1:10–11) and with judgment (2:12), warned of possessing a demonic wisdom (3:14–16), charged with being adulterers in their relationship to God (4:4), warned of the Judge's ability to "destroy" them (4:12), reminded of their own transience (4:14), and informed of their coming doom in the "day of slaughter" (5:1–6).

the exploration and application of this thesis.<sup>24</sup> Hiebert similarly holds that “*tests of living faith* is indeed the unifying theme of the epistle and . . . provides ready access to its contents.”<sup>25</sup>

The call to guard against self-deception in James relates to those who believe that they can receive the redemptive word without obeying it—to pretend that one has received the word but not to obey it serves only to reveal the pretense (cf. 1:22).<sup>26</sup> This includes the rich who refuse to love their poor neighbors and instead abuse and oppress them. In 5:19, as James concludes the letter, he mentions a person who wanders (*planan*) from the truth. This is not one who has accidentally or unconsciously departed from the truth; rather the term implies that the person is guilty of apostasy. Behind the term are the ideas of idolatry and ethical dualism (Jer 23:17; Ezek 33:19; Prov 14:8; Wis 5:6–7; 12:24; Sir 11:16).<sup>27</sup> Titus 1:13–16 describe those who turn away from the truth as unbelieving and denying God by their works though they profess to know him.<sup>28</sup> In sum, the rich James is addressing in his letter are the rich false believers who are oppressing the poor.

<sup>24</sup> William F. Brosend, *James and Jude*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary, ed. Ben Witherington III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 51. Hiebert cites other scholars such as McNeile and Lenski approvingly as they argue that the central theme of the letter of James is the need for genuine faith which manifests itself in life. James's purpose is to urge his readers to test their own faith by the criterion that faith without works is useless (2:20), and he provides a series of tests for the readers to determine the genuineness of their faith. As Hiebert puts it, “The testing of your faith’ (1:3) seems to be the key which James left hanging at the front door, intended to unlock the contents of the book” (D. Edmond Hiebert, “Unifying Theme of the Epistle of James,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 135, no. 539 [July 1978]: 223).

<sup>25</sup> Hiebert, “Unifying Theme of the Epistle of James,” 224.

<sup>26</sup> Mariam Kamell Kovalishyn, “The Implications of Grace for the Ethics of James,” *Biblica* 92, no. 2 (2011): 282.

<sup>27</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *James*, vol. 48, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 218.

<sup>28</sup> The actions leading to apostasy are thought of as under Satanic influence—James has already given attention to the warning that certain misbehavior is the work of the devil (3:15; 4:7; cf. 2:19). Thus, a person who deliberately forsakes the “way of righteousness” is under the control of the devil and in need of a radical conversion. Otherwise, this person faces the risk of condemnation by God (Martin, *James*, 218–19).

## The Rich Are Warned about the Eschatological Judgment

In James 5:1–6, the sociopolitical aspect seems to be the dominant concern because the rich have the power to defraud the wages of the poor workers, who presumably have no realistic social or legal recourse because they lack the wealth, status, and prestige that would earn them such recourse in their society.<sup>29</sup> “You have condemned” in 5:6 may be looking back to 2:6b (“Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?”), indicating that these rich Jews controlled their Jewish courts or used their influence with pagan judges to secure an adverse verdict against the poor.<sup>30</sup> “You have killed” in 5:6 indicates that the condemnation secured has resulted in the death of the innocent or at least deprivation of their living.<sup>31</sup>

The church fathers also held the rich’s refusal to help the poor as a serious sin. For Cyprian, the rich who preserve their worldly wealth while neglecting the poor sin gravely with their covetousness and can only expect eternal loss and punishment like the rich fool in the Lukan Gospel.<sup>32</sup> Helen Rhee restates Clement of Alexandria’s teachings: “A Christian who lives in luxury (which itself is an oxymoron) commits not only a ‘sin of commission’ (avarice, vanity, self-love, and attachment to the world), but also a ‘sin of omission’ by neglecting the commandment of loving one’s neighbor.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Scaewater, “The Dynamic and Righteous Use of Wealth in James 5:1–6,” 230–31.

<sup>30</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistle of James: Tests of a Living Faith* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 293.

<sup>31</sup> Hiebert, *The Epistle of James*, 293. Or this could mean murdering a man by depriving him of his living (Ecclesiasticus 34:22 “As one that slays his neighbor his he that takes away his living; and as a shedder of blood is he that deprives a hireling of his hire”). “But the context makes the thought of judicial murder more probable. The aorist tenses in this verse need not be restricted to an isolated event, but seem best taken as making a summary statement of what has occurred repeatedly. History is replete with such judicial murders.”

<sup>32</sup> Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 101. “Overall for Cyprian, almsgiving as lifelong penance provided an absolutely necessary (pre-)condition for and with the reconciliation of the lapsed; and their ‘conscious almsgiving’ would be a means that should sustain the care of the poor in the financially strapped situation of his congregation.”

<sup>33</sup> Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 170, citing *Paedagogus* 3.6.34–36, 2.13.120. Christian authors characterized the problem of avarice (love of money)

The rich who refused to help the poor, and worse, who oppressed and abused them, are warned that their eschatological judgment is imminent (5:1–6). Their judgment day will be the day of rude awakening for a great reversal of fortune just like in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. James may be still thinking about these oppressive rich in 5:19 when he mentions those who are wandering from the truth. As mentioned above, to wander from the truth is to apostatize.<sup>34</sup> Unless someone turns them back from their apostasy, their souls are headed toward death and will be punished for a multitude of sins (5:20).<sup>35</sup>

### How They Can Escape the Impending Judgment

Some commentators believe that the rich that James addresses are irreversibly under God's wrath. However, God's prophetic judgments in the Hebrew Bible were often conditional. As with Nineveh, if the wicked would repent and turn to God, he might relent of the coming punishment. So, here too, the rich have the opportunity to repent and avoid the coming miseries.<sup>36</sup> Rhee avers, "If renunciation of avarice and luxury constituted a negative boundary marker for Christian identity, almsgiving and sharing constituted Christians' positive boundary marker."<sup>37</sup> This is be-

essentially as idolatry problem and thus as something intrinsically antithetical to Christian identity (p. 168).

<sup>34</sup> Peter Davids, *Commentary on James*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 198.

<sup>35</sup> Davids, *Commentary on James*, 199–201. Davids discusses the meaning of words "will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" in 5:20b and concludes that the erring brother himself is the one who is saved from destruction and freed of his sins through repentance. The concept of saving a soul from death is clear enough, for death is plainly the final result of sin, usually thought of as eternal death or the last judgment. James discusses sin to point out to erring community members the results of their behavior and to bring them to repentance, hoping to save them from damnation and procure forgiveness for their sins. Covering a multitude of sins refers to gaining forgiveness and is a benefit parallel to the saving from death. To cover sin (5:20) is normally to procure forgiveness (Pss. 32:1; 85:2; Dn. 4:24; Sir. 5:6; Tob. 4:10; Rom. 4:7). See also Stulac, *James*, 188.

<sup>36</sup> Scacewater, "The Dynamic and Righteous Use of Wealth in James 5:1–6," 231; John Painter, *James*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament, ed. Mikeal C. Parsons and Charles H. Talbert (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 153.

<sup>37</sup> Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 171–72.

cause caring for and sharing possessions with the less fortunate is what distinguishes the genuine and “orthodox” Christians from the false and “heretical” Christians.<sup>38</sup> James cannot be said to argue that the rich cannot be saved, for he uses Abraham as the prime exemplar of faith (2:21–24), and Abraham’s wealth is repeatedly announced in Genesis.<sup>39</sup> On the flip side, poverty has no intrinsic value apart from attendant poverty of the soul, which is available for the rich as well as for the poor.<sup>40</sup>

The command in James 4:10 (“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up”) is issued to the entire audience, thereby indicating that anyone can *and should* be among the humble whom God will raise up.<sup>41</sup> How can the rich humble themselves before the Lord and be saved? According to the church fathers, one way is by loving God and loving one’s neighbor through almsgiving.<sup>42</sup> Peter of Alexandria, who was the bishop of Alexandria in the late-third century, assumed the rich in general to be the “wicked, merciless rich” unless they are specified as the “merciful and loving.” He also points out that a poor man can leave his financial poverty for another poverty seven times more evil such as idleness, arrogance, and stealing. Thus Peter of Alexandria deconstructs the wicked rich and the pious poor tradition without any attempt to spiritualize wealth and poverty.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 173.

<sup>39</sup> Kamell, “8. The Economics of Humility: The Rich and the Humble in James,” 173.

<sup>40</sup> Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 80.

<sup>41</sup> Kamell, “8. The Economics of Humility: The Rich and the Humble in James,” 169. Here the first verb *tapeinothete* (ταπεινώθητε) is the same root for humility/humiliation as the adjective and noun in 1:9–10, likewise the same verb *hypsosai* (ὑψώσει) for the promised elevation in 1:9 recurs here.

<sup>42</sup> Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 81–82. Clement uses transaction and exchange language to express that the rich can buy an eternal abode in heaven by giving the perishing things of the world. For Clement, almsgiving is a quintessential, positive demonstration of loving God and neighbor as well as of using one’s wealth properly. Without the love for God no one can gain salvation. “Because God receives and forgives everyone who turns to him in genuine repentance, almsgiving is an effective means of repentance and rooting out of the soul the postbaptismal sins leading to death” (p. 82, citing *Quis dives salvatur* 39). For Tertullian also, “Almsgiving, a visible act, fulfills both doing justice and loving mercy in Micah 6:8 and the ‘one thing’ required by Christ for salvation (*Adversus Marcionem* 4.36.7; cf. 4.27.6–9)” (p. 93).

<sup>43</sup> Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 88.

Early Christian leaders and texts connected almsgiving to the salvation of the giver, and an important point to keep in mind here is that almsgiving is not so much a human work as it is an index of one's underlying faith.<sup>44</sup> In Paul's words, it is faith working through love (Gal 5:6). How about the poor? How can they demonstrate their faith? James exhorts them not to judge the rich but instead endure their oppression, pray for them and bring them back from their apostasy. It is to this topic we next turn.

### **Call to the Poor Believers to Love and Not to Judge Their Rich Brothers**

#### **Judging Others Is a Serious Sin**

The command for God's people to cease from speaking evil against others of the congregation has well-established precedents (Lev 19:16; Prov 18:8; 26:22; Wisd Sol 1:11), and evil speech was a problem for the early church (Rom 1:30; 2 Cor 12:20; 1 Pet 2:1; 2 Pet 2:12; 3:16; 1 Clem 30.1–3; 35.5; Barnabas 20:2).<sup>45</sup> According to Moo, criticism and condemnation of others amount to pronouncing one's own verdict over their spirituality and destiny.<sup>46</sup> Moo thinks that James's concern in 4:11–12 is with jealous, censorious speech by which one judges others as being wrong in the sight of God.<sup>47</sup> It is this sort of judging that Paul rebuked among the Roman Christians, who were apparently questioning the reality of one another's faith because of differing views on the applicability of some ritual laws (Rom 14:1–13).<sup>48</sup> A similar situation was probably responsible for the problems James addresses.<sup>49</sup>

When James says, "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers" in 4:11, the verb *katalaleō* here means speaking against someone in harsh criticism, accusation or condemnation (Num

<sup>44</sup> Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 102.

<sup>45</sup> Martin, *James*, 163.

<sup>46</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *James*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 152.

<sup>47</sup> Moo, *James*, 152.

<sup>48</sup> Moo, *James*, 152–53.

<sup>49</sup> Moo, *James*, 153. "A bitter, selfish spirit (3:13–18) had given rise to quarrels and disputes about certain matters in the church (4:1–2). These disputes were apparently conducted, as they usually are, with a notable absence of restraint in the use of the tongue (3:1–12), including perhaps cursings (3:10) and denunciations (4:11–12) of one another. Such behavior is nothing more than a manifestation of a worldly spirit (3:15; 4:1, 4)."

12:8; 21:7; Ps 77:19; 2 Cor 12:20; 1 Pet 2:12; 3:16).<sup>50</sup> To set oneself over against another is to break the law of love, and this in turn must be seen as implicitly taking up a critical attitude towards the law itself, for failure to keep the law is to judge it to be invalid or unnecessary.<sup>51</sup> The transgressor thus puts himself into the position of a judge of the law.<sup>52</sup> When judging a brother or sister with evil intention, one is violating the law of love (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39; Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:14), opposing it, criticizing it, implying that it is not good and should be abrogated.<sup>53</sup>

### Those Who Judge Their Neighbors Will Also Be Judged

The poor will inherit the kingdom—not just any poor but the poor who also have genuine faith. Jipp argues that by judging others (whether it be the rich or the poor), one shows oneself to be unfit for the kingdom.<sup>54</sup> The poor who will inherit the kingdom are the ones who rejoice under trial and patiently endure the oppression, leaving God the role of the judge who can both destroy or save.<sup>55</sup> Peter of Alexandria's work, entitled *On Riches*, has a direct address to the poor. In it, there is no piety or spirituality of the poor mentioned; rather, it rebukes the poor just as harshly as the wicked rich for their apparent envy and fretting about the rich as well as their ingratitude to the Lord.<sup>56</sup> Cyprian accords to the

<sup>50</sup> Sophie Laws, *The Epistle of James*, Black's New Testament Commentary, ed. Henry Chadwick (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1980), 186.

<sup>51</sup> Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 187.

<sup>52</sup> Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 187.

<sup>53</sup> Hiebert, *The Epistle of James: Tests of a Living Faith*, 268.

<sup>54</sup> Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 170; van de Sandt, "James 4,1–4 in the Light of the Jewish Two Ways Tradition 3,1–6," 57–58: Showing partiality, one form of judging the neighbor, is strongly condemned by James in 2:1–13 as it violates the royal law. The command against partiality is connected explicitly with the standard Jewish view that the law is to be considered a unity. James suggests that favoritism be condemned as severely by the law as the major transgressions of adultery or even murder; seemingly negligible minor commandments, like the instruction against partiality, are to be included within the scope of the commandment "do not commit adultery" and "do not kill." One cannot pick and choose which commandments to keep. It is utterly wrong to disregard some prohibitions while obeying the others. In James' mind, "to show contempt for the poor is equivalent to committing adultery or even murder." In this respect, he is strongly rooted in the specific moral tradition thriving in pious Jewish groups.

<sup>55</sup> Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 170.

<sup>56</sup> Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 87.



poor the virtues of free will and steadfastness in their faith against the external pressure and threat of physical pain; these are not just any poor people but the poor that are steadfast in the face of persecution.<sup>57</sup>

James insists that there is a divine lawgiver and judge who will hold all people accountable—not least those who profess faith yet fail to obey the royal law of love in their attitudes to their brothers and sisters. Judgment will be severe for those “who do not show mercy, for mercy triumphs over judgment” (Jas 2:13b).<sup>58</sup> As mentioned above, Lev 19:18 is a key verse in James and it is set in a context that is stern in its opposition to slander, taking vengeance, and bearing a grudge against a neighbor (Lev 19:15–18).<sup>59</sup> The command to “love your neighbor as yourself” in Lev 19:18 is “the law” referred to in James 4:11–12 in which James says that anyone who speaks against a brother speaks against the law. James suggests that anyone who speaks disdainfully of a sister or a brother is, in fact, breaking this “royal law” (cf. 2:8). Nystrom argues that because this command had the central place in the ethical teaching of Jesus, to ignore this command is, in effect, to repudiate Christ and to render the self-description “Christian” a falsehood.<sup>60</sup>

According to James, when we judge others, we invite and pronounce judgment on ourselves. The sin of harsh criticism that is condemnation and accusation (the word *katalaleō* in 4:11) is condemned all through the Bible. It is the psalmist's accusation against the wicked man (Ps 50:20), and Ps 101:5 says that God will destroy the one who slanders his neighbor secretly. Paul lists it among the sins which are characteristic of the unredeemed evil of the pagan world (Rom 1:30), and it is one of the sins which he fears to find in the warring church of Corinth (2 Cor 12:20). Peter denounces it along with malice, envy, hypocrisy and deceit (1 Pet 2:1). Barclay maintains that there are few sins which the Bible so

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<sup>57</sup> Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 96.

<sup>58</sup> Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Martin, *James*, 164.

<sup>60</sup> David P. Nystrom, *James*, The NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 249. This “speaking ill” of sisters and brothers is closely allied to the ill treatment of them in 2:1–7, and the flagrant refusal to follow the royal law recalls James's teaching in 2:8–13.

unsparingly condemns as the sin of irresponsible and malicious gossip.<sup>61</sup>

Another reason why James condemns speaking evil of one's brother or sister is that it is an infringement of the prerogative of God. To slander our neighbors is to pass judgment on them. Judgment belongs to God alone since only he can save and destroy (Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kgs 5:7; Matt 10:28; Ps 68:20); only a reckless person deliberately infringes the prerogatives of God.<sup>62</sup> As Barclay points out, "We might think that to speak evil of our neighbor is not a very serious sin. But Scripture would say that it is one of the worst of all because it is a breach of the royal law and an infringement of the rights of God."<sup>63</sup>

Referring to 5:9a ("Do not grumble against one another, brothers"), Davids argues that this complaining will produce guilt with which God will deal severely and thus must be avoided. The nearness of the eschatological day in 5:8–9 is a warning to examine one's behavior so that "when the one whose footsteps are nearing finally knocks on the door, one may be prepared to open, for open one must, either for blessing or for judgment. The coming Lord is also the judge of the Christian."<sup>64</sup> Titus 3:10–11 declare that a person who stirs up division should be shunned after a couple of warnings since he is corrupt (*exestraptai*) and self-condemned (*autokatakritos*). The poor brother who grumbles and judges his brother will face God's judgment (5:9). James's statement in 4:12 ("There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?") indicates that the results of God's judgment is either salvation or destruction. Those who inherit salvation are the ones who endure trials and produce steadfastness when their faith is tested (1:3), but those who judge a brother will face God's judgment (5:9).

According to Nystrom, James has a warning for the poor in 5:9: James reminds the poor that the wealthy, so often the self-imposed enemies of the poor, are sisters and brothers, fellow believers in Christ. Even understandable feelings of

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<sup>61</sup> William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, rev. ed., The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 111.

<sup>62</sup> Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, 112.

<sup>63</sup> Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, 112.

<sup>64</sup> Davids, *Commentary on James*, 185.

enmity for what they may have suffered at the hands of the indifferent wealthy lays the poor open to judgment. Only Christ, the Judge, has the right so to criticize. . . . He has already enjoined them in the name of the Judge from speaking any kind of evil one against another (4:11).<sup>65</sup>

The thought of 5:9 is reminiscent of Jesus's words in Matt 7:1–5 that those who judge others have the same severity turned against them.<sup>66</sup> Commenting on 5:1–6, Stulac states,

Be patient? What an incredible command to give after the preceding portrayal of offenses! “Be outraged” is more what we would expect. But James has not lost his moral perspective in the midst of his moral passion. He has already expressed his outrage, but his concern is still for purity among the Christians, and he discerns the danger of falling into sin here. James is practicing his own counsel from 1:9–15, recognizing the danger of temptation in the midst of trials inflicted by rich oppressors. He does not tell his readers to compete with or fight against the rich for their wealth, because it would be horrible to become drawn into the materialism of the rich and so to come under the same divine judgment.<sup>67</sup>

Stulac avers, “James is here (as usual) cutting to an essential difference between genuine and false religion. He is saying: Do not allow suffering to pressure you into unbelief.”<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Nystrom, *James*, 286–87.

<sup>66</sup> Martin, *James*, 192; Kovalishyn, “The Implications of Grace for the Ethics of James,” 280. James warns in 2:13, “For judgment will be without mercy to the one not showing mercy” which seems to be the negative of Jesus's beatitude of Matt 5:7: “Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.”

<sup>67</sup> George M. Stulac, *James*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1993), 169. The one application of patience is that we will not grumble against each other (5:9), referring to a complaining in which we blame each other (cf. Heb 13:17). The warning “or you will be judged” is identical to Jesus's words in Matt 7:1 indicating that James regards this grumbling as a form of speaking against or judging one's brother, as in 4:11 (p. 172).

<sup>68</sup> Stulac, *James*, 178–79.

## Enduring Oppression by the Rich Will Secure Blessings and Salvation

In 5:7–11, James appeals for steadfast endurance in view of the Lord’s return, when their afflictions will be terminated and they will be rewarded. Is endurance essential for salvation? Yes, in James as well as in 1 Peter, “Endurance in difficulty is the key witness to the reality of a person’s faith and a part of the process through which they are saved.”<sup>69</sup> Kovalishyn sees that James has a lot in common with 1 Peter, explaining that “both James and Peter define saving ‘faith’ as faith that dynamically perseveres, no matter the situation with which it is faced and salvation is won only as an eschatological conclusion to such faith. For both authors, endurance is a necessary part of the salvation process.”<sup>70</sup> James and Peter use the exact same phrase, “the testing of your faith” (*to dokimōn hēmōn tēs pisteōs*; Jas 1:3; 1 Pet 1:7) as the “crucial stage that leads to the realization of one’s hope.”<sup>71</sup> Both James and Peter define faith partly through its relationship to the endurance of adversity. And, ultimately, it is only a faith that endures that results in salvation.<sup>72</sup>

The faith that receives the “crown of life,” to borrow James’s language, is the faith that has endured trials and temptations (Jas 1:12).<sup>73</sup> The faith that reaches its *telos* in salvation, to borrow Peter’s language, is the faith that has stood the test of unjust persecution (1 Pet 1:9). Thus, 1 Pet 1:9 provides the counterpart to Jas 1:12, the result of enduring trials: “for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” The outcome of the tested faith is salvation.<sup>74</sup> Twice in Matthew (10:22 and 24:13)—both in contexts of warning of future judgment—Jesus is quoted as saying “But the one who endures to the end will be

<sup>69</sup> Mariam Kamell Kovalishyn, “Endurance unto Salvation: The Witness of 1 Peter and James,” *Word & World* 35, no. 3 (2015): 235.

<sup>70</sup> Kovalishyn, “Endurance unto Salvation,” 231.

<sup>71</sup> Kovalishyn, “Endurance unto Salvation,” 235.

<sup>72</sup> Kovalishyn, “Endurance unto Salvation,” 235. James uses the *hypomēno* (υπομένω, endurance) stem three times in chapter one in key locations: in verses 3–4, the noun *hypomone* (υπομονή) is the crucial result of the tested faith that in its turn brings about the desired maturity of the believer.

<sup>73</sup> Kovalishyn, “Endurance unto Salvation,” 236. The “crown of life” is generally understood to be a crown that *is* life, as in, eternal life rather than some sort of reward.

<sup>74</sup> Kovalishyn, “Endurance unto Salvation,” 238.

saved" (*ho de hypomeinas eis telos houtos sōthēsetai*).<sup>75</sup> In Mark 13:13, Jesus declares, "You will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." James also exhorts his readers to persevere through trials near the beginning and the closing of his letter as an *inclusio* (cf. 1:2–4; 5:7–11).<sup>76</sup>

When James says, "He does not resist you" in 5:6b, James is picturing the scene from the standpoint of the victim who is making no move to put himself in active opposition to his murderers.<sup>77</sup> This stance is in obedience to the teaching of Jesus not to resist him that is evil (Matt 5:39). It is also in keeping with James's stress for patient endurance. James himself practiced the teaching of Jesus at his own martyrdom.<sup>78</sup> James mentions Job as an example for the readers to follow in his endurance under trials. Certainly James assumes that his readers know that the final outcome of Job's patience was God's restoration of Job's blessings in double

<sup>75</sup> Kovalishyn, "Endurance unto Salvation," 239.

<sup>76</sup> Persevering through trials is the same thing as being doers of the Word because the Word commands people to persevere through trials. Those who do not persevere but respond in grumbling and judging others are falling into temptation which is sin that results in death. Those who persevere in trials are the doers of the Word who rejoice in trials, refuse to judge and curse others but instead let God be the judge whose coming and judgment is imminent and thus respond in prayer to adverse circumstances, and they will be blessed like Job. James also encourages them to bring those who have apostatized (including the oppressive rich among them) back to truth and save their souls.

<sup>77</sup> Hiebert, *The Epistle of James*, 294. Some commentators interpret the statement ("He does not resist you") as a question, "Does he not resist you?" So Davids, *Commentary on James*, 180; John Byron, "Living in the Shadow of Cain: Echoes of a Developing Tradition in James 5:1–6," *Novum testamentum* 48, no. 3 (2006): 273. Scot McKnight also interprets 5:6b as an interrogative, "Does he not resist you?" and views their resistance expressed in crying out before the Lord (*The Letter of James*, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011], 266). But it is more natural to take it as a statement as it heightens the reader's sense of the guilt of the rich. So Dale C. Allison Jr., *James: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, *International Critical Commentary* (London, New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 688; Laws, *The Epistle of James*, 207; Patrick J. Hartin, "'Come Now, You Rich, Weep and Wail . . . ?' (James 5:1–6)," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 84 (September 1993): 60. This is in accordance with the Gospel teaching of turning the other cheek (Matt 5:39) (Hartin, "'Come Now, You Rich, Weep and Wail . . . ?' [James 5:1–6]," 60). This is in accordance with the Gospel teaching of turning the other cheek (Matt 5:39).

<sup>78</sup> Hiebert, *The Epistle of James*, 294.

portion (Job 42:10). James wants to assure his readers that their endurance will also be richly rewarded.

### **The Poor Should Pray for Their Brothers and Turn the Rich Oppressors from Their Apostasy and Save Their Souls**

In 5:13–18, James exhorts the readers to pray. Prayer is offered as the alternative to complaining (5:6) and swearing (5:12). Stulac argues that oaths and prayers are the verbal expressions of underlying stances of unbelief and faith, respectively.<sup>79</sup> All along, James has been urging his readers to resist the temptation to compromise righteousness in their trials; instead, they should use the power of prayer, for which they need righteousness. If they commit themselves to doing what is right without compromise, they may rely on God in prayer for all their needs. The prayer of genuine faith is the prayer that is powerful and effective (5:16b). Unbelief will cause one to try to protect oneself by unrighteous means in trials, but confident belief in God's grace will make one strong for acting righteously in the midst of trials. The miracles in 1 Kings 17–18 were undeniably beyond Elijah's human power—they were divine answers to prayer.<sup>80</sup> James emphasizes that Elijah was a man just like us to encourage his readers to trust God to answer their prayers also.

James implies that some of their sickness is caused by sin when he says in 5:15b, "And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." The prayer of the righteous believers will bring about healing and forgiveness of the sins that caused the sickness (v. 16). Confession of sins (which must include the sin of oppression by the rich) and prayers by the righteous for such sins will hopefully result in repentance from those sins (v. 19). This seems to be James's solution to the problems of oppression, strife, jealousy, and division in the church—the righteous not judging the unrighteous but instead patiently enduring and praying for them—for their healing if they are sick and for the forgiveness of their sins and conversion. If so, James is echoing Jesus's teaching on enemy love.

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<sup>79</sup> Stulac, *James*, 179.

<sup>80</sup> Stulac, *James*, 185. Jesus himself drew attention to Elijah's powerful praying over the rain when his miracles were hindered by people's unbelief in Nazareth (Luke 4:25; Mark 6:4–6).

When James mentions a member wandering from the truth (*alētheia*) in 5:19, who does he have in mind? Fearghail's statements are helpful:

The presence of ἀλήθεια in the concluding exhortation of the letter suggests that its sense should be seen in the broader context of the letter. In this context those who stray from the truth or who are on "the way of error" are those whose faith is not steadfast in the face of trial (1:2–4), whose prayer is not with faith (1:6), who attribute their faults to God (1:13–18), or who fail to put into action the law or word of God (1:19–27), notably the law of charity (2:1–13); they are those who do not put their faith into action (2:14–26) or do not bridle the tongue (3:1–12), those whose wisdom is not from above (3:13–18), whose friendship is with the world instead of with God (4:1–10); they are those who judge a brother (4:11–12), who are not mindful of God (4:13–17), who are unjust towards the poor (5:1–6); they are those who grumble against one another (5:9), who have not patience (5:7–11); they are those whose word is not their bond (5:12).<sup>81</sup>

In short, James is referring to all in his audience including the rich and the poor who are not on the path to life but on the path to death, that is, the false believers in the community—those who profess faith but in their deeds show themselves as not having been "brought forth" (*apekyēsen*), or regenerated, by the word of truth (1:18).<sup>82</sup> James exhorts the already-regenerated believers to love them enough to turn them back from their apostasy and save their souls (5:20).

### Conclusion

For James, those who have genuine faith and thus will receive the crown of life are those who have stood the test of faith with endurance (1:12). The test comes in the form of trials (1:2–3). In 1 Peter, it is persecution, and in James it is oppression by the rich and powerful. Genuine believers respond to the trials with joy and

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<sup>81</sup> Fearghus O. Fearghail, "On the Conclusion of the Letter of James," *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 35 (2012): 90.

<sup>82</sup> In Jas 1:15 and 18 is seen another contrast of the Two Ways motif: sin, when fully grown, brings forth (*apokyei*) death (1:15), whereas God's will and the word of truth bring forth (*apekyēsen*) first fruits of his creatures (1:18).

steadfastness and without grumbling (1:2–3; 5:9). The rich are warned because unless they repent of their evil oppression of their poor brothers, they will face God’s eternal judgment (5:1–6); the poor are also warned because unless they respond to their trials with endurance, they too will face God’s judgment (5:9; cf. 4:11–12). “Judgment will be without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy” (2:13).<sup>83</sup>

James is asking the poor not to judge the rich but instead to endure their hardships caused by the rich’s oppression and deprivation of their rightful wages, knowing that the Lord is near to bringing his judgment to the wicked and his reward to the righteous. The poor along with the rest of the genuine believers (“doers of the word”) should pray for God’s intervention and for the salvation of the rich along with the rest of the false believers (“hearers only”). Throughout the letter, there are numerous calls to those who are walking the path toward death to repentance, and there are also calls to those who are walking the path of life to love, pray for, and bring those who are on the path to death to repentance unto life.

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<sup>83</sup> It seems for James grumbling against the rich oppressors means failing to be patient and proving the superficiality of one’s faith. In 5:7–8, James uses the word “be patient” (*makrothymēō*) three times to emphasize the necessity of patience in the midst of trials in order to be prepared to meet the soon-coming Judge (5:8). Grumbling is a sign one failed to respond to trials with patience.



## **Is the Use of Vaccines Developed from Abortion-Derived Fetal Cell Lines Formal or Material Complicity in Evil?**

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Five normally-recommended vaccines along with some COVID-19 vaccines are currently derived from abortion-derived fetal cell lines: Varicella (chickenpox), rubella (the “R” in the MMR vaccine), hepatitis A, one version of the shingles vaccine, and one preparation of rabies vaccine. Additionally, of the three Covid-19 vaccines currently approved for use in the US – Janssen,<sup>1</sup> Moderna, and Pfizer-BioNTech<sup>2</sup> – the Janssen vaccine utilized abortion-derived fetal cell lines in development and design, confirmatory lab tests, and production. The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines do not use such cell lines in design or production but did utilize them in the confirmatory lab test phase of development. The UK has also approved the Oxford / AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine which uses abortion-derived fetal cell lines in development and design, confirmatory lab tests, and production.

Some pro-life groups, such as the Personhood Alliance,<sup>3</sup> insist that using vaccines developed from abortion-derived fetal cell lines is morally illicit. Other pro-life groups, such as the Christian Medical and Dental Associations,<sup>4</sup> contend it is morally licit to use such vaccines. This paper will argue that while the use of vaccines

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<sup>1</sup> Janssen Pharmaceuticals is a wholly owned subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson. In some sources, this vaccine is called the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and in other cases it is called the Janssen vaccine. Following the FDA’s usage, I’ll be calling it the Janssen vaccine.

<sup>2</sup> The brand name for this vaccine is Comirnaty, but I will simply be referring to it from here on as the Pfizer vaccine.

<sup>3</sup> See The Personhood Alliance, “The Personhood Alliance’s Official Position on Vaccine Ethics,” <https://personhood.org/positions/vaccines/>.

<sup>4</sup> Christian Medical and Dental Association, “Vaccines and Immunization,” May 2, 2021, <https://cmda.org/policy-issues-home/position-statements/>.

developed from abortion-derived fetal cell lines does not necessarily imply formal or material cooperation with evil, the vaccines raise concerns related to the sanctity of human life. To defend this thesis, the paper will begin with a summary of the abortion-derived fetal cell lines and the vaccines developed from them. Next, the paper will dispel the myth that fetuses are being aborted today to supply an ongoing source for vaccines. Then, the paper will clarify that using vaccines developed from abortion-derived fetal cell lines clearly does not entail formal cooperation with evil. Finally, while the question of material cooperation with evil is more challenging, the paper will argue that using vaccines developed from abortion-derived fetal cell lines does not entail material cooperation with evil.

The broader debate regarding the anti-vaccination movement will not be addressed. This paper operates on the premise that anti-vaccination arguments are unconvincing and based on poor argumentation, inaccurate interpretation of data, bad data, or conspiracy theories. Vaccines have been a blessing to humanity, saving countless lives from death. This paper assumes that vaccines are safe and do not cause diseases, and the principle of vaccination has been robustly confirmed as effective. The question here is narrow: Given that vaccines are safe and effective, how should we respond to vaccines which raise questions regarding the sanctity of preborn human life?

This paper will not extensively address the issue of informed consent in vaccine research. However, this essential principle of bioethics does play a role in considering the morality of using some vaccines. The summary of informed consent as described in the Nuremberg Code<sup>5</sup> gives a sound summary of the principle, especially noting that the duty for obtaining informed consent rests with the researcher himself or herself who is conducting the experiment. The canon of informed consent should shape the way candidates are recruited for research.

### **Abortion-Derived Fetal Cell Lines**

Where and how were abortion-derived fetal cell lines developed? Why do scientists want to use human cell lines instead of

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<sup>5</sup> *Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, October 1946 – April 1949, Vol. 2, *The Medical Case* and *The Milch Case* (Washington, DC: U.S.G.P.O., 1949–1953), 181–82.

animal cell lines in research and development of pharmaceuticals? To answer these questions, the term *abortion-derived fetal cell lines* will be defined and the qualities which make them more favorable than animal cell lines will be summarized, then the background of specific abortion-derived fetal cell lines used in vaccine production will be described.

### Defining the Term *Abortion-Derived Fetal Cell Lines*

What is an *abortion-derived fetal cell line*? Cells are removed from an aborted fetus and subsequently grown in an artificial environment. While there is a limit to the number of times a human cell can divide, by using laboratory techniques to freeze cells at each subcultivation or every few subcultivations, researchers can produce an *almost* limitless number of cells from one fetus. Hayflick and Moorhead suggested such a line could have a theoretical maximum yield of  $10^{22}$  cells.<sup>6</sup> The word *abortion* is here used to describe an elective procedure performed for the purpose of ending a pregnancy. In context, the abortions in question are not carried out because of imminent and immediate danger to the mother's health, such as in the case of an ectopic pregnancy. Since aborted fetuses serve as the source of human cell lines, the term *abortion-derived fetal cell lines* is a descriptive and accurate term.

While I am using the term *cell lines*, researchers actually prefer the term *human diploid cell strains*. In a landmark 1961 article, "The Serial Cultivation of Human Diploid Strains," Leonard Hayflick and Paul Moorhead of Philadelphia's Wistar Institute disclosed that human cells can normally multiply only about 50 times, a fact now known as the Hayflick limit.<sup>7</sup> In research biology, a *cell line* is a group of cells that does not reach the Hayflick limit and will go on dividing endlessly, such as some cell lines derived from cancer cells or genetically modified to do so. In contrast, a *cell strain* denotes a group of cells that is mortal—they will reach the Hayflick limit and then at some point expire.<sup>8</sup> But using modern laboratory methods, these mortal cell strains can be frozen, thawed, divided, and multiplied to provide an almost endless supply of cells for research and development. While the term *cell strains* is technically

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<sup>6</sup> Leonard Hayflick and Paul S. Moorhead, "The Serial Cultivation of Human Diploid Strains," *Experimental Cell Research* 25.3 (December 1961): 604 n. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Hayflick and Moorhead, "The Serial Cultivation," 619.

<sup>8</sup> Meredith Wadaman, *The Vaccine Race: Science, Politics, and the Human Costs of Defeating Disease* (New York: Penguin, 2018), 70.

correct, the term *cell lines* is used in a popular manner to describe any number of types of cells used in research. For the purposes of public discussion, the phrase *cell strains*, though helpful when defined, can be confusing and the term *cell line* seems to be more easily understood.

### Why Use Fetal Cells?

Why do vaccine makers want to use human fetal cell lines in developing vaccines? First, human cell lines have the ability to produce proteins most similar to those synthesized naturally in humans.<sup>9</sup> Second, animal-derived cell lines have been used in many different vaccines. Still, there are concerns about animal viruses lurking in the animal genome, with fears that some viruses might have detrimental post-vaccination sequelae.<sup>10</sup> Third, human fetal tissue is preferred because it is considered more pure, with less risk of the prenatal child having been exposed to exogenous bacteria or viruses. Fourth, viruses that infect humans tend to grow better in human cells than in animal cells.<sup>11</sup>

The process of developing vaccines occurs in three stages: 1) design and development; 2) confirmatory lab tests on the proposed vaccines; 3) actual production of the vaccines. Each stage has a particular purpose:

1. Design and development: Researchers develop the concepts needed for a new vaccine. Preparatory experiments are performed which help specify how the vaccine will be constructed and produced.
2. Confirmatory lab tests: These are tests to analyze the quality of the proposed vaccine, its nucleic acid or protein

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Dumont, Don Eewart, Baisong Mei, Scott Estes, and Rashmi Kshirsagar, "Human Cell Lines for Biopharmaceutical Manufacturing: History, Status, and Future Perspectives," *Critical Reviews in Biotechnology* 36.6 (2016): 1110.

<sup>10</sup> For example, some of the polio vaccine administered from 1955–1963 was contaminated with a virus, called simian virus 40 (SV40). The virus came from the monkey kidney cell cultures used to produce the vaccine. There has been ongoing debate about whether the SV40 virus causes cancer, with a 2002 report from the National Academy of Sciences calling the evidence for a connection "inadequate." Kathleen Stratton, Donna A. Almario, and Marie C. McCormick, eds. *Immunization Safety Review: SV40 Contamination of Polio Vaccine and Cancer* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, "Vaccine Ingredients – Fetal Cells," March 8, 2021, <https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-ingredients/fetal-tissues>.

sequence, antibody reactivity, and other attributes. The goal here is to produce a vaccine that is both safe and effective for the vaccinee. After the vaccine passes through the confirmatory lab tests, it is usually tested on animals and then humans. Human trials occur in three phases. In Phase I, only a handful of volunteers are used to assess the medication's safety. In Phase II, a larger group, perhaps hundreds of volunteers, is used. In Phase III, thousands of volunteers are used. Phases II and III are double-blind studies that compare volunteers who received the proposed vaccine with a comparator group who did not receive the vaccine.

3. Production: This is the process to manufacture the final vaccine to be given to the public.<sup>12</sup>

Abortion-derived fetal cell lines can be used in some of the stages or all of the stages depending on the particular vaccine.

### **The Origins of Modern Abortion-Derived Fetal Cell Lines**

Abortion-derived fetal cell lines are nearly ubiquitous within modern research but for the specific discussion of vaccines, a few are of particular importance: WI-38, MRC5, HEK293, and PER.C6.

WI-38 was developed in 1962 by Leonard Hayflick at the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia, a major independent research laboratory. Hayflick had already performed experiments on other human cell lines from aborted fetuses and co-published a major paper in 1961 in which he detailed his findings that human cell lines have a limited lifespan, a theory—now known to be true—which challenged convention at the time.<sup>13</sup> But to prove his theory, Hayflick used cells originating from 19 aborted fetuses<sup>14</sup> which he

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<sup>12</sup> This description of the three stages derived from David Prentice, “Update: COVID-19 Vaccine Candidates and Abortion-Derived Fetal Cell Lines,” September 30, 2020, <https://lozierinstitute.org/update-covid-19-vaccine-candidates-and-abortion-derived-cell-lines/> and World Health Organization, “How Are Vaccines Developed,” December 8, 2020, [https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/how-are-vaccines-developed?gclid=CjwKCAjwn8SLBhAyEiwAHNTJbF3VXTLEl4JQegnDQEzcGxa2CxchmfatDeDnBVH24tfw9OOC-PyN5xoC9vQQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/how-are-vaccines-developed?gclid=CjwKCAjwn8SLBhAyEiwAHNTJbF3VXTLEl4JQegnDQEzcGxa2CxchmfatDeDnBVH24tfw9OOC-PyN5xoC9vQQAvD_BwE).

