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# MIDWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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## EDITORIAL

It is my pleasure as Managing editor, to welcome you to the Fall 2018 issue of the *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. I am again indebted to those who work so hard each Semester, to ensure the Journal appears. As usual, particular thanks go to Dr. Jason Duesing, Provost and Academic Editor, for all his invaluable assistance, and also to Mrs. Kaylee Freeman, for all her work as Journal secretary.

We are pleased and honored to begin this issue, by publishing the 2018 Faculty Lecture given at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The speaker this year was recently retired New Testament and Greek Professor Alan Tomlinson, who gave a scholarly analysis of Colossians 3:5, on the subject of 'An Evocative Vocative: Members (of Christ's body) upon the earth.' We are similarly honored to publish an important addition to John Newton and William Wilberforce studies, by established Newton scholar, Marylynn Rouse. Her article is cutting edge, presenting as it does, primary material much of which was previously unpublished.

The first of our final three articles is from Midwestern professor, Matthew Millsap, with his very intriguing, 'Infinite Dominion: *No Man's Sky* and the Cultural Mandate'. In his article Millsap argues that the video game *No Man's Sky*, is so phenomenally popular because of its correlation to the cultural mandate found in Genesis 1:26-28. Our penultimate article is a very helpful assessment of John Owen's influence upon Andrew Fuller, by David Norman, an adjunct professor at Midwestern. Our final article is a thought-provoking piece from Midwestern's Provost Jason Duesing, in which he recounts and analyses the events surrounding the conversion of Charles Spurgeon. Our final article is a thought-provoking piece from Midwestern's Provost Jason Duesing, in which he recounts and analyses the events surrounding the conversion of Charles Spurgeon.

We again conclude this issue of the *MJT* with several relevant and thought provoking book reviews, helpfully secured and edited by Dr. Blake Hearson.

Fall Faculty Address,  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018:  
‘An Evocative Vocative:  
Members (of Christ’s body) upon the Earth’

F. ALAN TOMLINSON

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Forty-two years ago, as a student in an Intermediate Greek Class, I came upon the phrase “the members upon the earth” in Col 3:5.<sup>1</sup> My initial investigative inquiry in order to translate the phrase was to determine the case of the word μέλη (“members”). I quickly discovered that the Greek word had the same form for the nominative, accusative, and vocative cases. Immediately, I was in a dilemma as to how to translate the phrase within the sentence. As an articular vocative phrase, I could translate Νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς as “Therefore, *members upon the earth*, you put to death”; on the other hand, as an accusative direct object, I could translate the phrase “Therefore, you put to death *your members upon the earth*.” When I checked the various translations and realized that none of the modern translations resembled my own simplistic reading “Therefore, members upon the earth, you put to death,” I humbly submitted to the accusative direct object view. Years later, that is not the case.

Our investigation will posit that “the members upon the earth,” an articular vocative phrase, is an expression unique to Colossians that fits precisely into the context of Colossians and that it relates to the authority of Christ. Given that the grammar significantly impacts meaning, this investigation will first examine and critique the two competing views: the direct object view (“Therefore put to death *your earthly members*: sexual immorality...”), and the vocative view (“*Members*, you put to death the things upon the earth: sexual immorality...”). It will

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<sup>1</sup> A fairly literal rendering of the phrase is preserved as the direct object of the verb in the ASV, KJV and NKJV.

then present the articular vocative phrase view ("*Members upon the earth, you put to death sexual immorality...*") as a better explanation for both the grammar and the fitness of the phrase within Paul's argument in Colossians.

### **The Direct Object View: Put to death your members upon the earth**

Most modern translations, understanding the form as accusative case and functioning as a direct object, have attempted to make the Greek more understandable with a dynamic equivalence in English: "Put to death therefore *what is earthly in you*," followed by a colon with a series of vices elaborating "*what is earthly in you*." The ESV, as a representative example, translates Col 3:5: "Put to death therefore *what is earthly in you*: sexual immorality, impurity...."

Other modern versions have nearly identical translation scenarios. They understand that the five 'vices' following the phrase "members upon the earth" are standing in apposition to it and that they require a dynamic translation of τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς in order to make the phrase understandable to the English reader.<sup>2</sup> This expression unique to Colossians is rendered in these translations as "what is earthly in you" (the ESV being representative). In each case, the phrase "the members upon the earth" is understood as an accusative direct object, which is then elaborated in a series of five nouns (all vices) in apposition (expressed in English with a colon): "sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness...." Bruce, who notes the difficulty of this construction in the abrupt, rough nature of this apposition (i.e., "members" are not conventionally viewed as related to a list of "vices"), suggests that a less than literal translation of the phrase τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς is necessary:

Paul is not talking here of the actual members of the human body, nor is he expressing himself in quite the sense intended by Jesus when he said that the offending hand or foot should

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<sup>2</sup> Various translations of the phrase have been put forth, each followed by a colon and a vice list: "Put to death, therefore, *whatever belongs to your earthly nature*" (NIV); "Therefore, put to death *what belongs to your earthly nature*" (CSB); "Put to death, therefore, *whatever in you is earthly*" (NRSV); and "Therefore put to death *what is earthly in you*" (NASB)

be cut off or the offending eye plucked out, if entrance into life could not otherwise be gained. This seems plain from the apposition of the noun “members” with the following list of vices. Yet this apposition is so abrupt that attempts have been made to *ease the difficulty of the construction* [italics mine] by expedients which nevertheless are unconvincing.<sup>3</sup>

Other exegetes also sense the difficulty of translation. Dunn sees the list of vices as rather awkwardly set in apposition to the phrase “the members upon the earth.”<sup>4</sup> O’Brien, also acknowledging the difficulty, comments on the phrase:

That which is to be put to death is *somewhat unusually* [italics mine] described: “the members which are upon earth (τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς),” and these are set in apposition to a list of five vices commencing with “fornication” (πορνείαν). ... [T]he conjunction of this list with the term “members” is rather abrupt and various attempts have been made to ease the difficulty.<sup>5</sup>

Harris, in what he calls “this puzzling phrase,” attempts to clarify the meaning of “the members upon the earth” by suggesting that the phrase is a catachresis (i.e., an expression employed in a unique and surprising sense):

In an instance of catachresis, Paul says “Put to death your limbs” rather than simply “put off immorality” (cf. v. 8), not because here “limbs” mean “deeds,” as in Iranian thought (so Lohse 137), but because bodily members can become “instruments of wickedness” (Rom 6:13; cf. Rom 6:19; 7:5, 23; Matt 5:29–30; 18:8–9). Paul is not advocating ascetic suppression or rejection of bodily desires and functions; he is rather calling for

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<sup>3</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 140–41.

<sup>4</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 213.

<sup>5</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC 44 (Nashville, TN: Word, 1982), 176.

termination of the immoral and self-centered use of physical limbs or organs.<sup>6</sup>

Harris offers several different translations for τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς but prefers “your limbs as used for earthly purposes” as also suggested by Moule.<sup>7</sup> He translates the entire verse: “Therefore put to death your limbs as used for earthly purposes—immorality, impurity, lust, evil craving, and especially ruthless greed, which is idolatry.”<sup>8</sup> Campbell, agreeing with Harris’ understanding of the metaphorical language, senses the same difficulty of translation, calling the phrase “a curious instance.” He understands τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς to mean “your limbs as put to earthly purposes.”<sup>9</sup> Moo also finds somewhat surprising the phrase “the members upon the earth” as the object of the verb, “put to death.” He comments:

In light of the parallels we have cited—“died to the elements of the world” (2:20); “died to sin” (Rom. 6:2)—the object of the verb *put to death* is somewhat unexpected: *whatever belongs to your earthly nature*, or, more literally, “the members which are on the earth” (cf. KJV; NKJV). “Member” (Gk. *melos*) is ordinarily used to refer to the parts of the human body (see, e.g., Matt. 5:29-30; Jas. 3:5-6; 4:1). Paul applies the word to Christians in his well-known extended metaphor of the church as a “body,” believers being the “members” of that body. More pertinent to the usage here, however, are those places in the New Testament where the word refers more generally to the “faculties” of people, faculties that in the old sphere of life are used in the service of sin and unrighteousness but that in the new realm are to be given to Christ.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Murray J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 126.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 126-27.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>9</sup> Constantine R. Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, ed. Martin M. Culy, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 51.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 255-56.

Moo attempts to solve the problem by insisting that “members” is being employed in the sense of the “faculties” of people.

In summation, many commentators recognize the uniqueness of the phrase “members upon the earth” following the verb “put to death”; they also point out the abruptness of the list of vices in apposition–vices elucidating the meaning of the phrase “members upon the earth.” Because the relationship is not precisely defined by the immediate context, commentators disagree about the precise meaning of “the members upon the earth.” However, most interpreters are in agreement on five contextual issues: 1) the accusative direct object of the imperative verb νεκρώσατε (put to death) is τὰ μέλη; 2) τὰ μέλη means ‘body parts,’ ‘members’ or ‘limbs’; 3) the article τὰ in the phrase τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς is equivalent to a possessive pronoun ‘your’ (i.e. “your members”); 4) the modifying prepositional phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“upon the earth”) is roughly equivalent to an adjective, such as ‘earthly’ or ‘worldly’; and 5) the list of vices demands that the phrase τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς be translated with a dynamic translation equivalent. On this last issue, there is latitude of interpretation from the general “whatever belongs to your earthly nature” (e.g., Moo), “what is earthly in you” (e.g., ESV), to the more specific “your limbs put to earthly purposes” (e.g., Harris, Moule) to the more sexually specific “your members put to earthly purposes” (e.g., Pao, McKnight). The general idea is that your limbs are being used as the instruments of your fallen nature and the instruments must be put to death.

Three critiques of this view present themselves: 1) very rarely is a plural neuter article (τὰ, “the”) translated as a possessive personal pronoun; 2) the prepositional phrase “upon the earth” is not generally adjectival in the sense “earthly,” or “worldly” in Greek literature; and 3) the different proposed senses for “the members upon the earth” do not take into account the uniqueness of this Colossian phrase within Pauline literature.<sup>11</sup> One caveat to the last critique should be noted: the theological concept to which this view subscribes is actually taught in Romans, albeit, of course, with completely different language (Rom 6:19; 7:23).

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<sup>11</sup> With reference to the second critique, the prepositional phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (493 occurrences in the LXX and in the Greek New Testament [NA28]) is translated with an adjectival sense only in Col 3:5.

### **The Vocative View: Members, You Put to Death the Things Upon the Earth**

In order to remove the translation difficulty, an alternative view offered by Masson and Turner identifies τὰ μέλη (“members”) as a vocative form that should be understood as addressing the members of the body of Christ at Colossae.<sup>12</sup> Turner offers this translation, “You, as members of the body, must mortify the things that are upon the earth....”<sup>13</sup> This so-called vocative view has received little traction among interpreters. Bruce exemplifies their main objection with the following critique: “...such an absolute use of μέλη [members] in this sense would be tolerable only if their membership in the body of Christ were stressed in the immediate context.”<sup>14</sup> Harris concurs:

Occasionally τὰ μέλη has been construed as an art. nom. used as a voc., and τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς as the obj. of νεκρώσατε: “Members [of the body of Christ], put to death what is earthly in you....” Although possible grammatically, this interpretation would be convincing only if Paul had added τοῦ σώματος (cf. 1 Cor 12: 12, 22) or τοῦ Χριστοῦ (cf. 1 Cor 6:15; 12:27) to τὰ μέλη, or had written ὑμεῖς οὖν τὰ μέλη νεκρώσατε κτλ. (“You, therefore, as members [of the Body], must put to death....”).<sup>15</sup>

However, the fact that Paul does not spell out “members” either as “members of the body” or “members of Christ” is not necessarily a death knell to Masson’s position. In a very similar context in Ephesians that has several parallels to Colossians 3:1-17, Paul exhorts believers to “let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another” (Eph 4:25 [ESV]; cf. Col 3:8). Baugh recognizes that the compressed phrase ἀλλήλων μέλη (“members of one another”) in Eph

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<sup>12</sup> Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*. (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1966), 105, cites Charles Masson who suggests that “members” be regarded as a vocative form, and understands “members” as members of the body, the church. See Charles Masson, *Commentaire du Nouveau Testament*, (Neuchatel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1950), 142.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 141n53.

<sup>15</sup> Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 126.



4:25 stands for the idea of being “fellow members of the body of Christ *alongside* one another.” He observes:

This phrase is often rendered strictly as “we are members of one another” (e.g., NASB, ESV, NRSV), yet ἀλλήλων μέλη (*allēlōn melē*) is a compressed phrase standing for the idea of being fellow members of the body of Christ *alongside* one another (see Eph 5:30; cf. Rom 12:5). That is, believers are not members of each other’s body but of Christ’s body (cf. 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30). So also NIV, “we are all members of one body.” The genitive simply connects ἀλλήλων (*allēlōn*) to μέλη (*melē*) with whatever relation warranted by context. More importantly, with this last colon (v. 25c) we can see that Paul’s concern in this place and throughout 4:25–5:2 is with life *within* the covenant community and building that unity he insists on elsewhere (e.g., 4:1–6; 15–16). This does not imply that Christians are free to lie to their nonbelieving neighbors but only that life within the church is Paul’s focus here.<sup>16</sup>

It is clear from the context of Ephesians that Paul can employ μέλη (“members”) as compressed language for “members of His body.” However, it must be admitted that the qualifier “of one another” helps to interpret Paul’s shorthand in Ephesians.

At times, Paul is not averse to using compressed language, leaving something startling for the reader to complete and contemplate. As Fee and other commentators have pointed out, Paul even employs “Christ” as a shortened form for “the body of Christ” in 1 Cor 12:12 (cf. 1 Cor 12:27).<sup>17</sup> In 1 Cor 3:11, speaking of building the church on the right “foundation of Jesus Christ, Paul employs the name “Jesus Christ” as compressed language for “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (cf. 1 Cor 1:23, 24; and 2:2). The point being made is that an almost wholesale rejection of the vocative view in Col. 3:5 is based on a weak premise that

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<sup>16</sup> S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, eds. Wayne H. House, Hall W. Harris III, and Andrew W. Pitts, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 391.

<sup>17</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 603. See Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 589-90.