<sup>13</sup> Hayflick and Moorhead, “The Serial Cultivation,” 585–621.

<sup>14</sup> Hayflick and Moorhead, “The Serial Cultivation,” 591.

acquired from the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. It was this research that prepared the way for his development of the WI-38 cell line in 1962.<sup>15</sup>

Hayflick also acquired some fetuses from Sweden. Why? World famous Swedish virologist Sven Gard (1905–1998) had spent some sabbatical time in 1959 working at the Wistar Institute where Hayflick made his acquaintance. Gard suggested Sweden would be an easier place from which to get fetuses for research since Sweden had legalized abortion in 1938.<sup>16</sup> While the nation of Sweden during this period waxed and waned between support for and opposition to abortion, by and large, it was simply easier to get fetal material from Sweden than from the US.

The fetus Hayflick used to develop WI-38 came from a legal abortion in Sweden performed by Dr. Eva Ernholm in Stockholm in June 1962. Based on the description of the abortion procedure, it appears Ernholm used a form of hysterotomy, allowing her to remove the baby intact, a female who was 20 cm long.<sup>17</sup> The woman procured an abortion because she already had several children and her husband was irresponsible, often away from home

<sup>15</sup> Hayflick used the number 38 to ease identification of the line. It was actually the 27<sup>th</sup> he had developed.

<sup>16</sup> The Swedish law did not grant unlimited access to abortion, but only in three cases: 1) Imminent danger to the woman's health (defined narrowly), 2) Cases of pregnancy because of rape or incest, and 3) cases "where it may reasonably be assumed that the mother or father of the expected child will, owing to hereditary disposition, transmit to their offspring, insanity, mental deficiency, or serious physical disease." "Swedish Law on Abortion: Act Relating to the Termination of Pregnancy, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 1938," *Eugenics Review* 32.2 (1938): 109. The law also prohibited all abortions after the 20<sup>th</sup> week of gestation except in cases of imminent danger to the mother's life. When abortions were performed for cases in the third category, the law was eugenic in nature and said the woman could only have an abortion if she also agreed to be sterilized. In 1946, the law was expanded to include the category of "expected weakness," which allowed for abortion when the mother's mental or social stability could seriously deteriorate if she gave birth. At the same time, abortion purely on the basis of social needs like poverty, lack of housing, or unemployment, was not included in the law. Per Gunnar Cassel, "Induced Abortion in Sweden during 1939–1974: Change in Practice and Legal Reform," *Stockholm Research Reports in Demography* (2009): 4–5; [https://www.suda.su.se/polopoly\\_fs/1.295386.1473146636!/menu/standard/file/SRRD\\_2009\\_2.pdf](https://www.suda.su.se/polopoly_fs/1.295386.1473146636!/menu/standard/file/SRRD_2009_2.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> See Wadaman, *The Vaccine Race*, 88 for a description of the abortion. Wadaman doesn't use the term hysterotomy, but this is obviously what happened.

for jobs; when he was home, he was an immature alcoholic who had served time in prison.<sup>18</sup> The abortion was not specifically procured to provide fetal cells for research and Meredith Wadman, author of *The Vaccine Race*, says that the abortive mother “had no idea that her fetus had ended up anywhere but in a medical waste incinerator.” Wadman adds, “In 1962 in Sweden, as in the United States, tissue from aborted fetuses was routinely used by scientists without the knowledge of the women who had the abortions.”<sup>19</sup>

After the abortion, the fetus was dissected at the virology department at the Karolinska Institute. The fetus’s lungs were then shipped to Hayflick in Philadelphia, who especially wanted lung tissue as it was more amenable to replication. In his lab, Hayflick minced the lungs into innumerable pinhead-size pieces.<sup>20</sup> This became the starting point for WI-38 which later was used to develop the rubella vaccine and one rabies vaccine.

### **The Rubella Vaccine and WI-38**

To produce the rubella vaccine, cells from a second aborted fetus were also used. The modern rubella vaccine is a live attenuated virus vaccine primarily developed in 1964 and 1965 by Stanley Plotkin (b. 1932), an American pediatrician then working at the Wistar Institute. To develop his vaccine, Plotkin wanted to use cells from a fetus that had been infected with rubella in utero. Plotkin was searching for fetuses aborted due to rubella exposure because they would already have the rubella virus in their cells. These cells could then be used to create a live attenuated vaccine.

At that time, the US was experiencing a rubella epidemic and approximately 12.5 million Americans became infected, including many pregnant mothers. Children exposed to the rubella virus in utero can develop Congenital Rubella Syndrome, which causes deafness, heart disease, encephalitis, mental retardation, and pneumonia, among other problems. During this epidemic, rubella caused approximately 6,250 pregnancies to end in miscarriage and another 5,000 women chose to abort children which had been exposed to rubella in utero over fears the child might have Congenital Rubella Syndrome.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This description from Wadman, *The Vaccine Race*, 86.

<sup>19</sup> Wadman, *The Vaccine Race*, 93.

<sup>20</sup> Wadman, *The Vaccine Race*, 88.

<sup>21</sup> See Stanley Plotkin, “Rubella Vaccine,” in *Vaccines*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Saunders, 2008), 471. See also Wadman, *The Vaccine Race*, 161.

The cell line which Plotkin used to develop the rubella vaccine came from an abortion by a 25-year-old mother in Philadelphia during the epidemic. The mother was exposed to rubella around eight weeks gestation and chose to abort. According to Plotkin, “The fetus was surgically aborted 17 days after the maternal illness and dissected immediately. Explants from several organs were cultured and successful cell growth was achieved from the lung, skin, and kidney. All cell strains were found to be carrying rubella virus.”<sup>22</sup> Plotkin introduced the isolated rubella virus from the fetus aborted in Philadelphia into cultured WI-38 cells. This rubella vaccine is still used throughout much of the world today as part of the combined MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine.<sup>23</sup> Plotkin named the virus he cultivated RA 27/3, with the RA signifying “rubella abortus” and 27 denoting that it came from the 27<sup>th</sup> fetus he received during the 1964–1965 epidemic.<sup>24</sup> Thus, two aborted fetuses—the one from Sweden used to produce WI-38 and the one from Philadelphia used to isolate the rubella virus—were used to develop the rubella vaccine.

### MRC-5

Another widely used, abortion-derived fetal cell line is MRC-5. After WI-38 was produced in the USA, scientists in England decided to develop their own human cell line using similar techniques. Led by Dr. Frank T. Perkins, the United Kingdom’s top vaccine regulator and later Chief of Biological Standardization with World Health Organization, the Medical Research Council in London developed such a cell line. They took cells from lung tissue of a 14-week fetus aborted by a 27-year-old physically healthy woman. The abortion was performed for “psychiatric reasons” according to the researchers.<sup>25</sup> The cell line was named “MRC-5” after the Medical Research Council. MRC-5 is used to produce

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<sup>22</sup> Stanley L. Plotkin, David Cornfeld, and Theodore M. Ingalls, “Studies of Immunization with Living Rubella Virus,” *American Journal of Diseases of Children* 110 (October 1965): 381–82.

<sup>23</sup> The College of Physicians of Philadelphia, “The History of Vaccines,” accessed November 25, 2019, <https://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/articles/human-cell-strains-vaccine-development>.

<sup>24</sup> Wadaman, *The Vaccine Race*, 163.

<sup>25</sup> J. P. Jacobs, C. M. Jones, and J. P. Baille, “Characteristics of a Human Diploid Cell Designated MRC-5,” *Nature* 227 (July 11, 1970): 168–70.



vaccines for hepatitis A, chicken pox, and the original shingles vaccine.<sup>26</sup>

### COVID-19 Vaccines and Abortion-Derived Fetal Cell Lines

Three COVID-19 Vaccines have been approved for use in the United States: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Janssen while the UK has also approved the Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine. The Janssen and AstraZeneca vaccines used an abortion-derived human cell line in all three stages of vaccine development; The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines used an abortion-derived human cell line only in the confirmatory lab tests phase, but not in the design nor production phases. The following chart shows the differences for each vaccine:

**Table: COVID-19 Vaccines and Use of Abortion-Derived Fetal Cell Lines<sup>27</sup>**

	Design & Development	Confirmatory tests	Production
Janssen (PER.C6)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pfizer-BioNTech	No	Yes	No
Moderna	No	Yes	No
AstraZeneca (HEK293)	Yes	Yes	Yes

### HEK293

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines use the abortion-derived fetal cell line HEK293—an acronym which stands for “Human Embryonic Kidney 293”—in the confirmatory lab tests phase while the AstraZeneca vaccine uses HEK293 in all three phases. HEK293 was developed in Holland in 1973 by a team led by molecular biologist and virologist Alex van der Eb at the University of Leiden. The cell line originates from kidney cells taken

<sup>26</sup> Concerning the shingles vaccine, only the Zostavax is derived from human cell lines; Shingrix is not.

<sup>27</sup> The Charlotte Lozier Institute has a wonderfully helpful chart which is the source for my information here. See David Prentice, “Update: COVID-19 Vaccine Candidates and Abortion-Derived Cell Lines,” September 30, 2020, <https://lozierinstitute.org/update-covid-19-vaccine-candidates-and-abortion-derived-cell-lines/>; see also Christian Medical and Dental Association, “Courage in the Crisis: CMDA and Covid-19,” March 4, 2021, <https://cmda.org/coronavirus/>.

from a female child aborted around the year 1972. The abortion was not specifically performed to provide cells for research, but the cells were acquired after the fact. In 2001, Van der Elb commented on the source of the cells and said: “The fetus, as far as I can remember, was completely normal. Nothing was wrong. The reasons for the abortion were unknown to me. I probably knew it at the time, but it got lost, all this information.”<sup>28</sup>

The fetal kidney cells taken from the 1972 abortion have been transformed by introducing Adenovirus-5 DNA into their genome. This means certain strands of Adenovirus DNA were inserted into the kidney cells’ DNA.<sup>29</sup> As noted earlier, normal human cells can only replicate and divide a finite number of times, but the modified DNA in HEK293 allows these cells to replicate any apparently infinite number of times. HEK293 is now one of the most widely used cell lines around the world.

### PER.C6

The Janssen COVID-19 vaccine uses an abortion-derived fetal cell line known as PER.C6—an acronym that stands for “Primary Embryonic Retina Clone 6”—in the development, testing, and production phases. Also developed by Alex van der Eb’s team at the University of Leiden, this cell line was developed in 1995 from retinal cells taken from a child aborted in 1985. This abortion was not performed specifically to provide cells for research, but the cells were collected after the fact. Van der Eb described the original source of the cells, saying:

So I isolated retina from a fetus, from a healthy fetus as far as could be seen, of 18 weeks old. There was nothing special with the family history [and] the pregnancy was completely normal up to the 18 weeks, and it turned out to be a socially

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<sup>28</sup> Testimony of Alex van der Eb before United States Food and Drug Administration Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research meeting in Gaithersburg, MD, May 16, 2001, p. 81. [https://web.archive.org/web/20170516050447/https://www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/ac/01/transcripts/3750t1\\_01.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20170516050447/https://www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/ac/01/transcripts/3750t1_01.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> A portion of human adenovirus 5, nucleotides 1-4344, is integrated into chromosome 19 of the HEK cells. Washington State University, “HEK 293 Cell Lines,” <https://biosafety.wsu.edu/?s=HEK293>.

indicated abortus . . . and that was simply because the woman wanted to get rid of the fetus.<sup>30</sup>

The DNA in the PER.C6 line has also been modified to allow limitless reproduction. Pharmaceutical manufacturers like PER.C6 because it can be grown in huge 10,000 liter vats, allowing for large-scale production of vaccine components.<sup>31</sup>

To summarize, Janssen and AstraZeneca use abortion-derived human cell lines in all three production phases of their vaccine, but Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna used abortion-derived human cell lines only in the confirmatory lab tests phase.

### **Dispelling a Myth: Vaccines and Ongoing Abortions**

A persistent rumor claims infants are currently being aborted to manufacture vaccines. This is completely false. No ongoing abortions supply fetal cells for vaccine production.

One reason the myth gains credence is the fact that groups such as Planned Parenthood do provide fetal tissue for research and receive some money in return. In July 2015, the Center for Medical Progress, a pro-life group, released a series of undercover videos, one of which included Planned Parenthood's then-senior director for medical services, Dr. Deborah Nucatola, describing how she performs abortions in such a way that body parts and organs can later be used for research. The videos sparked tremendous controversy. Planned Parenthood insisted the videos were edited to misrepresent their actions and that women donate aborted fetal tissue voluntarily.<sup>32</sup> They did add, "In some instances, actual costs, such as the cost to transport tissue to leading research centers, are reimbursed, which is standard across the medical

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<sup>30</sup> Testimony of Alex van der Eb before United States Food and Drug Administration Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research meeting in Gaithersburg, MD, May 16, 2001, p. 91. [https://web.archive.org/web/20170516050447/https://www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/ac/01/transcripts/3750t1\\_01.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20170516050447/https://www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/ac/01/transcripts/3750t1_01.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Mark Reid, "This Professor Laid the Foundation for the Corona Vaccine," *Mare*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.mareonline.nl/en/science/this-professor-laid-the-foundation-for-the-corona-vaccine-and-trumps-medication/>.

<sup>32</sup> Planned Parenthood won a civil lawsuit against the Center for Medical Progress in November, 2019. Sabrina Tavernise, "Planned Parenthood Awarded \$2 Million in Lawsuit Over Secret Videos," *New York Times*, November 15, 2019.

field.”<sup>33</sup> Planned Parenthood is basically saying they do not violate federal law which says:

It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly acquire, receive, or otherwise transfer any human fetal tissue for valuable consideration if the transfer affects interstate commerce. . . . The term “valuable consideration” does not include reasonable payments associated with the transportation, implantation, processing, preservation, quality control, or storage of human fetal tissue.<sup>34</sup>

In other words, Planned Parenthood says they are reimbursed for costs only and do not view this as a profit-making scheme. Regardless of legality, to the average person, the idea that money is changing hands for fetal parts, even if merely to cover costs, makes plausible the idea that abortions are supplying ongoing material for vaccine production.

It is quite true, however, that researchers in different fields still receive new fetal material from recent abortions. For example, *Nature* published an article in December 2015 describing how researchers at UNC-Chapel Hill receive new fetal livers from abortions performed at 14–19 weeks gestation. The article described how researchers “carefully grind the liver, centrifuge it and then extract and purify liver- and blood-forming stem cells.”<sup>35</sup> Descriptions such as this are sometimes leveraged as evidence that these very processes are used in modern vaccine production, but this is not true. No further abortions are performed to perpetuate the cell lines used to manufacture vaccines. A robust pro-life stance will be clear and accurate in what it opposes. Our moral focus must be clear. We acknowledge that fetal tissue procured from current abortions is used in research and these are the types of

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<sup>33</sup> Planned Parenthood, “Statement from Eric Ferrero, Vice President of Communications, Planned Parenthood Federation of America,” July 14, 2015, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/statement-from-planned-parenthood-on-new-undercover-video>. The activists who produced the video were indicted and a criminal trial against them is moving forward in San Francisco. Planned Parenthood also won a civil suit against the group which is in appeal.

<sup>34</sup> 42 U.S. Code § 289g–2 - Prohibitions regarding human fetal tissue, A, “Purchase of Tissue,” and E.3, “Definitions.”

<sup>35</sup> Meredith Wadaman, “The Truth about Fetal Tissue Research,” *Nature* December 3, 2015, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-truth-about-fetal-tissue-research/>.

procedures that were used to produce the abortion-derived fetal cell lines now used in vaccine production. But we also must be clear that we understand no new abortions are being performed to provide new cells for the vaccines in question. No further abortions are required to keep the abortion-derived fetal cell lines multiplying.

The rumor that pharmaceutical companies continually use new aborted fetuses to produce vaccines is also possibly based on a misunderstanding of what it means to say human cell lines are used in the research or development of vaccines. Both HEK 293 and PER.C6 are called *immortalized cell lines*. The adjective *immortal* can be confusing, and leads some people to think the original cells from the aborted fetuses have been kept alive forever and are somehow present in a vaccine, but this is incorrect. Immortalized cell lines are cells that have been manipulated to multiply and divide indefinitely and thus can be cultured for long periods of time.<sup>36</sup> The current HEK293 and PER.C6 cell lines are significantly modified and innumerable generations distant from the cells originally cultured decades ago. There are extremely small, residual quantities of trace DNA from the original abortions in the cell lines, but this is quite different from the defective assertion that vaccines contain fetal parts. The cells used in the modern HEK293 and PER.C6 cell lines are not the same cells as those taken from the aborted children.<sup>37</sup>

### **Abortion-Derived Fetal Cell Lines and Complicity with Evil**

Evaluating possible moral complicity with evil is a healthy exercise for Christians. A disciple of Christ should be informed and strive to make decisions that honor the Lord. The choices we make matter, and it says something about our moral convictions when we ask penetrating questions about the source of vaccines. Christians do not want to further evil, so the question of vaccines developed from abortion-derived fetal cell lines is not one to be taken lightly.

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<sup>36</sup> Matt Carter and Jennifer C. Shieh, "Cell Culture Techniques," *Immortalized Cell Line, Guide to Research Techniques In Neuroscience*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2015): <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/neuroscience/immortalised-cell-line>.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher O. Tollefsen, "Vaccines, HEK293 Cells, and Cooperation with Evil: A Response to Michael Pakaluk," *The Public Discourse*, April 26, 2021, <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2021/04/75494/>.

Before moving forward, a working definition of the sanctity of human life will help shape the discussion. For Christians, the phrase *sanctity of human life* is a shorthand way of referring to the value God gives to all human life along with its inherent preciousness. The concept begins with an affirmation of the beauty and richness of biological human life itself.<sup>38</sup> The principle is fundamentally grounded in the creation of all humans in the image of God (Gen 1:26–28). The evaluation here assumes the sanctity of human life entails from conception to natural death. The right to life is the basis of all other human rights, natural and legal, and the foundation of a civilized society.<sup>39</sup>

When considering the sanctity of life, we must also consider the lives which can be saved by the vaccines. When we are vaccinated, we are protecting the lives of other people by helping prevent the spread of the deadly disease. Doing so also shows love for our neighbor (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39) by acting in a responsible way that helps lessen the possibility that we might inadvertently pass along a potentially-terminal disease. In this way, being vaccinated reflects a commitment to the sanctity of human life by preventing the infection of others. We must be clear that vaccination is a proven method to prevent disease. When we are vaccinated, we are protecting our neighbor and affirming our neighbor's value as a human. In a strange turn of events, because rubella can cause a pregnant mother to miscarry, the rubella vaccine itself helps prevent fetal deaths. Likewise, having COVID-19 while pregnant is associated with an increased risk for maternal death,<sup>40</sup> and thus taking a vaccine possibly produced from abortion-derived fetal cell lines can lower morbidity rates for the expectant mothers, which is a better outcome for children. At the same time, Christians with a deep concern for the sanctity of hu-

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<sup>38</sup> See Thomas A. Shannon, *An Introduction to Bioethics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Paulist, 1997), 46.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Wood, "Life, Sacredness of," *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. James F. Childress and John MacQuarrie (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 353.

<sup>40</sup> Jean Y. Ko, Carla L DeSisto, Regina M. Simeone, Sascha Ellington, Romeo R. Galang, Titilope Oduyebo, Suzanne M. Gilboa, Amy M. Lavery, Adi V. Gundlapalli, and Carrie K. Shapiro-Mendoza, "Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes, Maternal Complications, and Severe Illness Among US Delivery Hospitalizations With and Without a Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Diagnosis," *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 73, supplement 1 (July 15, 2021): S24–31.

man life are disturbed by the use of abortion-derived fetal cell lines in testing or producing vaccines.

The abortions which provided the fetal tissue for the development of WI-38, MRC-5, HEK293 and PER.C6 violate the sanctity of human life. The question now becomes a bit clearer: If a Christian affirms the sanctity of human life and the subsequent conclusion that elective abortions are illicit, is he or she complicit in the evil of abortion by using a vaccine developed from abortion-derived fetal cell lines? Does using the vaccines give tacit approval to or further the evil of abortion?

The categories of formal and material complicity with evil help us in answering these questions and living in a manner of moral integrity with a clear conscience before God. To begin, *cooperation with evil* refers to being involved with others in immoral activity. What are the necessary and sufficient conditions whereby one is complicit in the wrongdoing of another? Gregory Mellema, building on Thomas Aquinas, suggests the following: "An agent is complicit in the wrongdoing of another if and only if the agent contributes to the wrongdoing by way of commanding, counseling, consenting, flattering, receiving, participating, keeping silent, failing to prevent, or failing to denounce."<sup>41</sup> In Scripture, a clear example of cooperation with evil is the murder of innocent Naboth recorded in 1 Kings 21:1–16. In Queen Jezebel's wicked plan to get Naboth's vineyard for her pouting husband King Ahaz, she enlisted the help of two evil men who falsely accused Naboth of blaspheming God. These men were directly complicit in an evil scheme to have Naboth "legally" murdered via stoning.

*Formal Cooperation in Evil* takes place when the cooperator intends in his or her action to further the wrongdoing of the principal agent. Formal cooperation is always wrong, because it is not permissible intentionally to perform a morally evil act, even for a good end.<sup>42</sup> Formal cooperation arises when an individual shares in the intention or the action of another who does what is wrong.<sup>43</sup> In formal cooperation, the intention of the person coop-

<sup>41</sup> Gregory Mellema, *Complicity and Moral Accountability* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 16. He is summarizing Aquinas *Summa Theologica* II.II.62.7.

<sup>42</sup> M. Cathleen Kaveny, "Complicity with Evil," *Criterion* 20 (Autumn 2003): 24

<sup>43</sup> Edward J. Furton, "Vaccines Originating In Abortion," *Ethics and Medics* 24.3 (March 1999): 3.

erating enters right in with the intention of the malefactor; the cooperator and the malefactor have the same desire.<sup>44</sup> For example, if one served as a lookout for an assassin to help the killer shoot someone, then one has formally cooperated in the murder.

*Material Cooperation in Evil* is defined negatively; all cooperation that is not formal cooperation is by definition material cooperation. In other words, in the case of material cooperation, the cooperator foresees but does not intend that his or her action contributes to the wrongful action of another.<sup>45</sup> Material cooperation occurs when one who cooperates makes an essential contribution to the circumstances of a wrongdoer's act.<sup>46</sup> Material cooperation does not entail actual participation with the malefactor but, in some way, we are affirming the action itself. Material cooperation is often further divided into the subcategories of immediate versus mediate material cooperation, and proximate versus remote material cooperation. For example, if John robs a bank and Paul helps John pack the cash into a trunk of a car, Paul has materially cooperated in the evil of bank robbery in a very immediate manner. Paul is concurring with John's sin of stealing.

Using vaccines today developed from cell lines derived from fetuses aborted long ago is certainly not a case of formal complicity in evil. Modern vaccinees did not perform the abortions in question; pro-life vaccinees do not approve of the abortions and do not want any other abortions performed to derive such cell lines. We are not contributing in a *formal way*; we did not perform the abortion nor do we intend to further the wrongdoing of abortion.

But does using vaccines developed from cell lines derived from fetuses aborted long ago amount to material complicity with evil? This is a more challenging question. While there may be a stronger argument that using vaccines derived from fetal cell lines implies material complicity in evil, I do not think it is necessarily so. We are not contributing to the act of abortion, nor are we encouraging future abortions. We are not contributing to the circumstances of the evil acts of elective abortions which provided the material for these cell lines.

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<sup>44</sup> Kevin L. Flannery, S.J., *Cooperation with Evil: Thomistic Tools of Analysis* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 31.

<sup>45</sup> M. Cathleen Kaveny, "Complicity with Evil," 25.

<sup>46</sup> Edward J. Furton, "Vaccines Originating In Abortion," 3.



The distinction between *proximate* material cooperation and *remote* material cooperation is vital here. Someone who is *proximate* to the evil in question makes a direct contribution to the act that leads to the commission of the act. It seems difficult to see how taking vaccines produced from abortion-derived fetal cell lines makes direct contribution to the act of abortion, so a person taking the vaccine is not guilty of proximate material cooperation. Proximate material cooperation would have required potential vaccinees to have given direct approval to the abortions from which the cell lines are developed. Or, perhaps someone who provided a lab for the fetuses to be dissected would have been guilty of such proximate cooperation.

Remote material cooperation means one makes a contribution to an evil act but his or her contribution does not lead to the commission of the act; it is not closely connected to the evil act. I think when most Christians express concern about abortion-derived vaccines, they are expressing concern about remote material cooperation and want to avoid complicity in evil in even a manner which is far removed from the original acts of abortion. They feel using the vaccine contributes to the wrong-headed thinking of our culture that abortion is permissible, that the Christian himself or herself might tacitly be giving approval of the abortion, and in this way might promote additional evil acts of abortion. We should celebrate Christians who have a tender conscience in such matters. Certainly, we live in a day when, as the prophet Jeremiah said, "People don't even know how to be ashamed" (Jer 6:15), so it is refreshing when Christians are concerned about these matters. It is right to ask the question, "Am I participating in evil?"

Using the vaccines derived from abortion-derived fetal cell lines does not seem to rise to remote material cooperation. I do not see how taking the vaccine contributes to the acts of abortion from whence the cell lines are derived. The best case I can see that one could be guilty of material cooperation in evil in these cases is that using such vaccines gives tacit approval to abortion and joins me in participation with it. Such a stance is articulated by the Pontifical Academy for Life in their evaluation of vaccines connected to abortions. They argued "the use of vaccines whose production is connected with procured abortion constitutes at least a mediate remote passive material cooperation to the abortion, and an immediate passive material cooperation with regard to their market-

ing.” And yet, they concluded by saying in cases where no other vaccines were available and public health is at risk, “vaccines with moral problems pertaining to them may also be used on a temporary basis.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, though not preferable, Catholics could use such vaccines.

Catholic scholar Gregory Mallema has said, “When one person enables another to do harm, the person is almost certainly complicit in the wrongdoing of another. . . . What makes enabling harm important as a category of complicity in wrongdoing is that the actions of the enabler constitute a necessary condition of harms being produced by the actions of the principal actor.”<sup>48</sup> When we use vaccines produced from abortion-derived fetal cell lines, are we directly or inadvertently enabling the harm of abortion? It seems possible, but only if we keep silent and do not decry abortion. The principal actors here are the abortionists, researchers using ethically-tainted fetal cells, and the vaccine manufacturers. Pro-life Christians are not enablers and are not blandly saying, “Oh yes, any vaccine will do.” No, we plead for ethically pure vaccines.

Perhaps an illustration can help us think about vaccines, cooperation with evil, and abortion-derived fetal cell lines.<sup>49</sup> Imagine that an evil father attacks his three-year-old child. The injured child is rushed to an emergency room where the ambulance is met by the distraught mother, a woman who had not been present when the father flew into a rage. Despite the best efforts of medical personnel, the child dies. Several floors up at the same hospital is another three-year-old child needing a transplant of some sort, and the deceased child is an ideal match. No one would think the grieving mother would have sinned by donating her deceased child’s organs to save another child’s life. While this scenario is not exactly analogous to the elective abortions which provided the original fetal cells for the various cell lines, the cases are similar in that the original evil in both cases—killing an innocent child—cannot be undone. In neither case—killing of a child by a violent father and killing of a child via an abortionist—do we affirm the

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<sup>47</sup> Pontificia Academia Pro Vita, “Moral Reflections On Vaccines Prepared From Cells Derived From Aborted Human Foetuses,” June 9, 2005, <https://www.immunize.org/talking-about-vaccines/vaticandocument.htm>.

<sup>48</sup> Gregory Mallema, *Complicity and Moral Accountability*, 45.

<sup>49</sup> The type of illustration used here has been used by other pro-life groups and is hardly original with me.

evil act. But the child who received the transplant is not considered complicit in the evil act of murder. Likewise, I do not think taking a vaccine makes us complicit in the evil of abortion.

One possible weakness with the analogy proposed here is the fact our society currently says it is illegal for a violent father such as the one described here to kill his child, yet elective abortion is legal. In the first case, both believers and nonbelievers concur that act was morally illicit; in the second case, pro-life Christians assert elective abortion is illicit while most in the western world consider it licit. For pro-life Christians, both a preborn infant and a three-year-old child have the same moral standing, and the shared worth of both children is what makes the proposed analogy helpful.

Some pro-life Christians may object, “No reasonable parent hoping for a transplant could foresee a murdered child as a potential organ donor.” From this perspective, those anticipating organ transplants often hope to receive organs from donors who died at peace and without a violent hand, but in the case of abortion-derived fetal cell lines, there was complicity with abortion in the very process of doing the research. In response, it should be noted that those who developed the abortion-derived fetal cell lines insist they have not solicited pregnant women to have abortions for the specific purpose of supplying such cells. And it is the case that murdered people have served as organ donors.<sup>50</sup> But even if a pro-life Christian does not find the analogy completely compelling, one should make sure complicity is placed on the right people, and the Pontifical Academy for Life seems correct when they say, “The cooperation [with evil] is . . . more intense on the part of the authorities and national health systems that accept the use of the vaccines.”<sup>51</sup>

Someone else may reject the analogy of a murdered child serving as an organ donor by questioning the comparison of a sick child in imminent danger of immediate death as opposed to the possible danger to someone who does not receive a vaccine. A

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<sup>50</sup> For example, see the case of Scott Morin who was murdered and whose lungs were donated to save the life of the recipient. Jordan Fischer, “Homicide Victims Rarely Become Organ Donors: Scott Morin Was One of the Few.” WRTV, April 19, 2017, <https://www.wrtv.com/longform/homicide-victims-are-rarely-candidates-for-organ-donation-scott-morin-was-one-of-the-few>.

<sup>51</sup> Pontificia Academia Pro Vita, “Moral Reflections On Vaccines Prepared From Cells Derived From Aborted Human Foetuses,” June 9, 2005, <https://www.immunize.org/talking-about-vaccines/vaticandocument.htm>.

problem with this objection is the subtle implication that vaccines are not an effective way to save a life. But this objection is rooted in a poor understanding of vaccines' effectiveness. While granting that not every vaccine achieves the same level of efficacy, the science behind the methodology of vaccines is time-tested and replicated in countless cases. Vaccines do in fact save lives.

Others may reject the entire distinction between formal and material cooperation altogether. The concepts emerge from older debates within Roman Catholicism which many argued were too preoccupied with individual guilt in particular deeds and inspired a great deal of quibbling.<sup>52</sup> In her influential book *The Vaccine Race*, Meredith Wadman described the distinctions between formal and material cooperation as "arcane."<sup>53</sup> Some Christians consider such reasoning merely a form of casuistry, clever ways of developing arguments that relieve one of moral accountability.

We should be careful before discarding conceptual categories for considering complicity in evil; the Bible itself is very familiar with the challenge Christians face in this area. Paul's entire discussion about meat sacrificed to idols addresses the ethical stance the nascent Christian community should take within the urban society of the city of Corinth.<sup>54</sup> In that context, meat sacrificed to idols was ubiquitous, making it virtually impossible for Christians to avoid the dilemma. In his answer, Paul directs the Corinthians to consider the context and contemplate how their actions might affect a weaker believer (1 Cor 8:7–13). While the discussion of meat sacrificed to idols is not cited here to say that Paul had a fully-developed concept of formal versus material cooperation with evil, Paul is making some distinctions about the degree of complicity with evil in different situations. The categories of formal and material cooperation face the fact that in a complex world of sinful people, total detachment from evil is impossible and, in this way, the categories have enduring relevance.<sup>55</sup>

Is the argument that using vaccines produced from abortion-derived fetal cell lines does not entail material cooperation merely a religiously-minded ethical utilitarianism? Paul warns in Romans

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<sup>52</sup> Daniel C. Maguire, "Cooperation with Evil," *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, 129.

<sup>53</sup> Wadman, *The Vaccine Race*, 339.

<sup>54</sup> Joop F. M. Smit, "About the Idol Offerings": *Rhetoric, Social Context and Theology in of Paul's Discourse in First Corinthians 8:1–11:1* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 3.

<sup>55</sup> Maguire, "Cooperation with Evil," 129.

3:8, “And why not *say* (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), ‘Let us do evil that good may come?’ Their condemnation is just.” Without getting into a discussion about Paul’s opponents, it is clear the apostle forcefully rejects the idea that salvation by grace and Christian freedom grants the moral right of way for some twisted form of utilitarian thinking enabling us to justify any means by well-intended ends.<sup>56</sup> In this light, the entire point in the discussion about the vaccines in question is that Christians are not doing the evil act of aborting the child, nor do we condone it. Furthermore, no abortions are ongoing to produce the vaccines.<sup>57</sup>

On a personal note, two particular elements on this topic have emerged which cause me to have a more troubled reflection on the matter and frankly have heightened my concerns about the moral issues related to vaccines produced from abortion-derived fetal cell lines. First, while each of the cell lines addressed in this paper were developed from individual fetuses, the number of fetuses used to get to that final cell line is often downplayed. It is quite common to read summaries that stress individual cell lines were developed in each case from a single fetus aborted long ago and the abortion did not occur for the purpose of acquiring human cells. And yet, such summaries neglect to detail the research on other fetuses which allowed the perfection of skill to reach the final goal of a marketable cell line. For one example, Hayflick had already developed other human cell lines from aborted fetuses and co-published a major paper in 1961 in which he detailed his findings that human cell lines have a limited lifespan.<sup>58</sup> To prove his theory, Hayflick had used cells originating from 19 aborted fetuses<sup>59</sup> which he acquired from the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. It was this research that prepared the way for his development of the WI-38 cell line in 1962. Yes, each cell line itself comes from only one fetus, but the destruction of other fetus-

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<sup>56</sup> Plotkin himself made a sort of Utilitarian argument and said, “I am fond of saying that rubella vaccine has prevented thousands more abortions than ever have been prevented by Catholic religionists.” Meredith Wadman, “Cell Division,” *Nature* 498 (2013): 425; cited in Wadman, *Vaccine Race*, 333 n. 1.

<sup>57</sup> If, hypothetically, some vaccine was developed which required procurement of fresh human tissue from ongoing abortions, using such a vaccine would be material cooperation with evil.

<sup>58</sup> Hayflick and Moorhead, “The Serial Cultivation,” 585–621.

<sup>59</sup> Hayflick and Moorhead, “The Serial Cultivation,” 591.

es was involved in the process of learning how to perfect the method.

The second element which troubles me is the issue of informed consent on behalf of the abortive mothers. The Swedish woman whose child was used to start WI-38 was never asked for her consent. Meredith Wadman spoke with the mother in 2013 and she said, “They were doing this without my knowledge. That cannot be done today.”<sup>60</sup> While standards of informed consent have improved, cell lines still being used today were started without the abortive parent’s knowledge, and while these lines are profoundly helpful in vaccine production, they are also profoundly profitable.

Most crucially, the informed consent of the fetus was not sought nor considered. And as elective abortion continues unabated, it seems that fetal tissue research is a way to ease the troubled conscience of a nation, the thought being, “*Something* good has to come of this tragedy.” In this way fetal tissue research—and yes, vaccines derived from such research—becomes a fig leaf that covers the unseemly parts of compromised ethics in a medical community that supports abortion on demand.<sup>61</sup>

Let me be clear. I want modern science to give us human cell lines developed in ways that do not raise any concerns about the sanctity of human life. I am confident that smart people committed to moral excellence can achieve this goal. Fetal cells derived from miscarriages, cases of ectopic pregnancies, or perhaps even thyroid cells taken from neonates during heart surgery are at least possible sources. But to be frank, the pharmaceutical companies at present seem to have no interest in resolving the moral concerns of their fellow citizens who are pro-life. For example, a new rubella vaccine based on licit cell lines would require a new round of testing and approval, a time-consuming and expensive process. If a legal and effective vaccine is already available, there is no motivation to produce one from ethically pure cell lines. Pharmaceutical companies talk about the issue of abortion-derived fetal cell lines and vaccines as a *fait accompli* instead of something to be discussed and changed.<sup>62</sup> Because vaccines are a benefit for all people

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<sup>60</sup> Wadman, *The Vaccine Race*, 361.

<sup>61</sup> My wording here influenced by Paul Ramsey, *The Ethics of Fetal Research* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 49.

<sup>62</sup> One frustrating element for Christians with conscience concerns is that the rubella vaccine with its moral questions is given with two other vaccines—

and many people choose not to use them because of connections to abortion for some vaccines, developing such cell lines will, I think, encourage greater compliance with vaccinations and improve public health, a goal I share with my non-believing neighbors.

Moral debate regarding vaccines derived from abortion-derived fetal cell lines will continue to be with us for the foreseeable future. Many of our neighbors who have accepted the moral reasoning of a culture of death are mystified by our concerns. Even though this paper concludes that we are not materially cooperating with evil when using such vaccines, the intent is not to ignore the moral problem of procurement of the vaccines but to find a way forward as we use vaccines to save lives.

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mumps and measles—which do not have sanctity of life concerns associated with them.





## Heaven or *Halakha*: John 14:1–3 Re-Examined

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**Abstract:** John 14:1–3 is a passage often referenced to support the notion of “going to heaven.” Yet, Christ’s message in John 14:1–3 is one of exhortation, by which the Lord urges his followers to emulate his pattern of obedience. An analysis of significant Greek terms in the immediate context as well as the wider context of the Bible and Second Temple period literature suggests that “the Father’s house” is not a designation for heaven, but a reference to Jesus Christ as the new temple. Similarly, the “prepared place” is a reconceptualization of temple imagery, in which the preparation consists of Jesus’s obedience, crucifixion, and resurrection, which makes the presence of God accessible for all believers. As Christ walked in obedience to the Father, he modeled a new *halakha*—one based on personal, relational faith.

**Key Words:** John, *halakha*, heaven, temple, parousia, Father’s house, prepared place

### Introduction

The promise of a paradisaical dwelling in the afterlife is a hope most Christians embrace. One only need glance through traditional hymnals to encounter lines such as “In the mansions bright and blessed, He’ll prepare for us a place. When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be!”<sup>1</sup> However, the idea of an otherworldly heaven as the eternal dwelling place of redeemed believers has come under increasing scrutiny. J. Richard Middleton asserts that focusing expectations “on an otherworldly salvation has the potential to dissipate our resistance to societal evil and the dedication needed to work for the redemptive transformation of

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<sup>1</sup> *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: LifeWay Worship, 2008), 603.

this world.”<sup>2</sup> N. T. Wright similarly laments that many Christians have settled for a “truncated and distorted version” of the greatest of all biblical expectations.<sup>3</sup>

John 14:1–3 is a passage often referenced to support the notion of “going to heaven.” In the familiar pericope, John recounts Jesus’s encouraging words to the disciples just prior to his crucifixion:

<sup>1</sup> Do not let your hearts be troubled; believe in God, also believe in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father’s house there are many rooms; unless it were so, would I say to you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I should go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am also you will be. (John 14:1–3)<sup>4</sup>

For centuries, John’s words have engendered hope and excitement over the prospect of Christ’s final return. However, by focusing solely upon future events, believers may be missing a key emphasis of the passage.

In particular, Christ’s message in John 14:1–3 is one of exhortation by which the Lord urges his followers to emulate his pattern of obedience in order to gain deeper fellowship with the Father. A close examination of the Greek text of John 14:1–3 within the literary and historical contexts suggests that Christ is advocating a Christian reinterpretation of the traditional Jewish *halakha*.

### Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled

John 14 is a continuation of Jesus’s farewell discourse. In the first verse of the chapter, Jesus seeks to assuage the anxiety of the disciples in the face of his departure.<sup>5</sup> Jesus is already on his way to the Father, yet his greatest concern is the welfare of those who believe in him—those who must remain behind.<sup>6</sup> Jesus’s words in

<sup>2</sup> J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 221.

<sup>3</sup> N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 19.

<sup>4</sup> All Scriptures are translated by the author.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 618. Cf. Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 930; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 152.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, *John*, 581–82.