“members” cannot refer to the members of the body of Christ because ‘body’ or ‘Christ’ does not occur in the immediate context. Actually, when one looks at the closest parallels to the continuous paraenetic section in Col 3:5-17, it is the Ephesians 4:25-5:2 pericope that offers the most parallels. As Baugh has pointed out in Ephesians, this continuous paraenetic section begins with “members” in compressed language for the members of Christ and “members” is the focal point for all the exhortations that follows.<sup>18</sup>

Another major feature of the vocative view understands the prepositional phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“upon the earth”) to be functioning as a substantival phrase “the things upon the earth” because of the neuter plural article (τά), which precedes it and functions as a substantizer, turning the prepositional phrase into a noun phrase “the things upon the earth.” In this case, it is to be translated as the object of the verb “put to death”; this results in the translation: “Therefore, you as members [of Christ] put to death the things upon the earth” (followed by a colon and then the list of vices).

There are three critiques of this view: 1) it assumes an ellipsis (i.e., “members [of the body]”) without context; 2) prepositional phrases are not normally *independent* substantival phrases when connected to a head noun with identical articles framing that noun (e.g., Col 3:5; τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς); and 3) the proposed sense does not take into account the uniqueness of the Colossian phrase within Pauline literature.

### **The Articular Vocative Phrase View: Therefore, Members upon the Earth, You Put to Death**

The hallmark of this position is understanding τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς as an articular vocative phrase functioning as an epithet of address: “members upon the earth.” This view posits an alternate way to understand the sentence structure of Col 3:5, involving three grammatical features. First, τὰ μέλη (“members”) is an articular vocative of address introducing a continuous ethical section beginning in 3:5. Second, the article before the prepositional phrase τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“upon the earth”) serves as a function marker attaching the prepositional phrase to τὰ μέλη (“members”), forming the epithet “members upon the earth.” Third, the objects of the verb “put to death” are the list of nouns

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<sup>18</sup> Baugh, *Ephesians*, 391.

commencing with sexual immorality. Taken this way, the translation would be “Members upon the Earth, you put to death sexual immorality....” This understanding is at the very least an acceptable grammatical option; and it has the advantage of solving the difficulties of the other two views. As regards the direct object view, the neuter plural article being translated as a possessive pronoun “your” is no longer necessary; and the prepositional phrase “upon the earth” being viewed as the adjective, “earthly” or “worldly”, is no longer needed. With respect to Turner’s simple vocative view, this vocative phrase view removes the inherent grammatical difficulty of employing the articular prepositional phrase τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“the [things] upon the earth”) as an *independent* substantival object unrelated to its head noun τὰ μέλη (“members”).

The articular vocative phrase view raises the question: why did Paul employ this unique phrase, “Members upon the Earth,” as an epithet to introduce a series of practical prohibitions and exhortations in Col 3:5-11? The answer points backward in the context. The view presented here understands the previous paragraph, and especially verse 4, as being essential for understanding Paul’s employment of the unique epithet “members upon the earth.” Most interpreters agree that the key to understanding the paragraph beginning in Col 3:5 is its relationship to the prior paragraph (Col 3:1-4), as indicated by the inferential conjunction “therefore” marking a strong relationship.<sup>19</sup>

The emphasis of the previous paragraph in 3:1-4 is on two summary exhortations closing the main body of the hortatory letter that began in 2:6. The first exhortation is in Col 3:1: τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε (“seek the things that are above”). The second exhortation is in Col 3:2 and contains both positive and negative elements: τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε (“focus your attention on the things above”; i.e., the heavenly realm); and μὴ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“[do] not [focus] on the things upon the earth”; i.e. on the realm below; Col 3:2).<sup>20</sup> These two summary exhortations are precursors to the specific paraenesis directed to the whole corporate body in Col 3:5–4:1. These two exhortations focus on Christology: they have been raised “with Christ” in the past (3:1), are currently hidden “with Christ” in the present

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<sup>19</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 255; David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 219.

<sup>20</sup> I am indebted to Murray Harris for insights throughout this paragraph.

(3:3), and will be revealed “with Christ” in the future (3:4).<sup>21</sup> In the paragraph, as many have pointed out, there is an already-not-yet element; a realized eschatology that focuses on our participation in the resurrection of Christ (Col 3:1; and death as well, Col 3:3) through union with Him.<sup>22</sup> Since believers have already participated in His resurrection through union with Him, it is only appropriate that they “seek the things above,” that which belongs to the realm above where Christ is seated with all authority at God’s right hand (Col 3:1). In fact, believers are to “focus their thoughts on the ‘above-things’ ” (Col 3:2) and not focus on the earthly realm, since through union with Christ, they have already participated in Christ’s death—they have died ([to the world]; cf. Col 2:20). Their new spiritual life (through union with Christ) is now concealed in safekeeping by God (Col 3:3) in the realm above.<sup>23</sup> They are to focus their thoughts on the realm above because Christ is their ‘Life’ (employed as an epithet) and when he appears, they will be revealed with him in the open display of His glory at His advent (Col 4:4).<sup>24</sup>

Harris notes the emphasis in verse 4 on the *actual future event* expressed in the adverbial clause “when Christ, ‘your life’ appears” you will appear with Him in glory.<sup>25</sup> It is obvious that Christ takes central place (five references) emphasizing the believers’ new spiritual reality. Christ [who is] the believers’ ‘Life’ is everything (Col 3:4; cf. 3:11). This emphasis is highlighted by the words “your Life” which are in apposition to Christ—in a rare, and emphatic placement in the Greek text. The language in the original is arresting, abrupt, and definitely emphatic. Harris, commenting on “your Life” is instructive here:

It “is” Christ, not in the sense that Christ’s risen life in heaven can be equated with believers’ spiritual life on earth or that the Church is the resurrection body of Christ, but in the sense that Christ is the *source, center, and goal* [italics mine] of the individual

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<sup>21</sup> David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 201. Dunn, *Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 209.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul’s Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology*, SNTSMS 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>23</sup> Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 196.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 123, 196.

and corporate lives of believers (cf. 1 Cor 8:6; Gal 2:20; Phil 1:21; Col 1:16).<sup>26</sup>

The meaning of “your Life” is full orbéd in Greek, incapable of being translated completely in English. It can be translated “Jesus Christ ‘the Life of each one of you’ ” (i.e., “he is everything to the individual”; Col. 3:4) and also translated “Jesus Christ ‘the Life of you all’ ” (i.e., “he is everything to the corporate body”; Col 3:4, cf. Col 2:19).<sup>27</sup> Both aspects occur in this new reality: individual believers have participated with Christ in His death, and resurrection (Col 3:1-3); and, at the second advent, they will appear σὺν αὐτῷ (“together with Him”) τότε (“at the same time”) in glory as the glorified new humanity (Col 3:4; cf. Romans 8:23; the body [sg] of you all [pl.]). Harris offers a paraphrase of verse 4:

...When this Christ, who is your very Life, appears at his second Advent and his glory is manifested, then you too will fully share in his appearance and in the open display of his glory.<sup>28</sup>

It is at this point that Paul shifts from the summary exhortations, “seek the realm above” (Col 3:1) and “focus your thoughts on the realm above and not on the realm below” (Col 3:2) to specific commands addressed to the corporate body. The unique articular vocative phrase “Members upon the earth” (3:5) evokes a recognition that the Colossian believers are members of Christ’s body in this realm, on the earth, who have not yet experienced his shared glory in the realm above. As those who are focused on the realm above, Paul exhorts them to put to death the things belonging to this realm: “Therefore, Members upon the earth, you put to death completely those sexual dispositions and activities which

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Your’ (plural) ‘life’ (singular) certainly does refer to the individual believer in this context (the so-called distributive sense of the head noun “life”; cf. Robertson 409; Turner, 23-25; BDF §140); but it also refers to the future corporate entity as well (“the life of you all”)—we are all going to be glorified together at the same time with Christ at His second advent (v. 4). The singular head noun represents this corporate concept. The same ambiguity takes place in Rom 8:28 where the redemption of *your (pl.) body (sg.)* takes place when final glorification happens to the entire corporate body (composed of individual members) at the same time (see also 1 Cor 6:19, 20; 2 Cor 4:10).

<sup>28</sup> Harris, Colossians and Philemon, 196.

characterized your former lives in idolatry” (author’s paraphrase). Verse 6 is an aside calling attention to the group with whom they were in corporate solidarity; as pagans, they were “son of disobedience” (a Hebraism for pagans).<sup>29</sup> If one accepts the textual variant “sons of disobedience” in verse 6 as original (several English translations do), in verse 7 Paul would be identifying the Colossians as those who formerly walked “among these” (i.e., “sons of disobedience”) when they were living “in these things” (sexual debauchery). Sexual sins that characterized their old life as pagans were virtually eliminated within the body (v.7). In verse 8, Paul exhorts them: “But now indeed you strip off completely” the five dispositions and actions which affect social relationships.<sup>30</sup> In verse 9, in an even more emphatic way (asyndeton), he clearly expresses corporate body life with the reciprocal pronoun in the command: “Do not lie to one another.” He then states the twofold ground in verses 9b and 10a: “because you have stripped off the old man/old humanity with its practices (a causal participial phrase)” and “because you have put on the new man/new humanity (causal participial phrase) who is being renewed....” Harris comments about the individual and collective overtones of this old and new humanity:

Paul’s contrast between ὁ παλαιος ἄνθρωπος (v. 9) and ὁ νέος [ἄνθρωπος] (v. 10) is not only a contrast between “the old self” and “the new self” (GNB, NRSV, NASB,<sup>2</sup> ESV; Barth-Blanke 4, 410–11), “the old nature” and “the new nature” (RSV, NEB; Dunn 210), but also between the old humanity in Adam and the new humanity in Christ, humans as they are in Adam and humans as they are in Christ. Ἀνθρωπος has both individual and collective overtones: this individual “man” or “Man(kind)” as a whole is “old” (παλαιός, -ά, -όν) in the sense of belonging to the “earlier, unregenerate” state (BDAG 751c).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See W. T. Wilson, *The Hope of Glory: Education and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Colossians* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 241, 246. Also, the textual problem concerning “sons of disobedience” is notorious, with some English translations omitting the phrase. However, the manuscript evidence is widely diversified and early, and therefore is included here.

<sup>30</sup> Τὸ πάντα is being used as an adverbial accusative (translated “completely”) whose usage is not uncommon in Greek literature (as is evident in 1 Cor 15:28; Col 3:11; Eph 1:23; 4:10, 15).

<sup>31</sup> Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 131.

With respect to this collective sense, it is clear in verse 11 that the relative adverb “where” (ὅπου; obfuscated in most English translations) refers back to the new man/humanity in v.10 as its referent and the negative impersonal verb “there is no longer” (οὐκ ἔνι) points forward to a community of believers *where* there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and foreskin, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freedman. Harris picks up the referent (new man/humanity) offering this paraphrase of verse 11:

In this new humanity [i.e., the referent to the relative adverb “where”]...all personal distinctions are eradicated — between Greek and Jew, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, the slave and the freeman. On the contrary, Christ himself amounts to everything and he is in all of you<sup>32</sup>

This new humanity no longer has personal distinctions regarding racial privilege (Greek and Jew), legal and ceremonial standing (circumcised and uncircumcised), cultural norms of personal worth (barbarian, Scythian), or norms regarding social class (slave and freedman). At the end of verse of 11, in a short elliptical sentence actually beginning with “but” (ἀλλὰ), Paul offers a compressed summary statement about the relationship of this new humanity to Christ: “but in every way, and in all, Christ” (ἀλλὰ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός). The idea seems to be “in every way” (τὰ πάντα, adverbial accusative) and in everyone (ἐν πᾶσιν; prepositional phrase)—Christ (nominative subject in emphatic placement). Or put differently, supplying the elliptical verbs, “Christ [is] everything” (an adverbial accusative emphasizing degree of authority and importance) and “Christ [is] in all” (i.e. those who belong to the new humanity).

The first element of the summary statement, Christ is everything, emphasizes His place of importance for those who belong to the new humanity (cf. “Christ, your Life,” Col 3:4; “He is head over the body,” Col 2:9). In every corporate-body relationship within Colossians, the authority of the Lord as head over the body is emphasized: He is the “Lord Jesus” who has authority (3:17); He is the “Lord,” the measure for determining what is fitting (3:18); He is the “Lord” to whom one pleases

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 197.

in service (3:20); He is “Lord Christ” whom one serves (3:24); He is the “Lord” (i.e., “Master”) in heaven to whom one must answer (4:1).

The second element of the summary statement, “Christ [is] in all” emphasizes that Christ is in each one of those individuals who belong to this new corporate humanity. He indwells all without distinction.

Of even more importance for the macro-context, the thought unit running from Col 3:5-11, is the semantic frame consisting of “Members upon the earth” and “Christ.” The semantic unit begins with a compressed phrase “Members upon the earth” and ends with a compressed phrase “all, and in all, Christ” with Christ emphatically placed. Christ is everything to the those who belong to the *new humanity*, he indwells each individual believer in *the new humanity*.

Earlier in the epistle, Paul states that Christ is “head over the body” (Col 1:18; 2:19), the body is identified as the corporate group called the church (Col 1:24), and later, in the immediate context, believers are called as *one body* (i.e. as members of a single corporate body, Col 3:19). The semantic connection between new humanity, body, church, and “members” is compelling, given Paul’s usage in Colossians, as well as Ephesians. Members of the “new humanity” upon the earth are to put to death (i.e., put off) those values that represent the old humanity of which they were formerly members.

## Conclusion

The unique articular vocative phrase τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“Members upon the earth”; Col 3:5) evokes a recognition that believers are members of a *new humanity* in this realm, on the earth, who have not yet experienced His shared glory. As members of this *new humanity* who are focused on the realm above, Christ is everything and consequently, they are to put off those attitudes and actions that reflect the perspective, values, attitudes and deeds that characterize this realm below.