14:1 are uttered to “disciples who under substantial emotional pressure were on the brink of catastrophic failure.”<sup>7</sup> A primary purpose of chapter 14, therefore, is to reassure Jesus’s disciples that his death would not end their fellowship, but deepen the relationship.<sup>8</sup> Christ’s followers are urged not to worry because his departure is to their advantage.<sup>9</sup>

The exhortation not to let hearts be troubled (*tarassō*) may reflect OT usages, wherein God’s followers were commanded not to fear just prior to a great reward or victory.<sup>10</sup> A verbal link between John 14:1 and 12:27, *tarassō* also serves to remind hearers and readers that when Jesus’s heart was troubled, he focused on accomplishing the Father’s will through obedience.<sup>11</sup> By following Jesus’s injunction to have faith, the disciples engage in the same battle as Jesus himself. Jesus’s faithful obedience to the point of death is central to his victory over the world (John 12:31; 16:33).<sup>12</sup>

More than encouraging words, however, Jesus also provides an example of trusting the Father in the face of distress. Jesus’s words in John 14:1 delineate the way by which the disciples may calm their hearts: believe in God and believe in me (*pisteuete eis ton theon kai eis eme pisteuete*). The type of faith Jesus addresses “denotes personal relational trust”<sup>13</sup> as well as the idea of “firmness.”<sup>14</sup> To have faith in Christ means participating in the steadfastness of God. Moreover, the comforting words are not given in the general

<sup>7</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 487.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Stagg, “Farewell Discourses: John 13–17,” *RevExp* 62 (1965): 459–72.

<sup>9</sup> Carson, *John*, 488.

<sup>10</sup> Deut 1:21, 29; 20:1, 3; Josh 1:9; 2 Kgs 25:24; Isa 10:24; Gen 26:24; Jer 1:8; Köstenberger, *John*, 425.

<sup>11</sup> “Now my soul has become troubled (*tetaraktai*), and what shall I say? ‘Father, deliver me from this hour?’ No, for this purpose I came to this hour” (John 12:27).

<sup>12</sup> Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 347; James McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms: The Temple Theme of Jn. 14, 2–3*, AB 114 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988), 347.

<sup>13</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 425.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, *John*, 618.

sense of believing, but the more specific sense of trusting Christ about his departure and return.<sup>15</sup>

The promises of chapter 14 are made *only* to those who place faith in Jesus.<sup>16</sup> The ever-deepening faith of Christ's followers complements and parallels Jesus's work in drawing believers into deeper union with himself.<sup>17</sup> To anticipate the following discussion, the idea that faith is required to come to Jesus also indicates that faith in Christ is the way to the Father. If the disciples will internalize the experience of knowing Jesus, they will know the Father as well.<sup>18</sup>

### The Father's House

Many of the terms in John 14:2–3 are spatial terms used metaphorically and none more so than the imagery of a house. In fact, the controlling imagery for John 14:1–6 is that of “the Father's house” (*tē oikia tou patros*). *Oikia* has been variously interpreted as heaven, the presence of God, the heavenly temple, the Jerusalem Temple, the self-designation of the Johannine community, and the family of God. Mary L. Coloe vehemently defends a symbolic interpretation of “the Father's house,” arguing that heavenly interpretations “fail to give full weight to the figurative language of the verse and its context in a highly symbolic Gospel narrative.”<sup>19</sup> She argues that through temple imagery, the author of the Fourth Gospel interprets “the Father's house” as the Johannine community.<sup>20</sup> David Aune also favors the house-as-community option because early Christian communities typically met in homes.<sup>21</sup> Robert Gundry interprets the phrase similarly, although he sees a broader scope. He argues that *oikia* can be envisioned corporately

<sup>15</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 766.

<sup>16</sup> Fernando F. Segovia, “The Structure, *Tendenz*, and *Sitz im Leben* of John 13:31–14:31,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 471–93.

<sup>17</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 221.

<sup>18</sup> James M. Reese, “Literary Structure of Jn 13:31–14:31, 16:5–6, 16:33,” *CBQ* 34 (1972): 321–31.

<sup>19</sup> Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical), 157; cf. Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 32–33.

<sup>20</sup> Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 178.

<sup>21</sup> David Edward Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity*, SNT 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 130–31.

as in the spiritual house of God, i.e., the church. He further contends that *oikia* is a frequent New Testament (NT) metaphor for “the believer’s place in the domestic domain of God.”<sup>22</sup>

Alternately, Andreas J. Köstenberger favors viewing *tē oikia tou patros* as heaven, arguing that because Jesus established his followers as members of his Father’s household, they have access to his home as a final residence.<sup>23</sup> James McCaffrey postulates two levels of meaning, whereby the pre-resurrection identification of *oikia* is the Jerusalem Temple, and the post-resurrection identification is the heavenly temple. He suggests that the disciples, like Jesus, would journey through death to the heavenly temple to be reunited with him there. He contends, “there is no doubt that the Father’s house refers to the heavenly temple, not the Jerusalem temple; for Jesus travels there through his passion-death.”<sup>24</sup> A subset of interpreting the phrase as heaven is viewing *tē oikia tou patros* as the presence of God himself.<sup>25</sup> Such a view is promising and will be explored in conjunction with an analysis of temple imagery in John’s Gospel.

### Temple Imagery

Understanding the temple implications of John 14:2–3 is essential for a correct interpretation of *tē oikia tou patros*. Numerous scholars have contested a reference to the temple here, but several factors indicate that temple imagery must be considered.<sup>26</sup> First of

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<sup>22</sup> Robert H. Gundry, “In My Father’s House Are Many *Monai* (John 14:2),” *ZNW* 58 (1967): 68–72; cf. Mary E. Coloe, “Temple Imagery in John,” *Int* 63 (2009): 368–81.

<sup>23</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 426. Cf. Brown, *John*, 625; Michaels, *John*, 767; David Earl Holwerda, *The Holy Spirit and Eschatology in the Gospel of John: A Critique of Rudolf Bultmann’s Present Eschatology* (Kampen: Kok, 1959), 20; John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, trans. William Pringle, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 2:81; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC 36, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 249.

<sup>24</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 177.

<sup>25</sup> H. Leonard Pass, *The Glory of the Father: A Study in S. John XIII–XVII* (London: Mowbray, 1935), 66–68; G. H. C. MacGregor, *The Gospel of John*, MNTC (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), 305; Sandra Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 39, 129.

<sup>26</sup> Scholars who argue against a reference to the Jerusalem temple include the following: Holwerda, *Holy Spirit*; G. Fischer, *Die himmlischen Wohnungen: Un-*

all, the phrase *tē oikia tou patros mou* exhibits a clear link to the nearly identical *ton oikon tou patros mou* in John 2:16. The author likely repeats the phrase to recall the first usage, in which Jesus explicitly links the Father's house to the temple.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, *oikos* was a common term used to refer to the Jerusalem Temple in biblical and postbiblical Judaism.<sup>28</sup>

Thirdly, the Gospel of John took its final form during the decades following the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. Just as the Jewish people were beginning the process of redefining themselves, so were Christians defining their own identity. Both groups sought to understand the actions of God in recent history. With the destruction of the Temple, the Jewish people turned to Torah to replace what they had lost. "Around the same time," according to Coloe, "the Fourth Evangelist presents Jesus, not Torah, as the new temple."<sup>29</sup>

In John 2:19–21, the author expands upon Jesus's initial comments about his Father's house and identifies Jesus's body as the temple. Should such associations be carried forward into chapter 14? Coloe argues that they should. In referring to the temple as Jesus's body, John begins to move away from the "temple-as-building to something more personal and relational."<sup>30</sup>

The shift in terminology from chapter 2 to chapter 14 emphasizes the transition to a more relational form of dwelling.<sup>31</sup> In John 2:16–17, the evangelist makes use of the term *oikos*, which is used

*tersuchungen zu Joh. 14,2f*, EH 23 (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1975); R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Michaels, *John*, 767; Köstenberger, *John*, 426.

<sup>27</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 30. Cf. Luke 2:49.

<sup>28</sup> Isa 56:7; 60:7; Apoc. Ab. 10:12; Luke 2:49, 11:51; Mark 2:26; McCaffrey, *House*, 30; Keener, *John*, 932; Otto Michel, "oikos," *TDNT*; Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 73.

<sup>29</sup> Coloe, "Temple Imagery," 369; cf. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 1; Pass, *The Glory of the Father*; O. Schaefer, "Der Sinn der Rede Jesu von den vielen Wohnungen in seines Vaters Haause und von dem Weg zu ihm (Joh 14, 1–7)," *ZNW* 32 (1933): 210–17; Edmund P. Clowney, "The Final Temple," *WTJ* 35 (1973): 156–89.

<sup>30</sup> Coloe, "Temple Imagery," 365; *God Dwells with Us*, 161. Craig Blomberg also links *oikia* with the Jerusalem Temple. He argues that "John 14:2–3 probably draws on temple imagery. The temple was by far the most prominent multi-room house in Jewish thought." Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 198.

<sup>31</sup> Other familial language in John reinforces the relational nature of "the Father's house": *teknia* (1:12; 13:33); *ouk aphesō hymas orphanous* (14:18).

exclusively of physical dwellings. However, *oikia* used in John 14:2, bears a broader range of meaning. *Oikia* can be used of a building or a household comprised of people.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the usage in John 14:2 continues the movement toward understanding the “Father’s house” relationally.<sup>33</sup> More specifically, temple shifts to a single person, that is, Christ (John 2:21).<sup>34</sup> The new temple of Jesus’s body becomes the place where humans can approach God’s presence, as Jesus bridges the chasm between heaven and earth.

A primary component of God’s covenant promise with Israel was to dwell among his people, and prior to Christ, the temple was the primary means by which he fulfilled such a promise.<sup>35</sup> “Given that the emphasis in ch. 14 is on the *divine dwellings* with the believers, it is not surprising that this theology is introduced with an image that draws on Israel’s symbol of the divine presence in its midst—the temple, Israel’s House of YHWH, renamed as my Father’s house (2:16) and now as my Father’s household (14:2).”<sup>36</sup>

The imagery of house and home is evocative of sanctuary, peace, and rest, so naturally the house of God, the temple, was a place of security for Jewish people.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the inception of the eschatological temple was expected to usher in an age of peace and prosperity for all humanity. “The blessings of salvation reserved for the eschatological age are also inseparably linked with the Jerusalem temple as the gathering-place of the nations.”<sup>38</sup> The bringing together of God’s children through the work of Christ in John 14:1–3 may be for John the “beginning of realization of the promised eschatological unity of the people of God.”<sup>39</sup>

In John 7:37–39, the notion of Jesus’s body as temple does, indeed, bear eschatological implications.

<sup>32</sup> As a building: John 2:16–17; 11:31; 12:3; as a relational concept: John 4:53; 8:35. Cf. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 161; Gundry, “My Father’s House,” 71.

<sup>33</sup> Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 162.

<sup>34</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 130; Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Exod 25:8; 29:45; Lev 26:11–12 (tabernacle); Ezek 37:26–28.

<sup>36</sup> Coloe, “Temple Imagery,” 376.

<sup>37</sup> Ps 4:8[9]; Mic 4:4; Isa 36:16; 1 Macc 14:12; Carolyn Osiek, “Dwellings,” *BT* 53 (2015): 34–39.

<sup>38</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 60.

<sup>39</sup> Marinus de Jonge, *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God*, trans. John E. Steely, SBLBS 11 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977), 174.

<sup>37</sup> Now on the last day, the great *day* of the festival Jesus stood and shouted, saying “If anyone should thirst, let him come to me and drink.”<sup>38</sup> The one who believes in me, as the Scripture says, from his inward being will flow rivers of living water.”<sup>39</sup> But he said this concerning the Spirit that they were about to receive, those who trusted in him; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, for Jesus had not yet been glorified.

The link between the temple and “living water” is also attested in the Old Testament (OT).<sup>40</sup> In Ezek 47:1–12, the prophet describes the eschatological river that flows from the temple as a source of nourishment for the barren land.<sup>41</sup> “The prophecy of the ‘living water’ issuing from the eschatological temple (Ez 47,1–12), and the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to the temple (Ze 14,16–21), are thus both fulfilled in a remarkable way in our understanding of Jn 14,2–3, within its immediate context.”<sup>42</sup> Even more explicit, in Rev 22:1–2, the seer promises “a river of water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the lamb.” Just as living water flows from the temple in Ezek 47:1–12, the water flows from Christ himself in John 7:37 and Rev 22:1–2. Moreover, the Lamb is explicitly identified as the temple in Rev 21:22.

In the light of the Jewish association of God with the temple, the imagery of Jesus as the temple implies that he is a vessel for the life-giving presence of God. Because Christ embodies God himself, interpreters should find no problem with regarding Jesus as the human receptacle of God’s presence. Paradoxically, the tragic events in which the Temple of Jerusalem and the temple of Christ’s body were destroyed by the Romans made the outpouring of the Spirit possible. Jesus’s death ushered in an age in which the Jewish expectation for an eschatological temple was fulfilled through the pouring out of God’s presence, the Holy Spirit, upon believers.

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<sup>40</sup> Ps 36[35]:8–10; Zech 12:10; 13:1; God as source: Jer 2:13; 17:13; messianic benefits of: Zech 14:8; Ezek 47:1–12; Joel 4:18; Isa 43:19–20; 49:10; water and spirit: Isa 44:3.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ps 46[45]:4; Joel 4:18; Zech 14:8.

<sup>42</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 232.



## Many Rooms

The shift in understanding the Father's house from a heavenly locale to the presence of God in Christ entails a similar shift in the understanding of the meaning of the term *monē*, which has been variously interpreted as "rooms," "mansions," and "dwelling places." The term is rare in Greek literature, and appears only twice in the NT (John 14:2; 14:23). Due to the paucity of attestations, determining a precise meaning has presented interpreters a particular challenge. As a result, *monē* has undergone a storied history of interpretation. The Vulgate translation of the term as *mansiones* was intended to convey stations or resting places along the soul's journey to heaven.<sup>43</sup> Some modern translators render the Latin term literally, which is reflected in the ASV and the KJV as "mansions." Such a translation bears the connotation of a large, stately, luxurious home. If one interprets "the Father's house" as heaven or a heavenly temple, then understanding *monē* as a glorious future dwelling bears merit, or at least consideration. Accordingly, Friedrich Hauck interprets the *monē* of 14:2 as heavenly dwellings into which believers go after the earthly state.<sup>44</sup> Köstenberger similarly argues that "Jesus thus conveys to his followers a vision of future heavenly living that surpasses even that enjoyed by the most exalted ruler or wealthy person of that day."<sup>45</sup> However, the term warrants further investigation.

As the nominal form of the verb *menō*, *monē* should most likely be interpreted simply as a "dwelling."<sup>46</sup> Brown explains that interpreting *monē* in the light of its cognate μένω is in line with Johannine thought, as *menō* is "frequently used in John in reference to staying, remaining, or abiding with Jesus and with the Father."<sup>47</sup> Greek parallels in Josephus also support such an interpretation.

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<sup>43</sup> Jewish tradition does not provide any firm basis for interpreting *monē* as way stations or resting places on a journey; McCaffrey, *House*, 73. Cf. Brown, *John*, 619; Michaels, *John*, 767; Gundry, "My Father's House," 69; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 249; Köstenberger, *John*, 426; Carson, *John*, 489; Whitacre, *John*, 348; Stagg, "Farewell Discourses," 459–72.

<sup>44</sup> Friedrich Hauck, "*menō*," *TDNT*; R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel: A Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 275.

<sup>45</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 426.

<sup>46</sup> Carson, *John*, 489.

<sup>47</sup> Brown, *John*, 619; cf. Osiek, "Dwellings," 36.

The historian uses *monē* twice in *Antiquities*, in both cases to denote abiding-places.<sup>48</sup> The single attestation in the LXX is less clear. In 1 Macc 7:38, the antithetical parallelism may imply that the term is associated with “continued existence,” and indeed the NRSV interprets *monē* as such. However, “resting place” is also a valid option, as reflected in the NJB.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, based on inconclusive results from early sources, interpreting the term based upon its immediate context in John remains the safest option.

The theological import of the cognates *menō* and *monē* in John is noted by numerous scholars. Craig Keener points out that repeated uses of the verb throughout John indicate that the present experience of believers dwelling in God’s presence defines the use of *monē* in John 14:2.<sup>50</sup> Coloe, McCaffrey, and Gundry also argue for an interpretation that reflects a theology of mutual indwelling.<sup>51</sup> Gundry explains that the two uses of *monē* (John 14:2; 14:23) reflect a reciprocity between Jesus and his followers. “The plural form *μοναί* in verse 2 emphasizes the individuality of the places which all believers have in Christ. Inversely, the singular *monē* in verse 23 emphasizes that the Father and Jesus dwell in each disciple individually.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Coloe describes the dwelling as “a series of interpersonal relationships made possible because of the indwellings of the Father, Jesus, and the Paraclete with and in the believer.”<sup>53</sup> Although Hauck argues that a *monē* is a heavenly abode, he makes an apt point by describing the term as a permanent and indestructible dwelling wherein the believer is unified with God.<sup>54</sup> Stagg also makes a crucial point when he notes that *monē* desig-

<sup>48</sup> “And thus did Jonathan make his *abode* at Jerusalem” (*Ant.* 13.2.1); “and finding there a certain hollow cave, [Elijah] entered into it, and continued to make his *abode* in it” (*Ant.* 8.13.7).

<sup>49</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 65. Cf. NRSV: “Take vengeance on this man and on his army, and let them fall by the sword; remember their blasphemies, and let them *live* no longer.” NJB: “Take vengeance on this man and on his army, and let them fall by the sword; remember their blasphemies and give them no *respite*.” LXX: *poison ekdikēsēn en tō anthrōpō toutō kai en tē parembolē autou, kai pesetōsan en rhombaiā, mnēstheti tōn dysphemiōn autōn kai mē dōs autois monēn.*

<sup>50</sup> *Menō* is used 40 times in the Gospel of John; 3 times in chap. 14; 11 times in chap. 15; Keener, *John*, 935.

<sup>51</sup> Coloe, “Temple Imagery,” 374; McCaffrey, *House*, 33; Gundry, “My Father’s House,” 70.

<sup>52</sup> Gundry, “My Father’s House,” 70.

<sup>53</sup> Coloe, “Temple Imagery,” 376.

<sup>54</sup> Hauck, “*menō*,” TDNT.

nates a reciprocal indwelling that begins in life and remains unbroken by death.<sup>55</sup>

Before moving on, the notion of *monai pollai* should be addressed briefly. As Jesus sought to comfort his disciples, he likely desired to reassure them that there was enough room for each believer.<sup>56</sup> In both John 14:2 and 14:23, the salvation of the individual is in view, as opposed to universal or eschatological salvation.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, in the light of John 14:23, *pollai* should be interpreted as representing individual believers, who are the locus for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

### A Prepared Place

In the light of conclusions that have been established thus far, what precisely is the place that Jesus prepares? If the *monai* of the Father's house represent the co-abiding of God and believers, and the temple is Christ himself, the "place" would not appear to be a material, structural edifice. In the NT, the idea of preparing, *hetoimazō*, often indicates some type of spiritual action.<sup>59</sup> Most scholars agree that the preparation in John 14:2 refers to the redemption accomplished through Jesus's death and resurrection.<sup>60</sup> Not at odds with such a view is Augustine's suggestion that Jesus was referring to preparing believers as the vessels of God's presence.<sup>61</sup>

The language of a "prepared place" resonates with cultic imagery. The verb takes on profound theological significance in the LXX version of the OT, expressing "God's whole creative and conserving action in nature and in history," especially in prepara-

<sup>55</sup> Stagg, "Farewell Discourses," 465.

<sup>56</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 426; Brown, *John*, 625; McCaffrey, *House*, 74; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 533.

<sup>57</sup> Hauck, "*meno*," TDNT.

<sup>58</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 131.

<sup>59</sup> Matt 3:3; 25:34; Mark 1:3; Luke 1:17, 76; 2:31; 3:4; 12:47; 1 Cor 2:9; 2 Tim 2:21; Gundry, "My Father's House," 71.

<sup>60</sup> Gundry, "My Father's House," 71; Keener, *John*, 937; Brown, *John*, 627; Whitacre, *John*, 349; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 457.

<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 55–111*, trans. W. Rettig, FCPS (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 68.2.1–2.

tion of the promised land.<sup>62</sup> Similar terminology is also used of the ark of the covenant, rooms within the temple, and the temple itself.<sup>63</sup> In Micah 4:1 and Isaiah 2:2, the term describes the eschatological temple as the place prepared for the pilgrimage of all nations. Additionally, Jewish tradition presents the Messiah as the one who will prepare the eschatological temple.<sup>64</sup>

Along similar lines the noun “place,” *topos*, also carries cultic associations. For a seemingly generic term, a surprising preponderance of LXX attestations are used in a very precise manner. *Topos* frequently refers to the promised land, the temple, or the presence of God.<sup>65</sup> Indeed the “*place* where Yahweh has chosen to establish his name” is repeated 21 times in various forms throughout the OT, generally referring to the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>66</sup>

In the text of John, *topos* is used 17 times, usually in a literal, spatial sense.<sup>67</sup> However, “the fourth gospel also provides us with a highly technical use of the term *topos* to designate the Jerusalem temple.”<sup>68</sup> Therefore, exegetical precedent exists, both in the OT/LXX and the NT for interpreting *topos* in accordance with the idea of the land or temple/sanctuary. On a deeper level, the “place” may be regarded as the eschatological dwelling that Jesus the Messiah will prepare.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Exod 23:20; Deut 1:29–33; Ezek 20:6; McCaffrey, *House*, 88–89; Köstenberger, *John*, 427.

<sup>63</sup> Ark of covenant: 1 Chron 15:1–3; 12:2; 2 Chron 1:4; rooms in temple: 2 Chron 3:1; 31:11; the temple: Exod 15:17; Sir 47:13; 49:12; Wis 9:8; 2 Chron 8:16.

<sup>64</sup> Targum Zechariah 3:8; 6:12; Apoc. Ab. 29:17–19; McCaffrey, *House*, 91–99.

<sup>65</sup> Temple: Deut 12:11, 21; 14:24; Ezek 42:13; 46:19–20; 2 Macc 5:20; Ps 75:3; Dan 8:11; Land: Num 20:5; 32:1; Josh 1:3; Judg 18:10; Jdt 3:3; Bar 3:24; Ezek 45:4; Presence of God: Gen 28:17; Exod 3:5; 33:21; Josh 5:15; Isa 4:5; 33:21; 66:1; Zech 13:1.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Kgs 8:15; 11:36; 14:21; 2 Kgs 21:4, 7; McCaffrey, *House*, 98–100.

<sup>67</sup> Spatial: John 5:13; 6:10, 23; 10:40; 11:6, 30, 48; 14:2–3; 18:2; 19:13, 17, 20, 41; 20:7.

<sup>68</sup> John 4:20; 11:48; McCaffrey, *House*, 98; Coloe also sees a typological nuance to the use of *τόπος* in the Fourth Gospel. In Gen 22:3–14 the term occurs four times with reference to the place Abraham is asked to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:3, 4, 9, 14). In the Gospel of John, Jesus is taken to the place of the skull to be crucified (John 19:13, 17, 20); Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 165.

<sup>69</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 98; Other NT passages also refer to eschatological places that God prepares for his followers: Matt 20:23; 25:34; Heb 11:16.

In the light of such usages, the evolution of the phrase might be considered complete in regarding Jesus as the Messiah who “prepares” the eschatological “place,” i.e., his own body and those of his followers. In conjunction with “my Father’s house,” the phrase reveals a concern to reconceive temple imagery as the new household of God—the community of believers, which includes Christ himself.<sup>70</sup>

### Going and Coming

The references to departure and return in John 14:2–3 underlie the entire discourse (chaps. 13–17) as fundamental themes. The “going” and “coming” of Jesus is developed within the central section (chap. 14) in order to emphasize the importance of Jesus’s actions.<sup>71</sup> The majority of interpreters view the passage as Jesus’s explanation of his departure from the world. Segovia outlines six subtypes of this view.<sup>72</sup> (1) Jesus seeks to comfort his followers in the face of their sorrow.<sup>73</sup> (2) Jesus announces an eventual return to offset the sorrow over his impending death and emphasizes the impermanence of his departure.<sup>74</sup> (3) In a combination of (1) and (2), Jesus consoles his disciples with the promise of return.<sup>75</sup> (4) Jesus outlines a legacy for the disciples—belief in himself and love for one another—to enable them to overcome their distress. Such an option is typically regarded as an explanation for the failed Parousia expectation within the community.<sup>76</sup> (5) Similar to (4), Jesus

<sup>70</sup> Coloe, “Temple Imagery,” 377; McCaffrey, *House*, 119.

<sup>71</sup> Segovia, “Structure,” 477; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 403.

<sup>72</sup> Segovia, “Structure,” 473–74.

<sup>73</sup> Bernard, *John*, 530–31; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Last Discourse and Prayer of Our Lord: A Study of St. John XIV–XVII* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 3–4.

<sup>74</sup> Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel*, 259–72; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 403–6; Reese, “Literary Structure,” 321–25.

<sup>75</sup> Bover states that Jesus’s words in John 14:1–3 are like drops of balm on the troubled hearts of the disciples: “que serán gotas de bálsamo para su afligido corazón.” J. M. Bover, *Comentario al Sermón de la Cena*, 2d. ed., BAC 70 (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1955), 35–38.

<sup>76</sup> Brown, *John*, 624–28; D. Bruce Woll, “The Departure of ‘The Way’: The First Farewell Discourse in the Gospel of John,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 225–39; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 406; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 244; Brown, *John*, 626; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, trans. David Smith and G. A. Kon (London: Burns & Oats, 1982), 3:62.

focuses exclusively on love as the means for overcoming grief and distress.<sup>77</sup> (6) Jesus seeks to explain to his disciples that their union with him will never come to an end and only deepen with his departure.<sup>78</sup>

Considering points (2) and (3), the two millennia that have passed since Jesus's departure have rendered the idea of the Lord comforting his followers with a promise of imminent return questionable. Such a view is only tenable if one views Jesus's "return" as his brief post-resurrection appearance. However, the short time that was spent with the disciples would hardly have served to alleviate their sorrow over his departure, nor their well-founded apprehension over mounting persecution. If Jesus was understood to have promised an imminent, lasting, and possibly eschatological return, his disciples would have been sorely disappointed. Therefore, options (2) and (3) are less favorable. All other options bear merit, but (6) is most in keeping with the idea that Jesus's passion expedited a "perpetually effective" mutual indwelling between himself and his followers.<sup>79</sup>

### If I go

The verb used to describe Jesus's "going" is *poreuomai*. In the spatial sense, the term indicates movement from one place to another with the implication of continuity.<sup>80</sup> In the LXX, *poreuomai* is used for several Hebrew verbs, but primarily for *halak*. The literal sense of the Hebrew verb is "walking" or "journeying," but the moral sense of the term is also well attested and well known. In Deut 5:33a, Moses instructs, "You shall walk (*halak/poreuomai*) in every way which the Lord your God commands."<sup>81</sup> Other LXX usages include going to the temple (Ps 122[121]:1), exiting (Isa 52:12), entering (Num 14:38), and going to death (Job 10:21). In the NT, the verb is used to describe movements such as going home (Luke 5:24), going to the temple (Luke 2:41), and going to the next world (Acts 1:10–11; 1 Pet 3:19, 22). The moral connota-

<sup>77</sup> J. Schneider, "Die Abschiedsreden Jesu: Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Komposition von Johannes 13,1–17,26," in *Gott und die Götter: Festgabe für E. Fascher* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1958), 103–12.

<sup>78</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, TC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 168–69.

<sup>79</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 98–100; cf. Westcott, *John*, 168–69.

<sup>80</sup> Johannes Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, "poreuomai," L&N 15.10.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Ps 86[85]:11.

tion is also reflected in NT verses such as Luke 1:6: “And they were both righteous in the presence of God, walking blamelessly in all the commands and requirements of the Lord.”<sup>82</sup>

Specifically in regard to John 14, Jesus did physically depart after his resurrection. However, in the light of ethical overtones inherent in the idea of *halakha*, Jesus’s words in 14:2b might be interpreted more accurately as, “For I walk in obedience in order to prepare a place for you.”<sup>83</sup> Along such lines Jesus’s “going” not only reconciles believers with the Father, but provides the perfect model of obedience. The ethical interpretation accords well with McCaffrey’s classification of the usage as a “futuristic present,” which describes a journey in process, yet still in the future. McCaffrey explains, “All of these rich possibilities of the verb *poreuomai* in line with LXX and NT usage would help to explain the sudden (and unexpected) change from the use of *hypagō*” in chapter 13.<sup>84</sup>

Other nuances of Jesus’s departure also require expansion. The use of *poreuomai* may evoke the notion of the Exodus.<sup>85</sup> Whereas the unbelief of the Jewish people prevented them from entering the land that was prepared for them, the faith of Jesus’s followers will usher them into a new prepared place. The potential for danger in Jesus’s role also accords well with the OT/LXX usages.<sup>86</sup> Deuteronomy 1:30 reads, “The Lord your God who goes (*halak/poreuomai*) before you, he himself will fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes.” Along such lines the author of the Fourth Gospel may be presenting Jesus as a new leader who goes before his people for the purpose of liberation.

*Poreuomai* is linked also with the imagery of Jesus’s body-as-temple through the concept of a sacrificial act. In John 10:36, Jesus describes himself as the one “whom the Father sanctified and

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Acts 9:31; 1 Pet 4:3; 2 Pet 2:10; 3:3; Jude 11:16, 18.

<sup>83</sup> In Second Temple period Judaism, *halakha* became synonymous with Jewish law codes, particularly the oral law. *Halakbic* traditions were often attributed to particular teachers (e.g. *halakha le-Moshe mi-Sinai*), and older *halakha* were afforded more authority; Daniel Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine*, SBLDS 22 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975), 14–15. Today, the term refers to any matter of Jewish law; Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 153–57.

<sup>84</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 86–87.

<sup>85</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 86.

<sup>86</sup> Brown, *John*, 625.

sent into the world.” The use of *hagiazo* may be an allusion to the temple, as the same verb is used in the LXX of sanctifying the tabernacle, Solomon’s Temple, and the Second Temple.<sup>87</sup> Supporting such an interpretation is the broader context of John 10:22, which indicates that the Festival of the Dedication of the temple (Hanukkah) was taking place. Even more telling is Jesus’s description of himself as a willing sacrificial victim in John 10:17–18.<sup>88</sup> Jesus is both sanctuary and sacrifice as he prepares the way for believers to enter the presence of God.<sup>89</sup>

### I will come again

John never describes the departure of Jesus in isolation, but rather as part of the death, resurrection, and ascension process. The verb used to describe Jesus’s return is *erchomai*, one of the most common verbs in the NT.<sup>90</sup> McCaffrey argues that the term is used characteristically of the parousia.<sup>91</sup> However, *erchomai* is such a common verb that his argument lacks firm textual support. Other common proposals include the “return” as referring to (1) all of the returns of Christ, (2) the coming of the Paraclete, (3) the coming of Jesus to the disciples at the time of their deaths, and (4) the eschatological in-gathering of all nations to Christ.<sup>92</sup> With a less common view, Aune interprets Jesus’s return as “the recurring cultic ‘coming’ of Jesus in the form of a pneumatic or prophetic

<sup>87</sup> Tabernacle: Num 7:1; Exod 29:36, 43; Lev 8:11; Solomon’s Temple: 1 Kgs 8:64; 9:3; 2 Chron 7:7, 16, 20; Second Temple: 1 Macc 4:48.

<sup>88</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 233–35.

<sup>89</sup> Pss 15[14]; 24[23]:3–4.

<sup>90</sup> The verb appears 634 times in the NT and around 1200 times in the LXX; William D. Mounce, *Basis of Biblical Greek Grammar*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 400; McCaffrey, *House*, 110, n. 1.

<sup>91</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 40; cf. Holwerda, *Holy Spirit*, 84; Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 198; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 250; Köstenberger, *John*, 427; Francis J. Moloney, *Glory not Dishonor: Reading John 13–21* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 34; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 568; Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1984), 220; Whitacre, *John*, 348.

<sup>92</sup> (1) Westcott, *John*, 168; (2) Dodd, *Interpretation*, 395; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols., trans Kendrick Grobel (New York: Scribner, 1951), 2:57; Becker, “Abschiedsreden,” 222–28; Keener, *John*, 299; Schnackenberg, *Gospel*, 3:59; João Alves Santos, “Jesus e as Moradas na Casa do Pai: Interpretando *monai* em João 14,” *Fides Reformata* 16 (2011): 49–70; (3) Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel*, 275–76; (4) De Jonge, *Jesus*, 173–74.



*visio Christi* within the setting of worship ‘in the Spirit’ as celebrated by the Johannine community.”<sup>93</sup> Jesus’s return could also be viewed as his post-resurrection appearances, but few scholars favor this option.

The language used to describe Jesus’s return, *palin erchomai*, implies a future sense in both English and Greek.<sup>94</sup> The future tense of the proximate *paralēpsomai* reinforces the future sense of *erchomai*.<sup>95</sup> *Palin*, “again,” also expresses contrast, emphasizing the link between Jesus’s departure and return.<sup>96</sup> As such, many scholars read in John 14:2–3 a promise of Jesus’s future eschatological return.<sup>97</sup> Studied in isolation, the verses do appear to describe a future eschatological paradigm, in which Jesus returns to earth to gather his faithful followers and transport them to heaven. Within context, however, such an interpretation does not adequately convey the richness of the text.<sup>98</sup>

The distinction between past and future blurs in John 14, and careful readers will note an apparent contradiction in the text. In vv. 2, 19, and 28, Jesus goes away, while in vv. 3, 18, and 28 Jesus returns. Brown suggests that the disparity between past and future orientation is the result of various traditions being collected together from “various stages in the history of Johannine eschatological thought.”<sup>99</sup> De Jonge asserts, with Brown, that the difficulty in interpreting the passage is due to “diverse conceptions side by side,” which creates a contrast between past and future.<sup>100</sup> More specifically, many scholars contend that the passage represents a Johannine reinterpretation of failed parousia hopes. According to such a theory, vv. 1–3 outline the traditional view of the parousia, while the remainder of the chapter serves as the po-

<sup>93</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 129.

<sup>94</sup> *Erchomai* in the present tense but with a future sense is common in John (1:15, 30; 4:21, 23, 25, 28; 14:18, 28; 16:2, 13, 25); Beasley-Murray, *John*, 250.

<sup>95</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, 249–50.

<sup>96</sup> James Swanson, “*palin*,” *DBL* 4099; McCaffrey, *House*, 41, 194.

<sup>97</sup> Bernard, *John*, 535; Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 198; Holwerda, *Holy Spirit*, 84; Swete, *Last Discourse*, 10.

<sup>98</sup> Keener, *John*, 932; Brown, *John*, 626; Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 62.

<sup>99</sup> Brown, *John*, 603.

<sup>100</sup> De Jonge, *Jesus*, 188.

lemical reinterpretation.<sup>101</sup> However, George R. Beasley-Murray sagely notes that if the author intended a correction to parousia theology, he was largely unsuccessful “since the vast majority of Christians to this day haven’t so understood it.”<sup>102</sup>

Westcott provides a way forward with his proposal that 14:2–3 represents all forms of Jesus’s return: the resurrection, the parousia, the coming of the Spirit, and Jesus’s coming to believers at their time of death.<sup>103</sup> Even Brown concedes that the final redactor of John apparently saw no contradiction in the various eschatological positions he presented.<sup>104</sup> Nonetheless, Westcott’s approach can be refined further.

### Parousia and Paraclete

A second instance of *coming* is mentioned in John 14:16–18—that of the Paraclete. The coming of the Paraclete seems to be connected to the return of Christ in v. 3.<sup>105</sup> Reese regards the Paraclete sayings as later additions but asserts that through the Paraclete “believers are already receiving the living, indwelling source of love and wisdom by which they recognize and accomplish the Father’s will.”<sup>106</sup> The teaching on the Spirit is not simply an interpolation, but an explanation of how Jesus is fulfilling his promise to return to those who believe in him.

The promises of John 16 yield further insight into those of chapter 14. Whereas the message that Jesus conveys in 14 is a matter of debate, commentators generally agree that 16:5–14 describes the giving of the Spirit.<sup>107</sup> The strikingly similar terminology of *knowing* (*ginōskō*; 14:7; 16:3), *going* (*poreuomai*; *aperchomai*; 14:2; 16:7), *coming* (*erchomai*; 14:3, 6; 16:7), *believing* (*pisteuō*; 14:1; 16:9), and *seeing* (*theōreō*; 14:17; 16:10) creates a link that is difficult to deny. The condition John strives to describe is “the intimacy of rela-

<sup>101</sup> Segovia, “Structure,” 478; Becker, “Abschiedsreden,” 223–28; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 395–96; Brown, *John*, 627; Woll regards the pericope as an intentional juxtaposition of “two mutually exclusive traditions of succession.” Woll, “Departure,” 234.

<sup>102</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, 251.

<sup>103</sup> Westcott, *John*, 168.

<sup>104</sup> Brown, *John*, 603.

<sup>105</sup> De Jonge, *Jesus*, 173–74; McCaffrey, *House*, 219; Keener, *John*, 939; Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 155; Contra Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel*, 275–76.

<sup>106</sup> Reese, “Literary Structure,” 326.

<sup>107</sup> Bernard, *John*, 503–5; Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:57; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 395; Keener, *John*, 1029–32; Swete, *Last Discourse*, 122–28.

tionship desired by Jesus with believers, an intimacy even greater in the Spirit than the one possible when Jesus was still physically among his earthly followers.”<sup>108</sup>

Scholars such as Aune and Keener rightly emphasize the presence of the Spirit in the community of believers. However, too little credence is typically given to the possibility of two-fold coming. Gundry posits that Jesus’s return is actualized in both the resurrection appearances and the giving of the Spirit. He further proposes that the coming of the Paraclete prefigures the second coming of Christ.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, the initial manifestations set the precedent for Jesus’s future coming in the parousia.<sup>110</sup> The giving of the Spirit is not the final parousia of Jesus, only a prelude to the final return of Christ.

Numerous verses identify the Spirit as a “promise.” Second Corinthians 1:21–22 reads, “Now the one who confirms us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave the promise (*arrabôn*) of the Spirit in our hearts.”<sup>111</sup> Interestingly, the promissory term used here can be translated literally as “first installment,” implying that believers are awaiting a second, or final, installment to come.<sup>112</sup> Thus, a dual return of Jesus may be implicit in John.<sup>113</sup> The first installment consists of the giving of the Paraclete, while the second installment, Christ’s eschatological return, has yet to occur. Stagg aptly summarizes, “John’s eschatology allows for present realization and future consummation.”<sup>114</sup>

### When We All Get to Heaven?

The Greek phrase *kai paralempsomai hymas pros emauton, hina hopou eimi egō kai hymeis ēte* (John 14:3b), is often understood as Je-

<sup>108</sup> Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 155.

<sup>109</sup> Gundry, “My Father’s House,” 69.

<sup>110</sup> Segovia argues that the resurrection appearances of Christ are a temporary precedent for the more permanent indwelling of the spirit. “Structure,” 486, n. 47.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 5:5 (*arrabôn*); Eph 1:13 (*epangelia/sphragizō*); 4:30 (*sphragizō*).

<sup>112</sup> Louw and Nida, “*arrabon*,” *L&N* 57.170.

<sup>113</sup> Such an interpretation is supported by another example of double meaning in the same Gospel. The reference to the temple as Jesus’s body in John 2:19–21 validates the application of double meaning to chap. 14; McCaffrey, *House*, 76–79, 117.

<sup>114</sup> Stagg, “Farewell Discourses,” 465; cf. McCaffrey, *House*, 40.

Jesus's promise to return to earth, gather his followers, and transport them to heaven. However, a close examination of the text reveals that Jesus does not promise to take his followers anywhere at all, other than "to himself" (*pros emauton*).

The Greek phrase describing the action of receiving in 14:3b is *paralēpsomai hymas pros emauton*. The verb *paralambanō* is often translated as "to take along with," designating a spatial movement.<sup>115</sup> Yet, *paralambanō* is more accurately rendered as "to take to oneself," and when directed towards a personal object, "to take into a fellowship."<sup>116</sup> Gundry explains that the phrase "*paralēpsomai hymas pros emauton*" bears great depth of meaning in John 14, as believers receive the immediate, personal presence of Jesus, as opposed to a roomy, ethereal dwelling place.<sup>117</sup> Even McCaffrey, who sees a primarily spatial aspect to the phrase, concedes that the intimacy implied in *paralēpsomai* also has a spiritual sense in implying "a deep spiritual union between the believers and Jesus."<sup>118</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg asserts that *paralambanō* should be interpreted as "receiving into a house," which has obvious connections with the phrase "my Father's house."<sup>119</sup> Yet, if the Father's house is the presence of God in Christ, such an interpretation is wholly congruent with reading *paralēpsomai* as "I will receive you into my presence."