A Double Portion of my Thoughts and Prayers:  
John Newton's Letters to William Wilberforce

*Both the importance and the difficulties of your situation,  
superadded to my regard,  
entitle you to a double portion of my thoughts and prayers.<sup>1</sup>*

MARYLYNN ROUSE  
The John Newton Project,  
[www.johnnewton.org](http://www.johnnewton.org)

"Sir," wrote William Wilberforce in great distress to John Newton on Saturday 2 December 1785, "I wish to have some serious conversation with you." Though he possibly had not seen him for fourteen years, Newton was the one person whom Wilberforce felt he could trust for spiritual advice in his conversion crisis, knowing that anything he said would be held in complete confidence. Almost two years later, on Sunday 28 October 1787, with an even deeper, proven friendship and mutual regard between them, it was Newton whom Wilberforce had at his side for further serious conversation on the day that he was to enter in his diary, "God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners."<sup>2</sup>

John Newton, the ex-slave trader, had not long been curate-in-charge at Olney when all his savings, which he had entrusted for safekeeping to his former employer Joseph Manesty, disappeared through the bankruptcy of Manesty's shipping company in 1766. John Thornton of Clapham<sup>3</sup> providentially stepped in to provide Newton with a regular annuity of £200, enabling him to offer hospitality and to contribute to some of the needs of the poor around him.

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<sup>1</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f34, 10 June 1791, Bodleian Library.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life of William Wilberforce*, Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, 1838, vol 1, page 149.

<sup>3</sup> John Thornton, 1720-1790, whose son Henry became a close friend of William Wilberforce.

Through this new friendship, Newton met Thornton's half-sister, Hannah and her husband William Wilberforce<sup>4</sup> and invited them to spend some time with him at Olney. When they next stayed at Newton's vicarage, in June 1771, "Master Wilberforce", <sup>5</sup> aged 11, accompanied them.<sup>6</sup> All too mindful of the wasted years of his own youth, Newton had a strong concern for young people. It was not surprising that this meeting and possibly others endeared him as a father-figure to the young William, so recently deprived of his own father.<sup>7</sup>

However, Wilberforce was soon removed by his mother from the evangelical circles of London, in the hope that he would lose all sense of those Methodist influences. But Newton retained his prayerful interest. Hannah's husband was on the point of leaving for Yorkshire, when he received a letter from Newton saying, "I beg to be remembered likewise to Master Wilberforce when you see him."<sup>8</sup>

To Hannah, Newton wrote, "I hope your nephew engages good bodily health, and his soul nourished and refreshed; and though he lives in a barren land, I trust he finds that the Lord can open springs and fountains in the wilderness. The word of grace and the throne of grace afford wells of salvation, from which he cannot be debarred; from thence, I hope, he will daily draw with joy the water of life, and, like a tree of the Lord's planting, strike root downwards, and bear fruit upwards, and experience that the Lord is able to keep, establish, and comfort him, though for a season he is deprived of the public ordinances of the Gospel."<sup>9</sup>

Their pathways diverged for a while. Newton's ministry at Olney lasted 16 years, during which time he enjoyed the close friendship of William Cowper (remembered forever in their joint production of the

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<sup>4</sup> William Wilberforce, [1721 – 1777] son of William Wilberforce [1690-1774] of Hull.

<sup>5</sup> William Wilberforce, MP [1759-1833].

<sup>6</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 120-121, 4 July 1771. Wilberforce's portrait by John Russell, 1770, shows him at this same age (11), while he was under the care of his aunt and uncle.

<sup>7</sup> *William Wilberforce*, John Pollock, Lion 1986 edition, page 5. Pollock quotes Wilberforce's reminiscences of Newton, "even reverencing him as a parent when I was a child."

<sup>8</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 122-123, 25 November 1774.

<sup>9</sup> *Gleanings*, ed E Powell, 1824, undated letter, 391.

*Olney Hymns*<sup>10</sup>), and amongst many other achievements, laid the foundations amongst the Northamptonshire Baptist ministers for a missionary-minded Baptist Association to develop out of their high Calvinism. In 1780, John Thornton procured Newton the living of St Mary Woolnoth and he moved to Charles Square, Hoxton. In September that year Newton dined with John Thornton and Hannah Wilberforce at Clapham.<sup>11</sup> The following month William Wilberforce, the newly elected MP for Hull, took his seat in Parliament for the first time.

Just as Newton had discovered on the *Greyhound* that fateful day of 21 March 1748, when a sudden and violent storm in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean had flung one of his shipmates overboard and threatened instant death to the rest of them every moment as the ship broke up around them, for Wilberforce too, “now the Lord’s time was come.”<sup>12</sup> The age gap between John Newton and William Wilberforce was 34 years and 20 days.

Having abandoned his childhood spirituality, but with a conscience suddenly deeply stirred by recent readings of the Scriptures and Doddridge’s *Rise and Progress*<sup>13</sup> with Isaac Milner,<sup>14</sup> Wilberforce was in turmoil. His Journal reveals his anguish as he longed to consult with someone spiritually wise and trustworthy:<sup>15</sup>

30 November. I thought seriously this evening of going to converse with Mr Newton.

2 December. Resolved again about Mr Newton. It may do good; he will pray for me. Kept debating in that unsettled way... whether to go to London or not... went at last in the stage to town – inquired for old Newton; but found he lived too far off for me to see him.

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<sup>10</sup> *Olney Hymns*, John Newton, 1779. In his preface to this publication, Newton explained that one of his designs in embarking on writing the hymns together, was that it should be “as a monument, to perpetuate the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship.”

<sup>11</sup> 129 Letters from the Rev John Newton, Rector of St Mary Woolnoth, to the Rev William Bull of Newport Pagnell, 1847, page 100, 25 September 1780.

<sup>12</sup> *An Authentic Narrative*, John Newton, 1764.

<sup>13</sup> *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, Philip Doddridge, 1745.

<sup>14</sup> Isaac Milner [1750-1820], formerly assistant teacher to Wilberforce, later Dean of Carlisle.

<sup>15</sup> *Life*, vol 1, 92-97

3 December. Had a good deal of debate with myself about seeing Newton.

As if the clinch the matter, Wilberforce sat down and penned a note:

To the Rev John Newton

Dec 2 1785

Sir, I wish to have some serious conversation with you...  
[ending,]

PS Remember that I must be secret, and that the gallery of the House [of Commons] is now so universally attended, that the face of a member of parliament is pretty well known.

Despite “ten thousand doubts”, he made his way to St Mary Woolnoth for the evening service, and delivered his note to old Newton afterwards in his vestry. A date was arranged for their secret meeting. It was to be on Wednesday, at the Newtons’ home in Charles Square. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the central area was grass bordered with trees. But for Wilberforce it might as well have been lined with all the inquisitive spectators of the House of Commons gallery, for all the confidence he could summon up to brace himself for a conversation that might end his promising political career. It was a point of no return.

Wednesday. After walking about the Square once or twice before I could persuade myself, I called upon old Newton –

6 December. Was much affected in conversing with him – something very pleasing and unaffected in him.

He discovered that his confidant “had always hopes and confidence that God would sometime bring me to Him.”<sup>16</sup> Newton knew all too well the ragings of an awakened conscience and could counsel him from the heart. He encouraged him to remain in politics, not to forsake his present friends, and not to rush into new acquaintances. He spoke gently of the workings of the Spirit of God in the heart of man and gave him a copy of his own “great turning day” experience to read.<sup>17</sup> “When I came away”,

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<sup>16</sup> *Life*, vol 1, 97 (refers to Journal, 6 December 1785).

<sup>17</sup> *An Authentic Narrative*, John Newton, 1764.

Wilberforce wrote, "I found my mind in a calm, tranquil state, more humbled, and looking more devoutly up to God."

The following Sunday he headed down for St Mary Woolnoth with a lighter heart. He heard Newton preaching "on the addiction of the soul to God. They that observe lying vanities shall forsake their own mercy. Excellent. He shows his whole heart is engaged." Wilberforce attended Newton's church every Sunday in December and was sometimes at his midweek lectures on Wednesdays. By Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December he felt able to say, "he has my leave to mention my case to my aunt and Mr Thornton." Newton wrote to him a few days later, "I saw Mrs Wilberforce today, and left her in tears of joy. She says you may depend on her strictly observing your requisitions."<sup>18</sup>

Wilberforce's doubts did not disappear instantly. His diary shows he was worried, feeling "very wretched— all sense gone. Colder than ever – very unhappy."<sup>19</sup> And eventually on Monday 2 January 1786 "called at Newton's, and bitterly moved: he comforted me." Newton recommended that he regularly attend the lectures of Thomas Scott, who had recently become chaplain of the Lock Chapel in London.<sup>20</sup> When Henry Venn came to hear of it, he wrote excitedly to a friend, "Mr Wilberforce has been at the chapel, and attends the preaching constantly. Much he has to give up! And what will be the issue, who can say?"<sup>21</sup>

In January, Wilberforce brought Newton back to Wimbledon after church. He dined and slept there – "composure and happiness of a true Christian: he read the account of his poor niece's death, and shed tears of joy,"<sup>22</sup> Wilberforce wrote in his diary. The following day he and Newton were seen walking together on the common in the evening. "Expect to

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<sup>18</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f1, 22 December 1785.

<sup>19</sup> MS Don e f50 [Wilberforce's Diary], Bodleian Library.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Scott [1717-1821], Bible commentator, who also held the lectureship of Bread Street Church on Sunday afternoons.

<sup>21</sup> *The Life and a Selection from the Letters of the late Rev Henry Venn*, ed. H Venn, with a Memoir of his Life by J Venn, 1835, reprinted 1993, 435 of reprint.

<sup>22</sup> Newton's *Works*, vol 5, *A Monument to the Praise of the Lord's Goodness, and to the Memory of Dear Eliza. Cunningham*, first published as a Tract for private distribution in November 1785. Eliza was buried by Newton on 12 October 1785 at St Mary Woolnoth.

hear myself now universally given out to be a Methodist: may God grant it may be said with truth,"<sup>23</sup> he noted.

A circle was gradually forming of Christian friends who were to have a profound impact on the whole country and improve the lives of many in other nations: John Thornton's son Henry, Henry Venn's son John, Hannah More, William Wilberforce and Henry Foster,<sup>24</sup> supported in teaching and pastoral advice by their elders, John Newton and Thomas Scott. There was much that the younger man wanted to learn, and much that the older longed to impart. Wilberforce was keen to meet and talk. Although Newton often had a succession of visitors on Saturdays, the day that best suited Wilberforce, he gladly offered to free up time, inviting him to dine with them at 2pm. "From that time till five or half past five, I could have you to myself in my study, let who would come."<sup>25</sup>

Several times over these months, Wilberforce entered in his diary, "Newton dined with me".<sup>26</sup> Newton wished that Wilberforce could visit him often but conceded this was not practicable in his political duties. "But whenever you can call, you will be a welcome guest," he assured him, "Great subjects to discuss, great plans to promote, great prospects to contemplate, will always be at hand. Thus employed, our hours, when we meet, will pass away like minutes."<sup>27</sup>

As much as he would have loved to have spent an hour with Wilberforce every week, "or every day," – "from morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve, a summer's day"<sup>28</sup> he elaborated in old age – their different situations did not allow it. "Yet I trust we are both in our assigned posts, and the servants of the same Lord; I look forward to an approaching period, when our communication with Him, and in Him with each other, will be perfect, perpetual, and without interruption."<sup>29</sup> A valuable correspondence developed between them, which is currently being prepared for publication.

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<sup>23</sup> MS Don e f51, Wilberforce's Diary, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> 1786.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Foster [1745-1844], rector of St James Clerkenwell. When in Olney, Newton sometimes exchanged pulpits with Foster.

<sup>25</sup> MS Wilberforce c49, f1, 22 December 1785.

<sup>26</sup> e.g. MS Don e f51 Wilberforce's Diary, Sun 26 Feb 85: Lock, Newton. Newton dined with me, Sun 19 Mar: Mr Newton dined with me.

<sup>27</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f4, 21 March 1786.

<sup>28</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f 116, 4 May 1803.

<sup>29</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 52-53, 2 October 1794.

"I believe you are the Lord's servant," he told Wilberforce, "and are in the post which he has assigned you; and though it appears to me more arduous, and requiring more self-denial than my own, I know that He who called you to it, *can* afford you strength according to your day, and I trust He *will*, for He is faithful to his promise."<sup>30</sup> He upheld, as examples, men in Scripture who had held responsible positions in government. "My heart is with you, my dear Sir. I see, though from a distance, the importance and difficulties of your situation. May the wisdom that influenced Joseph and Moses, and Daniel rest upon you. Not only to guide and animate you in the line of political duty – but especially to keep you in the habit of dependence upon God, and communion with him, in the midst of all the changes and bustle around you."<sup>31</sup>

Newton prayed constantly for him. Delighted by Wilberforce's recovery from a long and serious illness in early 1788, he confided that even when this had seemed the least probable outcome, his hopes for him had been stronger than his fears, the reason being: "The desires and opportunities the Lord has given you, of seeking to promote the political, moral and religious welfare of the Kingdom, has given me a pleasing persuasion that He has raised you up, and will preserve you to be a blessing to the public."<sup>32</sup>

Some years later he again made this point. "Your life likewise appears to me of great importance both to the church and to the nation. However, you are immortal as to the present state till your work is done, and I will hope that the period of your services is yet at a great distance."<sup>33</sup> But illness would be an ongoing problem for Wilberforce. He needed to be encouraged that God was Sovereign in even this. Times of illness need not be lost times, if used to fix one's heart more firmly "to be His wholly, and to serve him with your All." They taught "the importance of eternal things, and the comparative insignificance of all things in this transient state", lessons which would be of great value in the future. In fact, "The difficulties and snares attendant upon your situation, makes me consider your afflictions as especially tokens of the Lord's love to you and care over you; and I humbly and cheerfully expect that you will come out of the furnace, refined like gold."

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<sup>30</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 71-72, 21 July 1796.

<sup>31</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f9, 18 May [1786].

<sup>32</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f 16 [1788].

<sup>33</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f 104, 15 September 1800.

Further encouragement and guidance could be found in Scripture, in considering the two sisters, Mary and Martha, who “seem apt emblems of the active and contemplative life. They both loved our Lord, and they both showed that love to him, but in different ways.”<sup>34</sup> He pitied Martha, rather than blamed her. It was much more pleasant to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear his gracious words than to be engaged in hurry and bustle. Martha was properly employed, but she lost her temper, incurring rebuke. Here was a lesson:

“They who have the honour of living for public, must submit to live the less for themselves, and to be abridged in many things that contribute to the comfort of a Christian. And as they are likewise exposed to more snares and difficulties, they need a double portion of grace and watchfulness. They may sometimes suffer loss. The Lord is able to keep those who trust in him, though they live in the fire, or in a den of lions, if they are there by his appointment.”