An examination of other attestations proves helpful. In the LXX, both literal and figurative usages of *paralambanō* can be identified. In Dan 5:31 (6:1; LXX), Darius metaphorically "receives/takes" the kingdom, whereas in Gen 45:17 Joseph is told to "bring" his household to Egypt.<sup>120</sup> The different usages do not prove that *paralambanō* in John 14:3 is figurative, but they do reveal that the term can be used metaphorically or spatially.<sup>121</sup>

Other Greek usages prove informative. Hellenistic Jewish culture regarded *paralambanein* as descriptive of the type of relation-

<sup>115</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 41; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 250.

<sup>116</sup> Gerhard Delling, "*paralambanō*," *TDNT*.

<sup>117</sup> Gundry, "My Father's House," 70.

<sup>118</sup> McCaffrey, *House*, 195.

<sup>119</sup> Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 63.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. 2 Macc 4:7; 10:11; Jer 30:17.

<sup>121</sup> McCaffrey lists numerous verses in which *paralambanō* is used in the sense "to take along with oneself" (Gen 22:3; 31:23; 45:18; 47:2; Num 22:4; 23:27; Jgs 9:43; 11:5; 1 Sam 17:57; Jer 39:7), but does not provide examples of any other type of usage.

ship in which a student is continually sustained by his teacher's impartation of religious tradition, like that of the *talmid* and his Rabbi.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, Plato describes the relationship between a student and a teacher as *paralambanōn* to *paradidous*, respectively.<sup>123</sup>

An examination of NT usages is helpful as well. While most instances of the term in the Gospels are spatial, Paul utilizes *paralambanō* exclusively in the sense of receiving Christ or his teachings in line with the *talmidim* tradition.<sup>124</sup> For example, in 1 Cor 15:1 Paul states, "I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received (*paralabete*), in which also you stand." The same type of usage is attested in John 1:11–12.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, based on the precedent in John 1, the usage in chapter 14 may be interpreted in keeping with *paralambanō* in the epistles.

One problem does remain with such an interpretation. In John 14:3, Jesus is the subject of the verb, i.e., the one receiving. If the receiving were in line with the Pauline/*talmidim* usages, one would expect the disciples to be the subject. However, in the light of the reciprocal action described in the chapter as a whole (and the surrounding passages), the idea of Jesus receiving the disciples into his own presence is not incongruent at all.<sup>126</sup> John 15:1–17 describes Christ's followers as the branches that abide in the vine. Presumably, Jesus's followers could not abide in him if he had not taken the initiative to first receive them into his presence. Even more telling, in John 12:32 Jesus explicitly states that "If I am lift-

<sup>122</sup> *Talmidim* were close pupils of a rabbi, as the disciples were of Jesus. The term is only attested once in the OT (1 Chron 25:8) and is likely a late evolution of the verb *lamad*. The Mishnah indicates that the relationship between the *talmidim* and rabbi was more important than family ties: "If his father and his teacher were each taken captive, he must first ransom his teacher and afterward ransom his father" (m. B. Meš 2:11). Jesus uttered statements along similar lines (Luke 9:60–62; 14:26; Matt 8:22–23; 10:37). Cf. Walter C. Kaiser, "tlmyd" TWOT.

<sup>123</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, 198b; Gerhard Dellling, "*paralambanō*," TDNT.

<sup>124</sup> Gospels: Matt 1:20, 24; 2:13–14, 20–21; 4:5, 8; 12:45; 17:1; 18:16; 20:17; 24:40; 24:41; 26:37; 27:27; Mark 4:36; 5:40; 7:4; 9:2; 10:32; 14:33; Luke 9:10, 28; 11:26; 17:34–35; 18:31; John 1:11; 14:3; 19:16; epistles: 1 Cor 11:23; 15:1, 3; Gal 1:9, 12; Phil 4:9; Col 2:6; 4:17; 1 Thess 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess 3:6; Heb 12:28.

<sup>125</sup> "He came to his own, but they did not receive (*parelabon*) him; but as many as received him (*elabon*), he gave the right to become children of God; to those who believe in his name."

<sup>126</sup> John 12:26, 32; 15:1–17; 17:24.

ed up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.” While the verse does not use *paralambanō*, the message is parallel.

The final assertion of 14:3, *hina hopou eimi egō kai hymeis ēte* (“in order that where I am also you might be”), also supports the idea of Jesus receiving his followers into his presence. Jesus is already in the Father’s house, i.e., in fellowship with God. The phrase, therefore, implies that Jesus will receive his disciples into their *monai*, which is the very presence of God. The double layered meaning established with the coming of Jesus is carried forward, such that the disciples will experience the presence of God initially through the Spirit, but later more fully when Christ returns bodily.

In John 14:4, the evangelist shines additional light on the phrase. The verse reads, “And you know the way where I go.”<sup>127</sup> Here, Jesus never explicitly states that the disciples know *where* he is going, only the *way*.<sup>128</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels postulates that if the disciples know the *way* (i.e. Jesus himself; John 14:6) their arrival at the correct destination is guaranteed.<sup>129</sup> The way is not an indicator of direction, but a commitment to follow Christ, in line with the stress on abiding in chapters 14–15, and the nuance of *halakha* in 14:2b. Jesus does not point the way, he *is* the way.<sup>130</sup> Further, in John 12:32, John reveals that Jesus’s way is through the cross. Middleton expands upon the concept, arguing that until the parousia “Christian discipleship will be cruciform, following the pattern of Christ’s life, and will therefore often be characterized by suffering and sacrifice.”<sup>131</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Textual variants indicate a possible longer ending to the verse: *kai ten hodon oidate*. Attested in in  $\mathfrak{P}^{66^*}$  A C<sup>3</sup> D  $\Delta$   $\Theta$   $\Psi$  and others. Metzger gives the shorter version a B rating and proposes that the variant is probably a copyist’s expansion upon the original text to smooth out the transition to v. 5. The variant does slightly modify the meaning of the text. The verse would read, “And you know where I go and you know the way.” Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2d. ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), 207; cf. Carson, *John*, 490.

<sup>128</sup> If the textual variant were proven to be the better option, the *where* that Jesus goes would be the cross.

<sup>129</sup> Michaels, *John*, 773.

<sup>130</sup> J. Lanier Burns, “John 14:1–27: The Comfort of God’s Presence,” *BibSac* 172 (2015): 299–315.

<sup>131</sup> Middleton, *New Heaven*, 221; cf. de Jonge, *Jesus*, 174.

### Conclusion

Christ's message in John 14:1–3 is one of exhortation, by which the Lord urges his followers to emulate his pattern of obedience in order to gain deeper fellowship with the Father. Rather than viewing the Father's house as a reference to heaven, the imagery of the house points to Jesus Christ as the new temple. Jesus is the locus of God's presence and the place where humanity encounters God. As such, the prepared place is a reconceptualization of temple imagery. The preparation is Jesus's obedience, crucifixion, and resurrection, which makes the place, i.e., the presence of God, accessible for believers.

Jesus's departure, rather than creating separation, provides greater access to God. The rooms within the Father's house are, thus, an indication of the reciprocal indwelling between Jesus and his followers, a union that is permanent, indestructible, and unbroken by death. The final return of Christ, already prefigured through the promise of the Holy Spirit, will one day consummate the fullness of God dwelling with his people.

In John 14, no indication is given that Jesus will return to collect his disciples and transport them to an otherworldly heaven. When Jesus receives believers to himself, he is drawing them into the presence of the Father, not transporting them to another realm. The departure and death of Jesus is the preparatory act that makes mutual indwelling between God and believers possible. In his going away, Jesus provides the perfect model of obedience, while at the same time reconciling believers to God through his sacrifice. As Christ walked in obedience to the Father, he modeled a new *halakha*—one that is based on personal, relational faith in the Father.





## A Credible Witness: A Pluriform Church in a Pluralist Culture

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Not long before his death, sociologist Peter Berger claimed, against the well-known thesis of Charles Taylor, “We don’t live in a secular age; *we live in a pluralist age.*”<sup>1</sup> While the first half of his thesis might be debated, the second half surely cannot be. The task of theology in general and ecclesiology in particular must meet our current pluralist moment and work toward answers to questions such as these: What does it mean for the church to “be the church” in this pluralist context? How should the church approach the reality of its existence in a pluralist culture? How now can the church most effectively bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ? My present burden is to work toward a possible answer to such questions. To do that I will argue that the pluriform character of a healthy local church witnesses with unique credibility to the reality of the triune God and his gospel in a pluralist culture. This thesis will be built in four steps.

First, I will briefly explore and broadly define the nature of various types of pluralities ultimately defining a “pluralist culture” in terms of what James Davison Hunter calls “the objective reality of dissimilarity.”<sup>2</sup> Second, I will contrast this pluralist vision with Oliver O’Donovan’s concept of pluriformity.<sup>3</sup> Third, this concept of pluriformity will be deployed ecclesologically. I will define the ontology of a local church as proclamation of the gospel and prac-

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<sup>1</sup> Peter L. Berger, “The Good of Religious Pluralism,” *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life*, 262 (April 2016): 40. Cf. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 202.

<sup>3</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 189–99.

tice of the sacraments, and the health of a local church as comprised of a regenerate and ethnically diverse membership, defining such a church as a “pluriform local church.” Fourth, I will explore such a pluriform local church’s witness about the triune God of the gospel in two modes, first to the spiritual powers cosmically in light of Ephesians 3:10, and second to a pluralist context culturally, engaging Richard Niebuhr’s typology for the relationship of Christ/church to culture, in which the pluriform local church exists both “for” and “against” the culture it inhabits.<sup>4</sup>

As I will make clear, I will not here argue or assume that this is the only mode of ecclesial faithfulness; rather, I propose that it might be one mode of such faithfulness in which the church might pursue unity in imitation of the unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit, so that the world might know that the Father sent the Son (John 17:20–23). In other words, the pluriform local church imitates the life of God *ad intra* in order to witness to the work of God *ad extra*—the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Exploring Plurality

Pluralism can be defined in a number of different ways. Metaphysical pluralism, against monism, teaches that there is an inherent many-ness to reality. Ideological religious pluralism argues that no “religion can advance any legitimate claim to superiority over any other religion.”<sup>5</sup> Some have claimed a Christian vision while also arguing along such lines.<sup>6</sup> Sociologically, Peter Berger has famously defined “two pluralisms. The first concerns the fact that many religions and worldviews coexist in the same society. . . . The second kind of pluralism involves the coexistence of the secu-

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<sup>4</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: HarperOne, 1951).

<sup>5</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 26.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., John Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995). Berger notes, “The suffix ‘-ism’ suggests an ideology rather than a simple fact, but I’m using the term in the descriptive sense” (“The Good of Religious Pluralism,” 40). Here Berger points to the work of Horace Kallen as an early proponent of pluralist ideology. E.g., Horace Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1998); idem, *Cultural Pluralism and the American Idea: An Essay in Social Philosophy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1956).

lar discourse with all of these religious discourses.”<sup>7</sup> Others, seeing obvious differences in political and social values, have argued for a form of what we might call “civic pluralism.”<sup>8</sup> The exploration of the intersection of the gospel and the church with these realities is an important one. That said, our definition of a “pluralist culture” will mainly work from what Hunter calls “the objective reality of dissimilarity.” Here Hunter means “the observable differences in dress, food, languages, beliefs, moral commitments, ways of organizing social relationships, and habits of daily life.”<sup>9</sup> Hunter is not alone here, for others before him have likewise called attention to this “fact of plurality.”<sup>10</sup>

Thirty years ago, Lesslie Newbigin could say that the reality of societal plurality was a “commonplace” in cultural analysis.<sup>11</sup> In American culture, we do not need to read this to believe it. We only need to go outside, whether among the Muslim population of Dearborn, Michigan,<sup>12</sup> to a city in Texas that is now the nation’s most ethnically diverse,<sup>13</sup> or to the increasingly multiethnic city of Birmingham.<sup>14</sup> Americans live in a context of “deep difference,” as John Inazu has pointed out, and “We also disagree over the nature

<sup>7</sup> Berger, “The Good of Religious Pluralism,” 40. See also Timothy Shah and Greg Forster, “Evangelicalism and the Two Pluralisms,” *Society* 53:2 (2016): 142–52.

<sup>8</sup> John D. Inazu, *Confident Pluralism: Surviving and Thriving through Deep Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); James W. Skillen, *Recharging the American Experiment: Principled Pluralism for Genuine Civic Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); Ted Turnau, “Speaking in a Broken Tongue: Postmodernism, Principled Pluralism, and the Rehabilitation of Public Moral Discourse,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 56:2 (1994): 345–77.

<sup>9</sup> Hunter, *To Change the World*, 202.

<sup>10</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 14. Carson calls this “empirical pluralism” (*The Gagging of God*, 13–16). Note also Niebuhr’s assertion that a form of pluralism is an essential feature of culture (*Christ and Culture*, 38).

<sup>11</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, 1. For a more recent appraisal of Newbigin see Scott W. Sunquist and Amos Yong, eds. *The Gospel and Pluralism Today: Reassessing Lesslie Newbigin in the 21st Century*, Missiological Engagements (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> “Exploring Dearborn, Michigan: Home to a Growing Muslim American Community,” <http://www.wxyz.com/muslim-american/exploring-dearborn-michigan-home-to-a-growing-muslim-american-community>.

<sup>13</sup> “How Houston has become the most diverse place in America,” Brittny Mejia, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-houston-diversity-2017-htmlstory.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Mathews and Park, *The Post-Racial Church*, 231.

of our disagreements, and over how much disagreement is a good thing.”<sup>15</sup> And this phenomenon is not just or even primarily an American one: many nations globally experience incredible cultural and ethnic diversity, and American diversity does not break the top 20 on this point.<sup>16</sup>

The current proposal does not aim to solve the issue of actual or ideological pluralism. Instead, I will work to offer one specific way for the church to live and move and have its being in an increasingly credible way in the current cultural moment. This way will be for the local church to (re)claim its pluriform character. Before going further, let me briefly note two points regarding scope and definitions. First, terms like “pluralism,” “pluralist culture,” “pluralist context,” and “pluralist moment” will be used synonymously but not technically; all will represent the broad understanding of the “objective reality of dissimilarity” staked out above. Second, the current aim will work mainly with North America in mind, though it may certainly have wider implications. In light of this understanding of “pluralism,” I will now work toward a definition of “pluriformity.”

### Defining Pluriformity

While some use the term “pluriform” as a virtual synonym for “diversity,”<sup>17</sup> I will define it in a very specific sense based on Oliver O’Donovan’s work in *Resurrection and Moral Order*. O’Donovan writes, “The *plurality* of situations and events which characterizes the experience of history, the fact that every event is ‘new’ and different from every other, can be seen as a *pluriformity* in the world-order.” In other words, underlying the very real diversity and newness of historical events is an equally real unity and “order.” Such pluriformity “is a capacity for different things to transpire and succeed one another within a total framework of intelligibility which allows for their generic relationships to be understood.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, difference does not dissolve into absolute diversity

<sup>15</sup> Inazu, *Confident Pluralism*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> “The most (and least) culturally diverse countries in the world,” Rich Morin, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/07/18/the-most-and-least-culturally-diverse-countries-in-the-world/>.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Martin Davie, “Doing Theology in a Pluriform Church,” *Amil* 21:1 (2004): 43–56.

<sup>18</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 189, emphasis original.

but is bound together coherently. These differences relate to one another “generically,” that is, by “genre” or “kind.”

Further on, O’Donovan illustrates this pluriformity with the Mosaic law, “consisting of ten commands in the Decalogue, six hundred and thirteen commands in the Pentateuch” and so on. He defines this multiplicity (e.g., ten) as necessary “because the moral field itself is specifically differentiated.”<sup>19</sup> The moral field is the vast array of moral options available to a moral subject,<sup>20</sup> so the law code must be pluriform to meet the demands of this vast array of options. And yet “the order of reality holds together a multitude of different kinds of moral action, and orders them without abolishing their differences.” This “order of reality” is an underlying coherence to things because of God’s creative and redemptive action. This “order also confers unity upon differentiation and complexity.”<sup>21</sup> Profound diversity exists within a profound unity, because of the “order of reality” instituted by the creator. Thus, there is to all reality an ordered unity-in-diversity, a pluriformity that can be understood.<sup>22</sup>

For a Christian theologian, this ordered unity and diversity makes intuitive sense in light of the grammar of trinitarian theology embedded in Scripture as defined in the broadly pro-Nicene tradition.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps with trepidation, we may say that the Creator

<sup>19</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 199.

<sup>20</sup> “The moral field is the world as it presents itself to us at any particular moment as the context and occasion of our next action” (O’Donovan, 191).

<sup>21</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 199.

<sup>22</sup> Bruce D. Baker comments regarding O’Donovan’s view of reality and moral order: “The moral order is there. Its ontological presence within the creation may be stated assuredly as a steadfast and unassailable doctrine of evangelical ethics” (“The Transformation of Persons and the Concept of Moral Order: A Study of the Evangelical Ethics of Oliver O’Donovan with Special Reference to the Barth-Brunner Debate,” [PhD Diss., University of St. Andrews, 2010], 29).

<sup>23</sup> Here I am accessing the work of many of the fourth century pro-Nicene fathers, along with the retrieval of those fathers by Lewis Ayres, Khaled Anatolios, Steven Holmes, Scott Swain, Fred Sanders, and others. To the point I’m making more directly, Kevin Vanhoozer notes, “The doctrine of the Trinity, with its dual emphasis on oneness and threeness as equally ultimate, contains unexpected and hitherto unexplored resources for dealing with the problems, and possibilities of contemporary pluralism” (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Introduction: The One-in-Three and the Many,” in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 1997), x.

himself is, according to this definition, “pluriform”—a real distinction of personal relations within total unicity.<sup>24</sup> If God is a Trinity, how could such a reality within the ordered creation he made surprise us?<sup>25</sup> That said, of course, the structure of reality is not obvious to the world or even always to the church. Matthew Arbo notes that the underlying pluriformity of the created order can only be apprehended by “wisdom,” which “transforms incomprehensible plurality into *comprehensible pluriformity*.”<sup>26</sup> The church’s current context, simultaneously in the crosshairs of cosmic, spiritual conflict and sometimes adrift in a pluralist world, calls for the display of the wisdom of the triune God. How can the church fulfill its vocation to display the wisdom of God to the powers (Eph 3:10)? And how can the church help the world “get a heart of wisdom” to see an inherent coherency to reality in the gracious revelation of the triune God in creation and redemption?<sup>27</sup> How can the church in its actions and existence point to-

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<sup>24</sup> I take the term “unicity” from Katherine Sonderegger’s strong appraisal of it in *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> Richard Lints addresses many of these themes in his new volume *Uncommon Unity: Wisdom for the Church in an Age of Division* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2022). Overall, Lints’s volume is clear and helpful. That said, his section on applying trinitarian theology to human unity and diversity blends apophaticism and agnosticism toward social/relational trinitarianism in a strange way (138–48). He shows admirable familiarity with the debate about relating human relationships to trinitarian relations, yet he remains agnostic about which side is correct. This move is somewhat unsurprising, given Lints’s appeal to apophatic “mystery” (see the work Sonderegger on this point). Yet Lints also surprisingly cites with seeming approval the social trinitarian project of Miroslav Volf (Miroslav Volf, “The Trinity Is Our Social Program”: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement,” *Modern Theology* 14:3 [1998]: 403–23; idem, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997]). The work of Volf has been strongly contested at this point (by myself included).

<sup>26</sup> Matthew Arbo, “Pluriformity and the Shape of Moral Experience,” <http://www.canonandculture.com/pluriformity-and-the-shape-of-moral-experience/>. See O’Donovan: “Wisdom is the perception that every novelty, in its own way, manifests the permanence and stability of the created order, so that, however astonishing and undreamt of it may be, it is not utterly incommensurable with what has gone before” (*Resurrection and Moral Order*, 189).

<sup>27</sup> “The created order is not self-evident, however. In keeping with orthodox Christianity, O’Donovan asserts that there are epistemological barriers to our knowledge of the created order and, therefore, what certainty we have about this order depends entirely on God’s self-disclosure” (David Hansen,

ward the heart of all reality—the triune God of the gospel of Jesus Christ? I will argue that the *polypoikilos* (“many-colored”) wisdom of God (Eph 3:10) is best displayed in ecclesial pluriformity.

### Ecclesial Pluriformity

As a classical Protestant, I define ecclesial ontology by the gospel and the sacraments, and as a Baptist Protestant I define ecclesial health (in part) by membership that is regenerate and ethnically diverse.<sup>28</sup> From here, I follow Miroslav Volf, who argues that the local church proleptically expresses the eschatological church, the church gathered around the throne of Jesus in Revelation 5 and 7. The eschatological church is comprehensively ethnically diverse—“a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language” (Rev 7:9).<sup>29</sup> It is also completely pure, “clothed in white robes” (Rev 7:9). Hebrews 12:22–23 explains that to enter the local church’s gathering is in some sense, to “come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God (the heavenly Jerusalem) . . . to the assembly of the firstborn whose names have been written in heaven.”<sup>30</sup> Thus the local church expresses in space and time the reality of the heavenly, eschatological congregation gathered around the throne of God.

This proleptic relationship of the local church to the heavenly/eschatological church implies both regenerate church membership and ethnic diversity in the local church. Both of these are a function of a local church’s health. The ontology of a local church as a church depends upon the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord’s Supper).<sup>31</sup> The membership of such a church will be most healthy

review of *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* by Oliver O’Donovan, *Theology Today* 45:1 [1988]: 117).

<sup>28</sup> Daniel T. Slavich, “In Church as it is in Heaven: An Argument for Regenerate and Ethnically Diverse Local Church Membership,” *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 16:1 (2017): 38–60. These next two paragraphs summarize my argument from this previous essay.

<sup>29</sup> Scriptural citations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the Christian Standard Bible.

<sup>30</sup> See William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 468; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Louisville: Presbyterian, 2012), 331.

<sup>31</sup> Jason G. Duesing, “A Denomination Always for the Church: Ecclesiological Distinctives as a Basis for Confessional Cooperation,” in *The SBC in the 21st*

when it is holy (regeneracy) and diverse (multiethnicity). Failures of local churches to attain to these ideals for their membership occur within the tension of inaugurated eschatology.<sup>32</sup> Regenerate membership is impossible to ensure, because no person ultimately knows the heart. Ethnic and socio-economic diversity is often constrained by the church's location in time and space.<sup>33</sup> A church's constraints, however, do not excuse local churches from seeking to ensure the regeneracy and diversity of their membership.

We may describe this kind of local church as "pluriform."<sup>34</sup> The church, as the community of the gospel, exists by the creative-redemptive act of the triune God, and it thus itself exists within the divinely given "order of reality." As O'Donovan writes, such an "order also confers unity upon differentiation and com-

*Century: Reflection, Renewal, and Recommitment*, ed. Jason K. Allen (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 120.

<sup>32</sup> See George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

<sup>33</sup> DeYoung, et al. give three exceptions to the multiethnic mandate in *United by Faith*: a genuine homogeneity in the community; language barriers; "first-generation immigrant groups" [Curtis Paul DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004),

143]. Woo adds a fourth exception: when pursuing ethnic diversity would destroy the church (Rodney Woo, *The Color of Church* [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009], 237, cited in David E. Stevens, *God's New Humanity: A Biblical Theology of Multiethnicity for the Church* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012], 237). Moreover, churches also need to reckon with the historic reasons *why* their communities may be homogeneous or segregated (e.g., Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009], 44).

<sup>34</sup> Note that a Kuyperian Reformed ecclesiology can speak of the pluriformity of the universal church, especially after the Protestant Reformation saw much splintering and factionalization. Abraham Kuyper discussed pluriformity as an idea relating to the universal church, especially after the Protestant Reformation saw much splintering and factionalization. See, e.g., Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 194–95; G. C. Berkouwer *The Church*, trans. James E. Davison, *Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 51–62; Ad de Bruijne, "'Colony of Heaven': Abraham Kuyper's Ecclesiology in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of Markets & Morality*, 17.2 (2014): 445–90. My proposal about intra-ecclesial pluriformity complements this vision of the inter-ecclesial pluriformity of the church catholic. There is potential here to explore the relationship between universal and local church pluriformity, but such discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.



plexity.”<sup>35</sup> O’Donovan explains that the order of created things has two categories or “two fundamental directions” given by God.<sup>36</sup> All things are “ordered vertically” or “teleologically” (*telos*) toward the Creator, to serve Him.<sup>37</sup> All creation is, likewise, ordered “horizontally” or “generically” (*genos*) according to “kind.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, various kinds of things are ordered teleologically toward other created things. This is seen, for example, in humanity’s “rule . . . which liberates other beings to be, to be in themselves, to be for others, to be for God.”<sup>39</sup> As creation is subject to humanity, it is likewise most fully itself and subject moreover to God Himself. Here we note again O’Donovan’s point that the pluriform coherence of diverse things and situations “allows for their generic relationships to be understood.”<sup>40</sup> These “generic relationships” are relationships according to “genre” or “kind,” meaning differences that exist within the same comprehensive and coherent category.

This provides explanatory help for this proposal. The pluriformity of an ethnically diverse local church reflects pointedly the redeemed and transformed eschatological “order of reality”<sup>41</sup> created and redeemed by the evangelical movement of the triune God *ad extra* and to the trans-generic reality of the inner unmoved movement of the life of God *ad intra*. Within this new order of created reality is the church—not merely a diverse group of saved sinners, but an entirely new, “chosen *genos*” (1 Pet 2:9)—a new “genre,” “kind,” or “race” of humanity, united with Christ, the new Adam. Mankind bears the image of the triune God (“Let us make man in our image”). Thus, the type of church that most evidently expresses this eschatological new human race and most evidently mirrors the reality of the Trinity is a pluriform local church.

Revelation 5 shows that this eschatological new human *genos* is ordered toward the Trinity in praise and loving adoration as its *telos*: “You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God”

<sup>35</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 199.

<sup>36</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 32.

<sup>37</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 31–32.

<sup>38</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 31.

<sup>39</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 38.

<sup>40</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 189.

<sup>41</sup> “The resurrection of Christ . . . vindicates the created order in this double sense: it redeems it and transforms it” (O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 152)

(Rev 5:10).<sup>42</sup> Likewise, this new humanity is ordered toward creation as ruler, re-crowned over creation as God originally intended: “They will reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10). This reign is eschatological and purchased by the blood of Christ. “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slaughtered, and you purchased people for God by your blood” (Rev 5:9). Perhaps this explains the why Paul casts the witness of the multiethnic church in cosmic terms in Ephesians 3:10: The multiethnic people of God, displaying the pluriform, many-colored wisdom of God, will rule the created order, in both its physical and spiritual facets.<sup>43</sup> As Ephesians 2:13–16 also shows, the reconciled new humanity—the eschatological pluriform church—could only be purchased by the bloody crucifixion of Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup> Biblically, the Father’s evangelical sending of the Son defines love (1 John 4:10). We can say that God is love (1 John 4:8) in this light. We know that the eternal, inward life of the triune God is love in the Father, Son, and Spirit because the historical, outward work of the triune God is love in the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the eternal counsel of his will, the triune God planned the purchase of the church’s birth through the gospel, accomplishing this through his work *ad extra* in time and assuring the church’s full maturity at the end of time. Thus, the church is the object of the triune God’s evangelical work of love *ad extra* and an analogous reflection of the life and love of God *ad intra*.

### The Witness of the Pluriform Church

The pluriform church witnesses of the triune God of the gospel in two modes, first to the spiritual powers cosmically and, second, to a pluralist context culturally. First, the church’s unity and diversity proclaims to the cosmic powers the pluriform wisdom of

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<sup>42</sup> See Osborne, *Revelation*, 258–61. Robert H. Mounce calls this “one of the greatest scenes of universal adoration anywhere recorded” (*The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed. New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 134). Mounce notes the destiny of the church as both rulers (“kingdom”) over creation and servants of God (“priests”) (*Revelation*, 136). On this theme more comprehensively, see G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> See Stevens, *God’s New Humanity*, 75–94, on ethnic strife as spiritual conflict.

<sup>44</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 383.

God:<sup>45</sup> “so that God’s multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens” (Eph 3:10). In the context of Ephesians 3 Paul explains his proclamatory calling. God gifted Paul with this calling and empowered him for it (3:7).<sup>46</sup> The verb is a divine passive— “this grace was given” (*edothē hē charis autē*).<sup>47</sup> Paul modifies this verb with two infinitives, which indicate two aspects of the gift of his calling. First, in 3:8, “to proclaim (*euangelisasthai*) to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of Christ.” One of the most shocking elements of the gospel for Paul relates intimately with the union of Jews and Gentiles into the covenant people.<sup>48</sup> His calling is to preach to Gentiles the fact that they can in union with Christ receive “every spiritual blessing in the heavens” (1:3) and the “immeasurable riches of [God’s] grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (2:7) along with the Jews. Second, in 3:9, Paul was gifted service for the gospel “to shed light [*phōtisaī*] for all about the administration of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.”<sup>49</sup> Here Paul shows that his mission was also non-discriminatory. Everyone needs this message that God is bringing every kind of person to himself in Christ. Through the blood of Jesus, God is bringing salvific redemption, forgiveness (1:7), and nearness (2:13), by grace through faith (2:8). Through the cross, the “only source of resolution of racial enmity,” God is reconciling both Jews and Gentiles, first to himself, then to one another (2:15).<sup>50</sup>

Paul explains the purpose of this calling: “so that God’s multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens” (3:10). The word modifying “wisdom” here is *polypoikilos*, which can be translated “many-colored.” The many-colored wisdom of God is displayed in the

<sup>45</sup> See Stevens, *God’s New Humanity*, 189.

<sup>46</sup> See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 449–53.

<sup>47</sup> See Mathews and Park, *The Post-Racial Church*, 206.

<sup>48</sup> Contra Hoehner, who argues, “Care must be taken not to make Gentile believers a part of Israel. There is a delicate balance between what applies specifically to the nation Israel and what applies to the church” (*Ephesians*, 447).

<sup>49</sup> Mary Catherine Berglund, “Ephesians 3:1–12,” *Interpretation* 58.1 (2004): 65–67: “when the author of Ephesians speaks of bringing light regarding God’s mystery (3:9), he employs the same Greek root (*phōtizō*) as found in the LXX of Isa 60:1” (67).

<sup>50</sup> Mathews and Park, *The Post-Racial Church*, 179.

many-colored and many-cultured unity and diversity of the multiethnic church. God displays his wisdom through the multiethnic church, and Jesus exercises his kingship and the fullness of his power and authority and dominion “in” or “by the church” (*τῆ ἐκκλησία*),<sup>51</sup> which is “the body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way” (1:23). Thus God exercises and displays the authority of Christ “in” or “by” the multiethnic assembly of Christ.<sup>52</sup> The witness of the multiethnic church has cosmic, spiritual influence, because it reflects the glory of the triune God and the gospel in a unique way. The same is true of the church’s witness in its second mode, to a pluralist culture.

In a second mode, this pluriform church witnesses to its cultural context.<sup>53</sup> Here I will deploy Niebuhr’s typology of the relationship of Christ to culture as a helpful way to categorize the discussion.<sup>54</sup> In this light, the pluriform church witnesses both against and for a pluralist culture.<sup>55</sup> Here the pluriform church occupies Niebuhr’s “Christ against culture” and “Christ the transformer of culture” typologies.<sup>56</sup> In its testifying both against and for the culture, the character of the church’s witness is threefold: evangelical, prophetic, and public. First, it is evangelical as it exists as a new order of creation inaugurated in the missions of the Son and the Spirit. Second, this evangelical witness is likewise prophetic in its speaking and living toward the reality of God and His

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<sup>51</sup> Hoehner renders it “to the church . . . Christ’s relationship to the universal church” (*Ephesians*, 287).

<sup>52</sup> See Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994): “The church is in the dative case, and it can be taken as (1) the indirect object, ‘God gave Christ to the church,’ or (2) the beneficiary of the action, ‘for the church’” (37).

<sup>53</sup> “The church as a spiritual entity on earth is not known to the secular world only for its proclamation of racial unity but also for its *practices* of reconciliation and integration for all races” (Mathews and Park, *The Post-Racial Church*, 212).

<sup>54</sup> D. A. Carson offers trenchant critique of Niebuhr saying that “as influential as it has been in the past, Niebuhr’s fivefold typology now seems parochial” (Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 201).

<sup>55</sup> On the church “for” and “against” the world (“*Contra mundum pro mundo*”), see Owen Strachan, *The Colson Way: Loving Your Neighbor and Living with Faith in a Hostile World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 180.

<sup>56</sup> The legitimacy of extending the typology of the relationship between “Christ and culture” to “church and culture” is seen in biblical metaphors that express the church as the body of Christ indwelt by the Spirit of Christ (e.g., 1 Cor 12, among others).

past-present-and-future work in the world.<sup>57</sup> Third, it is public, because publicity is a function of both the gospel and prophetic testimony to it.<sup>58</sup>

Here let me clarify that the argument that a pluriform church is a uniquely credible witness in a pluralist culture does not mean that a “non-pluriform” church is not a credible witness. It instead argues that insofar as the pluriform church more fully displays the eschatological reality of the church and the true ontology of God, it witnesses with unique credibility. “Witness” is defined as the prophetic publication of the gospel of Jesus Christ. “Unique” contrasts the pluriform church with churches that have abandoned the gospel, thus rendering a claim to unity eschatologically fruitless. It also contrasts, though much less starkly, with churches that preach the gospel yet have denied the importance of either regeneracy or multiethnicity, or both. “Credibility” has to do with “belief.” Edward E. Baptist, in his work on slavery in American history, discusses the history of “credit.” Credit comes from the Latin *credere* which means, “to believe.”<sup>59</sup> Credibility has to do with “believability,” with providing a “plausibility structure” for the gospel in a diverse, pluralist culture.<sup>60</sup> On this point Hunter explains, “As a community and an institution, the church is a plausibility structure and the only one with the resources capable of offering an alternative formation to that offered by popular culture.”<sup>61</sup> Every true church inherently provides the framework for the believabil-

<sup>57</sup> See Russell D. Moore, *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* (Nashville: B&H, 2015) and his conception of the church “as a prophetic minority” (35).

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., Gerrit Scott Dawson’s exposition of “the ascension as public truth” (*Jesus Ascended: The Meaning of Christ’s Continuing Incarnation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 29–52. Here he notes, Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

<sup>59</sup> Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of the American South* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 90, 223.

<sup>60</sup> “Every society depends for its coherence upon a set of what Peter Berger calls ‘plausibility structures,’ patterns of belief and practice accepted within a given society, which determine which beliefs are plausible to its members and which are not” (Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Plurality Society*, 8–9). See Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967).

<sup>61</sup> Hunter, *To Change the World*, 282–83.

ity/plausibility of the one true gospel.<sup>62</sup> That said, the pluriform church is uniquely positioned to more fully cultivate a framework for this believability/plausibility in a pluralist context, “a type of ‘dynamic equivalence’ translation of the essence of the gospel” and the acting and being of the triune God.<sup>63</sup> The pluriform church cultivates this plausibility in two ways.

First, the pluriform church witnesses *against* its pluralist context. Niebuhr notes that the vision of “Christ against culture” was exemplified, in part, in the early church seeing itself as “a new people, a third ‘race’ beside Jews and Gentiles.”<sup>64</sup> Thus the pluriform church testifies prophetically and publicly not just *to* the culture but at times *against* the culture.<sup>65</sup> Newbigin writes, “The Church . . . as the bearer of the gospel, inhabits a plausibility structure which is at variance with, and which calls in question, those that govern all human cultures without exception.”<sup>66</sup> This is pointedly true for the pluriform church. It witnesses that plurality is certainly, objectively a reality in a pluralist context, but it is not the only reality. While some celebrate pluralism as an “ideology,”<sup>67</sup> the mere reality of its existence may lead to the conclusion that such plurality cannot be resolved.<sup>68</sup> Hunter comes close to this, for example, when he says, “An irresolvable and unstable pluralism—the collision and conflict of competing cultures—is and will remain a fundamental and perhaps permanent feature of the contemporary social

<sup>62</sup> “A plausibility structure is not just a body of ideas but is necessarily embodied in an actual community. It cannot exist otherwise. In this case the community is that company of people who have been chosen and called by God in continuity with those who have gone before from the very beginning of the story” (Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 99).

<sup>63</sup> Stevens, *God’s New Humanity*, 243.

<sup>64</sup> Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 49. See pp. 49–79 for Niebuhr’s “Christ against culture” typology.

<sup>65</sup> Neither posture, of course, means to deny that the church always exists in culture. “The church must never deceive itself to think the culture is somehow ‘out there’ in people outside the church” (George R. Hunsberger, *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin’s Theology of Cultural Plurality* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 279).

<sup>66</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Culture*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Culture*, 14.

<sup>68</sup> “Today the central question is how unity and diversity can coexist” (Paul Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 251).

world, both here in America and in the world.”<sup>69</sup> Ironically, this pluralist vision might also lead to a retreat into larger or smaller pockets of homogeneous tribes.<sup>70</sup> As the trinitarian theology of Nicene faith speaks a “No” to tritheism, Sabellianism, or Arianism, the pluriform church speaks a “No” to any vision of boundless pluralism (or any corresponding retreat into homogeneity, or even bigotry).<sup>71</sup> In this, the pluriform church is a set-part and beloved community lamenting in the wilderness of the world, calling to the pluralist culture, “Repent!”

Second, the pluriform church points toward and may at times modestly effect the transformation of culture.<sup>72</sup> In this sense it is not just pessimistically against the culture, but also optimistically for it.<sup>73</sup> It verbally and visibly celebrates—not the whole, but in part—the pluralist culture’s joy, approval, and “cherishing” of the goods of creation, including the beauty of diversity.<sup>74</sup> The pluriform church affirms many elements of such beautiful diversity,

<sup>69</sup> Hunter, *To Change the World*, 202. Note also Hiebert, “One thing is increasingly clear: the world is not moving toward a greater homogenization” (*Transforming Worldviews*, 249).

<sup>70</sup> See, e.g., Hiebert on “localization” and “regionalization” in response to “globalization” (*Transforming Worldviews*, 242–51).

<sup>71</sup> I believe the grammar pro-Nicene theology allows for ethnic unity in diversity functioning as a legitimate analogy of the immanent life of the triune God. If this is the case, it will allow for an exploration of ways in which this ethnic unity in diversity may operate as a mode of ecclesial worship and witness to the life of God and His gospel, using a trinitarian ecclesial analogy to develop a typology of insufficient modes of ethnic unity in diversity in light of historic, trinitarian error. In my thought, this typology envisions colorblind theology as “ecclesial Sabellianism,” assimilation, favoritism, and colonization as “ecclesial Arianism,” and the homogeneous unit principle as “ecclesial tritheism.”

<sup>72</sup> See Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 190–229. Along this line, Michael R. Allen says, “We must go beyond Brueggemann and Hauerwas to a theology with greater appreciation for ‘Christ the Transformer of Culture’ as well as ‘Christ Against Culture’” (“Theological Politics and the Davidic Monarchy: Three Examples of Theological Exegesis,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 30.2 [2008]: 159).

<sup>73</sup> On the optimism of this view, see Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 191. See also Volf’s exposition of 1 Peter: “The community was to live an alternative way of life in the present social setting, transforming it, as it could, from within. In any case, the community did not seek to exert social or political pressure, but to give public witness to a new way of life” (“Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation Between Church and Culture in 1 Peter,” *Ex Auditu* 10 [1994]: 20).

<sup>74</sup> See D. A. Carson on “celebration” as part of “cherished pluralism” (*The Gaggling of God*, 18, quoting Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 1).

and in transformative love for its culture declares a message and demonstrates in a visibly diverse family of faith “an even better way” (1 Cor 12:31). This is the way not of the cacophony of naked plurality and diversity, nor the flat notes of tribal homogeneity, but the more beautiful harmony of a pluriform unity and diversity. In this, the pluriform church is a beloved community in the world celebrating and calling a pluralist culture to believe in a yet more excellent way.