“You are called not to live to yourself,” he often reminded him,

“I have some conception, though I suppose a faint one, of the difficulties attending your situation. I doubt not but you would often be glad to share with us who move in a more humble sphere, in the privileges we have, in the choice of our company, and the disposal of our time. But you are in your appointed post, and the Lord supports you in it. You live like the young men, and Daniel in Babylon, preserved in the midst of flames and lions; because the Lord is with you.”<sup>35</sup>

Indeed the great point for our comfort in life, he felt, was to have a well-grounded persuasion that we were where, all things considered, we ought to be. “He is always near. He knows our wants, our dangers, our feelings, and our fears. By looking to him we are enlightened and made strong out of weakness.”

“I do not envy you, Sir,” he said,

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<sup>34</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 47-48, 30 August 1793.

<sup>35</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 62-63, 4 July 1795.



“even the opportunities you have of doing good in promoting the cause of God, in pleading the cause of the oppressed, or in relieving the distress of individuals. Much less do I envy you the apparatus of your post. Nor need you envy me the advantage I have of you in the dispersal of my time, and in the choice of my company, if we are both where we ought to be.”<sup>36</sup>

Newton hoped Wilberforce would look to Scripture for his chief instruction, but responded to his enquiries on reading material. He lent him “Austin’s *Confessions*,”<sup>37</sup> commenting that he did not have his *Meditations*, which Wilberforce may have requested. The suggestions he gave for “a plain enquirer” were “2 or 3 good books of Bunyan’s, such as the *Jerusalem sinner saved* and *Come and welcome to Jesus Christ* and *Grace abounding to the chief of sinners*,”<sup>38</sup> adding, “Baxter’s *Call*,”<sup>39</sup> and Alleyne’s *Alarm to the Unconverted*<sup>40</sup> have been useful to many; Flavel on *Providence*<sup>41</sup> – on *the Keeping of the heart*,<sup>42</sup> and any of his works, most of which have been published in small books – his *Spiritual Navigation*.<sup>43</sup><sup>44</sup>

He was very concerned about Wilberforce’s health and prayed that the spa waters might be beneficial to him, “For I feel for you, when I think of the approaching hurry of Parliament business.”<sup>45</sup> But he saw the young Christian aiming high in his spiritual ideals, imposing some unnecessary inconveniences on himself, and attempted to bring him down to earth again. “I approve and admire your motive for the mode of travelling which you chose, but I could not help wishing, that in consideration of the infirm state of your health, you had not obliged yourself to walk to the Inn so early in the morning, nor to the hurry of a coach which goes from London to Bath in a single day [a distance of 116

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<sup>36</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 47-48, 30 August 1793.

<sup>37</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f3, 6 March [1786].

<sup>38</sup> John Bunyan: *The Jerusalem sinner saved*, 1689; *Come and welcome to Jesus Christ*, 1678; *Grace abounding to the chief of sinners*, 1666.

<sup>39</sup> *A Call to the Unconverted*, Richard Baxter, 1658.

<sup>40</sup> *An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners*, Joseph Alleine, 1671.

<sup>41</sup> *The Mystery of Providence*, John Flavel, 1678.

<sup>42</sup> *On the Keeping of the Heart*, John Flavel, 1671.

<sup>43</sup> *Navigation Spiritualized, or A New Compass for Seamen*, John Flavel, c.1670.

<sup>44</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f3, 26 March 1786.

<sup>45</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f11, 1 November 1786.

miles].” To reassure his own mind, he asked for “a line by your order from Mr Cragg informing me that your health is not worse than when we parted”.

Newton acted as a sort of clearing house for papers as well as missionaries themselves, many of whom passed through his hands as they left for pioneering work overseas. “I expect that a Mr Cary will shortly wait upon you,” he wrote to Wilberforce, “and will probably bring an introductory line from me,”<sup>46</sup> Thomas Robinson of Leicester had asked Newton to act on William Carey’s behalf. “He has for some time had a strong desire of preaching the Gospel among the heathen, and the accounts he received from Mr Thomas (of whom I know nothing but from Mr Grant) determined his choice to Bengal.” There was special reason for approaching Wilberforce. “Mr Cary wishes to know if it be practicable to procure the Company’s leave for his passage thither, or if he might be permitted to stay, if he could find his way by a foreign ship. He thought, if you and Mr [Henry] Thornton approved of his character, motives and ends, your patronage might probably enable him to go. However this may be, if you could afford him a short audience, you could perhaps give him such advice in a quarter of an hour, as might put him in a right path, and be useful to him through life.”

Carey told Newton he was “ready to go anywhere, to the ends of the earth, so that he might preach the Gospel.” Newton added to Wilberforce, “I mentioned America, that there was an open door to Canada and Nova Scotia, particularly to New Brunswick; whether he considers himself too far engaged for Bengal, to think of any other place I know not, but perhaps a word from you might have weight.” From Robinson’s testimony, Newton was confident that Carey “may be depended upon as a faithful man; and that his zeal to be a Missionary is not the flight of a warm fancy, but the desire of a man who is willing to give up, and to hazard everything for the glory of God and the good of souls.”

Wilberforce’s sons later recalled their father often saying,

“I do not know ... a finer instance of the moral sublime, than that a poor cobbler working in his stall should conceive the idea of converting the Hindoos to Christianity; yet such was Dr Carey.

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<sup>46</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f 46, 27 May 1793.

Why, Milton's planning his *Paradise Lost* in his old age and blindness was nothing to it."<sup>47</sup>

Some years earlier, Newton had confided to Wilberforce,

When I think of the trials to which those are exposed who willingly offer themselves to serve the Lord among the heathens; and when I think of some at home, whose situation and calls to public service, require, though in a different way, almost equal zeal and self denial, I shrink into a button and feel my own comparative insignificance. But I am often cheered by that thought of Milton, They also serve, who only stand and wait – I hope I am where I ought to be. And if I am not called to do *great* things, it is a mercy and an honour to do *any* thing, in such a cause. [Life was valuable] "if I may but live to the Lord, and for him."<sup>48</sup>

Newton's correspondence with Wilberforce covered topics such as prison visiting, political pressures and opportunities, spiritual advice, marriage, life and death, true wisdom, the establishment of chapels of ease, Christian witness, the slave trade, political and national affairs, missionary work, "book reviews", family matters and mutual friends. He constantly tried to discern what Wilberforce's needs, pressures or temptations might be and how to address them. His wise counsel was permeated with prayer.

Just as he prayed often for himself that the close of his life may be "without any stain unsuitable to my character as a Christian and a Minister,"<sup>49</sup> so he constantly urged Wilberforce to honour his calling. He thanked God for what He had done for them both, reminding Wilber that much more remained to be done, and that they were called and encouraged to press forward. Not to advance, he cautioned, was to go back. For there would be no standing still at the same point. One of Newton's frequent prayers for Wilberforce was "that the Lord may be your Sun and Shield".<sup>50</sup> The phrase appears in David's affirmation in

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<sup>47</sup> Life of Wilberforce, Vol 4, 123.

<sup>48</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 43-44, 4 Aug [1792].

<sup>49</sup> Princeton University, Firestone Library, Newton's Diary, March 1804.

<sup>50</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f 11, 1 November 1786.

Psalm 84:11, *For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

In Olney, Newton had preached from this Psalm, drawing attention to David's being styled as the man after God's own heart "on account of his love to the word, ways, people and ordinances of God".<sup>51</sup> Although David had been driven into the wilderness when fleeing from King Saul, which prevented him from worshipping in the Tabernacle, yet he "retained the savour – and he breaks forth at a distance, *How amiable [are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts]!*" Newton felt keenly for Wilberforce, whose busy, pressured, public life could often keep him away from the company of believers, with little time or opportunity for reflection and fellowship. Perhaps one may draw the parallel that, like David, Wilberforce was often driven away from the Tabernacle, or the living church of God, into a spiritual wilderness. Newton longed for him to "retain the savour" of communion with God, "that he may be your Sun and Shield, your Counsellor and Comforter here, and your portion forever."<sup>52</sup>

Just as David had been exposed to hostile elements and enemies in the wilderness, so for Wilberforce Newton observed "The snares, dangers and impediments which surround you are numerous and great."<sup>53</sup> The encouragement was, "But the Lord can make you superior to them all – to those who walk with him in the path of duty, and simply depend upon him for guidance and strength, He will be both a Sun and a Shield." Even while Newton was in great anguish during his wife's last few dying days when she was "so low and weak, that she can neither move nor be moved, can hardly bear to speak, or to hear my voice, if I attempt to speak to her,"<sup>54</sup> his heart still went out to Wilberforce in the same letter, "And I often pray, that he may make you an instrument of much good in your public line of service, support and guard you, in the midst of all the snares and difficulties and temptations to which it is exposed, and fill your soul with his wisdom, peace and consolation."

Some years later he returned home one night to find a note from Charles Grant, informing him that Mrs Wilberforce was dangerously ill. He wrote immediately to Wilber, though he could scarcely see what he

<sup>51</sup> Newton's pocket sermon notebook No. 43, Cowper & Newton Museum, Olney.

<sup>52</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 43-44, 4 August [1792].

<sup>53</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 29-30, 1 July 1789.

<sup>54</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f32, 23 November 1790.

was writing by candle-light,<sup>55</sup> "It sent me to my knees... Surely I can sympathise with you! I likewise have stood in the post of painful observation darker every hour."<sup>56</sup> I have trodden the painful path before you." He dearly loved them both and prayed for Barbara's recovery and their peace of mind. "Your affliction, My dear Sir, did not spring out of the ground," he wrote. His suffering was in the Lord's hands. He was called now to a Post of Honour.

"Many eyes are upon you, both your friends and your enemies, have seen that the Lord has been wonderfully with you in your public life. You will now, I trust, burn and shine in a different situation to the praise and glory of his grace, and to the increase of your experience and wisdom, power and faithfulness."

He visited Wilberforce at the Palace Yard, and saw how he lived "in parliament-time". His business there and the constant demands being made on him, the ever present company of others, the importance of his situation and the great influence he was exercising for good, caused the older man to declare, "you have need of almost miraculous supports and supplies."

How he longed for "an hour's tête à tête" with Wilberforce safely concealed in his study at No. 6 Coleman Street Buildings, "where I could have you to myself – without loud raps at the door to interrupt us." Wilberforce responded in person within days. He attended Newton's church that Sunday, and after first calling in on Henry Thornton at Kings Arms Yard, he strolled the little extra distance to spend an uninterrupted hour with Newton.<sup>57</sup>

Newton was most concerned not to take up too much of Wilberforce's time, or strain his weak eyes from reading letters. Wilberforce assured him that he would be very pleased to hear from him, but was in turn conscious of Newton's many correspondents. "It is true I have many correspondents, but they have not prevented me from writing to you more frequently,"<sup>58</sup> Newton replied. "I have been rather afraid of

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<sup>55</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f 105, 30 September 1800.

<sup>56</sup> Referring to his wife's last months, weeks and days as she lay dying from cancer, Edward Young wrote of his own experience, in *Night Thoughts* (1742), ... Dreadful post of observation, Darker every hour.

<sup>57</sup> Life, vol 1, page 227 [5 July 1789].

<sup>58</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 47-48, 30 August 1793.

breaking in upon you, unless I had something of a *dignus vindice nodus*.”<sup>59</sup> But Wilberforce’s kind encouragement had decided Newton upon a compromise. “I seem determined to wait upon [you] with a letter, without ceremony or apology, about once a quarter, while I am able to write at all. You will please to accept this, as my first payment, for the Michaelmas quarter.”

So began their “quarterlies”. Urgent business was dealt with as it arose, but four times a year Newton would write something to Mr Wilberforce which he hoped would be especially edifying. “That the power, presence and promises of God, may give efficacy to all your endeavours for the service of mankind; and support you under every trial to which He may see fit to call you, is the frequent prayer of, My dear Sir, Your most obedient, obliged and affectionate servant.”<sup>60</sup>

He supposed Wilberforce might wish to have more control over the use of his time and choice of company. “But though you live in the midst of hurries and snares, where almost everything seems to have a tendency to damp the noblest exertions of your mind, He who has appointed your station, has hitherto supported you in it, and I trust will still support you.”

The day before his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Ancient Mariner addressed another quarterly to Wilberforce, contemplating his approaching death. When a ship had made a trading voyage, touched at different places, in different climates, passed through a variety of winds and weathers, hardships and dangers, and was,

“as the sailors say, riding at simple anchor, in her last part, the business finished, all on board, and only wait for a wind to waft her home, the mariners go before her in their thoughts; they anticipate their arrival, and think with what pleasure they shall meet their friends and relations, from whom they have been long separated.”<sup>61</sup>

It gave him great joy to contemplate meeting with those he loved. Surely he would see Wilberforce’s uncle, John Thornton. “He was the instrument of God to me for good,” Newton recalled. “He supported me,

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<sup>59</sup> difficulty worthy of such an intervention Horace: *Ars Poetica* (CXCI).

<sup>60</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 37-38, 3 January 1792.

<sup>61</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 75-76, 30 March 1797.

while at Olney; to him I owe my present honourable comfortable and I hope, in a measure useful, situation here." And what of Hannah Wilberforce? "Shall I not be glad to thank your kind aunt, for all the kindness she showed me when she was below?" He longed also to meet "my dear Mary and Eliza," and many more. "But I please myself into thinking I shall be among the first of those, who will be waiting for you, to welcome you home to your Mansion in the Heavenly House."

In 1799, he broached this subject of chapels again with Wilberforce. He was in Southampton, staying with the Taylors.<sup>62</sup> "I believe I mentioned last year the state of the parish of Botley, where Mr Taylor lately purchased an estate, and where the people have little more sense of religion or means of instruction than those in the South Sea Islands"<sup>63</sup> There were many young people, but they were illiterate. The church was "two miles from the town (the road almost impassable in winter, even by a horse) and is not much larger than a common dining-room."

Taylor was willing to build a chapel at his own expense and put in a Gospel minister, with the incumbent's consent. But the difficulty was, how to make it a chapel of ease, "in the regular line," and at the same time to secure the nomination of proper preachers. While in Reading, Newton had heard that Wilberforce and his friends had thought of bringing a Bill into parliament, "for the relief of those who wish to build chapels upon this plan." He asked Wilberforce to send him his opinion "of the practicability of the design and the best mode of pursuing it." Wilberforce replied that he had already tried to persuade several bishops of the importance of chapels of ease and was making some headway, but the progress had been too slow to risk proposing this measure during the last session of parliament, as he had hoped to do. However, it was an objective that "I shall keep steadily in my eye."<sup>64</sup>

Encouraged by the fact that Wilberforce was already attempting to address the issue, Newton added a "PS" to his next letter:<sup>65</sup>

"Allow me to add a word upon the subject of chapels, though I suppose I shall only meet your thoughts. The people of Camberwell, Reading and some other places, when deprived of

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<sup>62</sup> Walter Taylor [1732?-1803], member of Above Bar Congregational and blockmaker to the navy.

<sup>63</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 91-92, [June or July 1799].

<sup>64</sup> *Life*, vol 2, page 342.

<sup>65</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f 93, 31 July 1799.

their parochial minister, have been compelled for the continuance of the Gospel among them, to take shelter under the Toleration Act, that is, to become dissenters. I am not much attached to names, but I cannot wish that the bulk of profession should insensibly fall into the dissenting line, especially as some of their evangelical teachers are not so sensible of our national blessings, nor so friendly to our constitution and government as I could wish them.

If a method could be devised for the Establishment of Regular Chapels of Ease, where needful, without the express consent of the new incumbent being essentially necessary, I think it might prevent many good people and good subjects from deserting the Establishment, and be thereby a means of strengthening the church and the state. I should be glad if our rulers in both departments saw the thing in this light. *But when I think of you, Mr Thornton and a few of your friends, I am ready to address you in the words of Mordecai – Who knoweth but God has raised you up for such a time as this!*"

The following year he prayed especially for this group as they took a holiday together. "I am often with you and Mrs Wilberforce, and Mr and Mrs H Thornton, in spirit, at Bangor. I sympathize with you in the sweets of retirements, which to gentlemen in your public line, must be doubly agreeable. My frequent prayer shall be that the Lord may bless the relaxation and the sea air, so that you may both return in health and strength, sufficient to support you comfortably in the approaching winter campaign."<sup>66</sup>

He advised Wilberforce not to be misled by other arguments, "A thousand things are started to draw our attention, to exhaust our strength, and to divert us from our course. Happy they who go forward with a single eye, and upon as strait a line as possible – and say to all that would intrude, I am engaged in a great design, and cannot stop, or turn aside, to talk with you."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f 104, 15 September 1800.

<sup>67</sup> Nehemiah 6:3.



In 1797 Wilberforce left for a fortnight in Bath hoping the spa waters would again improve his health. Before leaving, he asked his bookseller to deliver a copy of his *Practical View*,<sup>68</sup> hot off the press, to Newton's home address. On his arrival in Bath a few days later, he wrote to suggest to Newton that if he did not have time to "fight through the whole of it", he might "dip into the third or fourth chapters and perhaps the concluding one."<sup>69</sup>

Wilberforce was thankful "to have published what I may term my manifesto – to have plainly told my worldly acquaintances what I think of their system and conduct and where it must end." He felt "a solid comfort from having openly declared myself as it were on the side of Christ," and having shown where his hopes for his country lay. Newton was absolutely delighted to receive his copy and read it immediately. "Indeed, I have not properly *read* it yet, but I have *devoured* it,"<sup>70</sup> he confided to Wilberforce. "We can remember the time," he soberly reflected, "when you could not have written this book, and when I would not have read it if it had been put into my hands. The difference between what we are and what we once were, and what many still are, is all of grace."

At this point in writing, he was interrupted by the postman delivering the above letter from Wilberforce. "How could you think it possible," he remonstrated, "that I should be content with dipping in a book of yours?... You compel me, Sir, to say, that I deem it the most valuable and important publication of the present age that I have seen: especially as it is *yours*." Wilberforce had written of a real religion "so complete, so *totus teres et rotundus*,<sup>71</sup> so forcible and yet so gentle, so candid and yet so explicit." He marvelled at the goodness of God in having guided and guarded Wilberforce through so many embarrassments, snares and trials in his public life, to publish "such a book" without fear. Many may have watched and hoped for his downfall, but "That the Lord has raised you up to bear such a testimony, at a time like this, to His truth, revives a hope... He will not yet give us up." He

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<sup>68</sup> A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes of this Country contrasted with real Christianity, William Wilberforce, 1797.

<sup>69</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff77-78, 19 April 1797, Wilberforce to Newton, from Bath.

<sup>70</sup> *Correspondence*, vol 1, 155, 21 April 1797.

<sup>71</sup> so complete, smooth, round, Horace, Sat. II, vii 86.

rejoiced to think “what additional weight it will give to all you say or do, as in other places, so especially in the House of Commons.”

He tried to call on Wilberforce in person, to congratulate him “*viva voce*” when he knew he had returned to London, but had to be content with writing later en route to his usual summer retreat at Southampton. “One thing strikes me very much and excites my praise to the Lord on your behalf. That a gentleman in your line of life, harassed with a multiplicity of business, and surrounded on all sides with snares, could venture to publish *such* a book, without fearing a retort either from the many friends or the many enemies amongst whom you have moved so many years.”<sup>72</sup>

To Charles Grant, Newton declared, “What a phenomenon has Mr Wilberforce sent abroad! *Such* a book, by *such* a man, and at *such* a time!”<sup>73</sup> Its great advantage was that it would be read “by persons in the higher circles, who are quite inaccessible to us little folks; who will neither hear what we can say, nor read what we may write. I am filled with wonder and with hope. I accept it as a token for good, yea as the brightest token I can discern in this dark and perilous day. Yes, I trust that the Lord by raising up such an incontestable witness to the truth and power of his Gospel, has a gracious purpose to honour him as an instrument, of reviving and strengthening the sense of real religion where it already is, and of communicating it, where it is not.”

In his annotated copy of *Practical View*,<sup>74</sup> given him “from the author”, written in his own hand are the comments:

Second reading begun 20 April 1797

Finished the second reading 10 May 1797

Finished the third reading ye 11 June 97

Fourth reading begun 19 Oct

This book made him reconsider the tone of his future “quarterly payments” to Wilberforce. “Though I have long been well satisfied that the Lord had in mercy set you apart for himself, yet I thought an occasional hint of the dangers to which you were exposed might not be unseasonable. But now I shall be glad to look to you (or at least to your

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<sup>72</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff79-80, 7 June 1797, from Reading.

<sup>73</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff125, 18 April 97, Newton to Charles Grant.

<sup>74</sup> Cowper & Newton Museum Library, Olney.

book) for cautions against the evils that beset my own path, and for considerations to strengthen my motives for running the uncertain remainder of my race, with alacrity.”<sup>75</sup> He closed his letter in prayer, “May the wisdom and power of the Most High guide, strengthen and protect you.” Newton wanted to lend the book to his adopted niece, Betsy (Elizabeth Catlett). But to make the position quite clear, he inscribed in it:

My regards for the author who gave me this book, will not permit me to part with my property in it, and therefore I can only *lend* it to my dear Elizabeth<sup>76</sup> during my life. If she survives me, it will then be her own. I commend it to her, as one of the best books (in my judgment) extant – and I hope she will find much pleasure and much profit from a frequent perusal of it. The Lord accompany her reading with his especial blessing! Amen. 10 May 1797

The book is punctuated with marks here and there, underlinings, and occasional brief comments (True, etc), the longest being on Wilberforce's statement: “In short, reasoning fairly, there is no medium between absolute Pyrrhonism and true Christianity...” Here Newton underlined absolute Pyrrhonism and wrote in the margin:

Uncertainty

Pyrrho professed that he could be sure of nothing – how could he then be sure even of this? According to his principles, he was not to give way to a carriage on the road. He could not be sure that it was a carriage, or that it would run over him, if he stood in the way, before it. Yet this is called Philosophy! Bethlehem [the lunatic asylum] is a fit College for such Philosophers!

How much of Wilberforce's bold and clear delineation of real Christianity in his *Practical View* may have stemmed from Newton's gentle guidance and constant, wise counsel over the years, one can only speculate.

Wilberforce worked relentlessly on “the slave trade business.” In early 1788, sudden illness put him out of action. He was given two weeks to live. Pitt shouldered responsibility for the Abolition. A Bill to limit the

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<sup>75</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff79-80, 7 June 1797.

<sup>76</sup> Elizabeth (Betsy) Catlett [1769-1834] who married Joseph Smith in 1805.

number of slaves on board trading ships was introduced on 1 May, encountering opposition in the Lords in June, but finally granted Royal assent on 11 July. Throughout this time Wilberforce had been unable to participate. Newton wrote to update him while he was convalescing in the Lake District: "Sir Charles Middleton desired me to keep in the way, one week, if I should be wanted to give evidence at the bar of the House of Commons, but the business went on there very well without me. The next week I had an order from the Lords to attend them, but I was not called upon."<sup>77</sup>

He had been saddened by the spirit of opposition in the House of Lords. But Pitt's speech had impressed him. "I admire the firmness and integrity of the man, who in his situation, could take such an open and determined part in favour of the cause of humanity. Surely I am bound to pray for him, for I think he is raised up for the good of the nation, and to exhibit a proof to all Europe that in a statesman no less than in private life, honesty is the best policy." The following year, he re-iterated his thankfulness to God "for the wisdom, integrity and firmness with which he has furnished Mr Pitt for such a time as this." Pitt was entitled to the nation's esteem, "but it would perhaps give him more pleasure, if he could know how many prayers have been offered daily on his behalf."<sup>78</sup>

In the continuing struggle over abolition, Wilberforce was the target of slander and accusations and was even challenged to a duel by a West Indian captain. Hearing from Charles Grant that Wilberforce had gone to Bath again for the waters, Newton wrote to him there with kindly comfort and encouragement. "The situation of the slaves, and your exertions for their relief, are, if I may say so, palpable subjects – they are felt by all where sordid interest has not benumbed – and therefore your name will be revered by many, who are little affected by the love of the *Great Philanthropist*. If you therefore meet with some unkind reflections and misrepresentations, from men of unfeeling and mercenary spirits,

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<sup>77</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 17-18, 5 July 1788. He did, however, give evidence before the Privy Council when Wilberforce kindly arranged for Pitt to introduce him personally [*Correspondence*, pages 112-117, 13 December 1794] see also *Reports of the House of Lords Committee of Council*, 1789 and *Evidence to a Committee of the House of Commons*, 1790.

<sup>78</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 24-25, 16 Feb 1789.

you will bear it patiently, when you think of Him who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself.”<sup>79</sup>

He was keen to know from Wilberforce himself, his opinion on a rumour heard from the Rev Abraham Booth, Baptist minister, of a move to establish a Society in London, and throughout Britain, to ban the use of West Indian produce until the Slave trade Abolition should be abolished. Newton had heard from Henry Thornton that Wilberforce was apprehensive that such a move might divide the friends of the Abolition, and therefore could not support it. But he wanted to know from him directly. “My poor judgement will probably be asked upon the occasion, and I wish to speak after you,” he explained.

Shortly before leaving on another visit to the health-giving waters of Bath in 1792, Wilberforce gave Newton a print of his portrait. It prompted a letter of heartfelt thanks from Newton, “I shall always look at [it] with double pleasure, as your resemblance, and your gift. I shall rank it among the most valued of my movables.” Wilberforce had recently suffered defeat over the Foreign Slave Bill, so Newton added with unfailing encouragement, “But especially I am glad to view it as a memorial of the Lord’s goodness to you, in honouring you to be his instrument of what has already been done, towards the abolition of the slave-trade. Much has been already done, and I trust you... live to see the accomplishment of your benevolent design.”<sup>80</sup> As usual, he concluded in prayer, “That he may be your Sun and Shield, your Counsellor and Comforter here, and your portion forever, is the sincere prayer of, My dear Sir, your affectionate and obliged and obedient servant, John Newton.”

In early December 1794 Wilberforce set aside a day of prayer and fasting<sup>81</sup> for “seeking God and praying for political direction, for a blessing on my parliamentary labours, on my country, and on those who have specially desired my prayers.” Within days, a letter arrived from Newton,

“When you have the leisure to favour me with a line, I shall be glad of your judgment respecting the associations rapidly

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<sup>79</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 43-44, 4 August [1792].

<sup>80</sup> Wilberforce lived to see the Abolition of Slavery legalised (effectively, for it passed the 3<sup>rd</sup> reading in the House of Commons in 1833, just 3 days before he died).

<sup>81</sup> It proved a day not without interruptions, to his distress (see *Life*, vol 2, 65).

forming to stop the consumption of West Indian produce. If you and your friends who have exerted yourselves so nobly for the abolition of the slave trade, and are likewise known friends to government, were to recommend such a measure, I should readily adopt it. At present, and especially as a minister, I do not enforce it; I think it premature, and rather beginning, as we say, at the wrong end. In these noisy times I would be cautious of taking any steps which might even remotely seem to imply dissatisfaction with government. I judge of your sentiments by those of Mr Thornton and Sir Charles Middleton. But I wish, if you please, to have the sanction of your own name.”<sup>82</sup>

In the spring of 1795 Wilberforce was further disappointed in the House regarding the Slave Trade, and upset with himself for having been less prepared than on other occasions. Newton sought to comfort him. “You have acted nobly, Sir, in behalf of the poor Africans,” wrote Newton. “I trust you will not lose your reward. But I believe the business is now transferred to a higher hand. If *men* will not redress their accumulated injuries, I believe the *Lord will*. I shall not wonder, if the Negative lately put upon your Motion, should prove a prelude to the loss of all our West India Islands. Nor dare I say, I shall be sorry, if there is no other way to procure the abolition of that inhuman traffic.”<sup>83</sup>

Newton’s heart was pained “by the prevalence of sin and misery, and the evidences of God’s displeasure, against a nation that has long enjoyed and long abused, more light, liberty and prosperity, than was ever vouchsafed to any people upon the face of the earth.” He felt it must be even more distressing to Wilberforce, who, who from “higher ground” could see further. But to be more constructive, he concluded, “Let us look to the bright side. The Lord reigns. He has all hearts in his hands. He is carrying on his great designs in a strait line, and nothing can obstruct them.”

At seventy Newton remarked that he felt well and truly an Old Man. He wondered if this might be his last “quarterly” to Wilberforce. Writing “not far from the verge of life”,<sup>84</sup> he reflected on their citizenship being

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<sup>82</sup> *Correspondence*, pages 112-117, 13 December 1794.

<sup>83</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 60-61, 19 March 1795.