Here the church’s twin vocations of being both against and for the pluralist culture mutually chasten one another. In her vocation “against” a pluralist context, this church holds her hands to her mouth and loudly warns, “Not that way!” And in her vocation “for” a pluralist context, she pleads, “This way instead!” The first is a call to repentance and the second is a call to faith. Thus the pluriform church summons the world with Christ, “This kingdom is here. Repent and believe in the gospel.”

In this call to repent and believe the church embodies prophetically and publicly “God’s multi-faceted wisdom” (Eph 3:10), thus testifying to the powers and cultivating within its pluralist context credibility for that context to be made wise unto salvation and brought into communion with the triune God in the gospel. Here the church declares and demonstrates the eternal—past, present, future—reality of the triune God who is revealed in the gospel. First, it points to the past of a good and pluriform creation, to rebellion that became manifest in, for example, Cain and Babel. It proclaims the historical reality of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It proclaims by analogy the inner, eternal life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in perfect identity and distinction.

All of this allows the church to point credibly in the present to the reality of God and his reconciling work in Christ. Counterintuitively, this may happen by embrace of marginalization and smallness.<sup>75</sup> Refusing to covenant with the unconverted in membership or to pursue the fast-track growth of homogeneity, the pluriform church eschews a triumphalist theology of glory.<sup>76</sup> It embraces a

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<sup>75</sup> E.g., Mark Chapman, “The Common Good, Pluralism and the Small Church” *Political Theology* 16.1 (2015): 61–77: “The theology of small church means that the local church cannot let somebody else do the work of the church, simply because there is nobody else.” (74).

<sup>76</sup> See Carson’s point about “the extraordinarily rapid decline of Christian influence in the government and culture in the Netherlands” flowing from “the



present theology of the cross, knowing that crucifixion and burial must precede resurrection, pointing toward that cross as the means of reconciliation.<sup>77</sup> While this specific expression of conformity may be foolishness to some, to others it reveals the wisdom of the triune God to the peoples and the powers, who may be more threatened by a reconciled church than a large, homogeneous church. The pluriform church, thus, evangelizes the lost into eternal salvation in the context of a community of reconciled diversity, a community shaped like the gospel and the God about which it speaks. The church practices justice toward those on the margins, because some of its members are those on the margins.<sup>78</sup>

A pluriform church shows a pluralist context a way beyond animus, ambivalence, or apathy amid diversity. Inazu, for example, notes a study by Robert Putnam which offers a “critique of ‘the optimistic hypothesis that if we have more contact with people of other ethnic and racial backgrounds . . . we will all begin to trust one another more.’”<sup>79</sup> This “optimistic hypothesis,” however, has not often proven itself true. Instead, proximity tends to breed animosity.<sup>80</sup> Into such reality, the pluriform church testifies to a better way, a way of love and reconciled unity. Here deeply diverse members share a union with Christ that is even deeper than their diversity and mutual love that is even deeper than their natural animosity. They are the people of the triune God. The pluriform church proclaims, lives, and may be used of God to reconcile to

heavy emphasis within Kuyperianism on presumptive regeneration” (*Christ and Culture Revisited*, 216). Carson here also footnotes some Presbyterian works arguing for presumptive regeneration (216, n. 25). This, thus, undergirds part of my point in “In Church as it is in Heaven” (and if only tangentially here) that a Baptist ecclesiology holds unique promise in our present cultural moment.

<sup>77</sup> Mathews and Park, *The Post-Racial Church*, 179.

<sup>78</sup> “We are not so much focused on building bridges to the community; we are the community!” (Mark DeYmaz and Harry Li, *Leading a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Seven Common Challenges and How to Overcome Them* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 93).

<sup>79</sup> Robert D. Putnam, “E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community the Twenty-first Century,” *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30.2 (2007): 141, quoted in Inazu, *Confident Pluralism*, 118.

<sup>80</sup> Putnam, “E Pluribus Unum,” 142–51, in Inazu, *Confident Pluralism*, 118.

God and each other, “a place where God is forming a family out of strangers.”<sup>81</sup>

Thus, the pluriform church testifies to the context in which it lives about a reality deeper and truer than mere pluralism. As no one in Narnia knew the “deeper magic” at work in Aslan’s death on the Stone Table, our pluralist culture does not have wisdom to apprehend the “deep magic” of the gospel—the creating and redeeming work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—nor the “deeper magic” of the immanent life of God revealed in the gospel.<sup>82</sup> Impulses within a pluralist context merely to lament, tolerate, or celebrate pluralist diversity cannot ultimately provide a satisfying way forward.<sup>83</sup> Herein steps the pluriform church testifying to and analogously displaying a triune God who shows in the gospel itself that he is both against and for the world he made.

<sup>81</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, expanded 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014), 83.

<sup>82</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 156–66. See O’Donovan: “When we describe the saving work of Christ by the term ‘redemption,’ we stress the fact that it presupposes the created order. ‘Redemption’ suggests the recovery of something given and lost” (*Resurrection and Moral Order*, 54).

<sup>83</sup> On “tolerance,” see Inazu, *Confident Pluralism*, 87–88. The Nieburian typology for tolerance toward a pluralist culture would be “Christ and culture in paradox” (*Christ and Culture*, 149–89).

## Poverty, Prosperity and the Gospel: Is there Economic Good News for the Poor in Paul?

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### Introduction

Is there a biblical answer to poverty? Does the only economic hope for the poor lie beyond the grave? Is the Old Testament prophetic ideal of free people sitting under their own vines and their own fig trees (Mic 4:4) simply spiritualized in the New Testament, or postponed till the Parousia? In light of the prominence of the so-called “prosperity gospel,” or faith movement, and the reaction to it, this investigation asks how Paul viewed poverty, and how he addressed economic scarcity. It investigates whether there is a proper biblical theology of divine provision to be found in Paul’s Letters.

The last seventy years have seen massive growth in the so-called prosperity gospel movement, emphasizing financial prosperity as a positive result of faith. This movement has attracted widespread criticism,<sup>1</sup> often being labeled a heresy or a false gospel.<sup>2</sup> There are many problems caused by the so-called prosperity

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<sup>1</sup> Note the mostly scathing treatment of the financial aspects of the movement in Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 183–85. See also Darrell L. Bock and Mikel Del Rosario, “The Table Briefing: Escaping the Prosperity Gospel and Recovering the Real Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 178 (2021): 92–99; Samuel Oluwatosin Okanlawon, “Theological Interpretation of Key Biblical Passages Underpinning the Prosperity Gospel in Nigeria,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 57, no. 1 (2022): 75–100.

<sup>2</sup> Dieudonné Tamfu, “The Gods of the Prosperity Gospel: Unmasking American Idols in Africa,” *Desiring God*, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-gods-of-the-prosperity-gospel>; Peter R. Young, “Prosperity Teaching in an African Context,” *African Journal of Evangelical Theology* 15, no. 1 (1996): 3–18. It has though received less strident treatment from anthropologists. See Joel Robbins, “World Christianity and the Reorganization of Disciplines: On the Emerging Dialogue between Anthropology and Theology,”

gospel, but criticism is easy coming from those who are affluent. Criticism of prosperity-gospel teaching often fails to account adequately for its widespread appeal, especially among poorer communities and dismisses it as merely deceptive and materialistic. There has been recently, though, a growth of academic criticism of this movement from non-western sources.<sup>3</sup> One recent writer says, “Prosperity ministers ignore all economic standards of wealth accumulation, and proffer a divine magical route. . . . Adherents who have not experienced the proffered magical turn in their lives continue to accept the unproven arguments of these prosperity ministers as doctrinal.”<sup>4</sup> Another complains, “It is clear that the prosperity gospel distorts the doctrine of salvation by making success and wellbeing the measure of spirituality and the sign of God’s approval.”<sup>5</sup> And another, more stridently, “The greatest danger that has ravaged the church for decades is the prosperity gospel, circulated by Americans to the third world for their own selfish agenda and the destruction of the faith.”<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, some acknowledge some positive aspects of the movement<sup>7</sup> and recognize that criticism coming from the affluent

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in *Faith in African Lived Christianity: Bridging Anthropological and Theological Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> See Thomas J. B. Mboya, “Gift Challenges and Transforms Prosperity Gospel,” *African Ecclesial Review* 58, no. 1&2 (2016): 16–42; David Prasanna Kumar Mende, “A Biblical Analysis of the Main Teachings of the Prosperity Gospel, with Special Reference to the Preachers of Hyderabad, India,” *Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology* 23, no. 1 (2019): 19–35; Matthews A. Ojo, “The Prosperity Gospel among Neo-Pentecostals in Africa,” in *The Abandoned Gospel: Confronting Neo-Pentecostalism and the Prosperity Gospel in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Philip W. Barnes et al. (Africa: AB-216, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Judith I. Udechukwu, “Exploring the Intersectionality of Culture, Sacrificial Offering, and Exploitative Prosperity Gospel Rhetoric in Africa,” *Church, Communication and Culture* 6, no. 2 (2021): 243.

<sup>5</sup> Viateur Habarurema, *Christian Generosity According to 2 Corinthians 8–9: Its Exegesis, Reception, and Interpretation Today in Dialogue with the Prosperity Gospel in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Monographs, 2017), 279.

<sup>6</sup> John Ntui-Abung, *The Chaos of the Prosperity Gospel: A Case Study of Two Prominent Nigerian Pastors with Churches over 150 Countries Revealed to Be Spreading Fraudulent Gospels* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow, 2017), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Joshua Robert Barron, “Is the Prosperity Gospel, Gospel?: An Examination of the Prosperity and Productivity Gospels in African Christianity,” *Conspectus* 33 (2022): 96–100. Barron speaks of a development of the prosperity gospel he terms the “Productivity Gospel.” It means “the empowerment theology of the Prosperity Gospel combined with personal ac-

west may not always properly account for the culture in which the prosperity teachings have become embedded or the economic situations faced by its adherents.<sup>8</sup> One says, “Moral rejection of African forms of the prosperity gospel . . . has an ethnocentric bias in which Western influences are seen as the baseline against which Africans need to react.”<sup>9</sup> There is no need here to repeat further the many critiques of the faith movement. Instead, the point is to address questions about poverty and provision that the movement’s popularity raises.

It is necessary to briefly comment on terminology. The expression “prosperity gospel” itself is not one that has arisen from within the movement it labels. It is instead a critical term used largely by outsiders to describe the economic aspects of the faith movement’s teaching. It is a designation given by onlookers, a heteroethnonym,<sup>10</sup> or what Paul Trebilco calls “outsider-coined language, which is language developed by outsiders.”<sup>11</sup> In anthropological terms, it is emic rather than etic. Sometimes outsider-coined language is adopted by movement insiders, such as the church’s adoption of the term “Christian.” But this does not yet seem to have happened to any significant extent with the expression “prosperity gospel.” If the movement has an internal name it might be the “Word of Faith” movement (though this speaks particularly of its American manifestations), or sometimes simply the “faith movement.” It is important to remember that not all in the movement teach or advocate identical positions. In this study, I shall mostly use the generic term “faith movement,” except where clarity requires the use of “prosperity gospel.” Where necessary this study will use the expression “theology of provision” (or simi-

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countability and the Protestant work ethic. It has inherited Martin Luther’s understanding of vocation, the sanctity of work” (p. 98).

<sup>8</sup> Habarurema, *Christian Generosity*, 260–73.

<sup>9</sup> Mika Vähäkangas, “The Prosperity Gospel in the African Diaspora: Unethical Theology or Gospel in Context,” *Exchange* 44, no. 4 (2015): 379.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Mullen, Rachel M. Calogero, and Tirza I. Leader, “A Social Psychological Study of Ethnonyms: Cognitive Representation of the in-Group and Intergroup Hostility,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92, no. 4 (2007): 613.

<sup>11</sup> Paul R. Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 304; Paul R. Trebilco, *Outsider Designations and Boundary Construction in the New Testament: Early Christian Communities and the Formation of Group Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1–7. See also Habarurema, *Christian Generosity*, 243.

lar) to distinguish the position argued here from a “prosperity gospel” approach.

### The Faith Movement as a Response to Poverty

There have been of course a good many efforts within historical Christianity to alleviate poverty, often embodied in charitable institutions, some of which have continued in one form or another for hundreds of years.<sup>12</sup> Some are rooted in medieval monastic traditions of service to the poor, some in reformation and post-reformation efforts at social reform, and others emerged from the flowering of charity subsequent to revival movements such as the first and second great awakenings.<sup>13</sup> Many of these have found or sought political support in one way or another.<sup>14</sup>

In the last hundred years, however, new movements have arisen which have focused on the problem of poverty in ways beyond the traditional models of charity and service supported at times by the state. A number of these movements have concentrated on political solutions and state power to alleviate poverty and correct injustices. One can trace a line, for example, from the social gospel movement, to liberation theology,<sup>15</sup> to anti-imperial theology,

<sup>12</sup> L. Cilliers and F. P. Retief, “The Evolution of the Hospital from Antiquity to the End of the Middle Ages,” *Curationis* 25, no. 4 (Nov 2002): 60–66; Peregrine Horden, “The Earliest Hospitals in Byzantium, Western Europe, and Islam,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 3 (2005): 362–68.

<sup>13</sup> Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England*, Cambridge Social and Cultural Histories (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 242–44; Christopher Dyer, “Poverty and its Relief in Late Medieval England,” *Past & Present* 216, no. 1 (2012): 41–78; J. Wesley Bready, *England: Before and after Wesley. The Evangelical Revival and Social Reform* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), 183–206. Fogel identifies some of the social outcomes of the first and second great awakenings in the USA, and of the rise of liberal theology, but muddies the waters by referring to this latter as a third great awakening (Robert William Fogel, *The Fourth Great Awakening & the Future of Egalitarianism* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 19–24).

<sup>14</sup> B. A. S. Van Bavel and Auke Rijpma, “How Important Were Formalized Charity and Social Spending before the Rise of the Welfare State? A Long-Run Analysis of Selected Western European Cases, 1400–1850,” *The Economic History Review* 69, no. 1 (2016): 159–87; Brian Pullan, “Catholics, Protestants, and the Poor in Early Modern Europe,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 3 (2005): 47–51.

<sup>15</sup> Gutierrez insists that liberation theology does not align with any particular political ideology: “I am obviously not identifying the preferential option for

movements which have sought to enlist the church to political action on behalf of the poor, usually favoring left-wing political causes,<sup>16</sup> and state action through taxation and redistribution. More recently has come the emergence of a movement, operating within both evangelical and Catholic churches, advocating free-market economic solutions for the poor, a retrieval of a biblical view of work, and church-based economic action to enhance local communities. Without a settled name as yet, though sometimes using catchphrases such as “faith and work,” “faith, work and economics,” this movement leans more to conservative economics and politics.<sup>17</sup>

It is helpful to consider the faith movement, especially in its economic aspects, as another twentieth and twenty-first church-based reaction to poverty,<sup>18</sup> with an emphasis on divine provision. Kenneth Copeland, a faith movement preacher, insists, “The gospel to the poor is that Jesus has come and they don’t have to be poor anymore!”<sup>19</sup> It has certain distinctive features, though some of these are to some extent inherited. First, it has inherited certain Protestant views, including the rejection of the virtue of poverty, and along with it the tendency to view wealth as a sign of bless-

the poor with any ideology or specific political program” (Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973], 160). Despite this, liberation theologies as they have developed has largely supported left-wing political causes and movements.

<sup>16</sup> Rauschenbach, the founder of the social gospel movement, advocated for continual increase in communism, seeing it as a fundamentally Christian ideology (Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* [New York: Macmillan, 1907], 398).

<sup>17</sup> See for example Victor V. Claar and Robin Kendrick Klay, *Economics in Christian Perspective: Theory, Policy and Life Choices* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007); Robert A. Sirico, *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Yong suggests, in light of the association of prosperity and the gospel in developing nations, that “prosperity may be understood as the most recent form of the contextualization of Christianity in the non-Western world” (Amos Yong, “A Typology of Prosperity Today: A Religious Economy of Renewal or a Renewal Economics?” in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity: The Socio-Economics of the Global Charismatic Movement*, ed. Katherine Attanasi and Amos Yong, Christianities of the World [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012], 23).

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Copeland, *Prosperity: The Choice Is Yours* (Fort Worth, TX: KCP Publications, 1985), 9. This emphasis on prosperity is qualified, however, “The purpose for abundance is to preach the gospel, feed the poor and meet the needs of others” (Copeland, *Prosperity*, 27).

ing.<sup>20</sup> The Protestant work ethic has not been a distinctive aspect of the faith movement, but there is some evidence that the traditional virtues of hard work and thrift have found their places in the movement's teaching, alongside an interest in entrepreneurship.<sup>21</sup> Second is its intensely spiritual and personal nature. This derives most likely from its Pentecostal roots, and further back, to the holiness, revivalist, Wesleyan, and Pietist movements that preceded it, but it has developed its own flavor. In the economic, realm this has meant an emphasis on prayer and faith as the path to prosperity, rather than, say, economic development, governmental action, or family and community cooperation. Financial provision comes from God through faith and prayer.<sup>22</sup> Third is its emphasis on a form of reciprocal justice, the principle, found in both Old Testament and New, especially in wisdom contexts, that God treats people based on how they treat others, so that the merciful receive mercy, those who judge are themselves judged, and those who give also receive.<sup>23</sup> Economically this entails, in association with faith, a focus on generosity and giving as the key to unlocking divine provision.<sup>24</sup> For example, the notion of "seed-faith" taught by Oral Roberts is that "If you want God to supply your financial needs, then give seed-money for Him to reproduce

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<sup>20</sup> Gary A. Anderson, *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 8–10; John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 70; Adoniram Gaxiola, "Poverty as a Meeting and Parting Place: Similarities and Contrasts in the Experiences of Latin American Pentecostals and Ecclesial Base Communities," *Pneuma* 13, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 167–74; Katherine L. Wiegele, "The Prosperity Gospel among Filipino Catholic Charismatics," in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*, 183–85).

<sup>21</sup> Vähäkangas, "African Diaspora," 370; Wiegele, "Filipino Catholic Charismatics," 181.

<sup>22</sup> See the emphasis on faith in Kenneth E. Hagin, *How God Taught Me About Prosperity* (n.p.: Faith Library Publications, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Second Sam 22:26–27; Pss 18:25; 112:9; Prov 11:17; 14:21; 19:17; Matt 5:7; 6:14; Luke 6:38; Jas 2:13. Regarding the "circle of reciprocity" in the Old Testament see Peter J. Leithart, *Gratitude: An Intellectual History* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018), 60–61.

<sup>24</sup> As Wariboko points out, the excesses of some faith movement pastors should not hide the truth that there are others who "sincerely believe that faith and giving to God are viable strategies for combating poverty" (Nimi Wariboko, "Pentecostal Paradigms of National Economic Prosperity in Africa," in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*, 40).



and multiply. . . . Use it as your point of contact to release your faith for God to meet this need.”<sup>25</sup>

## Poverty and Provision in Paul

### Paul’s Experiences

We now turn to the letters of Paul for his insights on poverty, prosperity, and provision.<sup>26</sup> One has to be careful, as in the debates over Paul and the imperial cult or Paul and politics, not to make Paul speak too loudly to issues that are not his central concerns. However, due to the autobiographical nature of several of Paul’s letters, much of his writing about poverty and provision is found in his reflection on his own circumstances. We can see not only the instruction of the apostle on helping the poor but also his wrestling with personal difficulties. His own times of poverty, his own needs, and his own experiences of grace inform his thought.<sup>27</sup>

This may of course suggest a hermeneutical problem: how much can Paul’s autobiographical meditations on his economic situation be generalized in search of broad principles? But the Letters themselves show Paul consistently using his own experiences to draw or illustrate principles he wishes to impart to his readers. One instance is in 1 Corinthians 4:11–14. Paul recounts his hunger, poverty, and toil, not, he says, to shame them but as admonishment. Another is in Philippians 4, where Paul’s insistence on his contentment in the face of both material abundance and lack is preceded immediately by the exhortation of 4:9: “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me; practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” And it is concluded by the famous verse 19: “And my God will fulfill every need of yours according to his wealth in glory in Christ Jesus,” a text to which we shall return. A third instance is in 2 Thessalonians 3:7–9, where Paul describes his practice of working for his own living as

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<sup>25</sup> Oral Roberts, *The Miracle of Seed-Faith* (Tulsa: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Organization, 1970), Chapter 2.

<sup>26</sup> There is a lot of material in the Gospels and Acts that might usefully be incorporated into a wider study of economic provision, but there must be limits to a study of this sort. There is enough in Paul to make a useful start.

<sup>27</sup> First Cor 4:9–13; 2 Cor 4:7–15; 6:4–10; 11:23–30; Phil 4:12. See John W. Taylor, “Paul, Poverty, and Economic Justice,” in *Human Flourishing: Economic Wisdom for a Fruitful Christian Vision of the Good Life*, ed. Greg Forster and Anthony R. Cross (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020), 146–47.

setting an example for the Thessalonian believers. Paul's own experiences and economic life, though they are related to his distinct apostolic calling, are used by him to instruct the churches to which he is writing. They can therefore legitimately be brought into any discussion and synthesis of his broader views on poverty and provision.

### Poverty Should Be Addressed

It is clear that Paul was committed to “remember the poor” (Gal 2:10), as he was exhorted to by Peter, James, and John. Exactly what this instruction meant is not so easy to ascertain. There is a common notion that in Gal 2:10, Peter, James, and John were asking for financial support from gentile converts for the churches in Judaea.<sup>28</sup> Efforts have been made to make the famine relief visit of Acts 11–12 equate with the events recounted in Gal 2:1–10<sup>29</sup> or to make the instruction in 6:6 to share all good things with instructors into an allusion to the Jerusalem collection.<sup>30</sup> However, this is unlikely, given that the topic under discussion at the Jerusalem meeting was the gospel that Paul and Barnabas were preaching among the Gentiles (Gal 2:2) and its identity with the gospel the Jerusalem apostles were preaching to Jews.<sup>31</sup> Galatians 2:10 presents a possible exception to the agreement on the content of the gospel. Paul's disclaimer, that he was already zealous to remember the poor, suggests that he had simply neglected to mention this issue when he presented the gospel that he and Barnabas preached among the Gentiles. Paul mentions nothing of any offering for Jerusalem in Galatians, even though 1 Corinthians 16:1 indicates that the Galatians participated in the offering. The pillar apostles were not trying to make sending money to Jerusalem an intrinsic part of the gospel for the Galatians and other Gentiles,

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<sup>28</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 101–03; Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 126–28.

<sup>29</sup> Boer, *Galatians*, 127.

<sup>30</sup> Franz Mußner, *Der Galaterbrief: Auslegung*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 402–03.

<sup>31</sup> See Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 157–206. He shows that the interpretation of Gal 2:10 as the initiation of the Jerusalem offering at the instruction of the apostles is not evident till the fourth century.

even if Paul later presented the spiritual debt of the Gentile believers to the Jerusalem saints as an added motive for the collection, as we see in Romans 15:25–27. Rather, Paul interpreted it in a much broader sense, which is reflected in his letters.<sup>32</sup>

This broad concern for the poor can be seen regarding the Jerusalem offering, which involved the churches of Galatia (1 Cor 16:1), Macedonia (2 Cor 8:1), and Achaia (2 Cor 9:1–3). It is seen also in Ephesians 4:28, where thieves are told not to steal but to work with their hands so they can “contribute to the one in need,” and in 1 Timothy 5:3–16, where Paul discusses how the church can and should help poor widows. It is clear that Paul thought in general of poverty as a hardship that should be addressed, even though he does not explain why. Presumably, that was obvious enough, and Paul lists certain kinds of suffering which are associated with poverty, such as hunger and thirst, lack of protective clothing, violent treatment, homelessness, arduous labors, long working hours, and exposure to the cold (1 Cor 4:11; 2 Cor 6:5; 11:27). As has often been noted, Paul shares his concern for the poor, not only with other New Testament writers but with the early Judaism within which he was born and educated.<sup>33</sup> “The Jerusalem agreement of Gal 2:10 was intended to preserve . . . the very Jewish character of the gospel in contradistinction to the general ethos of the Greco-Roman world.”<sup>34</sup> However, while Paul probably has inherited the Jewish values of care for the poor and almsgiving, he is insistent that it is Christ’s grace and self-giving which shapes the churches’ response to poverty (2 Cor 8:9; 9:8, 15).

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<sup>32</sup> Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 188, and the discussion in Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 132–37.

<sup>33</sup> Gregg E. Gardner, “Pursuing Justice: Support for the Poor in Early Rabbinic Judaism,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 86 (2015): 37–62; Martin Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church: Aspects of a Social History of Early Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 15–22; Catherine M. Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Qumran Community*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 154; Helen Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty, and Early Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 38; Taylor, “Economic Justice,” 152.

<sup>34</sup> Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 204.

## Paul's Gospel is no "Get Rich Quick" Scheme

There are three important caveats to this concern for economic welfare. One is that Paul also shares with other New Testament witnesses and second-temple Jewish sources an aversion to greed and the love of money.<sup>35</sup> The greedy do not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 5:8–10). No one who is greedy or a lover of money should become an overseer or deacon (1 Tim 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7), and the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil practices (1 Tim 6:10). Whatever he says about divine provision cannot be used as an excuse for self-indulgence and materialism. A second caveat is that Paul is himself quite prepared to endure times of poverty and hardship for the sake of the gospel (2 Cor 6:3–10), following the example of Jesus (2 Cor 8:9). He renounces his right to financial support from the people he is reaching and is prepared to endure hunger so as not to “put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ” (1 Cor 9:12). In other words, poverty is not the worst thing that can happen. Paul remains content whether he is prospering or suffering (Phil 4:11), as long as he continues fulfilling his apostolic call.<sup>36</sup> A third caveat is that Paul envisages no earthly economic paradise this side of the resurrection, recognizing the persistence of suffering and death until Christ's return (Rom 8:18–25; 2 Cor 4:16–5:5).

## Work is the Normal Channel of Provision

Given that Paul understands poverty as a problem which should ordinarily be addressed, what are the sources and channels of provision that he envisages? How should poverty be addressed? It may seem obvious to say so, but it is important to recognize that Paul saw ordinary human work as the main means of providing for human needs.<sup>37</sup> Working to meet one's own needs is an act

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<sup>35</sup> In the New Testament see e.g. Matt 19:2; Luke 4:18; 6:20; 14:13, 21; 19:8. In other Second-Temple sources see, e.g., Tob 2:2–3; 4:7; Sir 4:1–8; 7:32; 11:12; 29:9; 34:24–25; 4Q418 2 I, 17–27, 2 III, 15–19; *T. Job* 9–11; Josephus, *A.J.* 12.224, *J.W.* 2.122; Philo, *Spec.* 4.158, *Virt.* 1.100. Philo on the one hand calls poverty “difficult” or “troublesome;” on the other it is “less than ill treatment of the body” (*Flacc.* 1.58).

<sup>36</sup> See John W. Taylor, “Poverty and Economic Justice in Second Corinthians,” *Journal of Language, Culture, and Religion* 3, no. 1 (2022): 94–96.

<sup>37</sup> On the topic of Paul's theology of work, see Jeremy Kidwell, *The Theology of Craft and the Craft of Work: From Tabernacle to Eucharist* (London: Routledge, 2016), 131–40; John W. Taylor, “Labor of Love: The Theology of Work in First

of love (1 Thess 1:3). If those who can work do not, then the burden of their needs falls on others. This is how Paul characterizes his working for a living while he was in Thessalonica. He worked so as not to be a burden on the believers and to set an example for them to do the same thing (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8–9) as well as to establish his integrity and the credibility of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 9:1–19). He instructs believers to work to be self-supporting, and to do so as an act of love, because then they would not burden others and would have a credible witness in the city (1 Thess 4:9–12). The injunctions against idleness, while honor is given to those who work, most likely warn believers against idly depending on the generosity of patrons or benefactors<sup>38</sup> and against abusing the generosity of the church that is committed to helping the poor (1 Thess 5:12–14; 2 Thess 3:10–12). Beyond the Thessalonian letters, the instruction to thieves in Ephesians 4:28 to stop stealing and work with their hands confirms the point that work and labor are for Paul the ordinary means of providing for oneself and of having an excess that could be given away. The preparations for the collection for Jerusalem imply this as well. Believers in Corinth are asked to set aside money weekly. This assumes daily or weekly income, which would meet their needs and provide an excess (1 Cor 16:1–2), although the caveat “as he may prosper” (*ho ti ean*

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and Second Thessalonians,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 59, no. 2 (Spr 2017): 201–218. For systematic theological treatment of work see Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004) and Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> Paul may have had a patron in the person of Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2), who is described as a *prostatis*. See James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, vol. 38B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1988), 888; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 946–48; and Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 556–57, though the latter conflates benefactor and patron. However, it is unlikely that Phoebe was Paul's patron in the formal sense of a patron-client relationship, as *prostatis* rarely if ever has this meaning (Erlend D. MacGillivray, “Romans 16:2, Προστάτις/Προστάτης, and the Application of Reciprocal Relationships to New Testament Texts,” *Novum Testamentum* 53 [2011]: 189–96). It is more likely that Phoebe was an occasional benefactor, both to Paul and others. In Paul's understanding benefaction is democratized, and all in Christ are “on level ground before God-in-Christ” (Steve Walton, “Patronage and People: Paul's Perspective in Philippians,” in *Poverty in the Early Church and Today: A Conversation*, ed. Steve Walton and Hannah Swithinbank [London: T&T Clark, 2019], 75).

*euodōtai*) implies income and expenses which are not fixed or certain.

### Families Should Meet Their Own Needs

Where the needs of the poor are not met by the normal activity of work, Paul looks to families to look after their own. This is especially evident in his discussion about helping elderly widows, who presumably would not be able to provide for themselves by ordinary work: “If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them *first* learn to show respect to their own family” (1 Tim 5:4, italics mine), and “If any believing woman has widows [in her family], let her care for them, and do not let the church be burdened, in order that it may care for those who are truly widows” (5:16).<sup>39</sup> These two verses suggest the provision of both financial and practical care for poor widows, most likely those who for some reason lacked the financial protection that the dowry normally provided.<sup>40</sup> Younger widows should marry, which would provide for their needs. However, Paul also assumes that married women will be working within the household unit, writing that they should “marry, bear children, and manage their households” (5:14).<sup>41</sup> Families have the primary responsibility to care for their own poor, especially household members, and to neglect this obligation is to be worse than an unbeliever (5:8).

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<sup>39</sup> I am assuming Pauline authorship for the Pastoral Epistles. Even if this is in question, they are very early testimony to practices in the Pauline churches.

<sup>40</sup> See Bruce W. Winter, “Providentia for the Widows of 1 Timothy 5:3–16,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 39 (1988): 83–86.

<sup>41</sup> Working in the household might well mean women working in the family business, and some women were active in trade or business beyond the household, as is shown by the example of Lydia in Acts 16:14, and likely that of Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2). Some evidence for female participation in trade, craft and business is compiled in Miriam J. Groen-Vallinga, “Desperate Housewives? The Adaptive Family Economy and Female Participation in the Roman Urban Labour Market,” in *Women and the Roman City in the Latin West*, ed. Emily Hemelrijk and Greg Woolf (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Claire Holleran, “Women and Retail in Roman Italy,” in *Women and the Roman City in the Latin West*; and Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of ‘New’ Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 174–76.

## The Church Meets Needs That Cannot Be Met by Work or Family Resources

Beyond the normal practices of work, and family support, Paul emphasizes the meeting of needs by the church (with the nouns *chreia*, *husterēma*, and their cognates). Some, such as some widows, may not be able to work (1 Tim 5:9–10; cf. Acts 6:1–7) and some may be released from regular work for the sake of the mission of the church (1 Cor 9:14). Need creates an obligation.<sup>42</sup> The ability to help those in need was, according to Paul, a sufficient reason even for a thief to abandon his dishonest lifestyle and work with his hands (Eph 4:28). And the negative situation of those in need was met with the positive obligation upon believers to love (Rom 13:8) and to do good (Gal 6:9–10; 1 Thess 5:15; 2 Thess 3:13; 1 Tim 6:18). Though the expectation is that believers should and will contribute, participation remains voluntary and without compulsion or taxation (2 Cor 8:8; 9:5–7).

Paul asks the Romans to contribute to the needs (*chreiai*) of the saints (Rom 12:13). What these needs are he does not say. However, given the poverty of so many, we can assume the obligation to meet needs includes the sharing of basic necessities such as food and clothing. In 1 Timothy 6:8 we read, “But if we have provisions (*diatrophai*) and covering (*skēpasmata*), with these we shall be content” (cf. Matt 6:31).<sup>43</sup> In Titus 3:14, Paul insists that the community practice good deeds, especially to meet urgent needs (*eis tas anagkaias chreias*). Although there was some almsgiving in the Greco-Roman world, occasional benefactions to the poor, and a variety of other attempts to help the needy,<sup>44</sup> the obligation to meet the needs of the poor, especially their own poor, was distinct

<sup>42</sup> Paul does use the language of obligation—the obligation to love one another (Rom 13:8; cf. Rom 15:27).

<sup>43</sup> In this Paul is in line with other New Testament authors. The meeting of the needs of the poor in the church was presented by Luke as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:45; 3:34–35). Both James and John indicate in their letters that believers are obligated to meet one another’s basic needs (Jas 2:15; 1 John 3:17).

<sup>44</sup> See David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2 Reihe (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 102–12; Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 67–107; Taylor, “Economic Justice,” 138–39.

to the Judeo-Christian tradition and a distinguishing feature of the early church.<sup>45</sup>

The duty to fellow believers was not restricted to those close to hand. One of the features of the spread of Christianity was its international nature. Akin in some ways to the Jewish diaspora in its spread from Jerusalem—and initially spread through the network of synagogues but ethnically diverse—this growth was intentional, the result of deliberate evangelism, though not always of deliberate strategy. The result was a community that, unlike the vast majority of Greco-Roman associations,<sup>46</sup> acknowledged a profound unity that crossed geographical and racial boundaries. The financial implication of this was expressed in the Jerusalem collection, for which the meeting of the needs of believers in Judaea was the basic motivation. Paul writes, “at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality” (2

<sup>45</sup> Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 60–67, Taylor, “Economic Justice,” 143–48. The *Damascus Document* stipulates a tax of at least two days’ wages per month, to be administered by the overseer and judges of the Essene communities, for the support of those in need (CD XIV, 12–17). Murphy suggests that the normal expectations upon kinship units were extended to the association, such that the association replaces the family (Catherine M. Murphy, “The Disposition of Wealth in the ‘Damascus Document’ Tradition,” *Revue de Qumrân* 19, no. 1 [1999]: 83–129). Josephus comments concerning the Essenes, “And they neither buy nor sell anything amongst one another, but each one, giving to the needy person what he has, receives that which is useful from him” (*J.W.* 2:127). Members can give to those in need voluntarily, but cannot give to relatives without permission (*J.W.* 2.134).

<sup>46</sup> Ascough shows that some associations had international links, especially expatriate cult groups, and the spreading Isis and Dionysiac cults. But he does not show that there were any financial links between these groups (Richard S. Ascough, “Translocal Relationships among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, no. 2 [1997]: 223–41). Kloppenborg’s citation of the Tyrian expatriate association in Puteoli in this regard provides no significant parallel. The finance involved was a tax, not a gift (John S. Kloppenborg, “Fiscal Aspects of Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem,” *Early Christianity* 8, no. 2 [2017]: 180). Likewise, the examples he provides of associational inscriptions eliciting donations from non-citizens, resident aliens or foreigners, are, as might be expected by their location and purpose, aimed at including all kinds of people *present in the city* who might read the inscription, not at soliciting funds from other towns or places (John S. Kloppenborg, *Christ’s Associations: Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019], 250, 411 n.27). See also Taylor, “Economic Justice,” 149.



Cor 8:14); also, “For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God” (2 Cor 9:12). In these texts Paul uses the term *busterēma* for “needs,” meaning that which is deficient or lacking (see also 2 Cor 11:9).

This orientation towards need must be qualified in this instance. The Judean believers were not the only ones in need. The Macedonian believers were themselves under affliction (*thlipsis*) and in the depths of poverty (*hē kata bathous ptōcheia autōn*) when they participated in the collection (2 Cor 8:2). In addition, the whole process took about four years (AD 53–57), so the offering was clearly not intended to stave off imminent starvation. Nevertheless, it was still a single operation, with no evidence in Paul’s writings that the flow of money from the Gentile churches to Judean churches would become a regular operation. In fact, Paul envisages support going the other way when needed. He is not simply shifting the financial burden from Jerusalem to Corinth. He anticipates a reciprocal mutuality, and thus equality, in the event of the Corinthians being in need (2 Cor 8:13–14).<sup>47</sup> As Barclay says, “Each can expect, at some time and in some respects, to be in surplus (having too much), with enough to give to others, and, at some time or in some other respects, to be in deficit (having too little), requiring others to fill up that lack.”<sup>48</sup> Other motives besides meeting the needs of the believers are also evident. In the explanation in Romans, the contributions of the Gentile believers to their Jewish counterparts are an obligation on account of reciprocal justice, since they have participated in the spiritual blessings of Israel (Rom 15:27).<sup>49</sup>

When Paul urges meeting the needs of the poor, he is most likely talking about providing basic resources such as food and

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<sup>47</sup> On Paul’s understanding of equality in the economic area see Taylor, “Economic Justice,” 150–52.

<sup>48</sup> John M. G. Barclay, “Manna and the Circulation of Grace,” in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, Christopher Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 423.

<sup>49</sup> There is some evidence in Paul of an obligation to meet the needs of those outside the church, even their enemies (Rom 12:20), and perhaps including civic benefactions. See Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens*, First Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 42–60. The Galatians are told to do good to all, though especially to the household members of faith (Gal 6:10).

clothing. He envisages the needs of the poor generally as temporary and thus amenable to temporary help (except elderly widows, who are enrolled on a list). These needs can and should be met by mutual giving within and by the church. Beyond this meeting of temporary needs, he provides no template for economic advancement and no impetus toward seeking wealth.

### Providing for the Providers

There are, however, three passages in Paul, all used frequently by the faith movement, which may promise financial provision from God, especially for those who give. The first is Galatians 6:6–10. The passage begins with an injunction for the one who is taught to “share [*koinōneitō*] in all good things” with the one instructing (6:6). Most scholars understand this passage as referring to or at least including financial support<sup>50</sup> because of (1) the subsequent instructions to keep doing good (6:9–10); (2) parallels between the sowing and reaping motif in this passage to 1 Cor 9:11 (“If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?” ESV) and 2 Cor 9:6 (“whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” ESV);<sup>51</sup> (3) the use of the same verb *koinōneō* elsewhere in Paul for financial support (Rom 12:13; 15:27; Phil 4:15); and (4) similarities between Paul’s instruction in Gal 6:6 and various sayings in the Greek philosophical tradition, including the Hippocratic Oath.<sup>52</sup> The requirement to support teachers is presented primarily as a matter of reciprocal justice but

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<sup>50</sup> Boer, *Galatians*, 385; David A. DeSilva, *The Letter to the Galatians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 489–90; Keener, *Galatians*, 546–49; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 33a (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 551.

<sup>51</sup> The proverbial use of the sowing and reaping metaphor is well-established in Greek literature both before and after Paul. See J. L. North, “Sowing and Reaping (Galatians 6:7b): More Examples of a Classical Maxim,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 43, no. 2 (1992): 523–27.

<sup>52</sup> Lines 4–5 of the oath, which was for medical students, read “To hold him who has taught me this art as equal to my parents and to live my life in partnership with him, and if he is in need of money to give him a share of mine” (Ludwig Edelstein, *The Hippocratic Oath: Text, Translation and Interpretation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1943), 2–3). Both Gal 6:6 and the *Oath* use the Greek verb *koinōneō* to signify sharing by the one taught with the teacher, including financial help and more. See also Betz, *Galatians*, 551.

the context, where Paul says to “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2), suggests that their needs are a factor. This is one way to bear burdens. It is also a way to sow to the Spirit (6:8) and to do good (6:9), though there are no doubt other ways, given Paul’s teaching on flesh and Spirit in chapter five. If the Galatians keep doing good, they will reap a harvest from the Spirit. The reaping of the harvest of giving is here eschatological. It relates to eternal life (6:8) and comes “in its own time” (6:9) so that believers must not “grow weary in doing good” (6:10). We should note also the Christological context: to bear one another’s burdens is to fulfill the law of Christ (6:2). The call to help teachers, especially financially, is broadened so that believers are told to “do good to everyone, and especially members of the household of faith” (6:10). Conversely, the implication is that failing to bear one another’s burdens by refusing to share with those who teach would be a mockery to God, sowing to the flesh<sup>53</sup> and resulting in corruption (6:7–8).