<sup>84</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 69-70, 30 March 1796.

in heaven, and reminded his friend that while they kept their aim on things unseen and eternal, the transient things around them would seem comparatively insignificant and trivial.

Not only were they travellers, but agents "bought with a price and ... not our own, commissioned and appointed ... to transact business for Him as we go along." Whilst he felt his calling allowed him a pleasant, mutually strengthening use of his time in and out of the pulpit, if he was wise and watchful, "It is otherwise with you," he empathised. "Much of your time is necessarily spent in connections and converse with those who can give you little direct assistance or comfort in your spiritual walk." But this could turn to his advantage: "So it is observed that the fire burns brightest in a severe frost."

The motives for fidelity and diligence in both their posts were powerful, "for we serve the Lord Christ, who has laid us under the strongest obligations of gratitude and love. But," he added tenderly, "we are not responsible for the success of our attempts." Just as David had wanted to build the Temple, but this task was reserved for his son Solomon, the Lord nevertheless accepted David's intention, "and was pleased to say, *Thou didst well that it was in thine heart...* So God accepts people, not according to what they have actually done in his service, but according to what they would have done, had they been able."<sup>85</sup> His illustrations prepared the way for comforting Wilberforce in his recent setback in Parliament.<sup>86</sup> "Your efforts in favour of the poor Africans have again been counteracted. But it was well it was in your heart to relieve them from oppression."<sup>87</sup>

He had been grieved to hear that the bill had been thrown out of the Commons – "not merely upon account of the Africans, but because I apprehend that if men refuse to redress them, the Great Avenger of

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<sup>85</sup> Newton made same this point in his *Amazing Grace* sermon of 1 January 1773 based on 1 Chronicles 17:16,17 (see *The Life of John Newton*, Richard Cecil, ed Marylynn Rouse, Christian Focus, 2000, page 365)

<sup>86</sup> The opposition forced the second reading to their numerical advantage, with Wilberforce rushing in from dinner at Palace Yard to hold the fort until more Abolition supporters could arrive. They got it through the committee, but it was thrown out at the third reading, "with enough at the opera to have carried it," lamented Wilberforce. He was sickened by the lukewarmness of the "supporters". *Life*, vol 2, 141-142.

<sup>87</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 69-70, 30 March 1796.

oppression will plead their cause Himself. Methinks I see his hand already lifted up.” He interpreted the nation’s recent naval calamity as evidence of this. “Our boasted fleet was to sweep the seas, to cover the West Indies, and to do I know not what. But the Lord said, It shall not be. He blew with his wind, they were scattered, disconcerted and driven back with heavy loss.” As an experienced mariner, Newton realised how rare it was for such a long series of southwest storms to hit. The timing had been critical, a providence about which he was deeply conscious in his own life. It had only been disputes about court-martials which had detained the fleet, otherwise, he reckoned, “they might have made their passage”. Moreover, “I think we have had more of these disasters in one year, than I have heard of in many years past. I do not impute it to negligence in the officers, but I fear it is a sign the Lord is against us, that so many disappointments occur.”

Newton had other fears for British servicemen, but his chief point was, “It is not Britannia as our boasting song pretends, but the Lord who rules the waves, and them who sail upon them.” He longed that great men and statesmen might acknowledge that, and seek His wisdom rather than the fragile spider’s webs of the finest spun schemes of men.<sup>88</sup> “One unforeseen contingency is sufficient to derange and sweep them away... But I seem to forget that I am writing to you.”

Added to the hardship of his own old age, was the mental derangement of Newton’s adopted niece, “my *Individua comes et umbra*,”<sup>89</sup> who was obliged to spend many months in the distressing Bethlem Hospital (where, as she improved, she was “a sort of Chaplain on a Lord’s day evening, to all in her ward who will attend, and has sometimes from 12 to 18 hearers, to whom she reads a chapter, a sermon, and gives out a hymn”). “My trial is great,” wrote Newton to Barbara Wilberforce in 1802, “but I am mercifully supported – I preach as much as at any former time, and am seldom at a loss when in the pulpit, though when out of it,

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<sup>88</sup> In his sermon notes on Genesis 15:1 preached in Olney, Newton wrote, “Too many would shelter themselves with a refuge of lies—self-righteousness, false notions of God’s mercy—repentance, promises and purposes are all they have to trust to. But this is like trusting to a cobweb to shield us from a cannon ball. Jesus is the only shield.” Newton’s sermon notebook No. 6, Cowper & Newton Museum.

<sup>89</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f79-80, 7 June 1797 [inseparable companion and shadow].



my recollection is so weak, that often in the afternoon, I forget that I preached in the morning.”<sup>90</sup>

“I long much for a sight of you and Mrs Wilberforce,” he admitted to Wilber the following year,

“Indeed I do long for it. But at present it is not practicable. However though absent in the flesh, I am present with you in spirit. I hope I shall never cease to love you both very dearly, to pray for you as well as I can, or to think with pleasure of my obligations to you.”<sup>91</sup>

When Wilberforce's renewed motion of the Abolition was carried by 124:49 in its first reading on 30 May 1804, his aging mentor and prayer supporter was not to be deterred by increasing deafness and blindness, but raced off a note in exuberance. “Though I can scarcely see the paper before me,” he scrawled,<sup>92</sup> “I must attempt to express my thankfulness to the Lord, and to offer my congratulations to you for the success which he has so far been pleased to give to your unwearied endeavours for the abolition of the slave trade, which I have considered as a millstone, sufficient, of itself sufficient, to sink such an enlightened and highly favoured nation as ours to the bottom of the sea.”

He had feared the prejudices of the West Indian planters might have proved insuperable obstacles, “but I have a new proof now of what I always professed to believe, that to prayer, faith and patient perseverance, all things are possible. Whether I who am within two months of entering my eightieth year shall live to see the accomplishment of the work, is only known to Him, in whose hands are all our times and ways, but the hopeful prospect of its accomplishment will, I trust, give me daily satisfaction so long as my declining faculties are preserved.”<sup>93</sup>

Wilberforce managed to “steal one moment from business and bustle” to thank him for his kind congratulations:

“O my dear sir, it is refreshing to me to turn away my eye from the vanities with which it is surrounded, and to fix it on you, who

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<sup>90</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f110, 16 June 1802, to Mrs. Wilberforce.

<sup>91</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f115, 21 February 1803.

<sup>92</sup> *Correspondence*, 302-303, 5 June 1804.

<sup>93</sup> Newton did live to see the Abolition of the Slave Trade become law in 1807, by just 9 months.

appear in some sort to be already (like Moses descending from the mount) enlightened with the beams of that blessed day which is beginning to rise on you, as you approach to the very boundaries of this world's horizon... Pray for us, my dear sir, that we also may be enabled to hold on our way and at last to join with you in the shout of victory."<sup>94</sup>

The second to last entry in the diary of the old African blasphemer, the "servant of slaves,"<sup>95</sup> written on Saturday 4 August 1804, his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday, reads, "Let me retire as a thankful guest from a full table, and rejoice that others are coming forth to serve thee (I hope better) when I can do no more."<sup>96</sup> William Bull's grandson, Josiah, asked in his biography on Newton, "And what in all this was the great secret of Mr Newton's power and steadfastness?"<sup>97</sup> He supplied the answer himself, "Unquestionably, it was his spirit of prayer." There was no question either in Wilberforce's mind as to what Newton's secret was, "O my dear Sir," he had written to him, "let not your hands cease to be lifted up, lest Amalek prevail."<sup>98</sup>

Newton had offered the young prophet "a double portion of my thoughts and prayers."<sup>99</sup> His prayer was "that the Lord may give you a

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<sup>94</sup> *Life*, vol 3, 169-170, 1804.

<sup>95</sup> Newton wrote his own epitaph, still in St Mary Woolnoth, London, with this phrase on it.

<sup>96</sup> Wed 21 March 1804, John Newton Diary, CO199, Firestone Library, Princeton University.

<sup>97</sup> *John Newton of Olney and St Mary Woolnoth*, Josiah Bull, 1868; reprinted as *But Now I See*, Banner of Truth, 1998 (page 368)

<sup>98</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f19, 6 September 1788, Wilberforce to Newton, from Rayrigg. On February 27, 1778, Newton wrote a hymn on Moses and Amalek, later published in the *Olney Hymns*, 1779, Book 1, Hymn which included these lines:

...Moses apart with lifted hands  
Engaged in humble prayer.  
When Moses' hands through weakness dropped,  
The warriors fainted too;  
Israel's success at once was stopped,  
And Am'lek bolder grew.

<sup>99</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 f 34, 10 June 1791.

double portion of his Spirit, to improve the advantages and to obviate the difficulties of your situation.”<sup>100</sup> *Let me inherit a double portion*, had been Elisha's plea to the aging Elijah.<sup>101</sup> For Elisha, the condition of receiving a double portion of the older prophet's spirit was that he should see him taken up to heaven. This wasn't to be for Wilberforce.

Newton died on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1807. But on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1807, Wilberforce inexplicably had “a sudden attack of a dangerous illness,”<sup>102</sup> which put him out of circulation. On 20 December he recorded, “A good deal of pain in my side, and my breath much affected.” When his doctor called on him two days later, he considered things were very serious indeed and “bled” him. Wilberforce's lungs had been inflamed. A slow recovery began. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1808, the day after Newton's funeral, Wilberforce was still not yet well enough to go downstairs. But the entry that day in his diary read: “...oh bring my soul, more effectually than ever hitherto, to God in Christ, **and give me a large measure of Thy Spirit.**”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> MS Wilberforce c49 ff 50-51, 19 June 1794.

<sup>101</sup> 2 Kings 2:9.

<sup>102</sup> *Life*, vol 3, 354.

<sup>103</sup> *Life*, vol 3, 355.

Infinite Dominion:  
*No Man's Sky* and the Cultural Mandate<sup>1</sup>

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Imagine yourself regaining consciousness on an unnamed, seemingly uninhabited planet somewhere in the expanses of the universe. As your eyes slowly adjust to the natural light now flooding them, you realize you are outside any shelter, and you hear the robotic voice of your spacesuit's computer software inform you of your life support system initializing. You slowly look around, trying to get your bearings, trying to make sense somehow of not only where you are, but also what has happened. You gradually look around at the vast, empty landscape of the unnamed planet, recognizing its unmistakable beauty, yet nonetheless realizing the harshness of an environment to which you are foreign, an environment you instinctively know is inhospitable toward your presence.

Then you spot it: a crashed starship nearby. *Your* crashed starship. Smoke rises from the wreckage, and as you survey the bleak scene, there is no question what must be done. If you ever want to leave this planet, you must find a way to repair the ship. But before you can even begin to ascertain just what will be required to complete this task successfully, the voice of your spacesuit's software chimes in, informing you that your life support system is depleting rapidly. If you do not find a way to replenish the system's resources and keep life support actively running, you will die long before you can possibly direct any attention toward your ship. You stand up and you begin walking out into the landscape before you, hoping that out there is something—anything—that might be used to keep you alive.

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is a revised version of Matthew C. Millsap, "Infinite Dominion: *No Man's Sky* and the Cultural Mandate" (Paper presentation, Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Providence, RI, November 15, 2017).

So begins the space exploration video game, *No Man's Sky*.<sup>2</sup> Released for the PC and PlayStation 4 platforms in August 2016, *No Man's Sky* quickly found a wide audience among video game players, as evidenced by large estimated revenue.<sup>3</sup> A highly anticipated title, much of its initial success arguably owed to the unique pitch conveyed throughout its marketing campaign, a selling point that many players found enticing: the prospect of exploring planet-by-planet a functionally infinite universe procedurally generated by computer algorithms.<sup>4</sup>

Why would so many players find this compelling? Why would tens of thousands of humans take time out of their daily lives to play a game in which they explore a universe that does not actually exist outside of a virtual realm?<sup>5</sup> In this essay, I seek to argue that *No Man's Sky*—its mechanics, scenario, and the playing of the game itself—appeals to players largely due to its correlation to the cultural mandate (Gen 1:26–28) found in Scripture. Whether or not the game's designers or players explicitly hold to the Christian metanarrative themselves, the appeal of

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<sup>2</sup>*No Man's Sky*, developed by Hello Games (Hello Games, 2016). Throughout this essay, all references to *No Man's Sky* pertain to the initial build of the game upon its release on August 9, 2016. *No Man's Sky* has received subsequent updates and additional content, which are not addressed in this essay; thus, the degree to which the game has changed from what is described herein must be determined by the reader, should he or she choose to investigate.

<sup>3</sup>Colin Campbell and Charlie Hall, "How Much Money Did Steam's Best-sellers Earn in 2016?" *Polygon*, January 6, 2017, <https://www.polygon.com/2017/1/6/14184200/steam-top-selling-games-2016>. Actual sales numbers and exact total revenue for video games are difficult information to obtain, given that many video game companies choose to withhold the exact figures unless specifically used for marketing purposes. Many researchers, such as Campbell and Hall, therefore rely on alternative methods to estimate such figures. For 2016, the estimated total revenue for *No Man's Sky* on PC was \$43.2M. This does not include total revenue for the other platform on which the game was available at launch, Sony's PlayStation 4.

<sup>4</sup>For an example of such marketing, see Hello Games, "*No Man's Sky* Gameplay E3 2014" (video), posted by HelloGamesTube YouTube channel June 9, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZO40WBNA60>.

<sup>5</sup>"*No Man's Sky*," Steam Charts, <https://steamcharts.com/app/275850#All>. During August 2016, *No Man's Sky* averaged nearly 37,000 concurrent players on PC. The number of concurrent players on PC has since decreased. The number of concurrent players on PlayStation 4 from August 2016 forward is unknown.

the game nonetheless hinges upon the divinely imbued impulse of every human being to exercise dominion over creation, even if creation, in this instance, exists within an interactive, fictitious universe.

Toward arguing the thesis, I shall begin with an overview of *No Man's Sky* that details the way the game works and the player's progression through the game. Secondly, I shall discuss what is meant by the cultural mandate and what types of actions humans undertake to fulfill it. Thirdly, placing each of these understandings together, I shall offer three possibilities for how *No Man's Sky* and the cultural mandate might correlate, concluding that the chosen correlation demonstrates the game's appeal.

Before moving into the overview, it would be beneficial to make the reader aware of a key presupposition under which I am operating. This essay is not an apologia for video games. Indeed, in the milieu of the past decade (and earlier), that certain games are worthy of theological attention should be self-evident to those who have ears to hear. In this paper, I, consistent with an understanding of video games on both the conceptual and experiential level, presuppose that video games are capable of meaningful communication. Thus, my aim for the paper is that it may serve as an example of work built upon the foundation of a rightly assumed legitimacy of theological interaction with video games.<sup>6</sup>

### *No Man's Sky*: An Overview

As mentioned previously, *No Man's Sky* is a space exploration game.<sup>7</sup> The opening scenario with which this essay began could be described as the premise of the game: The player is an explorer who apparently has crash landed on an unknown planet and must repair his ship in order to continue his journey throughout the cosmos. While this in itself is interesting enough to instill within the player a desire to progress, it

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<sup>6</sup>For more on such theological interaction with video games and a proposed framework for dialogue, see Matthew C. Millsap, "Playing with God: A Theoludological Framework for Dialogue with Video Games" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014).

<sup>7</sup>For a basic idea of the game's state on its launch date, see Sony Computer Entertainment America, "*No Man's Sky* – Launch Trailer | PS4" (video), posted by PlayStation YouTube channel August 9, 2016 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aozqa\\_7PLhE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aozqa_7PLhE).

becomes compounded when the player examines the crash site and discovers that at some point after the crash, an unknown intelligence has attempted to communicate with him by leaving him a message, a vague instruction to attempt to journey to the center of the universe.

As *No Man's Sky* is open in its design and affords the player a great deal of freedom, the player can choose to follow the intelligence's prompting to journey to the center of the universe, or he can completely ignore it and simply travel from planet to planet for the sheer satisfaction of discovering new worlds. The game is large enough that the player conceivably could spend hundreds of hours discovering and exploring new planets without ever moving any closer to the center of the universe.<sup>8</sup>

This is made possible by the fact that the universe of *No Man's Sky* is procedurally generated through computer algorithms.<sup>9</sup> Whereas most traditional game design is performed manually by human designers, much of the design of planets in *No Man's Sky* is executed by computer calculation. For a conventional game, the designers would, in effect, be designing every aspect of every planet the player encounters. In such a scenario, the designers would place specific flora "here" rather than "over there," create a lake of exact dimensions, precisely design rock formations, dictate a particular climate, design a substructure of caves below the planet's surface with navigation from point A to point B in mind, have designed the local wildlife according to minute detail, and so on and so forth.

In *No Man's Sky*, however, although the backbone of such design is in place as far as the game's assets (e.g., image files for rocks, water, components of plants, body parts of animals, etc.) are concerned, each planet in its entirety is generated by a complex computer algorithm from

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<sup>8</sup>The fact that the game is not narratively structured in a manner so strong as to send the player down a predetermined path is conducive to the overall theme of the game, which can be characterized as exploration, Kevin Schut, "Hello Game's *No Man's Sky*," in *The Routledge Companion to Imaginary Worlds*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf (New York: Routledge, 2018), 425–32.

<sup>9</sup>Procedural generation "occurs any time a game creates levels or spaces based on programmed rules, rather than on intentional design choices," Schut, 426. Schut further notes that the concept of procedural generation and its implementation are not expressly new when it comes to video games, but rather that procedural generation on the scale of what *No Man's Sky* has achieved is unprecedented.

various “seeds” the designers have programmed to use the available assets.<sup>10</sup> For example, when a player travels to planet Athanasius, an as-yet undiscovered planet, computer algorithms have generated the planet using the seeds, creating a unique planet whose exact landscape, climate, wildlife, etc. were not predetermined by human designers. In other words, the player lands upon and begins exploring a planet the game’s designers not only have never seen, but also of which the designers do not know the precise characteristics. The player, at that moment, is literally the only person who has ever seen or visited this planet.

The lead designer of the game, Sean Murray, estimates that the computers behind planet generation in *No Man’s Sky* have generated around 18 quintillion planets. According to his team’s calculations, if a new planet was discovered by a player every second, it would take 585 billion years for every planet available in *No Man’s Sky* to be discovered.<sup>11</sup> A scope this staggering is intentional. Murray’s childhood fascination with the cosmos continued through adulthood and informed his design of *No Man’s Sky* to the point of attempting to mirror in virtual form the reality in which we humans find ourselves—that planet Earth is but one planet among the multitudes in the nearly 10 trillion galaxies in the universe.<sup>12</sup>

Returning to the player’s experience on his algorithmically-generated starting planet within the game and his subsequent progression, it is clear at the outset of the game that the initial goal is survival. The player must replenish the resources needed for his spacesuit to function properly, keeping life support active, so that he can set about attempting to repair the damaged starship. The onboard computer system within the suit indicates that the player has a scanner

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<sup>10</sup>Roc Morin, “Inside the Artificial Universe That Creates Itself, *Atlantic*, February 18, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/02/artificial-universe-no-mans-sky/463308/>.

<sup>11</sup>Sean Murray, “*No Man’s Sky*: A Whole Universe to Explore,” PlayStation.Blog, August 26, 2014, <https://blog.us.playstation.com/2014/08/26/no-mans-sky-a-whole-universe-to-explore/>.

<sup>12</sup>Simon Parkin, “*No Man’s Sky*: The Game Where You Can Explore 18 Quintillion Planets,” *Guardian*, July 12, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jul/12/no-mans-sky-18-quintillion-planets-hello-games>.



available on the suit which is able to scan the surface of the planet in an immediate distance and provide a readout of lifeforms, flora, raw materials. The player is also equipped with a laser mining tool he can use to extract elements from the plants and rock formations he encounters, storing them for use in powering systems or for use in crafting other useful materials.

The onboard computer also details what elements and materials are needed to keep life support active, so that the player can prioritize keeping a steady supply available in order to stay alive. Likewise, the computer details what elements and materials are needed to power the starship and to craft the components needed to repair it. The player first locates and harvests what is needed to keep himself alive, then locates and harvests the materials needed to power the ship and the materials needed to craft the components to repair it. Eventually, once the ship is ready to fly, the player leaves the planet and travels to another, either journeying toward the center of the universe as prompted by the unknown intelligence or exploring the planets of the universe as he pleases. Although the universe of *No Man's Sky* is not technically infinite, it is functionally so; as long as the servers for the game are kept running, there will exist quintillions of planets that will never be seen by human eyes.

Through this overview, hopefully I have provided enough of an understanding of *No Man's Sky* to anyone who has not played the game to grasp its basic concept and mechanics. Admittedly, no written description—a simplified one, at that—can do justice to the richness and complexity of a visual, virtual world that is meant to be experienced personally through play.<sup>13</sup> Yet insofar as the cultural mandate is concerned, this overview of the game will suffice for beginning to think through any potential correlation. After discussing the cultural mandate itself, I will then be in a position to develop this correlation further.

### The Cultural Mandate

In order to argue that the appeal of playing *No Man's Sky* largely owes

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<sup>13</sup>This is—and will forever remain—the key difficulty in theological engagement with video games. A video game must be played in order for it to communicate meaning. Reported meaning, as is expressed here, goes only so far. See Millsap, “Playing with God.”

to some correlation to the cultural mandate, I must establish precisely what I mean by the term.<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this essay, the cultural mandate is the God-given command to mankind to exercise dominion over creation through care and cultivation, thus bringing creation into its full potential as it is developed into cultures. In terms of defining “culture,” Andy Crouch offers a particularly helpful understanding in his book, *Culture Making*: “Culture is, first of all, the name for our relentless, restless human effort to take the world as it’s given to us and make something else.”<sup>15</sup>

In recognition that the cultural mandate is God-given, Genesis 1:26–28 has often been viewed as its primary expression:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (ESV).<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, Genesis 2 contributes to an understanding of the cultural

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<sup>14</sup>The exact origins of the term “cultural mandate” appear to be unclear, though the essential thrust of the idea seems carried throughout much of the Kuyperian tradition. The idea and its consequent implementation are perhaps most notably manifest in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the work and thought of Francis A. Schaeffer, himself influenced apologetically by Herman Dooyeweerd and artistically by Hans Rookmaaker. While I am unaware of any monographs focusing exclusively on the cultural mandate itself, there are some books that build upon it and argue positions on how Christians might fulfill it. Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008) and Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004) are each representative of such works.

<sup>15</sup>Crouch, *Culture Making*, 23.

<sup>16</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations and references throughout this essay are taken from the English Standard Version of the *Holy Bible*.

mandate, especially the sections in which Adam is placed in the garden “to work it and keep it” (Gen 2:15) and in which God brings the animals before Adam so that Adam can name each of them (Gen 2:19–20).

While it is beyond the scope of this essay to go into full exegetical detail of these passages, it is worth noting four points particularly relevant to our concern. First, it is clear that God’s command for man to exercise dominion over creation does not make said dominion a foregone conclusion, as though dominion is instituted via divine fiat rather than through an intentional exercise on man’s part.<sup>17</sup> Man must *act* in order to have dominion, and it is clear that action is in mind in the subsequent Genesis 2 passage, in which God places man in the garden “to work it and keep it.” Thus, a proper understanding of creation is not as an object in which man passively exists, but rather as an object with which man must actively do something. Adopting “object” terminology does not betray a crass utilitarianism, nor is it license for man simply to do whatever he wishes with creation. Rather, it is an acknowledgment that the creation into which man was placed was not intended to remain in its initial, uncultivated state. Man, under divine command, must act upon creation—indeed, creation has been designed and structured *so that* man will act upon it.

Secondly, it is no coincidence that in Genesis 1:26–28 one finds a direct connection between being made in the image of God and fulfilling the cultural mandate. While the exact meaning of the *imago Dei* and its implications have been a matter of debate within theological anthropology for quite some time,<sup>18</sup> the more convincing interpretations

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<sup>17</sup>Victor P. Hamilton notes that the way דָּבַר (“have dominion”) is used later throughout the Old Testament to describe a dynamic of authority in other spheres of human life indicates here within the creation narrative an understanding that man is created “to rule” the rest of creation from the beginning of his existence, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 137–38.

<sup>18</sup>As the reader is likely aware, this is an understatement, to put it mildly. Complicating the matter are the differences between the strictly exegetical conclusions reached within Old Testament scholarship and the more theological interpretations thereof within theological anthropology. For an overview of the former, see Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26–28 in a Century of Old Testament Research* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988). For an overview of the latter, see John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the*

tend to offer a multifaceted understanding in which the God-likeness innate to human beings by virtue of the image incorporates multiple communicable attributes of God and/or appropriately limited anthropological imitations of his incommunicable attributes. Even when viewing the *imago Dei* primarily from a relational standpoint, this does not entirely preclude the inclusion of a functional understanding in which humans in some way mimic what God himself does, both in terms of creating and in exercising dominion.

As applied to the context of this essay specifically, J. R. R. Tolkien's understanding of humans as "sub-creators" proves instructive, as he rightly observes that all humans have something of a creative impulse within them, and that this creative impulse cannot be located exclusively anthropologically. Instead, the creative impulse all humans share as sub-creators has been placed within them from outside. It is natural in the sense that is universal to humanity, yet at the same time, it is supernatural in the sense that it is of divine, rather than human, origin.<sup>19</sup> Viewed contextually with the cultural mandate of which dominion is part, to be made in the image of God, then, is more than being a sub-creator, but it surely is not less. God intends that possessing his image will be what drives man to fulfill the cultural mandate faithfully, as to exercise dominion necessitates the use of creative faculties.

Thirdly, it is worth noting that fulfilling the cultural mandate logically demands the human development of the means to do so. Concerning Genesis 1:26–28, in order for man to exercise dominion over animals, one can reasonably conclude man would need to cultivate available resources and fashion tools from these resources to aid in this task. For instance, it is hard to imagine man being able to "have dominion

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*Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014). For a survey on the whole, see Daniel Simango, "The *Imago Dei* (Gen 1:26–27): A History of Interpretation from Philo to the Present," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42, no. 1 (2016): 172–90.

<sup>19</sup>J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," in C. S. Lewis, ed., *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 90–105. Here I am drawing my own conclusions from a reading of Tolkien's essay rather than from explicit statements he makes within said essay. Dorothy L. Sayers (herself not an "Inkling," though influenced by her friends Lewis and Williams) draws similar conclusions in *The Mind of the Maker: The Expression of Faith and Creativity through Art* (London: Methuen, 1941), 19–30.

over the fish of the sea” (Gen 1:26) if he does not engineer the means to remain afloat while in the sea. Likewise, concerning Genesis 2:15, one should not expect that man would be able to work the garden and keep it effectively were he not to devise agricultural techniques and contrive physical tools to implement these techniques.

Lastly, the cultural mandate itself implies that fulfillment of the mandate involves both travel and exploration. The language used throughout the passage is expansive in nature. In Genesis 1:26, mankind’s dominion is to be “over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” In 1:28, mankind is instructed to “[b]e fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.” Although God clearly places man within the garden of Eden for the purpose of cultivating it, there does not appear to be an expectation of remaining confined to the garden. The garden is not some mere subset of creation over which God has given man dominion, whereas the larger creation is intended to be left as-is, untouched by human hands. Rather, man is given dominion over all earthly creation, and if he is to exercise this dominion and thus fulfill the mandate, one can only logically conclude that—as originally intended—doing so will involve either Adam, his progeny, or both leaving the garden voluntarily prior to the Fall (Gen 3). This travel outside the garden naturally involves journeying into unknown territory, exploring places with which man has no familiarity.

I have identified four points of interest regarding the cultural mandate: that fulfillment of the mandate requires intentional action on man’s part, that man’s exercise of dominion over creation stems from a sub-creative impulse as found in the *imago Dei*, that the mandate logically demands the development of means to fulfill it, and that the mandate’s expansiveness necessitates travel and exploration for fulfillment. With these four points in mind, I now move toward considering in what ways *No Man’s Sky* might correlate to the cultural mandate.

### Three Possibilities for Correlation

In this essay, I am arguing that the appeal of playing *No Man’s Sky* is largely due to its correlation to the cultural mandate. Having provided an overview of the game, discussed what is meant by the cultural mandate, and included four points of consideration, I now move to the open question of just how *No Man’s Sky* might correlate to the cultural mandate. Here I shall offer three possibilities and choose one as the most

promising candidate, acknowledging that each of the three have been adequately informed by the aforementioned points of consideration. The three possibilities are as follows: microcosmic fulfillment, competitor to fulfillment, and recreational mirror of fulfillment.