The second passage to look at is 2 Corinthians 9:6–11. The overall rhetorical point is that Paul seeks to persuade the Corinthian believers to give generously toward the offering for the believers in Jerusalem.<sup>54</sup> The context (9:1–5) shows Paul explaining why he has sent representatives to Corinth in advance of his own visit: to help them prepare and so fulfill their previous promise of generosity in this matter. Verses 6–11 describe the benefits and blessings of cheerful, willing generosity. Then, verses 12–15 elaborate on the praise and thanksgiving to God that a generous gift will generate.

The major metaphor Paul uses in verses 6–11 to encourage generosity is again the agricultural one of sowing and reaping. The first point is that the more sowing, the more reaping (9:6). Verse 7 relates to the attitude of generosity: it should be willing and cheerful. Verses 8–11 emphasize that God himself will provide, to enable this generosity:

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<sup>53</sup> Though “sowing to the flesh” might also have a broader sense of practicing the “works of the flesh” (5:19–21) or even “supporting teachers who promote circumcision of Christian Gentiles” (Keener, *Galatians*, 552).

<sup>54</sup> Though the words Jerusalem, Judaea or Jew do not appear in 2 Cor 8–9, the destination of the collection can be assumed from 1 Cor 16:3 and Rom 15:25–26.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, “He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever.” Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

Some writers insist that the blessings promised for generous givers here are spiritual, not material, indicated by the use of expressions such as “bountifully” (*ep’ eulogia*), “all grace” (*pasa charis*) and “not grudgingly or under compulsion” (*mē ek lupēs ē ex anagkēs*).<sup>55</sup> Certainly, blessings beyond the material are in evidence, with phrases such as “his righteousness endures forever” (9:9),<sup>56</sup> “the harvest of your righteousness;” “enriched in everything;” or “producing thanksgiving to God.” But the main point is that God in his grace will provide for generous believers, to meet their needs *and* enable their generosity.<sup>57</sup> They will have “sufficiency in everything, so that they can abound in every good work.”<sup>58</sup> Verses 10–11 complete the sowing and reaping metaphor. God is the one who supplies both seed and bread. This is an allusion to Isaiah 55:20, where God supplies seed and bread through the blessing of

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<sup>55</sup> Verlyn D. Verbrugge and Keith R. Krell, *Paul & Money: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Apostle's Teachings and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 177–81.

<sup>56</sup> The quote from Psalm 112:9 (LXX 111:9) in its context in the psalm, is an assertion about the generous person. In that light 2 Cor 9:9 is an assertion about the generous person, whose reward is a reputation for justice (with George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 453–54. Some, though, read 9:9 as an assertion about God (Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary 40 [Waco: Word, 1986], 471–72), as do some English translations of 9:9 (NAS, NKJV), capitalizing the personal pronouns.

<sup>57</sup> As Thrall says, “The thought of God’s provision for the Corinthians is repeated: it is in every respect that they are in the process of enrichment, i.e. there is an increase in both their economic and spiritual wealth, resulting in every kind of generosity” (Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2 vols., International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000], 2:585).

<sup>58</sup> *Autarkeia* in 6:8 indicates sufficient economic provision, rather than an attitude of contentment, though the cognate *autarkēs* in Phil 4:11 might refer to either to self-sufficiency, or contentment.

rain and snow on the land. God, the source of all supply, will supply the needs of the Corinthians, enabling them to be generous, and this will lead to much thanksgiving.<sup>59</sup> So it seems we can talk about an explicit theology of divine provision here. God, the provider of all, in his grace makes provision that supplies the needs of believers and enables their generosity. And the implication is that when they are in particular need, God will also provide for them through the generosity of other believers. Once again there are Christological notes played in the context. To participate in the offering will be an act of obedience, coming from their confession of the gospel of Christ (2 Cor 8:9; 9:13). Precisely how God will provide is not specified.

The third passage under consideration is Philippians 4:10–20, and especially verse 19: “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” As has often been noted, the context situates this statement as a response to the Philippians’ sending generous gifts to help Paul in his imprisonment. Paul did not ask for help. He says, “not that I talk about lack” (*ouch hoti kath’ husterēsīn legō*), and he has learned to be self-sufficient, or content, in any circumstance. But the gift has led Paul to rejoice for their loving concern (4:10) and commend them for their sharing with him in his hour of need (4:14), as they have previously shared with him financially in the gospel (1:5; 4:15), providing for his needs (4:16). The fruit of the gift will be to their credit, but Paul is not seeking gifts (4:17).<sup>60</sup> Their gifts are not only helpful to Paul but a pleasing offering to God (4:18). And Paul from prison repays the social obligation in two ways. First, he sends the letter, full of affection, friendship, and instruction. Second, he tells them that Paul’s God, “my God,” will meet *all* of their needs (4:19), “especially their material needs,”<sup>61</sup> “but also their need for the qualities which Paul has been encouraging in this letter.”<sup>62</sup> And he will do so “according to his riches in glory in

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<sup>59</sup> Mark A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 360–61.

<sup>60</sup> See Walton, “Patronage and People,” 73.

<sup>61</sup> Gordon D. Fee, “To What End Exegesis?: Reflections on Exegesis and Spirituality in Philippians 4:10–20,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 8 (1998): 85; G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 325.

<sup>62</sup> Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 288.

Christ Jesus,” a trio of prepositional phrases which may have an eschatological thrust,<sup>63</sup> but do not exclude the present needs of the Philippians. We see in this passage some of the main themes we have seen before. Paul sees the proclamation of the gospel as more important than financial circumstances. Paul, unable to work due to his imprisonment, needs help and receives it from the church. In the light of their sacrificial generosity, and in accordance with the richness of God’s own glory, Paul promises God’s provision in Christ.

Regarding faith, in these passages there is no explicit use of faith language in Paul regarding the meeting of material needs, nor indeed anywhere else in Paul. He talks in several places about the necessity of enduring faith, including trusting God through trials of various kinds.<sup>64</sup> He encourages the churches to grow in faith (2 Cor 10:15; Phil 1:25; 1 Thess 3:10; 2 Thess 1:3). He knows that through faith miracles can happen (1 Cor 12:9; 13:2; Gal 3:5). There is no reason to suppose that the need for faith does not apply to material needs, and it is likely that trust or faith in the grace, power, or providence of God is implicit in Paul’s discussions of his own poverty. However, there is no emphasis on or even mention of faith in Paul’s discussion of poverty and provision<sup>65</sup> and certainly not of any so-called “seed faith.” Faith would seem to be as necessary in the economic realm as in any other, but no more so.

### Conclusions

We can conclude from this brief investigation that although economic issues are not Paul’s primary concern, neither are they insignificant. He is genuinely concerned about the suffering of poverty that others experience, though less about his own situation. He has no great plan for the poor to become wealthy. He condemned greed and the love of money, but neither did he wish for the poor to stay deprived, and he took major cooperative ac-

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<sup>63</sup> As Müller suggests, citing Phil 3:21 (Ulrich B. Müller, *Der Brief Des Paulus an Die Philipper*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Theologischer Handkommentar Zum Neuen Testament [Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2002], 207).

<sup>64</sup> Rom 1:12; 4:19; 15:13; 1 Cor 13:7; 16:13; 2 Cor 1:24; 5:7; Eph 6:16; Phil 1:27; Col 1:23; 2:5–7; 1 Thess 1:3; 3:2, 5, 6, 10; 5:8; 2 Thess 1:3; 1 Tim 1:19; 2:15; 5:12; 6:11, 12; 2 Tim 1:13; 2:22; 3:14; 4:7.

<sup>65</sup> Hagin argues that faith functions in the financial area as it does in other areas of life (Hagin, *Prosperity*, 15–20).

tion to change the circumstances of poor believers in Jerusalem. Paul avoids both crass materialism, where the gospel becomes a means to wealth, and other-worldly spiritualism. He sees that the economic needs of poor believers should be met in three main ways: first, through ordinary human work; second, through the help of family members; and third, through the mutual sacrificial help of believers to one another, both locally and extra-locally.

In three passages that use the sowing and reaping metaphor regarding giving, Paul emphasizes the need for generosity and that the generous will reap what they sow. In Galatians 6, that means reaping eternal benefits from the Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 9 that means God's meeting the needs of believers to enable them to give to others. In Philippians 4 that means divine provision for all the needs of believers, both material and spiritual. There is no call to give to provoke God into making one prosperous. The emphasis on the meeting of basic needs also qualifies or rather directs the generosity of believers. God, who provides rain, seed, and bread for the earth, will provide for them, enabling them to give sacrificially to one another and even to those outside the church. Given what Paul has said about work, family, and church, one might suppose that Paul would expect God to use these channels of provision.

As we have seen, there are Christological notes played in—or in the context of—all these passages. Paul can hardly talk about the provision of God without talking about the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 8:9). He “figures believers as channels or conduits of divine grace.”<sup>66</sup> We can speak of a theology of provision for the poor through work, family, generosity (especially within the church), and God's providing for members of the church—both for their own needs and especially to provide for each other when needed. Divine provision is not simply an end but also the means to enable further generosity to the poor. While the faith movement is no doubt misguided or at fault in some aspects, an emphasis on generosity and the divine provision which enables generosity is not contrary to Paul's teaching. Still, it must be put alongside his teaching on provision through work, family, and church. There is some economic good news for the poor in Paul, but it must be qualified eschatologically. The promise of divine

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<sup>66</sup> John M. G. Barclay, “Paul and the Gift to Jerusalem: Overcoming the Problems of the Long-Distance Gift,” in *Poverty in the Early Church and Today*, 95.

provision means, in the present, not the promise of wealth, but the meeting of basic needs, economic and otherwise, anticipating a greater eschatological provision to come.



## Revisiting Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and the Noble Lie

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### Introduction

Scholars sometimes defend the purported presence of deceptive pseudonymity in the New Testament with an appeal to an ancient idea known as the “noble lie.” This concept says that deception is permitted when used in the best interests of the person being deceived. The aim of this paper is to scrutinize briefly this theory used by scholars as it relates to pseudonymity and the New Testament.

### Some Proponents of the Noble Lie

This theory first found its popular and current expression primarily in the works of Norbert Brox and Wolfgang Speyer (*Falsche Verfasserangaben*<sup>1</sup> and *Die literarische Fälschung*,<sup>2</sup> respectively). In his magisterial volume on *Forgery and Counterforgery*,<sup>3</sup> though not particularly an advocate of the noble lie, Bart Ehrman has nonetheless contributed to the discussion and will be mentioned later.

According to Brox, the “noble falsehood,” found primarily in the writings of Plato, pervaded Greek culture, and in turn led to Christian pseudepigraphy.<sup>4</sup> In other words, for Brox, this idea forms the grounds for the proposal that early Christian authors wrote pseudepigrapha using permissible deception, and the “no-

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<sup>1</sup> N. Brox, *Falsche Verfasserangaben zur Erklärung der frühchristlichen Pseudepigraphie*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 79 (Stuttgart: KBW, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> W. Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum: Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 1/2 (München: Beck, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Brox, *Falsche Verfasserangaben*, 81–85.

ble” ends of these authors, at least for them, extenuated the means that they used. Brox says that the noble falsehood enabled pseudonymous authors to excuse themselves morally, if they had any ethical qualms concerning their work.<sup>5</sup> For Brox, early church leaders were not primarily concerned with a work’s authorship. They simply used the “noble lie” in support of their religion, and thus, they were mainly concerned with the content of writings.<sup>6</sup>

Speyer’s approach to early Christian pseudonymity is similar. He notes that a distinction existed in antiquity between (1) immoral forgeries composed to provide legal, political, or financial advantages or to satisfy one’s scientific vanity or other egotistical aims, and (2) justifiable forgeries created to achieve recognition for a truth or spiritual value or to defend a legal claim as legitimate.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Speyer explains that Christian writers created orthodox forgeries (i.e. using pseudonymity) to respond to heretical forgeries and surmount their harmful consequences.<sup>8</sup> Speyer views *3 Corinthians* as one of these many *Gegenfälschungen* (“counterforgeries”) written to defend the church’s teaching against heretics,<sup>9</sup> and the Pastoral Epistles and 2 Peter as forgeries composed from a high moral motive to serve in “the development of the faith and church discipline.”<sup>10</sup> Though Speyer calls it *die Nötluge* (the “necessary lie”), again the concept of the “noble falsehood” is seen at work in his theories.

Brox is correct when he says that the noble falsehood concept can be found in Plato’s works. Plato may have made the earliest specific mention in literature of this idea. In the *Republic*, for example, he says that “falsehood is in very deed useless to gods, but to men useful as a remedy or form of medicine.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, he advocated the use of deception when used to heal like medicine.

<sup>5</sup> Brox, *Falsche Verfasserangaben*, 82; idem, “Zum Problemstand in der Erforschung der alchristlichen Pseudepigraphie” in *Pseudepigraphie in der heidnischen und jüdischen-christlichen Antike*, ed. N. Brox (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 311–34, 322.

<sup>6</sup> Brox, *Falsche Verfasserangaben*, 26–36.

<sup>7</sup> Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung*, 96. So also Brox, “Zum Problemstand,” 323.

<sup>8</sup> Speyer, *Fälschung*, 96.

<sup>9</sup> Speyer, *Fälschung*, 278–79.

<sup>10</sup> Speyer, *Fälschung*, 285–86.

<sup>11</sup> Plato, *Republic* 3.389b, cited from *Plato, Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles*, vol. IX, trans. R. G. Bury, 12 vols. LCL (London: Harvard Univer-

### Patristic Evidence on the Use of the Noble Lie

In support of their ideas both Brox and Speyer referred to several early fathers of the church (men like Clement of Alexandria, Origen, John Chrysostom, et al.) whom they say advocated the use of the noble lie.<sup>12</sup> In this section, the statements of some of these church leaders will be examined.

Surprisingly, several early church fathers believed deception was justifiable to use in a noble fashion. For example, when discussing the virtues of teachers, Clement of Alexandria, the second-century church father, remarked concerning them:

Whatever, therefore, he has in his mind, he bears on his tongue, to those who are worthy to hear, speaking as well as living from assent and inclination. For he both thinks and speaks the truth; unless at any time, medicinally, as a physician for the safety of the sick, he may deceive or tell an untruth, according to the Sophists.<sup>13</sup>

Clement supports this statement on deception by calling attention to the Apostle Paul, who circumcised Timothy, though he taught elsewhere that “circumcision made with hands profits nothing” (*Stromata* 7.6). He also stresses that Paul accommodated himself—for example, to the Jews he became a Jew that he might gain all.

Similarly, Origen, a third-century church father, defended Christ’s incarnation against Celsus. Celsus charged that God had deceptively led people to imagine that Jesus was a real manifestation in the flesh when he was actually only a mere appearance. In his defense Origen concedes to Celsus the use of deception like medicine:

We . . . will attempt a reply, because you assert, Celsus, do you not, that it is sometimes allowable to employ deceit and falsehood by way, as it were, of medicine? Where, then, is the absurdity, if such a saving result were to be accomplished, that some such events should have taken place? For certain words, when savouring of falsehood, produce upon

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sity Press, 1929). Cf. also 2.376c–382b; 414c–e. This concept likely was current earlier than Plato, perhaps in the teachings of Socrates, Plato’s teacher.

<sup>12</sup> Brox, *Falsche Verfasserangaben*, 87–105; Speyer, *Fälschung*, 94–99, esp. p. 95 n. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Clement, *Stromata* 7.53.

such characters a corrective effect (like the similar declarations of physicians to their patients), rather than when spoken in the spirit of truth.<sup>14</sup>

Origen used Celsus's belief in useful deception and conceded, for the sake of argument, in essence, to ask, "So what then, if God did use deception?"—a saving result and corrective effect was still achieved.

Fearing that his candidacy for the episcopate would ruin a friend's chances at the post and thus deprive the church, John Chrysostom postponed his plans to serve as a bishop and then deceptively concealed them from his companion. When Chrysostom's friend discovered the ruse, he did not respond kindly. Chrysostom thus addressed him:

What is the wrong that I have done thee, since I have determined to embark from this point upon the sea of apology? Is it that I misled you and concealed my purpose? Yet I did it for the benefit of thyself who wast deceived, and of those to whom I surrendered you by means of this deceit. For if the evil of deception is absolute, and it is never right to make use of it, I am prepared to pay any penalty you please. . . . But if the thing is not always harmful, but becomes good or bad according to the intention of those who practice it, you must desist from complaining of deceit, and prove that it has been devised against you for a bad purpose . . . and as long as this proof is wanting it would only be fair for those who wish to conduct themselves prudently, not only to abstain from reproaches and accusation, but even to give a friendly reception to the deceiver. For a well-timed deception, undertaken with an upright intention, has such advantages, that many persons have often had to undergo punishment for abstaining from fraud.<sup>15</sup>

John Cassian, a later father, taught that the saints of God may profitably employ a lie like hellebore (a type of flowering plant). Cassian said this:

And so we ought to regard a lie and to employ it as if its nature were that of hellebore; which is useful if taken when some deadly disease is threatening, but if taken without be-

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<sup>14</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.19.

<sup>15</sup> John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 1.8.

ing required by some great danger is the cause of immediate death. For so also we read that holy men and those most approved by God employed lying, so as not only to incur no guilt of sin from it, but even to attain the greatest goodness; and if deceit could confer glory on them, what on the other hand would the truth have brought them but condemnation?<sup>16</sup>

Cassian supported his statements by referring to Rahab and Jacob as examples of those who employed acceptable lies. He pointed out that Rahab “could only escape death by means of this remedy, while Jacob could not secure the blessing of the first-born without it.” He argues further that even “the apostles thought that a lie was often useful and the truth injurious.” He contended that Paul, for example, when he “became all things to all men that he might save all” (1 Cor 9:22) was employing useful deception.

As was seen in the statements above, an analogy often used by these church fathers in such examples is that it is acceptable for a physician to lie to his patients for the sake of their health, like the use of a placebo.

Further support for this patristic viewpoint might even be found in the Old Testament with persons who used deceit mitigated by understandable priorities and circumstances: for example, Abraham, Isaac, David, and as we have already seen, Jacob, Rahab, among others.

### Critique

Although some of the early church fathers did hold to an idea of justifiable deception, the current theory which views the use of the noble lie as justification for writing purported pseudonymous letters in the New Testament is replete with difficulties.

First, one should note that a huge jump is required from the analogy of the physician who uses deception or a placebo to fool his patients for the sake of their health to the acceptable use of deception by early Christians in writing pseudo-apostolic letters. Regarding the medicinal idea, one should consider the evidence of Galen, a second-century doctor, who complained about false

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<sup>16</sup> John Cassian, *Conferences* 17.17. For more on this type of lie see Cassian, *Conferences* 17–25. Cf. Brox, *Falsche Verfasserangaben*, 87–105; Speyer, *Fälschung*, 94–99, esp. 95 n. 2.

works written in his name. He told the story of having overheard the remarks of an educated man who had bought and begun to read a work falsely attributed to him. The man had not even read two lines of the book when he threw it aside as a forgery shouting, "The style isn't Galen's! The title is false!"<sup>17</sup> As a result of this incident, Galen composed the work called *On His Own Books* to foil others from creating and selling forgeries of documents under his name.<sup>18</sup> In this pamphlet, he listed and described the works that were his in order "to avoid false ascriptions to him of inferior writings."<sup>19</sup> Not only did Galen disapprove of this pseudonymous work purporting to be his written property, but he also took special precautions to enable others to detect such forgeries, thus safeguarding against the possibility of wrong material being attributed to him. As it relates to pseudonymity, Dr. Galen's remarks fly in the face of the analogy of the physician's so-called use of deception. Thus, at least in Galen's case, to justify any purported pseudonymous letters in the NT on the basis of the noble lie is difficult.

Second, the theory that the early church used the noble lie to write pseudo-apostolic letters justifiably carries with it a great deal of subjectivity—*viz.*, "Who decided what a noble end was, and what was not?" Surely each pseudepigrapher determined the ends for himself and thus could also deny the claims of others who wrote pseudonymous works. Therefore, Speyer's distinction between orthodox and heretical forgeries cannot be so sharply contrasted.<sup>20</sup>

With this subjectivity one's personal ethics ultimately come into play. On the one hand, Scripture clearly contains the most emphatic precepts and warnings against deceit and lying<sup>21</sup> (e.g., cf. Ps

<sup>17</sup> Metzger, "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha." *JBL* 91 (1972): 6.

<sup>18</sup> Metzger, "Literary Forgeries, 6. See Galen, *On His Own Books*, in J. Marquardt, I. Müller, and G. Helmreich, *Galen scripta minora* 2 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1891), 91–124; cited by Metzger, "Literary Forgeries," 6, and later E. E. Ellis, "Pseudonymity and Canonicity of New Testament Documents," in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honour of Ralph P. Martin* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 212–24; 212 n. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Metzger, "Literary Forgeries, 6. Galen may also have taken this action so that others might not take bad medical advice from people using his name.

<sup>20</sup> D. Penny, *The Pseudo-Pauline Letters of the First Two Centuries* (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1980), 43.

<sup>21</sup> Metzger, "Literary Forgeries," 21.

101:7; Prov 14:5; Eph 4:25; Col 3:9; etc.). Moreover, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth (cf. John 14:17; 16:13), creates a background in which intentional deception would be frowned upon and thus could not flourish.

Such precepts, directives, and effects like those described reflect and support a deontological view of ethics, which holds that “a right action is one whose maxim can be universalized consistently, whereas its opposite cannot be.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, certain formal properties of the act of deception make it right or wrong, other things being equal. Thus, according to this view, if one must not deceive, then everybody must not deceive.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, one has to acknowledge, as mentioned earlier, that there are persons in Scripture who used deception that was mitigated by understandable priorities and circumstances: e.g., Abraham (Gen 12:13; 20:2), Isaac (Gen 26:7), Jacob (Gen 27:19), Elisha (2 Kgs 6:19), David (1 Sam 21:2), and Jehu (2 Kgs 10:18–19).<sup>24</sup> It should be noted, however, that although such examples of deception exist, the Old Testament itself does not condone them—it simply describes them.

Some though may object that the Old Testament does seem to condone deception, e.g., in 1 Kings 22:20–23 in which the Lord himself asks, “Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?” (v. 20, NASB). However, rather than condoning the use of deception, this text seems to be more in the category of God sometimes using evil to accomplish his purposes. God of course is not evil, nor can he be tempted by it, but he will use it for his purposes, e.g., using Assyria in judgment upon Israel, etc. In 1 Kings 22:20–23, God did not appear to deceive, but he used someone else’s deceit—a spirit who steps forward—to achieve his aims (cf. v. 22). It seems akin to what is seen in 2 Thessalonians 2:11 when God sends those who refuse to believe the truth a delusion or deluding spirit so that they will believe “the lie.”

Further, a study of the New Testament terms for “deceive” or “deception” (cf. e.g., the words *apataō/apatē* and the entire *pseud-*

<sup>22</sup> K. E. Yandell, *Christianity and Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: IVP, 1984), 172.

<sup>23</sup> Yandell (*Christianity and Philosophy*, 172) notes that the weakness of a deontological view of ethics is that “wrong actions may turn out to be right (or at least permissible),” or the theory may be “unacceptably obscure regarding precisely what its results amount to.”

<sup>24</sup> Metzger, “Literary Forgeries,” 21.

prefixed word group) also makes it difficult to demonstrate a concept of legitimate deception for the New Testament.<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, as seen earlier, examples of persons who believe that the use of deceit (like the physician with a placebo) was acceptable in mitigating circumstances can be found not only in non-Christian circles of antiquity (cf. again Plato, *Republic* 2.376c–382b; 3.389b, 414c–e), but also in post-apostolic Christian circles.

Examples like those just described reflect and support a consequentialist view of ethics, which holds that what makes an action right or wrong is determined by its foreseen consequences. Thus, if using intentional deception prevents some greater harm, then one is at least permitted, and possibly obliged, to deceive—e.g., the Corrie ten Boom type of situation: if you were hiding Jews, and Nazis came knocking on your door asking whether you were hiding any Jews, would you lie or turn them over? The greatest weakness of such a consequentialist view, however, is that unjust or wrong actions can be sanctioned as morally permissible.

Third, one should note that early church leaders never mention pseudonymous letters in connection with the idea of the noble lie. What sort of things do they discuss in conjunction with the latter concept? As seen earlier, they mention the virtues of Sophist teachers, avoiding the priesthood, etc. Further, we find that when early church figures do encounter pseudonymous letters, they soundly reject them. To be sure, the extant documentary evidence on Christian responses to pseudonymity overwhelmingly shows that the early church viewed pseudepigraphy as deceptive and unacceptable forgery. This fact flies in the face of Brox's claim that early Christians used the "noble falsehood" because they were not concerned with the authorship of writings but instead just with their content.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the idea that the early church acceptably used the noble lie to write pseudo-apostolic letters in the NT is

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<sup>25</sup> E. Schnabel, "History, theology and the biblical canon: an introduction to basic issues," *Themelios* 20.2 (Jan. 1995): 19; idem, "Der biblische Kanon und das Phänomen der Pseudonymität," *Jahrbuch für Evangelikale Theologie*, 3 Jahrgang (1989): 92–95. Cf. also the essay by R. Nicole ("The Biblical Concept of Truth," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge [Leicester: IVP, 1983], 287–98) who studies the language of the OT and NT to show that the full biblical concept of truth consists of factuality, faithfulness, and completeness.

<sup>26</sup> Brox, *Falsche Verfasserangaben*, 26–36.



demonstrably false from the documentary evidence. This essay turns now to that evidence.

### **Some New Testament Evidence Concerning Pseudonymity**

Paul remarked in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 that the false teaching the Thessalonians had believed—that the day of the Lord had come—was not due to him and his associates. No matter through what agency it came—whether by spirit, word, or letter—they had nothing to do with it. He does not seem to have a specific pseudonymous letter or forgery in mind. One can say, however, from 2 Thessalonians 2:2 that Paul would have objected to a pseudonymous letter being attributed to him that contained falsehood, wrong teaching, or inauthentic material that he did not write. With this general categorical disclaimer, he puts a moratorium on pseudonymity.

In Revelation 22:18–19, John warns that no one was to tamper with what he had written by rewriting it in any way, which would subsequently give the impression that the added or subtracted words belonged to him. To meddle in any way with what John had written was to violate his literary work. One can extrapolate from this interpretation to somebody writing another book and falsely attributing it to him using pseudonymity. John would have objected to a pseudonymous letter being attributed to him that contained falsehood, wrong teaching, or inauthentic material that he did not write.

Paul would have frowned upon someone using a facsimile of his signature in a pseudonymous letter that purported to be his. These greetings (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17; Phlm 19) in Paul's own handwriting, which indicated the use of a secretary, provided a sign of his letters' authority and authenticity.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See E. R. Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul*, WUNT 2.42 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 172.

### Some Responses of Early Christian Leaders to Pseudonymity

Many scholars neglect or discount prematurely the judgments of the early church fathers towards pseudonymity.<sup>28</sup> The latter evidence, however, is the only extant documentation of known early Christian responses to pseudepigraphy. Thus, this evidence, coupled with texts viewed from Scripture (e.g., 2 Thess 2:2; Rev 22:18–19; the Pauline signatures), arguably must be the point of departure in any study of pseudonymity and the New Testament. This documentation shows that early Christians were concerned about both the authorship and content of writings and strongly disapproved of the use of deception in a pseudonymous work written by someone who explicitly used the name of an authoritative apostle of Jesus Christ.

For example, Eusebius recorded the response of Serapion, bishop of Antioch (ca. AD 190), to the use of the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* in the church at Rhossus. Serapion initially had allowed the church to read the book, seemingly because he thought it was authentic. When the bishop further examined the work, however, he discovered that it contained heresy and forbade its use. Serapion declared,

For our part, brethren, we receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ, but the writings which falsely bear their names we reject, as men of experience, knowing that such were not handed down to us.<sup>29</sup>

At least three points may be concluded from Serapion's remarks. First, he clearly would not have accepted pseudo-apostolic works—whether orthodox or heretical in content. The bishop drew a sharp distinction between genuine apostolic writings (*bōs Christon*; “as Christ”) and pseudo-apostolic works (*pseudepigrapha*; “false writings”). Second, though Serapion had the heresy<sup>30</sup> of the *Gospel of Peter* in mind when he rejected the writing, he also clearly considered the pseudonymous authorship of the work. The latter

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<sup>28</sup> The study in this section is limited primarily to the attitudes of the ante-Nicene church Fathers towards pseudonymity because their responses are nearest to the apostolic era.

<sup>29</sup> Eusebius, *Ecl Hist* 6.12,2ff.

<sup>30</sup> But see J. W. McCant (“The Gospel of Peter, Docetism Reconsidered,” *NTS* 30 [1984]: 258–73) who argues that the *Gospel of Peter* does not contain heretical teaching.

conclusion is reached because, in the bishop's statement, the phrase "in their names" (*ta onomati autōn*) is used to describe the pseudepigrapha he rejected. Third, Serapion pointed out that the church did not knowingly hand down pseudo-apostolic writings. Both the heresy contained in the *Gospel of Peter* and its claim to authorship by an apostle were factors in the book's rejection by Serapion. He viewed pseudo-apostolic works as unacceptably deceptive.

Tertullian wrote a work entitled *On Prescription Against Heretics* in which he emphasized that orthodox Christian doctrine should originate only from the apostles.<sup>31</sup> He stated,

It remains, then, that we demonstrate whether this doctrine of ours, of which we have now given the rule, has its origin in the tradition of the apostles, and whether all other *doctrines* do not ipso facto proceed from falsehood.<sup>32</sup>

Tertullian clearly was concerned about both the authorship and the content of a work. Neither criterion was to be excluded when considering writings for acceptance by the church. Further, his opinion of teaching that did not come from the apostles is uncomplimentary—he says that it proceeds from falsehood—thus his conclusion does not favor the use of deception in a pseudonymous work written by someone using an apostle's name.

Tertullian also recorded that Asian church elders ousted a colleague from his post for writing out of "love for Paul" (a noble intention) the apocryphal *Acts of Paul*, which included the pseudo-apostolic letter of *3 Corinthians*.<sup>33</sup> Despite the presbyter's profession that he had meant well when he wrote the work, his action was treated as deserving of removal from office. The elders condemned the man either for writing a work that fictitiously bore Paul's name or for composing a fiction about the apostle and not because, in the apocryphal story, he had allowed a woman to baptize. The latter conclusion is reached because, in Tertullian's account, the elders condemned the presbyter immediately after he

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<sup>31</sup> T. D. Lea, "Pseudonymity and the New Testament," in *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. D. A. Black and D. S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 535–59; 539.

<sup>32</sup> Tertullian, *On Prescription Against Heretics* 21. Cf. *Against Marcion* 4.3 where Tertullian suggests that a true version of the gospel is not that of Marcion but that which is from the apostles.

<sup>33</sup> Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17.

had confessed that he was the author of the *Acts of Paul*. Only later did Tertullian complain about the book's teaching on baptism. The early church clearly regarded the deceptive and fictive use of an apostle's name with disdain.

While discussing the corporeality of God, Origen mentioned the *Doctrine of Peter*, which he rejected because it was "not included among the books of the Church and . . . not a writing of Peter nor of anyone else inspired by the Spirit of God."<sup>34</sup> Presumably, Origen rejected the *Doctrine of Peter* because of its inauthenticity. He does not sound like someone who would have approved of the use of deceptive pseudonymity, here in Peter's name.

The work entitled the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* has sometimes been assigned to the apostolic age and also attributed to Clement, the bishop of Rome.<sup>35</sup> However, the book is most likely a third-century document, which has had later additions.<sup>36</sup> This document consists of moral laws and instructions, guidelines for church leaders, and exhortations for those facing martyrdom.<sup>37</sup> One passage in this work censures pseudepigraphal writings:<sup>38</sup>

For you are not to attend to the names of the apostles, but to the nature of the things, and their settled opinions. For we know that Simon and Cleobius, and their followers, have compiled poisonous books under the name of Christ and of his disciples, and do carry them about in order to deceive you who love Christ, and us His servants.<sup>39</sup>

Some point out that this writer's words plainly indicate that the early church fathers were concerned about the content of writings and not their authorship.<sup>40</sup> This generalization, however, does not hold true if the *Constitution's* statement is interpreted in the following way: "These particular works are not from the apostles; we know that these writings are not by the apostles because they are heretical. Therefore, do not pay attention to the names attached to

<sup>34</sup> Origen, *On Principles*, Preface 8.

<sup>35</sup> A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, *ANF* 7:387–90; 389.

<sup>36</sup> Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF* 7:388.

<sup>37</sup> As rightly noted by Lea, "Pseudonymity and the NT," 540; idem, "The Early Christian View of Pseudepigraphic Writings," *JETS* 27 (1984): 70.

<sup>38</sup> This censure is notable because the following words occur in a document which itself may arguably be called pseudonymous.

<sup>39</sup> *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* 6.16 (ETr.: Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF* 7:457, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids/Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> E.g., David Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), 12.

these documents as though they were authored by the apostles.”<sup>41</sup> Clearly, the passage reflects an unknown Christian writer’s opinion towards pseudonymity which has originated from heretical sources, but both the orthodox content of a work and its authorship were factors when scrutinizing a document. Further, he strongly denounces pseudepigraphal writings as “poisonous books” meant to deceive—they use deceit to deceive—hardly a noble aim.

Other writings exist which indicate that the early church was quite concerned with the authorship of works and not just content. The latter statement is reflected in the fact that certain apostolic pseudepigrapha, though orthodox in their content and raising no doctrinal objections, were nonetheless excluded from the church’s canon.<sup>42</sup> Some works of this nature are the *Preaching of Peter*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Epistle of the Apostles*, the *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca*, and the extant *Epistle to the Laodiceans*.

Some of the language which early church leaders used to describe pseudonymous writings should also be considered briefly. These terms were certainly not complimentary and indicate that pseudo-apostolic works were viewed by them as unacceptably fraudulent and deceptive writings—for example, *perperam scripta* (“falsely written”),<sup>43</sup> *finctae* (“forged”),<sup>44</sup> and *pseudepigrapha* (“false writings”).<sup>45</sup> Surely the early church did not embrace pseudonymous writings that it described in such a pejorative fashion.

Though Ehrman says that “forgers themselves may have excused their activities to themselves on the grounds that they were accomplishing more good than evil in lying about their identity in order to have their point of view heard,” he is correct when he remarks, “We do not have any evidence of any Christian forger being welcomed and supported for his attempt to achieve a greater good through an act of deception.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Comments are mine.

<sup>42</sup> Ellis, “Pseudonymity,” 218.

<sup>43</sup> Description of the *Acts of Paul* in Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17.

<sup>44</sup> Description in the Muratorian Canon of the *Epistles to the Laodiceans* and the *Alexandrians*.

<sup>45</sup> Description by Serapion of pseudo-apostolic works recorded in Eusebius, *Ecccl Hist* 6.12,2ff.

<sup>46</sup> Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery*, 136. He also states, “One can easily imagine a situation where later followers of Paul, Peter, James, Thomas, or any of the other apostles may have thought that by producing a writing in the name of their

The exclusion of pseudepigrapha by the early church favors the following positions (all of which oppose the “noble falsehood” claims of Brox and Speyer examined in this article). First, we have seen that *both* the authorship of writings *and* their content were important criteria for the early church when determining which books were to be recognized or rejected as having normative status. These criteria appeared to fit together hand-in-hand. The content of a document was often used as a barometer to gauge its authenticity. If a work was judged heretical, it was considered inauthentic, and if inauthentic, then it was not used publicly in the churches. Only where a document was thought to meet both criteria was it ever recognized as normative and accepted for public reading in the churches. In other words, the early church would not have knowingly accepted or allowed either pseudo-apostolic or heretical works to be read publicly in the churches along with the apostolic writings. Second, Christians clearly did not regard the deceptive/fictive use of an apostle’s name with indifference. Third, evidence is lacking for any acceptable convention of pseudonymity amongst orthodox Christians, especially one that permitted the use of deception in pseudonymous works to achieve noble aims.

Despite the latter conclusion, some scholars object that the evidence of later, Gentile Christian attitudes towards pseudepigrapha is anachronistic and should not be used to judge the first-century, Jewish Christian phenomenon of pseudonymity. But the clear, undeniable fact is that second-century orthodox Christianity onwards strongly disapproved of pseudonymity, and it is highly improbable that first-century Christians had a different opinion on the matter.<sup>47</sup> Why? At least one reason is that large departures from the norm over relatively short periods of time are unlikely.

In sum, the defense of the presence of forgeries in the New Testament with an appeal to an ancient idea known as the “noble lie” is demonstrably untenable. This theory as it pertains to New Testament documents should be put to rest once and for all.

teachers . . . they could deal more effectively with a problem that had arisen or with a situation that had to be addressed.” Unfortunately, he goes on to find several forgeries in the NT: Acts, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude.

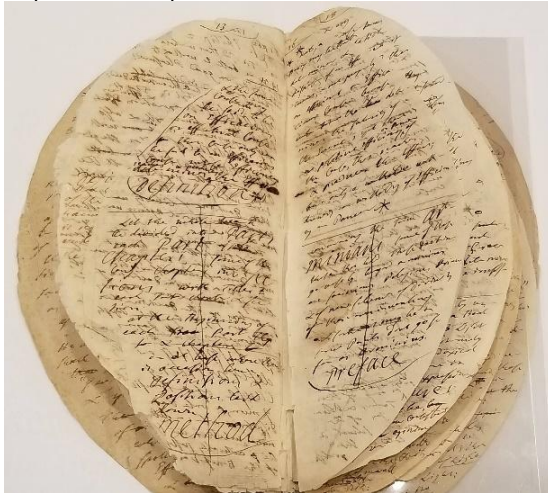
<sup>47</sup> David Meade (*Pseudonymity and Canon*, 206) denies a continuity of attitudes between the first and later centuries, but his arguments are unconvincing; see my work in *Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception: An Inquiry into Intention and Reception* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004).

## Wealth and Poverty in the Life and Thought of Jonathan Edwards

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Yale University invited me to be one of the speakers for the “Yale and the International Jonathan Edwards Conference” on October 2–4, 2019.<sup>1</sup> This meeting brought together prominent Edwards scholars and the directors of the international Jonathan Edwards Center affiliates from around the world. While the paper presentations were uniformly interesting, I particularly enjoyed the special exhibition from the Edwards Collection at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library hosted by Ken Minkema, director of JEC at Yale. Among several fascinating handwritten manuscripts, one peculiar artifact caught my attention, so I took out my phone and captured the photo below.



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<sup>1</sup> This paper was delivered on November 16, 2021, at the meeting of Evangelical Theological Society, Fort Worth, Texas. I am grateful to John Shouse for not only accompanying me to this conference but also giving me valuable feedback on an earlier draft of this paper.

After her husband was dismissed from the Northampton parish, Sarah Edwards and her daughters helped support the family's livelihood by making decorated fans out of silk paper. Ironically, the "great" Jonathan Edwards, who Harvard's Perry Miller once dubbed as "the greatest philosopher-theologian yet to grace the American scene,"<sup>2</sup> was financially unable to purchase enough paper to support all his writing endeavors. As a consequence, Edwards had resorted to writing down his thoughts on scraps of papers, including leftover scraps of pages from fans. This photograph of a leftover fan illustrates the extent of poverty Edwards and his family experienced during his lifetime.

Young Edwards had not been raised in poverty. On the contrary, he was brought up in an aristocratic setting. When Solomon Stoddard passed away in 1729, Edwards succeeded his maternal grandfather and became the Northampton congregation's pastor—one of the wealthiest and most influential parishes in the colony. However, as Edwards moved to Stockbridge in 1751 after the dismissal from his pastorate, he experienced poverty firsthand. The two towns of Northampton and Stockbridge could not have been more contrasting in terms of their social and economic standing. The former was an economic hub for commerce, and the latter was a wilderness outpost on the western frontier at the edges of civilized society in colonial America.

Three years before the venerable Stoddard's death, twenty-four-year-old Edwards came from Yale to Northampton to be groomed to take over one of the most illustrious pulpits in a wealthy town in Massachusetts. This congregation was able to attract Edwards with ten acres of land, £380 for his house, and a salary of £100.<sup>3</sup> The Northampton parish could afford to offer such a generous package to Edwards because, while it was no Boston, there had been rapid economic growth that took place in the 1720s. By the 1730s, Northampton had become firmly established as a center of commerce. With the energetic trading activity, a new

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<sup>2</sup> Perry Miller, "General Editor's Note," in *Freedom of the Will, The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), viii.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Valeri, "The Economic Thought of Jonathan Edwards," *Church History* 60, no. 1 (1991): 39–41. For detailed account of economic situation in town of Northampton, see Patricia Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor: Religion and Society in Eighteenth-Century Northampton*, Jonathan Edwards Classic Studies Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).



wealthy class composed of entrepreneurs and merchants emerged. Edwards pastored this congregation for twenty-one years from 1729–1750.

Long before his time as a Stockbridge missionary, Edwards displayed an unselfish, compassionate and caring attitude in the midst of his Northampton parish. The imperative of helping the poor and marginalized was always a prominent yet underappreciated part of his teachings. In 1738, Edwards preached a series of fifteen sermons, entitled *Charity and Its Fruits*,<sup>4</sup> based on 1 Corinthians 13:1–10. In the context of pastoring a cold-hearted, self-interested, and materialistic congregation, the Northampton Pastor exhorted his parishioners to understand that true Christians are known by their fruit. For Edwards, “charity” was synonymous with “love.” He dealt with these ten compact verses. Much attention is given to how to treat and care for the poor. Gerald McDermott put it as “exhorting the middle and upper classes at Northampton to empty their pockets and give” because of the increasing distance that had grown between the wealthy and the poor in the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

In typical Edwardsean fashion, his compassion toward the poor was not grounded in some altruistic goodness of humanity or humanitarian effort. In fact, Edwards had a bleak view of human nature. Rather, his call to reach out to the poor flowed from his theocentric vision. In the first sermon of this particular series, Edwards preached, “Love to God is the foundation of a gracious love to men.”<sup>6</sup> In his seventh sermon, focusing on 1 Corinthians

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<sup>4</sup> Edwards divided the 1 Corinthians 13 text this way: sermon one (1 Cor 13:1–3), sermon two (1 Cor 13:1–2), sermon three (1 Cor 13:3), sermon four (1 Cor 13:4a), sermon five (1 Cor 13:4b), sermon six (1 Cor 13:4c–5a), sermon seven (1 Cor 13:5b), sermon eight (1 Cor 13:5c), sermon nine (1 Cor 13:5d), sermon ten (1 Cor 13:6), sermon eleven (1 Cor 13:7a), sermon twelve (1 Cor 13:7b), sermon thirteen (1 Cor 13:7c), sermon fourteen (1 Cor 13:8), and finally sermon fifteen (1 Cor 13: 8–10). See Kyle Strobel, ed. *Charity and Its Fruits: Living in the Light of God’s love by Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 19–20. For background, George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 190–92.

<sup>5</sup> For details, see Gerald McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1992), 158.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits* in *Ethical Writings: The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 133.

13:5, “love is not self seeking,” he urges his congregation to avoid a selfish spirit. For Edwards, humankind “shrunk from its primitive greatness” into a narrow “confinedness” immediately after the fall.<sup>7</sup> Before the fall, the human soul was governed by “divine love” and was “enlarged to a kind of comprehension of all [its] fellow creatures.” But after the fall, this “enlargedness of [the] soul” was immediately lost, shrunk, and “shut up within itself to the exclusion of others.” In human souls, “God was forsaken” and “fellow creatures were forsaken” and humans, from this point on, were “governed by narrow, selfish principles.” Edwards, therefore, preached, “Self-love” became the absolute master of the soul. However, God granted mercy to “miserable” humankind through the work of redemption “by the glorious gospel of his Son.” God brought out humanity from this narrow confinement and, once again, “infused” those principles by which the soul was governed.<sup>8</sup> Edwards told his congregation to restore those “excellent enlargement[s] and extensiveness to the soul.”<sup>9</sup> He admonished his parishioners to exercise “divine love” and “Christian charity” because embracing their fellow creatures is an inescapable mandate of being “devoted to the Creator.” Thus, the Northampton pastor encouraged “charity . . . [which] seeketh not her own [and] is contrary to a selfish spirit” as being the sum of the Christian spirit.<sup>10</sup> This Edwardsean idea of “disinterested benevolence,” which placed happiness in the “common good” rather than restricted within an individual soul’s “confined good,”<sup>11</sup> can be seen to play out in Edwards’s ardent advocacy on behalf of the Mohican Indians in the face of the ruling white elites. This doctrine of disinterested benevolence can also be seen to pave the way for and was used by his nineteenth-century Edwardsean successors in the development of the antislavery movement and activism that was to come.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> WJE 8:253.

<sup>8</sup> WJE 8:253.

<sup>9</sup> WJE 8:254.

<sup>10</sup> WJE 8:254.

<sup>11</sup> WJE 8:257.

<sup>12</sup> See John T. Lowe, “Destruction and Benevolence. The New Divinity and Origins of Abolitionism in Edwardsean Tradition,” in *Jonathan Edwards within the Enlightenment: Controversy, Experience, & Thought*, New Directions in Jonathan Edwards Studies, vol. 7, eds. John T. Lowe and Daniel N. Gullotta (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020); Kenneth P. Minkema, “Jonathan Edwards’s

One of the most practical aspects of Edwards's social ethics and concern for justice may be found in his four-part sermon series entitled *The Duty of Christian Charity to the Poor*. He delivered these sermons in January of 1733 to a congregation that consistently resisted social action for the lowly. For Edwards, being "kind and bountiful to the poor" is seen "not only as a duty, but as a great duty." The Northampton pastor says that if people think this is not a "duty of very great importance," then they are seriously mistaken. Scripture recognizes helping the marginalized as being one of the "essential duties." As Micah 6:8 puts it, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" In explaining this verse, Edwards observed that "to love mercy" is mentioned as one of the three great mandates that are the sum of all religion. Further, he pointed out by citing Matthew 23:23 that Christ rebuked the Pharisees for omitting the "weightier matters of the law," which include mercy and faith. He noted that the Scripture teaches us again and again that concern for the poor is "a more weighty and essential thing than attending the outward ordinances of worship; Hosea 6:6 declares, 'I desired mercy, and not sacrifice'" (Matt 9:13; 12:7).

In this sermon *The Duty of Christian Charity to the Poor*, Edwards answers eleven possible objections on giving to the poor. All of them are worthy of reading and deeper reflection. I personally found them convicting and to speak powerfully and relevantly to the cry for social justice in our time. Given our limited time together, however, I will underscore only three.<sup>13</sup>

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Defense of Slavery" *Massachusetts Historical Review*, vol. 4, Race & Slavery (2002): 23–59; Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney, eds. *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). For Britain, see Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). For America, see Gary B. Nash. *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> First Objection: "I am in a natural condition, and if I should give considerable to the poor, I should not do it with a right spirit, and so should get nothing by it." Second Objection: "If I am liberal and bountiful, I shall only make a righteousness of it, and so it will do me more hurt than good." Third Objection: "I have given to the poor in times past and never found myself the better for it." Fourth Objection: "Again, some may object against charity to such or such

In the seventh objection he cites, Edwards addresses whether a needy person ought to be an object of charity or not; that is, what if we are not sure the person is really in “poverty”? Some of his Northampton parishioners apparently needed to be entirely convinced of the need for charity and wanted to know how the poor came to be in poverty in the first place. They wanted to see if it was the poor person’s own idleness and wastefulness that was the cause. They refused to give until they knew this information, just in case the poor were actually lying about their needs. In response, Edwards reprimanded them not to act like Nabal in 1 Samuel 25, who over-examined before providing relief. “Who is David?” Nabal asked. As far as he knew, David could be escaping from his master. Nabal jumped to the conclusion that no aid was necessary and, as a result, refused to give food to David in exile. Edwards commends the scriptural rebuke and chastises Nabal for raising the objection that “David was a stranger to him.” Not knowing a neighbor is not reason enough to refuse help. Edwards observes, “God exceedingly frowned on Nabal’s behavior here” and, as a result, ten days later, Nabal died (1 Sam 25:38).<sup>14</sup> In this sermon, Edwards pressed his congregation, by contrast, to follow Hebrews

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particular persons, that they are not obliged to give ’em [charity], for though they are [in] need yet they ben’t in extremity. ’Tis true, they meet with difficulty, but yet not so but that they can live, though they suffer some hardships.” Fifth Objection: “Some may object against charity to a particular object, that he is an ill sort of person and has been injurious to them. He don’t deserve that people should be kind to him; he is of a very ill temper; he is of an ungrateful spirit and is an ill sort of man upon other accounts.” Sixth Objection: “Some may object from their own circumstances, that they have nothing to spare.” Seventh Objection: “Some may object, concerning a particular person, that they don’t certainly know whether he be an object of charity or no. They ben’t perfectly acquainted with his circumstances; they don’t know what sort of man he is; they don’t know whether he be in want, as he pretends, or, if he be, they don’t know how he came to be in want, whether it was not by his own idleness, or whether he was not a spendthrift. They argue that they ben’t obliged till they certainly know.” Eighth Objection: “Some may say they ben’t obliged to give to the poor till they ask.” Ninth Objection: “He has brought himself to want by his own fault.” Tenth Objection: “Some may object and say others don’t do their duty. If others did their duty, the poor would be sufficiently supplied.” Eleventh Objection: “The law makes provision for the poor and obliges the town to provide for them.” See Jonathan Edwards, *The Duty of Christian Charity to the Poor in Sermons and Discourses 1730–1733: The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 17, ed. Mark Valeri (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 390–403.

<sup>14</sup> WJE 17:399.

13:2 and to be “not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”<sup>15</sup> Because we simply do not, and in many cases we cannot, know the circumstances of strangers; our aid may be in service of an angel.

The ninth objection Edwards cites is the notion that the poor have brought poverty on themselves by their own actions. In other words, the poor are responsible for their own poverty. In response, Edwards explores four possibilities of what the accusation of the poor’s responsibility for their poverty by their own wrongdoing could mean. First, it could mean poverty was the result of the lack of natural faculties. Providential faculties, however, are none other than gifts “that God bestows on some and not on others.” Thus, the most appropriate response to the disparate apportioning of gifts is for those who have been granted gifts to thank God and help those who are without such gifts. The Northampton pastor illustrates this principle by saying, “he that has sound feet should be willing to lead the lame.” Second, even if the poor should be blamed for their own oversight, this does not mean it frees the more privileged from the obligation to provide relief for them. If the more fortunate should refuse to help the poor, they are in some measure responsible and that would be to treat them as if they had committed “an unpardonable crime,”<sup>16</sup> which is quite contrary to the gospel that insists on forgiveness. The privileged do not withhold relief toward those they hold dear—children, family members, and close friends. They regularly lend help to their needs. Likewise, Edwards counsels, just as Christ loved us in our need, we ought to have dear affection and concern for the welfare of all fellow humans. Third, if the needy became poor by “idleness,” Edwards reasoned, his congregation is still not excused from its obligation to relieve them unless they continue in their idleness. If they do not continue, Edwards argues, the gospel directs us to forgive them. But if we do otherwise than forgive, we are acting contrary to how Christ loved us. The pastor preached on, “Now, Christ has loved us, pitied us, and greatly laid out himself to relieve us from that want and misery that we brought on ourselves by our own folly and wickedness.”<sup>17</sup> However, if the needy still continue in the same course in their “idleness,” Ed-

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<sup>15</sup> WJE 17:400.

<sup>16</sup> WJE 17:401.

<sup>17</sup> WJE 17:402.

wards counsels his congregation that does not excuse them from helping family members who are innocent. Moreover, if family members cannot be helped without also helping idle persons, then that should not bar charity. It is better, Edwards reasoned, that we lose something in our estate than suffer those who are really objects of charity to remain in suffering without relief.

The eleventh objection addresses another excuse. Namely, “the law makes provision for the poor,” and the “town” (or government)<sup>18</sup> will take care of them. In other words, taxes will take care of the poor, so it is no longer an individual responsibility. Edwards explains that this objection is built on two false assumptions. First, people falsely assume that the government is obliged by law to relieve everyone. The law was never intended to “cut off all occasions for Christian charity.” It is fitting that the law should make some provision for those with no estates of their own, but it was never designed to give relief to all who are in need. The second supposition is “equally false.”<sup>19</sup> Edwards observes that the “town” does not, in fact, actually relieve those who are in need. He pinpoints the obvious by voicing, “A man must hide his eyes to think otherwise.”<sup>20</sup>

These eleven answers to possible objections highlighted Edwards’s thinking on wealth and poverty long before he left for Stockbridge. The Northampton pastor vigorously identified and worked to counter the rise of materialism in his congregation. He taught on the importance of Christian charity to the poor with his life and preaching while still in Northampton. His life and ministry in Stockbridge would see this dimension of his thought and teaching take on even more prominence and have the occasion to be modeled in profound ways.

### **Jonathan Edwards and Stockbridge**

Approximately forty miles west of Northampton is the mission town of Stockbridge, a western frontier outpost of Massachusetts. Perhaps Edwards developed a better understanding of the poor

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<sup>18</sup> For Edwards’s political and economic philosophy, see Mark Valeri, “Politics and Economics” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jonathan Edwards*, eds. Douglas Sweeney and Jan Stivermann (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 446–60.

<sup>19</sup> WJE 17:403.

<sup>20</sup> WJE 17:404.

and underprivileged because in different seasons of his life, he, too, experienced poverty. As years went on in the Northampton parish, Edwards's family grew, and what was once a generous salary became inadequate. By 1744, his salary was simply not able to keep up with the expense of raising his eleven children. "All the pettiness of a small town," George Marsden notes, "emerged over the salary issue."<sup>21</sup> Parishioners criticized Edwards and his family for living a lavish lifestyle. Sarah and his daughters were judged based on their clothes. The real issue underlying the leveling of salary had less to do with money than with resentment towards Edwards for taking a stance against the halfway covenant and his refusal to allow young people the sexual freedom they so desired. The Northampton pastor was frustrated by the fact that every year, he had to practically beg the town to increase his salary to keep up with the ever-increasing cost of living.<sup>22</sup>

After Edwards's dismissal from his posh congregation in Northampton, instead of taking on another prestigious pulpit in Scotland at the invitation of his dear friend, John Erskine, in 1751 Edwards settled in the untamed land of Stockbridge where he would engage in missionary work to American Natives. Edwards's predecessor in Stockbridge, John Sergeant, built his house completely away from the Indians. By contrast, Edwards built his home among his Indian congregants so he could interact with them daily. Edwards chose to live among the poor, much like St. Francis of Assisi, in what today might be called an example of "incarnational ministry." On this particular point, one might say Edwards resembled the "Franciscan" spirit.

Relocating to Stockbridge was a trying time for Edwards's family. Not only was there financial stress, but he was also moving his family to an unsafe environment in at least two different ways. First was the ever-present threat of the French-Indian War. The French had recruited and drafted Indians to join forces with them in attacking the British colonies. In the summer of 1754, three years after Edwards had moved to the frontier, Stockbridge suffered several brutal Indian raids, and colonists were murdered or taken captives. Minkema described the living situation as one

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<sup>21</sup> Marsden, *A Life*, 302.

<sup>22</sup> Marsden, *A Life*, 391–92.

where Edwards and his family “lived in daily fear of attack.”<sup>23</sup> He was forced to make contingency plans for the sudden evacuation, if need be, of his family. Poverty is often experienced amid unpredictability, which can easily erode a sense of security. It was amid such a situation that Edwards and his family ministered for seven years.

The second insecurity was found in the reality of the many potential diseases and pathogens to which Edwards’s family was subject. Edwards had a scientific mind, and his personal letters to friends are filled with medical advice and concern for preventing diseases such as smallpox and tuberculosis that took the life of David Brainerd. Ironically, a smallpox inoculation and plans to relocate his family to the safer living environment of New Jersey would cost Edwards his life. In any case, even during one of the heights of the awakening, Edwards once declined an invitation to preach in a town, stating that his wife was pregnant. As a concerned father, he did not want to risk his wife and children’s health by carrying home a contagious disease that had spread in that town.

During his time at Stockbridge, both Jonathan and Sarah suffered from an illness that nearly killed them. Yet for all his precautions and concerns in disease prevention, inoculation, and cure, Edwards not only located his family in an area more prone to illness, he and his family interacted daily with the natives—even catechizing them in their home. Edwards encouraged his children to play with Indians. Jonathan Edwards Jr. spent a great deal of time with Mohican children and came to speak their language fluently.<sup>24</sup> Even more exemplary is the fact that Edwards clearly came to identify with the Native Americans. It is evident from his writings that the more time he spent ministering to them, the greater was his affection toward them. In one of his Stockbridge letters, dated May 10, 1754, and written to his longtime colleague Thomas Prince, Edwards refers to these Stockbridge natives as “my people.”<sup>25</sup> Edwards’s personal missionary profile in Stockbridge is

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<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Minkema, “Jonathan Edwards’s Life and Career: Society and Self,” in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America’s Theologian*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>24</sup> Marsden, *A Life*, 390.

<sup>25</sup> Edwards refers to Mohawk natives as “my people” not once but twice in this letter. See Jonathan Edwards, “To the Reverend Thomas Prince” in *Letters and Personal Writings: The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16, ed. George Claghorn



evaluated by Rachel Wheeler as being “a man of his time, with some notable differences.”<sup>26</sup> Edwards did share the prevailing assumption of his day that viewed Indian culture as inferior. Yet, Edwards also believed counter-culturally that the Natives with whom he worked and came to love were intellectually equal to whites and entirely capable of learning Christian doctrine. He used the Socratic form of question and answer, the same method he used to teach his own children, to catechize the Native Americans in his charge.

Albeit Edwards was not a particularly extroverted individual, he cared for the Natives and their interests deeply. During this period, he became their strongest advocate. The Stockbridge missionary was energetic and forceful in protecting the Natives from being swindled by European settlers who took advantage of the Natives’ unfamiliarity with English property laws. According to Roy Paul, the great “land grab” of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed many American Indian tribes systematically bring swindled out of their landholdings, only to be displaced to less valuable properties. This was the case among Mohican Indians but less so under Edwards’s watch. It is no coincidence that in the years of 1751–1758, which correspond to Edwards’s ministry at Stockbridge, this land-grabbing scheme subsided only to resume again after Edwards’s passing.<sup>27</sup> In Stockbridge, Edwards not only lived among the oppressed Native Americans, but he advocated for the poor against powerful colonialists.

## Conclusion

Edwards grew up a card-carrying member of the wealthy elite class. Nevertheless, even as he located amidst and spoke to that

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(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 633. Edwards calling to Indian “my people” would be following the example of David Brainerd who also called displaced natives “my people.” See David Brainerd, “Diary on April 14, 1747,” in *The Life of David Brainerd: The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 7, ed. Norman Pettit (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 442.

<sup>26</sup> Rachel Wheeler, “Edwards as Missionary,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 209. For extensive treatment on Edwards and Stockbridge see, also Rachel Wheeler, *To Live upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Roy M. Paul, *Jonathan Edwards and the Stockbridge Mohican Indians: His Mission and Sermons* (Ontario: H&E, 2020), 93.

culture, Edwards did not overlook the social dimensions of the gospel and the scriptural support for it. When he moved to Stockbridge in 1751 after his dismissal from the Northampton pastorate, he experienced poverty firsthand. His writings and preaching ministry during that time targeted charity toward the poor, needy, and marginalized people of society. Edwards indeed had feet of clay; he was a slaveholder, which has tarnished his reputation in recent days—especially in the context of the contemporary movement of “cancel culture” (I have much to say on this subject and even held a virtual conference on this theme).<sup>28</sup> That said, his sermons *Charity and Its Fruits* and *The Duty of Christian Charity* speak with clarity, and challenge us today to think about God and human affairs relating to the poor in our society. Edwards’s missionary years in Stockbridge offer a model by which contemporary Christians might profitably approach social justice issues in our time.

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<sup>28</sup> In addition to social distancing, in 2020, America witnessed civil unrest, political turmoil, and the “cancel culture” tear down of numerous statues of historical figures. A statue of John Greenleaf Whittier, an American Quaker poet and an ardent advocate of the abolition of slavery, was among those vandalized. Sadly, Jonathan Edwards was also among the important figures upon whom various social media outlets and “influencers” placed a bullseye. In response, I led the Jonathan Edwards Center at Gateway to host a virtual event on November 2, 2020, to address this issue directly. The theme was “Jonathan Edwards and Slavery: Christian Leadership with Feet of Clay.” It produced a lively conversation that was well received. In “news interview” style, I moderated the discussion of three speakers. First, Ken Minkema, the Director of the JEC at Yale University and an expert on this historical question, brought his erudite perspective to the conversation. He was joined by two African-American voices. James Westbrook, an alumnus of Gateway and pastor of Realm Church in Oakland, spoke appreciatively of the way Edwards contributed to his ministry and even his experience as an African-American pastor. Finally, Leroy Gainey, Senior Professor of Educational Leadership, and the first trustee-elected African-American professor in Southern Baptist history, addressed the broader subject of the legacy of Christian leaders who lived and died before the abolitionist movement.

## Book Reviews

*Augustus Hopkins Strong and the Struggle to Reconcile Christian Theology with Modern Thought.* By John Aloisi. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2021. 177 pages. Paperback, \$29.95.

Augustus Hopkins Strong (1836–1921) is a towering figure in the Northern Baptist tradition. In the 2001 edition of *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, a chapter on Strong follows the “prince of preachers,” Charles H. Spurgeon. Strong served as the president of Rochester Theological Seminary from 1872–1912 and is best known for his three-volume *Systematic Theology*, a standard text for Baptist seminarians until the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Strong is arguably the last theologian from the New England tradition whose views could comport with conservative and evangelical readings of Scripture. Strong was neither a modernist nor a fundamentalist. Rather, he warmly accepted Darwinian evolution but also defended doctrines such as the virgin birth and bodily resurrection. A 2009 single-volume reprint of the 1907 edition of Strong’s *Systematic Theology* by Judson Press features a foreword by Gregory A. Wills, professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. That Strong’s work continues to be read in evangelical circles today indicates that attempts to reconcile his own thought to orthodoxy are ongoing.

In *Augustus Hopkins Strong and the Struggle to Reconcile Christian Theology with Modern Thought*, John Aloisi seeks “to examine the role ethical monism played in Strong’s theology and ministry” (3). While “ethical monism” has an obtuse and pedantic ring, Aloisi explains the term’s meaning for Strong’s theology and his wider intellectual project. Aloisi supplies a swift, engaging summary of his life in the book’s first chapter. This includes details such as the remarkable fact that Augustus’s father, Alvah Strong, was converted under the preaching of Charles G. Finney in 1831 (p. 7), as was Augustus himself in 1856 (p. 14). Strong’s pastoral experience prior to becoming Rochester Theological Seminary’s president, including stints in Cleveland, Chicago, and Haverhill, Massachu-

setts (20–28), reminds readers that Strong did not initially pursue a career in academia.

In the second chapter, Aloisi covers the various intellectual currents and figures whose ideas influenced Strong's thought. This list includes post-Kantian German idealists such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schelling, and G. W. F. Hegel. Lesser-known American idealists such as Josiah Royce and Borden Parker Browne are also named. Aloisi notes that although Strong never cited a single philosophical influence, "references to these men . . . in Strong's *Systematic Theology*, suggest that he viewed them as philosophical sparring partners who sharpened his thinking about issues related to human responsibility, personal existence, and ultimate reality—in short, about what he called ethical monism" (45).

In chapter three, Aloisi includes Strong's definition of ethical monism by quoting from Strong's *Autobiography*, "this general doctrine of Christ's identification with the race because he is the creator, upholder, and life of the universe" (51). The author brings context to this term, noting that trends in science, literature, theology, and philosophy were moving in a monist direction at the end of the nineteenth century, compelling him to harmonize monism with orthodoxy. He believed that ethical monism could maintain "both the freedom of man and the transcendence of God" (55). In a later defense of ethical monism, Strong wrote, "as the attraction of gravitation and the inductive reasoning of evolution are only other names for Christ, so he is the basis for inductive reasoning and the ground of moral unity in creation" (71).

Chapter four explains how Strong's ethical monism impacted three doctrinal areas: 1) Scripture and experience, 2) evolution and miracles, and 3) sin and atonement (72). As to biblical inerrancy, Strong moved from a "more functional and less objective" view of inspiration (78) later in his career. Aloisi cites Strong's *Autobiography*, in which he claimed to interpret the Bible "from the point of view of the immanence of Christ" (79). As for evolution, the "imminent Christ" likewise constituted the principal cause behind the Darwinian process (83). Strong came to understand miracles as a higher manifestation of natural law. As for the atonement, Strong came to believe that Christ was united to the human race before Adam's fall. He wrote, "Christ therefore, as incarnate, revealed the atonement rather than made it" (91).

The fifth chapter considers Strong's contemporaries and their reception of ethical monism. Readers on the right and left were equally displeased with the system (97). Aloisi considers Strong's acceptance of liberal and conservative faculty members at Rochester as "emblematic" of ethical monism as a whole (109), a non-viable arrangement. He, therefore, concludes that it failed to bring together orthodox theology and modern thought (135).

Notwithstanding Aloisi's claim, later evangelical theologians continued to engage with Strong. Millard Erickson, for example, cites him 36 times in his *Christian Theology*, and Wayne Grudem, cites him 12 times in his *Systematic Theology*. No theologian from 1870–1910, Baptist or otherwise, comes close. Alister McGrath, in his *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, considers Strong's views of inspiration as a *via media* between Romantic subjectivity and Old Princetonian objectivity. These considerations suggest that "failure" at least in terms of influence, might be too strong a word.

It would be trite to claim that Strong too easily accommodated the prevailing philosophical ideas of his day, for this is arguably what every theologian does to some extent. Augustus Hopkins Strong's life and thought demonstrate how far a theologian can wade into the waters of contemporary philosophical currents without being swallowed up. The fact that his legacy is debated today proves that the line which separates an innovator from a heretic is quite thin.

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*Baptists and the Holy Spirit: The Contested History with Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements.* By C. Douglas Weaver. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019. 589 pages. Hardcover, \$74.99.

In *Baptists and the Holy Spirit*, Doug Weaver asks the question, “Have Baptists treated the Holy Spirit like a shy member of the Trinity?” (xi). Weaver is professor of Baptist Studies at Baylor University, where he has served in the Department of Religion since 2003. He earned his PhD from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1985, writing his dissertation about William Branham and his role as a healer-prophet in American Pentecostalism.<sup>1</sup> In *Baptists and the Holy Spirit*, Weaver identifies a gap in the study of Baptist History of the latter half of the twentieth century. Most of these studies have focused on biblical inerrancy or political involvement, but what has been lacking is a scholarly look at the “intriguing and substantive interaction between Baptists and the holiness-pentecostal-charismatic traditions” (xii). Weaver argues that in response to these traditions, Baptists had to clarify their views and experiences of the Holy Spirit, whether they affirmed or opposed their fellow restorationists (xiii).

In Part 1, Weaver describes Baptist interactions with the Holiness Movement of the mid-to-late-nineteenth century. The Holiness Movement began with the “Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness” that started in the home of Phoebe Palmer in 1835 in New York. For Palmer, sanctification was an instantaneous second blessing for those with “naked faith” who “only believe” (3). The Wesleyan focus of the Holiness Movement emphasized how the Holy Spirit empowered believers to overcome their sinful condition. The Keswick focus of the Holiness Movement emphasized how the Holy Spirit empowered believers for witnessing and missions. A. J. Gordon, a Northern Baptist, adopted the Keswick focus by encouraging each believer to seek a baptism of power for service, and he also argued that the ministry of healing was a restoration of New Testament Christianity (24, 30–32). The majority of Baptists, however, did not favor these early holiness ideas. Instead, they “thought perfectionism was an elusive ideal

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<sup>1</sup> “Doug Weaver, Ph.D.: Interim Department Chair, Professor of Baptist Studies,” Baylor University, Department of Religion, College of Arts and Sciences, available at <https://www.baylor.edu/religion/index.php?id=931783>.

and even dangerous to a proper assessment of a person's sinfulness and the need of the cross for constant forgiveness" (57).

In Part II, Weaver describes Baptist interactions with the Azusa Street Revival and the Second-Generation Pentecostals. Adolphus Worrell was a Baptist who reported to other Baptists about the Azusa Street Revival. Worrell noted some fanaticism at the revival, but he also emphasized how genuine revivals usually brought strong emotions. He described how people in this revival were cleansed from their guilt of sin and made right with God. In general, Baptists held negative perceptions of early Pentecostalism as a movement based on anti-intellectualism, and most Baptists believed that the doctrine of cessationism applied not only to faith healing but also to speaking in tongues. Some Baptists did adopt the moderate, non-cessationist position of Christian and Missionary Alliance founder A. B. Simpson, who said about speaking in tongues, "Seek not, forbid not" (271). The most recognizable woman evangelist in American history, Aimee Semple McPherson, had Baptist connections because she was ordained by the First Baptist Church of San Jose, California, in March of 1922. McPherson's revivals were characterized by divine healings and speaking in tongues.

In Part III, Weaver details Baptist interactions with the Charismatic Movement. The Jesus People Movement grew out of the hippie culture of the 1960s, and this movement was characterized by street preaching, coffeehouses, and Christian rock-and-roll music. Their music "appealed to the emotions and personal relationship with God" and "was compatible with evangelical emphases on experiential faith," much like contemporary Christian music today (224). Southern Baptists were generally more concerned with the battle over biblical inerrancy than with the Charismatic Movement, while the American Baptists responded to the Charismatic Movement with either cautious tolerance or avoidance. At the end of the study, Weaver concludes that Baptists have not treated the Holy Spirit as a shy member of the Trinity; rather, Baptists have had extensive interaction with the Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements and have responded with their biblical perspective of the Holy Spirit.

The first strength of this study is how Weaver elaborates on the similarities between Baptists and the Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements. After the first glance at worship services today, a person might think that these two traditions are radically

different. Weaver highlights how both traditions are attempts at restoring the New Testament church. Both traditions take the Bible seriously. Both traditions emphasize experience. Baptists emphasize the personal experience of conversion, and they tend to highlight evangelism, missions, and ministry so that more people can have a relationship with Jesus Christ. The Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements tend to emphasize the personal experience of the Holy Spirit and of the signs and wonders that accompany such an experience, such as those mentioned in Acts 2. A second strength is the time and effort that Weaver gives to discussing gender, race, and class. The irony that Weaver notes time and again is that at one historical moment, the Baptists were considered to be on the fringes of society, and other older main-stream denominations considered them to be uneducated and undignified (149). Now, the Baptists consider those in the holiness movement to be “inadequate at life; in other words, they considered them uneducated, ignorant, and gullible or socially in need of certainty and cultural refinement” (58). A final strength in this book is how Weaver describes the repeated pattern of those who move from the Baptist tradition to the Holiness/Pentecostal experience. Jack Taylor is one example. He attended a Baptist college and seminary and became a Baptist pastor, but “he experienced depression and despair, was trapped in a Romans-chapter-seven lifestyle, and prayed that God would take him in death—all typical elements for those who claimed a holiness or Pentecostal experience” (269).

The difficulty in reading this study is the organization of the material. Weaver is describing Baptist interactions with three movements, Holiness, Pentecostal, and Charismatic. Weaver generally adopts a chronological (diachronic) approach for the whole study, beginning with Phoebe Palmer in 1835 and ending with the twenty-first century. The difficulty lies in determining the beginning and the end of these three movements. Probably, these movements are more fluid than Weaver writes, and even events such as the Azusa Street Revival are not as determinative as Weaver portrays. Also, there are probably more gray areas between the black and white of the Wesleyan Focus and the Keswick Focus. Can there be empowering for missions and evangelism without empowering for personal victory over sin? Perhaps an explanation for this challenge is that Weaver approaches the material as a historian, compared to Anthony Thiselton, who ap-



proached the topic in *The Holy Spirit: In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Eerdmans, 2013) as a theologian.

Weaver's *Baptists and the Holy Spirit* belongs on the shelf in the study of every Baptist minister next to Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water* and for many of the same reasons. Foster traces six dominant Christian traditions throughout history, and he talks about the strengths, weaknesses, and manifestations of each one. In describing these traditions and identifying figures in each tradition, readers begin to see similarities between the traditions. Readers can have more understanding and sympathy with a different tradition when they see the common attempt of all these traditions to try to imitate Jesus Christ and take the Bible seriously. In the same way, readers of Weaver's study will see similar themes that will help these two traditions relate to each other now and in the future—themes such as restoration, experience, revival, piety, and the authority of Scripture.

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*Cultural Intelligence: Living for God in a Diverse, Pluralistic World.* By Darrell L. Bock. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020. 160 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.

In contrast to Darrell Bock's academic works, *Cultural Intelligence* is not aimed at scholars but at Christians and church leaders who are struggling to engage with America's progressively secular culture. He begins by briefly describing the recent changes in American culture that have led many churches to adopt a "culture war" mentality. Bock graciously addresses this flawed mindset in his first chapter by considering six New Testament texts to build a theology of cultural intelligence. Throughout this process, Bock reminds his readers that people are not our enemies and that the church's job is to engage with gentleness and respect, concluding that our relationality and tone are of utmost importance. In his second chapter, Bock uses Paul as a case study of cultural intelligence to determine how the early church engaged its surrounding culture. First, Bock looks at Romans 1:18–32, which Bock classifies as "an in-house conversation where Paul is evaluating the culture for the church" (38). Here, Paul is blunt and direct with his assessment, recognizing society's separation from God. However,

when analyzing Acts 17:16–34, Bock found that Paul addressed this same culture not “with a full-court polemic against his audience’s deeply held beliefs” but “with respect and thoughtfulness as to what aspects of that culture could be a bridge” (46).

Bock’s third chapter is perhaps his most vital. Rather than leaving the challenge of respectful conversation as an abstract generality, Bock proposes that three levels of conversation simultaneously occur: facts, filters, and identity. While most are only aware of the factual level where persuasion via rationale is the goal, Bock explains that people filter the same facts through their individual emotions and perceptions, resulting in different (and sometimes opposing) conclusions. Even deeper than these filters is the identity level: “how our identity and self-understanding are impacted by what we are discussing” (58). Bock argues that this level is the most difficult to navigate and requires a “curiosity and deep consideration” about what is driving both dialogue partners (59). Bock concludes this section with five practical steps to engage respectfully, effectively, and with gentleness. He then outlines five major saboteurs of effective conversation that often go unnoticed by those committing them: 1) dismissing problems raised against one’s point of view, 2) assigning labels to ideas, 3) claiming to know the motive of the opposing viewpoint, 4) refusing to recognize common ground, and 5) tribalism. In contrast, Bock offers five advancers of effective, respectful conversation: 1) engaging the contributing problems of one’s own side, 2) diligently discussing one topic at a time, 3) being honest about your thoughts and convictions, 4) remaining teachable, and 5) allowing room for different levels of certainty. Finally, he describes three categories of issues (core differences, ‘how’ differences, and tension between biblical passages) and wraps up the chapter with a checklist of questions that should lead the adherent toward genuine understanding and effective conversations.

In a slightly disjunct turn, Bock then proposes in his brief fourth chapter that the purpose of salvation is to do good works. He explains that the creation mandate is a call of stewardship, including the stewardship of relationships and resulting in an ‘ethical triangle’ between us, God, and others. This fourth chapter reads almost like a conclusion to the book, leaving the fifth chapter to feel like a rushed, truncated addition of material that could span the length of a book itself. Here, Bock recapitulates his introductory material about the changes in American culture over the re-

cent decades, but with the new assertion that such changes call for a different approach to sharing biblical ideas. Bock argues that “simply citing biblical warrant for things is no longer good enough” and that instead, we must shift our message from “It’s true because it is in the Bible” to “It’s in the Bible because it is true” (90). From here, he describes what he calls the “Bible-to-life” approach which draws principles from one text at a time. While affirming this approach as necessary, Bock claims that it neglects the “questions and tensions” people face (91). He then spends several sections addressing different aspects of the problem before finally offering a solution: the “life-to-Bible” approach. Bock explains that this approach is both canonical and contextual, allowing tensions to exist between various passages as we seek theologically consistent conclusions, while also recognizing the individual, unique contexts of each person’s situation and setting. He does not outline an exact approach but asserts that we must acknowledge tensions between passages, being wary of drawing a “constant or universalizing principle” from a text and instead asking “what in this specific circumstance triggers this response and why Scripture calls for something different in a similar scenario elsewhere” (110). Ultimately, his call seems to be one for nuance and relevance, and he concludes with some brief examples of how certain “hot topics” in our culture can be addressed with the life-to-Bible method.

Bock’s work successfully argues for a gentle, respectful tone while engaging with the culture around us. His exegetical work is brief yet appropriate for his audience, and he offers helpful practical application about how to implement his teachings on respectful conversation. His extensive analysis of conversation components in his third chapter fully equips his readers to engage with their surrounding culture well, particularly because of his attention to the plethora of subconscious elements that would otherwise remain unnoticed by the offending parties. Bock also engages with his skeptical readers well, gently addressing their potential rebuttals or complaints along the way. His own writing style and language reflect his call to gentle and respectful communication. However, his proposal for a “life-to-Bible” approach lacked the practical application present in his discussion on communication and risks leaving his readers unaware of the exact tenets of this method and how to implement it. Each section of his last chapter would perhaps be better explained if Bock stretched them into

individual chapters. As they currently stand, these sections seem slightly disjunct, and Bock only scratches the surface of multiple topics without fully expounding on them enough to encourage application. Perhaps Bock may write a future work dedicated to developing the contents of his “life-to-Bible” approach and providing a structured outline for his readers to follow. Ultimately, however, *Cultural Intelligence* is a helpful work for the general Christian public and particularly for those struggling to engage the culture well. Though the content may seem somewhat repetitive, one can be sure that any reader will not miss Bock’s thesis: our conversations must be respectful and gentle in tone, not stemming from a culture-war mentality.

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*Ethics as Worship: The Pursuit of Moral Discipleship.* By Mark D. Liederbach and Evan Lenow. Phillipsburg, PA: P & R Publishing, 2021. 792 pages. Hardcover, \$49.99.

The two authors are specialists in the academic study of Christian ethics, and they have written an exemplary study for contemporary readers. Liederbach earned graduate degrees from Denver Seminary (MA) and the University of Virginia (PhD). He serves as professor of theology, ethics, and culture; dean of students; and vice president for student services at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Liederbach has authored and co-authored other books on ethics, mentioned in the footnotes and bibliography. Lenow earned his PhD at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and is director of church and ministry relations at Mississippi College and director of the Clinton extension center of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a former student of Liederbach (xxix), and he has written several articles on ethics noted in this book.

These authors state their overall purpose concisely. “Studying ethics is the joyful discovery of what it means to live a life of *worship*. Making this discovery is both the premise and purpose of this book” (xxii). They are aware of the numerous options in classical and contemporary perspectives on Christian and non-Christian ethics, but they contribute a fresh emphasis on Christian worship as the context for ethics. They use “worship” in the larger sense of

a Christian's overall reverence for God and obedience to him in all aspects of life. Worship and discipleship are integrally related for these authors (xxv, 21, 83–87).

This volume is so large and rich that it cannot be adequately summarized in a short review. A brief overview might at least give the flavor and scope of the book. The book is divided into four parts. Part 1 consists of one chapter, "What Is Christian Ethics?" The chapter highlights topics such as rival worldviews and distinguishes areas such as metaethics and applied ethics.

Part 2 is "Revealed Reality: The Metaethical Foundations of Ethics as Worship." Chapters 2 and 3 review the metanarrative storyline of the Bible (creation, fall, redemption, and restoration). Chapter 4 focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit in ethics (e.g., conviction, sanctification, gifting, and guidance). Chapter 5 stresses the role of the Bible in ethics as worship and includes detailed discussions of general revelation, special revelation, biblical infallibility, and rules for hermeneutics.

Part 3 is "Revealed Morality: The Normative Formulation of Ethics as Worship." Chapters 6 and 7 treat the normative methodology they follow, and Chapter 8 tackles complex moral dilemmas.

Part 4, beginning on page 285, deals with "The Application of Ethics as Worship." Some readers might be tempted to jump immediately to this section since it deals with many classical and current ethical issues. Ideally, however, the reader should work through the first three parts in order to better understand the final section. Part 4 consists of chapters 9–19 and offers thoughtful discussions of justice, ethnic relations, wealth and poverty, ecological ethics, capital punishment, war, abortion, end-of-life issues, sexuality, marriage and divorce, and birth control and reproductive technologies. On each topic, the authors examine issues such as social science data, Supreme Court decisions, and key Bible texts. Their biblical interpretations are clear and exegetically solid.

A good example of the clarity and thoroughness of this volume is chapter 8. On the topic of morally complex issues, they use Rahab's lie about the Hebrew spies in Joshua 2 as a point of departure. They first examine six major ethical methods (antinomianism, generalism, situationism, graded absolutism, nonconflicting absolutism, and ideal absolutism). Then they present their approach, humble absolutism. They come back to the Rahab text at the end of the chapter.

Overall, this book is an outstanding contribution to Christian ethics. The authors communicate clearly, and they give fair evaluations of alternative views on each topic. On rare occasions, they seem to slight alternative views held by some evangelicals. For example, on the subject of women, they endorse complementarianism without a full engagement with the view of Christians for Biblical Equality (577). The book's strong content is supplemented by numerous pedagogical features. The book includes footnotes (a favorite for some readers), clear and concise outlines, figures and diagrams, and at the end of each chapter learning aids such as key terms and concepts, key Scriptures, study questions, and suggestions for further reading. At the end of the book, they include a glossary, an extensive bibliography, an index of Scripture passages, and an index of subjects and names.

Many different types of readers would benefit from this stellar volume. The book is clearly designed as a textbook, suitable for college and seminary students. The authors teach such students and know their interests and concerns well. The book includes several endorsements by academic leaders and ministers, suggesting the value of the book for their audiences. Ministers and church staff members will welcome the strong emphasis on the close relationship between worship and ethics. Ministers who treat ethical issues in their preaching and teaching will find a wealth of valuable information in each chapter. Although some lay people might be overwhelmed by the detailed presentation in the first three parts, they could easily engage chapters on specific application issues.

The authors realize that not all evangelicals and Baptists will agree with their conclusions. The author of the Foreword even noted his disagreement on one issue, but he still endorsed the book (xiv–xv). Some readers might wish the authors had treated other ethical issues, but the book presents a methodology that can easily be applied to issues not discussed in detail in their book. Traditional issues such as alcohol, gambling, and tithing are not highlighted. But current issues such as same-sex marriages and transgenderism are explored in light of the Bible.

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*Finding Ourselves after Darwin: Conversations on the Image of God, Original Sin, and the Problem of Evil.* By Stanley P. Rosenberg, Michael Burdett, Michael Lloyd, and Benno van den Tooren, eds. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. 384 pages. Paperback, \$34.00.

*Finding Ourselves after Darwin* is a book of essays for which Stanley P. Rosenberg served as the general editor and Michael Burdett, Michael Lloyd, and Benno van den Tooren served as the associate editors. All of the editors either hold or have held faculty positions at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford and hold to the institution's academic value that "all truth is God's truth, wherever it is found" (6). *Finding Ourselves after Darwin* is one of the products of a project funded by BioLogos, housed at Wycliffe Hall, where contributors from Europe, the United States, South America, and Africa came together for the project titled "Configuring Adam and Eve: Creating Conceptual Space for New Developments in the Science of Human Origins" (10).

The overarching purpose of *Finding Ourselves after Darwin*, according to Rosenberg, is to "model a healthy engagement" with "new scientific discoveries and interpretations" in order to "create space for honest investigation and dialogue" between faith and science (6–7). The contributors' overall thesis is that the "pursuit of truth will ultimately lead to, because all truth comes ultimately from, Jesus Christ" (7). Rosenberg identifies two overarching research questions: 1) "After Darwin and the revolution spawned in genetic research, who are we?" 2) "How do we define ourselves and find our past in light of these revolutions?" (7). The goal of the book is not to establish a line of demarcation of opposition between science and religion but to establish points of apposition.

The layout of the book is easily accessible and clearly stated. After the two introductory chapters by Rosenberg and Tooren, the central three parts begin with an introductory chapter by one of the editors, followed by a leadoff chapter that identifies key issues, with subsequent essays offering differing approaches from theology, history, and philosophy, and a concluding essay by the editor offering a reflection on the topic at hand. Three primary topics are addressed in discrete parts of the book: the image of God (part one), original sin (part two), and the problem of evil (part three). Considering the varied backgrounds of each of the contributors,

some of the views expressed are oppositional but in many cases, the views are either complementary or explanatory.

In the second introductory chapter, Toren explicates an important tool for navigating the interface between Christian faith and science, namely the distinction between doctrine and theological theories that explain doctrine. Doctrines are those articles of faith that the Christian community teaches and by which the church stands or falls. Theological theories, on the other hand, are attempts to explain Christian doctrines. Tension between science and faith often arises not between doctrine and scientific theory but between theological theories and science. Since theological theories are only of relative importance compared to Christian dogmas, they are more flexible when faced with apparent contradictions with modern science. Toren's distinction between doctrine and theological theory is important for properly understanding the rest of the book as the image of God, original sin, and the problem of evil are evaluated.

One of the strengths of *Finding Ourselves after Darwin* is the result of Toren's distinction between doctrine and theological theory. Christians will be encouraged that each of the contributors hold to Christian doctrine even though their theological theories are flexible. The contributors attempt to show that indisputable Christian doctrine is compatible with scientific discoveries in evolutionary biology through the development of flexible theological theories. Christian readers may not agree with the contributor's particular theological explanation but can appreciate their commitment to Christian doctrine.

On the other hand, some readers will be disappointed in the authors' commitment to evolutionary biology. In order to accommodate evolutionary science, many biblical passages concerning the relevant doctrines are reinterpreted in ways that challenge common, literal, and traditional interpretations. Evolutionary theories are seemingly considered to be truths on par with the truths of Christian doctrine. Vince Vitale questions this assumption on the basis that "science is constantly finding new evidence that requires its theories to be revised," whereas Christian doctrine is based on the Bible which is an "authoritative communication from God" (306). As a result, two assumptions should be dismissed: "first, that current majority positions in science are definitive and, second, that there is an obvious conflict between current majority positions in science and there being a fall of two literal



people as described in the biblical book of Genesis” (307). If science comes into conflict with the word of God, then the word of God must take priority in shaping our theological theories.

There are several examples in which priority is seemingly given to evolutionary theory over Christian doctrine as enunciated in the Bible. J. Wentzel van Huysteen argues that the image of God emerged through natural, evolutionary processes such as niche construction which resulted in the religious imagination. The image of God is portrayed as a natural phenomenon rather than a supernatural bestowal by God. Huysteen’s goal is to open a pathway for dialogue between theology and the natural sciences. Though Huysteen’s goal of interdisciplinary dialogue is commendable, the Genesis account seems to draw a clear distinction between humans and animals from the very beginning. The first remark concerning the creation of man and woman includes the statement that they were created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). One other example comes from Christopher M. Hays, who affirms a nonhistorical approach to Genesis 1–3. He argues that “one can indeed affirm the Christian doctrine of sin without believing in the historicity of Adam and Eve” (187). In order to argue against the historicity of Adam and Eve, he points out that Genesis 1 and 2 have conflicting accounts and are contrary to modern scientific findings. Although the authors are remaining faithful to the stated purpose of the book, in the creation of space for interdisciplinary dialogue between science and religion, priority should be given to the teaching of the Bible when conflict arises.

In conclusion, *Finding Ourselves after Darwin*, is an admirable attempt to address the proposals of evolutionary biology concerning human beings in relationship to the relevant Christian doctrines. Each of the contributors recognizes that evolutionary biology has serious implications for Christian doctrine. They attempt to charitably make room for interdisciplinary conversation without the characteristic hostility that many times accompanies the science and religion debate. Furthermore, each of the authors humbly recognizes that more work needs to be done.

Overall, *Finding Ourselves after Darwin* is a challenging and important book. Many of the essays require careful thought, but the dialogue between science and religion concerning the relationship between evolutionary biology and Christian doctrine is an important topic in modern culture worth the time and effort. Christian theologians and pastors, as leaders, should be informed con-

cerning modern scholarship on this relevant topic. This does not mean that the reader must agree with every conclusion but at least be informed enough to be part of the conversation.

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*God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology.*

By Steven J. Duby. In *Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture*, edited by Daniel J. Treier and Kevin J. Vanhoozer. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019. 352 pages. Paperback, \$40.00.

Can one know God as he is in himself? How do Scripture, Christology, natural theology, and metaphysics help one answer this question, and can one integrate them to enrich Christian discourse about God *in se*? In *God in Himself*, Steven J. Duby, associate professor of theology at Grand Canyon University and author of *Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account* (T&T Clark, 2018), offers a robust response to these questions. As a volume of the *Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture* series, edited by Daniel J. Treier and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Duby's book is an evangelical contribution to systematic theology that seeks to help reconcile the study of Christian Scripture and the study of Christian doctrine in dialogue with catholic tradition(s).

Metaphysical and speculative accounts of the doctrine of God are often presented as alternatives to Christocentric accounts that ground the doctrine of God within the economy of salvation. Offering a *tertium quid*, Duby argues that “natural theology, metaphysics, and the incarnation should be brought together and rightly ordered in a constructive account of the Christian practice of *theologia* taken in the strict sense of the word (discourse about the triune God in himself without primary reference to the economy)” (5). To defend his thesis, Duby provides a biblical account of the human knowledge of God in himself, to show that “a theology proper in which God's aseity and completeness are underscored in fact emerges from God's own self-revelation” (5) and to explain how this theology proper helps one understand the proper roles of natural theology, metaphysics, and Christology in the doctrine of God.

In chapter one, Duby puts forward a biblical defense for the pursuit of *theologia* (theology proper) while examining the purpose and object of theology. Out of a desire to be known, God has revealed himself to humanity. Multiple passages of Scripture, such as Exodus 3:13–16, reveal God’s aseity. Through passages such as these, God in himself becomes the object of theology. Scripture balances the knowledge of God with God’s incomprehensibility and places one’s knowledge of God within the history of salvation, indicating that the purpose of theology is union with God. One of Duby’s main points in this chapter is that if revelation (infused theology) includes knowledge of God in himself, then discursive reasoning and systematics (acquired theology) should also include such knowledge.

Having defended the biblical nature of theology proper, Duby spends the following three chapters looking at the roles of natural theology, Christology, and metaphysics within theology proper. He aims to distinguish theology proper from these three disciplines while placing them in right relation to theology proper. Duby calls natural theology “preparation for the school of grace” (59). Scripture points to a natural knowledge of God in creation. This knowledge is a positive element of the divine economy, an aspect of God’s self-revelation to humanity. While limited in objective content and by subjective distortion, it upholds humanity’s awareness that God exists, is merciful, and is deserving of worship and obedience. Duby spends ample time surveying the history of theological viewpoints on natural theology, probing history to clarify the role of natural theology. Duby is clear that natural theology cannot stand on its own but must be viewed in its relationship to the incarnation (131).

For Duby, the incarnation informs theology proper without being its first or only epistemological principle. Refuting Karl Barth and others who place Christology epistemologically prior to theology proper, Duby argues that one cannot understand the person of Christ without access to Scripture, and Scripture portrays Christ as the culmination of God’s revelation, not its first or only principle. Furthermore, the New Testament assumes knowledge of the God of the Old Testament to explain the incarnation and frame the identity of Christ. Nonetheless, Duby explains how Christology contributes positively to theology proper by showing that God’s being transcends his economic works.

Moving on to metaphysics, Duby examines three critiques of the use of metaphysics in theology proper and traces the study of metaphysics from Aristotle to the early modern period. He shows that metaphysics differs from theology proper in that metaphysics is the study of being and God is not a being. Metaphysics, however, can still be useful to theology proper, by giving theologians concepts that help facilitate an understanding of God in himself. Duby's main point on metaphysics is that a well-developed doctrine of God's aseity keeps Christian dogmatics from becoming mere metaphysics and from falling into the flaws of an overly-metaphysical doctrine of God.

Before concluding the book with a short summary and some concluding remarks, Duby spends chapter five of the book addressing the proper use of analogy in theological language. Duby argues that theological language must balance God's transcendence with God's communication of himself. He uses the doctrine of participation to show God's transcendence and communication. His point, made by engaging medieval and early modern thinkers alongside a slew of objections, is that creaturely language applies to God via a specific form of analogy, a point which he defends in technical detail.

Duby's *God in Himself* is a masterful defense of theology proper. Duby clearly presents the issue's landscape, conjoining multiple seemingly disparate disciplines into a cohesive tapestry. Throughout the work, Duby stays focused on his thesis and purpose statement. By the end of the book, the reader can see how theology proper is a biblical discipline, assisted but not governed by natural theology, Christology, and metaphysics. Duby's work to distinguish all of these disciplines hits the mark, and he eruditely proves that the doctrine of God need neither be pure metaphysical speculation nor mere Christology.

The book is a work of prolegomena, setting out the task and proper form of theology proper while not setting out a constructed theology proper. Duby uses a significant amount of Scripture in defending his position. As such, the book truly goes to great lengths to join the studies of Christian Scripture and Christian doctrine. Duby's reliance upon Scripture is balanced by his critical ressourcement of tradition. He constantly engages in dialogue with important theologians from the past, whether from the early church or the twenty-first century.

At times, the historical dialogue can become overly technical. The book, in general, tends to be technical, and it would definitely be difficult to understand for readers without prior cursory knowledge of scholastic metaphysics, classical theism, and the debates pertaining to them. However, for example, when in chapter five Duby wades through the various types of analogies while entertaining a dialogue with Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, Karl Barth, William Alston, and others, the technicality of the book exceeds necessity in relation to proving the book's thesis. Nonetheless, readers should not allow the technicality of the book to deter them from reading it. Duby places valuable summaries at multiple points throughout the book to aid the reader in grasping his main points. Furthermore, the more difficult sections of the book tend to deal with the periphery of the book's subject, leaving most of the book's argument accessible. Overall, Duby's book is a valuable defense of theology proper, recommendable to all theology students and studious pastors.

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*In Quest of the Historical Adam: A Biblical and Scientific Exploration.* By William Lane Craig. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021. 421 pages. Hardcover, \$38.00.

As expected from such a talented theologian, philosopher, apologist, and researcher as William Lane Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam* does not disappoint. Craig is the founder of Reasonable Faith, visiting scholar at Talbot School of Theology, professor of philosophy at Houston Baptist University, and the author of more than thirty books and more than one hundred articles in professional journals. He applies his considerable expertise to "integrate the independently discovered findings of contemporary science and biblical theology into a synoptic worldview" concerning the historical Adam (16).

At the outset, Craig recognizes two important implications of his research into the historical Adam. First, he acknowledges considerable disagreement over the early chapters of Genesis. Thus, he pleads with readers to engage his work with an honest and open mind to both the evidence and the conclusions. Second, he realizes the high stakes for the affirmation of the historicity of

Adam and Eve (xi). Although “it is tempting to view the question of the historical Adam as a peripheral concern,” two of the most important Christian doctrines are impacted by belief in the historical Adam, namely “the doctrines of Scripture and the incarnation” (3, 12). Therefore, it is important for those who hold a high view of both Scripture and Christology to consider carefully Craig’s evaluation of the biblical and scientific evidence for the historical Adam.

The evidence for Craig’s case is divided into two major sections. He gives priority to the “hermeneutical task” of evaluating the biblical evidence independently of the scientific evidence to avoid the pitfall of *concordism*, “employing contemporary science to guide one’s interpretation of the text” (16, 20). The first major section contains five chapters that provide a detailed genre analysis of Genesis 1–11. In conclusion, Craig identifies the *primaevae* history of Genesis 1–11 as mytho-history. Genesis 1–11 serves an etiologial purpose, grounding present realities for the pentateuchal author in the primal past, which is one of the main functions of cultural myths. The author of Genesis, however, interweaves chronological narratives and genealogies, demonstrating a historical interest, which excludes the idea that Genesis is pure myth. As mytho-history, Gen 1–11 need not be read literally, yet it evinces fundamental truths to be believed by those who affirm Scripture as the inspired word of God. Arguably, the most important chapter in the hermeneutical section is chapter seven, in which the NT evidence is evaluated to determine if the Genesis account of Adam and Eve should be interpreted literally or allegorically. Based primarily on Romans 5:12–21 and to a lesser degree on 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, Craig determines that the NT asserts that Adam was indeed a historical person.

Based on his conclusion of the evaluation of Scripture, the second major section is Craig’s attempt to locate Adam in history based on the scientific evidence for human origins. Before an in-depth examination of the evidence, Craig establishes scientific and philosophical parameters for determining the earliest possible appearance of modern humans based on anatomical similarities and the capacity for abstract thinking, deep planning, behavioral, economic, technological innovation, and symbolic behavior (264). The subsequent chapters thoroughly summarize the scientific evidence from palaeoneurology and archaeology. Based on the evidence, Craig concludes that the historical Adam might have been a

member of the species *Homo heidelbergensis*, the progenitor of *Homo sapiens* and *Homo neanderthalensis*, “living perhaps > 750 kya” (336).

One of the book’s most fascinating chapters is the final chapter in which Craig reflects on the ramifications of identifying Adam and Eve as a member of the species *Homo heidelbergensis*. Craig incorporates theological, philosophical, and ethical implications of his research concerning the eschaton, the *imago Dei*, mind-body dualism, and Adam’s contemporaries in the *Homo heidelbergensis* species. Since Genesis affirms that only Adam and Eve were created in the image of God with a rational soul, unique from the other animals, and Adam’s contemporaries lacked both, Adam and Eve were truly the first human beings. Craig posits that God could have divinely caused the genetic mutation that increased the first couple’s cognitive ability to support a rational soul, which was also miraculously bestowed, such that Adam and Eve were truly the first human beings from which all other humans have descended. Although of the same species, Adam’s contemporaries were not truly human.

*In Quest of the Historical Adam* is specifically written for “Christian philosophers, theologians, and other academics but who are neither Old Testament scholars nor scientists,” although intelligent laymen may find the book’s somewhat simplified material useful (xi). Many Christian laypeople, however, who have not kept abreast of current academic work in theology, philosophy, and science, will find Craig’s work surprising for two reasons. First, the idea that Genesis 1–11 should be categorized as mytho-history will be either confusing or shocking. The allegorical interpretation of Genesis 1–11 is not new. In the modern era, with new scientific discoveries, the allegorical interpretation has become more commonly accepted by biblical scholars and theologians. Differing interpretations of Genesis 1–11 were not typically an issue of orthodoxy until the modern era. Craig, however, does recognize that the literal interpretation of a historical Adam *is* a matter of orthodoxy based on hermeneutical analysis of the relevant NT passages. As a result, he defends the historicity of a literal Adam. So whether one agrees with Craig’s genre analysis of Genesis 1–11 as a whole, all Christians can appreciate his defense of orthodoxy regarding the historicity of Adam based on the whole counsel of the word of God.

The second surprise for many Christian laypeople will come in Craig’s evaluation of the scientific evidence. Craig affirms that Ad-

am and Eve, the first humans, were descended from inhuman ancestors through an evolutionary process. Although this may be troubling for some, even those who disagree will appreciate Craig's theological affirmation that Adam and Eve are the biological ancestors of every human being (363). Furthermore, Christians who hold to God's active role in the creation of human beings will approve of Craig's proposal that God supernaturally guided the genetic mutations that made the evolution of the first human couple possible (376–77). Craig also affirms that for Adam and Eve to have been made uniquely in the image of God, they must have been supernaturally endowed with a rational soul (370).

In conclusion, Craig's in-depth research into this important topic deserves a fair and open-minded reading. Admittedly, there will be some disagreement among biblical scholars, theologians, and scientists, but there are also important points of commonality. In a time when science and the Bible are commonly portrayed as mutually exclusive, Craig demonstrates that in the case of the historical Adam, the findings of modern science and biblical interpretation can be compatible. Christian academics and laypeople involved in the public arena in which the relationship between science and religion is being debated will benefit from Craig's extensive research into the historical Adam.

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*The Bible in the Early Church.* By Justo L. González. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 204 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.

Justo González (b. 1937) is a Cuban-American church historian and Methodist minister who holds multiple advanced degrees from Yale University in historical theology. He has published over 130 books on various aspects of church history, theology, biblical studies, and pastoral guidance in both English and Spanish. His most notable contributions to English readers are his two-volume *The Story of Christianity* (Harper & Row, 1984; rev. ed., HarperOne, 2010) and his three-volume *A History of Christian Thought* (Abingdon, 1970–1975). In addition to general surveys, González has contributed specific scholarship such as *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* (Abingdon, 1996) and *A Brief History of Sunday: From the New Testament to the New Creation* (Eerdmans, 2017).



The latter work is most analogous to *The Bible in the Early Church* in length, scope, and style.

As a bilingual scholar who communicates across cultural boundaries, González writes with clarity and simplicity. González's strength in communicating is storytelling, exactly what he does in *The Bible in the Early Church*. His comforting narrative style can be admired by readers sitting in an armchair or studying in the academy. Undergraduate students and moderately informed laypersons will benefit the most from this book.

*The Bible in the Early Church* consists of sixteen chapters divided into three main parts. In Part 1: The Shape of the Bible, González narrates the transformation of the Scriptures from Hebrew scrolls to the printed paper books that contain chapters and verses today. González stretches far beyond the early church period in this section, but he provides the necessary contrast between today's literacy and accessibility and the early church's lack of both. In Part 2: The Use of the Bible, González unpacks how the early church benefited from its textual heritage and leveraged it in practical life. He recounts the use of the Bible in public worship, private devotion, monastic education, and social reshaping. González uses these final two categories to explain church life in late antiquity regarding the rise of monasticism in relation to the Christianization of the Roman Empire. In Part 3: The Interpretation of the Bible, González explains the different methods of interpretation used by the early church and the differences between ancient and contemporary approaches to biblical interpretation. Using various church fathers' commentaries, González provides examples of allegory and typology rather than reproducing technical definitions. His three substantive chapters demonstrate the early church fathers' interpretation of the Creation (Chapter 13), the Exodus (Chapter 14), and the Word (Chapter 15) from the Hebrew Scriptures in light of the risen Christ and his church by using the method of block quotation. González's final chapter ties together three "lessons" from the history of the early church: 1) the Bible has been a group project in creation and transmission, 2) the simple possession of the Bible does not make one's interpretation infallible, and 3) the Bible is the word of God regardless of physical format (170–73).

González succeeds in framing the history of the Bible in the early church. Much of his success is attributable to his perspective in writing. In the introduction, he states: "This book is largely au-

tobiographical . . . the Bible itself having been my companion throughout the years” (vii). This self-awareness resonates with his final lesson regarding the Bible’s physical format. In good humor, he relates, “I feel strange when the pastor, visiting me in the hospital, pulls out a phone to read a psalm! And yet, if the entire history we have so rapidly reviewed tells us something, it is first of all that the shape of the Bible has been undergoing numerous changes through the centuries. . . . It is the same Bible, with the same power to transform” (172–73). While this volume contains much more valuable information, perhaps this lesson alone is worth a pastor’s or layperson’s time to read it. Laypersons today often feel uncomfortable with digital formats or updated translation styles. By being aware of the complaints within congregations, González shows that he is no mere academic in the proverbial ivory tower.

Readers without a cursory knowledge of early church prosopography will be at a disadvantage. González employs no less than fifty block quotations from church fathers, apologists, and later theologians to make his case. Within a mere 167 pages of text, these lengthy quotations—sometimes taking up an entire page—appear every three to four pages. Thus, González builds his case on the bedrock of primary sources, but the subtleties of his argument are lost without contextual knowledge. González attempts to remedy this issue by providing a glossary of more than forty persons and documents from the early church (175–84). Despite this quick fix, one must read the first 300 pages of González’s *The Story of Christianity* (vol. 1) to understand this book fully.

Two specific omissions are worthy of note. In his chapter on canonization (15–23), González omits the influence of Montanists on the closing of the canon. Moreover, he hints at the *regula fidei* in practice (23), yet he never labels it. Though González’s book does not fail on these two points, omissions like this preclude further reading and research on these two important aspects in shaping the New Testament canon.

The most apparent deficiency in González’s book is his penultimate chapter on the Word (162–69) as it relates to the doctrine of the Trinity. For seven pages, he provides the background for understanding both Hebrew and Greco-Roman concepts of the Word/Logos and various heretical errors that threatened the orthodoxy of the early church. With only one page to spare at the end of the chapter, he simply concludes his argument by stating: “In 381 a second council, gathering in Constantinople, reiterated

and developed what had been determined at Nicaea” (169). This was an odd move, and I assume he had reached the end of his word count. The chapter’s alarmingly abrupt conclusion left more questions than answers. González missed his opportunity to address the popular, yet mistaken, opinion that the Trinity, and the Bible, were the product of fallible human councils alone.

One final observation pertains to González’s challenging statements scattered throughout his writing. Describing the differences between manuscript families, he quips, “As a whole, one may well say that the Western text has an antifeminist agenda” (39). This is not his socio-political axe to grind as much as his simple statement that the Latin tradition introduced novel textual variants based on gender valuation. Additionally, González provides historical precedent for the viability of interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 as separate accounts of creation (146–47). González is not attempting to be provocative with either of these statements. He is simply providing the historical background of the Bible, its use, and its interpretation in the early church. If readers find fault with his presentation of historical facts through primary sources, then they have missed his intention in writing this book and the aim of the discipline of history entirely. González’s most recent work, *The Bible in the Early Church*, deserves attention and will likely attract a wide readership based on his brevity and style.

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*Theological Ethics: The Moral Life of the Gospel in Contemporary Context.*

By W. Ross. Hastings. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021. 256 pages. Hardcover, \$29.99.

W. Ross Hastings, Sangwoo Youtong Chee Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, offers a thoughtful study of ethics in *Theological Ethics: The Moral Life of the Gospel in Contemporary Context*. As the title suggests, Hastings approaches the subject of ethics from the standpoint of theology, working to show the necessary connection between two disciplines that are often separated (9).

Hastings’s book differs from what might be expected from an ethics book. While some ethics books provide some engagement with a variety of specific ethical issues, such as abortion, racism,

politics, war, and sexuality, Hastings's work considers ethics from a more methodological perspective. Rather than providing some introductory material to the study of ethics and then observing case studies or specific questions, Hastings explores the theological roots of ethics. He thus does not engage specific cultural issues but instead shows how ethics naturally grows from the reality of who God is and who humans are in relation to this God. Thus, the book should be understood as a sustained argument for the relationship between theology and ethics, with each chapter building on the conclusions of previous chapters and looking forward to further implications of the argument. By the end of the work, the cohesive nature of the whole may be better seen, and questions readers have early in the book may well be answered.

Hastings constructs his theological framework over nine chapters, arguing that theological ethics are theological, Trinitarian, biblical, eschatological (encompassing creation and reconciliation), evangelical, resurrectional, sexual, and public. He concludes by summarizing his thought and suggesting the usefulness of his framework. In chapter one, Hastings argues that ethics is necessarily theological. "Ethics and theology are interdependent," he writes. "Ethics is theological or it is not ethics" (12). By this, he means that ethics can ultimately be understood only in the context of the reality of God and his relationship with his creation. To truly understand right and wrong, one must know God. In chapter two, Hastings argues that theological ethics must be specifically Trinitarian. The Trinity informs ethical thought on a few levels. First, it grounds all moral thought in "the Creator behind the moral order and the moral law" (24). Second, it clarifies the nature of God and, thus, of humans made in the image of God. An affirmation of the Trinity "leads to affirmation of *both* the irreducible identity of the persons *and* their oneness of communion by perichoresis" (31). Thus, humans may be understood as persons "of irreducible identity" who are also "communal and specifically ecclesial" (51). Third, it provides a framework for ethics that encompasses and transcends deontological, utilitarian, and virtue approaches to ethics (47–49).

In chapter three, Hastings argues that Scripture means to form people morally through an inside-out transformation; life in covenant relationship with God leads to an outworking of moral action in participation with God. In chapter four, Hastings considers humans as created in the image of God. Hastings affirms a polyva-

lent understanding of the image of God, wherein the relational aspect takes primacy over the structural and functional aspects as each contributes to the meaning of the image. Humans are thus “persons-in-relation” (101), individuals created for communion with God, others, and creation. In chapter five, Hastings considers the effects of the fall on three aspects of the image of God before looking at how reconciliation begins to work against the effects of the fall, a work that will be completed in the consummation in the future.

In chapter six, Hastings shows how theological ethics are evangelical, that is, stemming from the gospel. Believers participate in the work of God by the power of the Spirit, a participation grounded in justification in Christ. Drawing on Oliver O’Donovan’s thought, Hastings argues in chapter seven that there exists an objective moral order in creation given by God, and resurrection reaffirms that moral order. The Holy Spirit frees humans to live according to that moral order. Because of humanity’s fallen state, however, the gospel is needed to make that ethical life possible. Hastings shows in chapter eight that a theology of sexuality counters common cultural narratives regarding sexuality (167–72). In their sexedness, humans image God’s “oneness with difference” as “persons-in-relation” (182). Hastings writes that sexuality thus has order and purpose rooted in who God is and in who humans are as his image bearers.

In chapter ten, Hastings explores the rationale for the church to engage culture concerning ethics. He argues that the church has a responsibility to engage the world as a witness to the kingdom after the example of God, who loves humanity, neighbors them in Christ, and calls them to himself. In the conclusion, Hastings draws together the threads he has been weaving throughout his book, showing how “the church . . . is the primary locus of ethics,” the place where “moral transformation, discernment in ethical inquiry, and courage and power for ethical action can happen” (225). He emphasizes the necessity of “being” and “doing,” of living out this theological ethic in humility by the power of the Spirit (226–29).

Hastings’s work builds upon the work of others. He states the influence of four thinkers on his book: Alan Torrance, Oliver O’Donovan, Stanley Hauerwas (and Karl Barth behind him), and Dennis Hollinger (xi). Throughout Hastings’s book, these names continue to appear as key voices in the discussion, and he often

devotes entire sections of his chapters to studies of these and other thinkers' writings. Thus, one can see Hastings's influences while recognizing this book as his own, a constructive work that benefits greatly from the insights of others.

As noted above, Hastings's work is more methodological than practical. Because of this, readers looking for theological insights into specific ethical issues may be disappointed, as that is not Hastings's aim. Also, Hastings's writing can be dense at points, and this can make for difficult reading. For example, one sentence in the conclusion spans nineteen lines, with commas and semicolons abounding (228–29). Though this writing style allows Hastings to qualify and clarify his points with precision, it produces some difficulty for the reader to follow his train of thought. The framework he presents may be worth the effort it takes to understand, though, for he presents a well-reasoned and coherent Trinitarian ethic and shows how theology informs and drives ethical thought and action.

Hastings presents a good treatment of the connection between theology and ethics, showing the relationship between God's person and work and that of humanity. While his writing could be more accessible, he helpfully provides a theological framework for ethics and a rationale for ethical engagement in the world. His work is not the last word in the conversation of Christian ethics, but it is a helpful contribution and worthy of consideration by those interested in the subject.

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*Typology: Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns.* By James M. Hamilton Jr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022. 405 pages. Hardcover, \$39.99.

James Hamilton's recent work, *Typology: Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns*, offers an extensive study of the typological functions of biblical persons, events, and institutions. Hamilton's goal in the book is to demonstrate that a "promise-shaped typology" is used throughout the Old Testament in a way that creates expectations that are fulfilled in Christ (4; 28–29). Readers will find in the book a rich presentation of the interconnectedness of the Old Testament and of how the Old Testament and the New

Testament are connected through shared references to the persons, events, and institutions Hamilton identifies. A striking feature of Hamilton's work is the attention he gives to two common assumptions of evangelical hermeneutics, namely, that the intent of the original authors is foundational to the meaning of Scripture and that the entire Bible is a book that points to Jesus.

*Typology* is divided into three sections—persons, events, and institutions. Most of the work focuses on the typological connections between biblical persons, as sections two and three receive less attention combined (111 pages) than section one alone (183 pages). Hamilton structures the book as a whole and chapters individually using chiasms—a structure he argues the biblical authors employed to reveal the typological connections within Scripture (354–60).

Hamilton's work is thoroughly intertextual in approach. The typological connections he discusses are not just based on how one text influences another but rather explore connections from throughout the canon that link various people, events, and themes. Virtually every segment of *Typology* explodes into a discussion of biblical intertexts. In discussing how the temple and creation affect typological connections in the creation event, Hamilton discusses eight passages in a span of fewer than three pages (237–39). This is a stark contrast to simply identifying the prototype and archetype that marks some typological approaches. Hamilton uses the term “ectype” to discuss the multiple stages between an original presentation of a person, event, or theme—i.e., the prototype—and the ultimate fulfillment of the prototype—the archetype (28). The discussion of the role ectypes play in typology allows for an intertextual methodology that brings a robust canonical discussion to bear on typological conclusions.

The most intriguing aspect of Hamilton's work is his understanding of how typology impacts and is impacted by one's hermeneutical foundations. The typology Hamilton proposes is anchored in the historical intent of the biblical author. Hamilton argues, “When the biblical authors composed their writings, they intended to signal to their audiences the presence of the promise-shaped patterns” (5). Such an approach anchors typology within a hermeneutic where the intention of the original author is the primary consideration for the meaning of a text. Other evangelical scholars have understood typology in a way that embraces authorial intent, but they tend to understand typology as a literary

methodology used by later authors and not the author of the text which contains the prototype or ectype. In their book *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard make this clear, “[Typology] does not imply that OT authors actually intended, in some prophetic kind of way, the type that the NT writer discovered. Typology is more a technique of the later writer who ‘mines’ prior Scripture.”<sup>2</sup>

Nowhere is Hamilton’s insistence that the typological patterns of Scripture are encoded by the biblical authors more explicit than in his discussion of Moses’s role in establishing typological connections in the Pentateuch. When he discusses the role of Isaac as a prophetic ectype, Hamilton states, “Moses *intended* to present Isaac after the pattern of Abraham” (99, emphasis mine).

Understanding typology as a methodology consciously used by the biblical authors rules out explanations of inner-biblical allusions not rooted in the context of the original author and his audience. For example, Hamilton rejects the use of prosopological exegesis to understand the citation of Isaiah 8:18 and Psalm 22:22 in Hebrews 2:12–13. He proposes that the assumption that Isaiah and the Psalmist are recording a conversation between the Father and the Son in these passages “disregards the meaning of the Old Testament Texts in their contexts” (144).

Readers looking to understand how the Old Testament points to Jesus will find a treasure trove of information in *Typology*. Hamilton has a rare gift of plumbing the depths of biblical theology and connectivity in a way that is easily understood by a wide array of readers. The greatest value of Hamilton’s work for biblical scholars is the bold presentation of how his typological understanding intersects with a hermeneutic that locates the meaning of Scripture directly in the intention of the original author.

Regrettably, Hamilton does little to engage with other methods that seek to understand typological and figural connections in different ways. Granted, his purpose in writing is to present his case for what the Bible is doing rather than to review scholarly literature. Dialoguing with those who understand biblical connections in differing ways, however, would add value to Hamilton’s work—especially for those intrigued by the hermeneutical methods that undergird his writing. It would be helpful for Hamilton to deline-

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<sup>2</sup> William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 261.



ate the differences between his methodology and those of other Evangelicals who also seek to understand the connection between authorial intent and theological connectivity in the Christian Canon.

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*Who Can Take The Lord's Supper?: A Biblical-Theological Argument For Close Communion.* By Dallas W. Vandiver. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021. 387 pages. Paperback, \$46.00.

*Who Can Take The Lord's Supper?* (hereafter, WCTTLS) is the twenty-first volume of the Monographs in Baptist History series. The series aims to provide Baptists with various academic studies that explain how the past should impact the present. In this light, Dallas W. Vandiver—assistant professor of Christian Studies at the Graduate School of Ministry, North Greenville University—wrote WCTTLS to convince Baptists that the Lord's Supper should be practiced according to the parameters of close communion. Vandiver identifies close communion as the best approach to performing the Lord's Supper, considering “the primacy of local church unity” and the “value of spiritual unity that exists through the gospel with other believers outside the local congregation” (286–87).

According to Vandiver, there are four main views on who can participate in the Lord's Supper. These are closed (past tense) communion, close (present tense) communion, open communion, and the ecumenical view. These categories are helpful because most Baptists are probably only familiar with the differences between close and open communion. The other two positions—closed and ecumenical—are more progressive types of either close or open communion, respectively. However, it is worth letting Vandiver explain these categories in more detail before evaluating his book. As one will see, there are strong Baptist advocates for both sides of this issue. Considering this, the potential value of Vandiver's work becomes even more critical.

Closed communion appears to have been first promoted by J. R. Graves in 1881. He argued that “the Lord's Supper is available only to baptized members in good standing of the local church administering the ordinance” (6). As noted already, close com-

munion is the most common position that “various Baptists have advocated” for “throughout their history,” and it “allows [for] baptized members in good standing to participate in communion together, where the ordinance is administered by a particular local church of like faith and practice” (6). Most Baptists will recognize this as the position supported by Abraham Booth and Andrew Fuller as well as several contemporary Baptists: “Gregg Allison, John Hammett, Thomas White, Mark Dever, Bobby Jamieson, [and] Jonathan Leeman” (7).

Among Baptists, open communion has been defined as “communion with any who claim to be sincere believers, whether baptized by any mode or not” (8–9). Henry Jessey, John Bunyan, Charles Spurgeon, Ray Van Neste, John Piper “and just over 50 percent of Southern Baptist pastors surveyed by LifeWay” hold to this view (9). Lastly, the ecumenical view is supported mainly by “Baptists in England associated with the Baptist Union” (9). They argue that Baptists should “welcome all people to communion no matter their ‘faith journey’” (9).

For Baptists of all types, Scripture contains the solution to whom can participate in the Lord’s Supper. However, according to Vandriver’s survey—found in chapter 1—many Baptist arguments are without biblical warrant historically, or at the very least, they need more “extended argumentation” (90). One of Vandriver’s main points is that there exists a “principle of analogy” between the Passover and the Lord’s Supper (2), such that baptism serves as a boundary marker for participation in the Lord’s Supper just as circumcision did for the Passover (206–210).

This issue is the topic of chapters 2, 3, and 4. In chapter 2, the reader will find a detailed discussion of circumcision and Passover. In chapter 3, the reader will find a similar analysis regarding baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These two chapters are then synthesized and applied in chapter 4. From here, Vandiver provides a proper defense of close communion (chapter 5) before concluding with some observations about how close communion should affect Baptist ecclesiology (chapter 6).

Readers will probably find chapters 1 and 5 to be the most illuminating. These chapters provided the most compelling and straightforward arguments for Vandiver’s position. In fact, I entered the book leaning towards closed communion, and Vandiver has convinced me that close communion is much more appropriate given the evidence. As Vandiver states, “Paul places the re-

sponsibility for rightful participation primarily on the recipients of the Supper rather than the administrators” (285).

Vandiver’s statement leads to a view of fencing the table related to how the participants respond to God’s word, not on a pastor (or pastors) checking the spiritual status of each participant. Instead, the main goal is to remind people of Christ’s sacrifice and to warn them to evaluate their own actions. They should seek to align their lifestyle and choices with the lordship of Christ. As Vandiver further explains, this will hopefully lead congregants to move “toward relational harmony” with other Christians when a possible “bitter rift” has developed between them (344).

In conclusion, I would recommend this book with a caveat. Vandiver’s audience is strictly those who agree with Baptist doctrine. As such, non-Baptist readers are unlikely to respond positively to Vandiver’s analysis. Furthermore, his exegetical analysis relies heavily on Peter John Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum’s *Kingdom Through Covenant* (Crossway, 2012). If one finds agreement with this book, one will find chapters 2 through 4 of WCTTLS helpful. If not, these chapters will be less convincing given that Vandiver does not clarify any of their arguments but defaults to them as the final authority (see, for example, Vandiver’s discussion of Exodus 24:1–11 on pages 114–18).

In many cases, I felt the need to stop reading certain parts of Vandiver so I could pick up *Kingdom Through Covenant* because Vandiver’s point was not entirely clear. Unfortunately, this level of dependence hinders the usefulness of Vandiver’s book. Still, Vandiver does well to demonstrate how baptism and the Lord’s Supper should help Christians deal with their “horizontal responsibilities . . . toward each other” (346). If anything, we need more of this in the church and less of other things. Hopefully, Baptists can move into the future by exemplifying Christian love through the ordinances and every other aspect of the church.

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