### Microcosmic Fulfillment

The first possibility for correlation is that playing *No Man's Sky* actually would serve as a fulfillment of the cultural mandate on a microcosmic level. For this possibility to be correct, one must affirm two propositions in coherence with the four points of interest observed above: first, that the expansiveness of the cultural mandate does not exclude activities in virtual realms, which are themselves subsets of reality, and secondly, that there is no qualitative difference between actions undertaken in virtual realms and those undertaken in physical reality. I shall address each of these in turn.

While it is true that the expansiveness of the cultural mandate does leave open a wide variety of human endeavors that work toward fulfilling the mandate in some capacity, from actual human labor that produces physical transformation (e.g., the construction of a new building) all the way to the development of the arts (e.g., the production of and screening of a film), extending this understanding to activities in virtual realms likely stretches too far. Virtual realms are indeed subsets of reality, but a key difference is that their stakes—assuming there is no permeation into “real-world” consequences—are not actual.<sup>20</sup> Thus, whatever action one might take in *No Man's Sky*—from mining a particular resource to purchasing a needed component from a merchant in a virtual economy built off the scarcity of certain resources—has no true, lasting meaning outside of the virtual realm in which it takes place. This is not what is found in the biblical witness regarding the cultural mandate, where it is understood that exercising dominion makes changes of actual consequence.

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<sup>20</sup>Mark J. P. Wolf, “Virtual Worlds,” in *The Routledge Companion to Imaginary Worlds*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf (New York: Routledge, 2018), 192–197. Those possessing familiarity with games studies as an academic discipline will recognize that the matter is actually more complex than I frame it to be here, but this statement must suffice for the purposes of this essay. Wolf’s “Virtual Worlds” entry serves as a useful starting point for readers wishing to dig deeper.

Likewise, concerning the second proposition, it is difficult to argue convincingly that there is no qualitative difference between actions undertaken in virtual realms and those undertaken in physical reality. For playing *No Man's Sky* to be an actual fulfillment of the cultural mandate, in-game actions must be of the same value and weight as their counterparts in physical reality. For example, in *No Man's Sky*, if, while mining Omegon ore, I accidentally fall from a precipice I knew to be unstable and die, in most cases I can restart nearby and perhaps go look for Omegon somewhere else I know to be safer. Alternatively, if I am a coal miner in West Virginia and I make a calculated risk in mining in an area of the mine known to be unstable, and then end up on the losing side of that risk, I do not have an opportunity to rectify my life-changing mistake. Moreover, in the first case, choosing not to mine Omegon may negatively impact me financially in the in-game economy, but the consequences involved exist only insofar as they apply to the well-being of my in-game character, whereas in the second case, I might be motivated to take such a risk by the fact that my family for whom I am providing has not purchased food in over a week. Clearly there is a qualitative difference between in-game actions and real-world actions in these instances. Since each of the two propositions in this section should not be affirmed, understanding the playing of *No Man's Sky* as a microcosmic fulfillment of the cultural mandate would not appear to be a viable option.

### Competitor to Fulfillment

The second possibility for correlation is that playing *No Man's Sky* competes against fulfillment of the cultural mandate. If this possibility is correct, then whether intentionally or unintentionally, the player plays the game *instead of* undertaking activities that fulfill the cultural mandate. More specifically, the actions undertaken in-game that exercise dominion over the game world effectively replace actions undertaken in physical reality that would exercise dominion over the earth. When examining the four points of interest addressed earlier, one sees how such a scenario might unfold. The player recognizes that he must take action within "creation" on the planets he visits in the game. After all, there is no leaving the initial planet without first cultivating the resources necessary to power the ship to its next destination.

In the "competitor to fulfillment" possibility, the player also is

motivated by the creative impulse instilled within him via the *imago Dei*, but in this case, he would be improperly exercising the creative impulse, as it is essentially being used in the wrong venue. The player recognizes that exercising dominion over the worlds he encounters in *No Man's Sky* requires the development of the means to do so, as in the third point of interest, so he uses the materials he harvests to do things like improve the efficiency of his mining beam, purchase materials for the purpose of engaging in intergalactic arbitrage, or develop a more powerful warp drive that enables him to expand his reach farther into the universe. The fourth point of interest—that fulfillment of the mandate necessitates travel and exploration—comes as no surprise here, as these two actions are part and parcel of the game.

At issue in the “competitor to fulfillment” possibility, then, is not the nature of the actions themselves as performed in-game, as though some measure of value can be assigned to them, but rather the broader context of where playing the game fits within living one’s life in physical reality. But one must be careful here to note that the problem within this broader context relates to the replacement of activities that fulfill the cultural mandate with those that do not, rather than to an inquiry into an underlying biblical worldview or lack thereof present within the life of the individual in question, as though this were determinative of whether or not one has the capacity to fulfill the mandate. Whether believer or unbeliever, one’s actions can be part of fulfilling the cultural mandate. The unbeliever who grows a small garden behind his home is at work fulfilling the cultural mandate, as is the believer who grows a small garden behind his home, regardless of whether the latter is more theologically informed than the other.

Returning to the issue of life context insofar as it concerns playing video games, the problem at hand is that there are some individuals who might excessively play *No Man's Sky* to the point of it taking the place of, or otherwise hindering, important life activities that actually constitute fulfilling the cultural mandate. The desire to play, in and of itself, is not wrong. In fact, I would argue that it is as prelapsarian and as God-given as is the desire to work.<sup>21</sup> But human desires are now twisted and marred

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<sup>21</sup>As much as I would like to elaborate upon this statement, space prohibits me from doing so, other than to offer this observation: Evangelicals have, on the whole, an underdeveloped theology of play.



by sinful human nature, and when virtual activities that mirror those right and good actions that bring about dominion over creation become so dominant as to displace the actions they were meant to mirror, one moves into abrogation of responsibility. In sum: Can playing *No Man's Sky* compete against fulfillment of the cultural mandate? Of course. But just because it can does not mean that it must, and just because it possesses this capacity does not necessitate the conclusion that "competitor to fulfillment" is the best candidate for correlation to the cultural mandate.

### Recreational Mirror of Fulfillment

The final possibility for correlation is that playing *No Man's Sky* is a recreational mirror of fulfillment of the cultural mandate. This understanding is predicated on similar observations to those previously expressed. The actions undertaken in the game itself, in fact, mirror actions that are legitimate expressions of exercising dominion over creation in physical reality. Each of the in-game actions is intentional, as the player rightly concludes that they are necessary not only for survival, but also for progression. Hypothetically, a player could, in fact, remain on his starting planet, never repair his ship, and simply spend hundreds of hours within a small radius of his starting position doing nothing but harvesting exactly what he needs to survive. But the chances of a player actually doing this are slim, as there is something inside him which compels him forward, even if he ignores the communication from the unknown intelligence at the beginning of the game. The desire is for more than mere subsistence; it is for flourishing.

The *imago Dei* also informs the player's activities rightly, as this move toward flourishing is driven by the player's sub-creative impulse. The player does not create anything *ex nihilo*, as he must use only those resources allowed by the game's design, just as any human creates anything on earth only through the use of the existing materials brought into being by God's creative act. Again, as applied specifically to the context of *No Man's Sky*, there is something satisfying about working toward crafting the materials necessary to improve one's starship even if the modifications provide no substantive advantage in playing the game. Likewise, many players find creative joy in the discovery and naming of undiscovered planets, or in extensively exploring such a planet, scanning its local wildlife, and naming each new species. The parallels to Adam

exercising dominion over creation through the naming of the animals should be readily apparent. All of this in-game activity, of course, takes place within a context in which these actions require the means to fulfill them and in which they necessitate travel and exploration.

But if these actions, collectively constituting playing *No Man's Sky*, could potentially be a competitor to the fulfillment of the cultural mandate as a result of the correlative appeal they hold, is it possible for them to be exercised rightly? I contend that the legitimate expression of these actions in-game is found in an understanding of playing *No Man's Sky* as recreational in nature, specifically as a recreational mirror of fulfilling the cultural mandate. While space does not permit a full treatment of a theology of play or the essential goodness of recreation, that God intended recreation to be a regular part of man's earthly life is evidenced by both the divine example of and formal institution of the Sabbath.<sup>22</sup>

Viewed accordingly, many recreational activities can be understood to mirror fulfillment of the cultural mandate in some capacity. Yet when looking at *No Man's Sky* specifically, one sees a game whose design, mechanics, and player actions appear poised to mirror this fulfillment at a more fundamental level, a correlation perhaps not seen as vividly in other recreational activities (though in no way derogating these other activities). Put simply, the game is designed in such a way as to simulate fulfillment of the cultural mandate, and it should be both viewed and played accordingly. Thus, the appeal of the game, for both believers and unbelievers, should not be separated from this mirroring, for the appeal is actually derived from prelapsarian human nature itself.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>For good starting points regarding a theology of play and the ways in which the Sabbath informs it, see Leland Ryken, *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), and Robert K. Johnston, *The Christian at Play* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

<sup>23</sup>There are parallels to what I am describing here found in Tolkien's and Lewis's understandings of beneficial "escapism" as manifested through fantasy worlds, an escapism that actually fosters the individual having a deeper appreciation for the physical world he or she inhabits. See Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," and C. S. Lewis, "Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*," in *On Stories: and Other Essays in Literature* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1966; New York: Harcourt, 1982), 83–90.

### Conclusion

In this essay, I have argued that the appeal of playing a popular video game, *No Man's Sky*, largely owes to its correlation to the cultural mandate. This correlation is informed by the nature of the mandate itself, as real-life actions that legitimately demonstrate exercising dominion over creation have strong virtual counterparts within the game. Playing *No Man's Sky*, though something that can be abused as can any other recreational activity, is good when done within its proper confines. When the cultural mandate is taken in conjunction with playing *No Man's Sky* recreationally, one perhaps sees how an appealing video game may be rightly enjoyed in a God-glorifying manner.

The Diminishing Influence  
of John Owen upon Andrew Fuller

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As eighteenth-century British Particular Baptist Andrew Fuller's thought matured concerning the nature of the atonement, his use and appreciation of the insights of seventeenth-century Non-Conformist John Owen waned. Early in his theological development, Fuller wrote concerning Owen, "I never met with any thing of importance in his writings on which I saw any reason to animadvert; so far from it, that I know of no writer for whom I have so great an esteem; it would be a faint expression for me to say I *approve* his principles—I *admire* them."<sup>1</sup> Yet, in large part, scholars have neglected to account for Fuller's theological development, especially his shift from a limited to an unlimited understanding of the extent of the atonement, when examining his reliance upon Owen.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Memoir*, in *The Complete Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of his Life by Andrew Gunton Fuller*; ed. Joseph Belcher, 3d ed. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845; reprinted by Sprinkle Publications: Harrisonburg, VA, 1998), 1:39. Italics his. All subsequent works contained in this three-volume set published by Sprinkle are listed in the following way: author's name, title of the individual work, a reference to *Fuller's Works*, volume number, and page number.

<sup>2</sup> There is considerable debate concerning the Fuller's mature position on the atonement. All scholars observe a decided shift in Fuller's position as demonstrated in the two editions of Fuller's *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. See Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation: Or the Obligations of Men Fully to Credit, and Cordially to Approve, Whatever God Makes Known. Wherein is Considered the Nature of Faith in Christ, and the Duty of Those Where the Gospel Comes in that Matter* (Northampton, England: T. Dicey, 1785) hereafter designated as *The Gospel of Christ* and Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, *Fuller's Works*, 2:328–416. The debate concerns both the position from which Fuller shifted and the final, mature position of Fuller. Scholars such as Michael A.G. Haykin and Thomas J. Nettles have argued that Fuller shifted from a

The diminishing influence of Owen's thought in Fuller's theology, then, can be demonstrated by evaluating Fuller's reliance upon Owen early, especially in *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation*, published initially in 1785, and comparing the content of that work and its reliance upon Owen with that of Fuller's second edition of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, published in 1801. Such an evaluation will demonstrate that Fuller's use of Owen has altered due to a shift in Fuller's view of the atonement. This is further exemplified in that Fuller's appropriation of insights gained from Jonathan Edwards increased in Fuller's later works in comparison to his earlier writings.

### **John Owen in *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation*, 1785**

Fuller was a self-taught theologian. The resignation of his beloved pastor, John Eve, due to Eve's willingness to call a drunkard in the church to repentance despite the church's antinomian contention that if immoral acts were to be restrained or conquered, "it was altogether to be ascribed to God, and not to us" awakened Fuller to theological

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commercial understanding of the atonement to a view more in line with high (or five-point) Calvinism. See Michael A. G. Haykin, "Particular Redemption in the Writings of Andrew Fuller," in *The Gospel in the World: International Baptist Studies*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, ed. David W. Bebbington (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2002), 123–28 and Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life*. Revised and Expanded 20th Anniversary Edition (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2006), 68–77. Opposing that reading of Fuller, David Allen represents a stream of scholarship arguing that Fuller's shift on the atonement was from that of high-Calvinism towards an unlimited view of the atonement in line with a modified (or four-point) Calvinism. See David L. Allen, *The Extent of the Atonement: A Historical and Critical Review* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 477–97. In like manner, Peter Morden writes that Fuller shifted "from a limited to a general view of the atonement." See Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life*. Studies in Baptist History and Thought 8 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2003), 76. A full consideration of the different readings of Fuller is beyond the scope of this paper, but the present author is in agreement with the arguments of Allen and Morden for Fuller having ultimately advocated a general, or unlimited, atonement.

controversy, especially concerning the responsibility of man before God.<sup>3</sup> This controversy proved formative for Fuller, and alongside Fuller's eventual call to serve as their next pastor, it provided the impetus to begin studying Scripture and trusted authors in search of a biblical answer. During this time, as Fuller's friend and biographer John Webster Morris described it, Fuller developed "a considerable taste for reading" and his studies led to the eventual publication of his first work, *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation*.<sup>4</sup>

In his description of Fuller's reading habits and library, Morris acknowledged, "[Fuller] was very partial to Owen. . . . [who] displayed, as he thought, a depth of judgment, and a knowledge of human nature, scarcely to be found in any other author."<sup>5</sup> Historian Michael A. G. Haykin wrote that Owen, alongside John Bunyan and Jonathan Edwards, was "undoubtedly" one of "Fuller's favorite authors."<sup>6</sup> As such, it is unsurprising to discover that John Owen is an ever-present and trusted source referenced by Fuller repeatedly in *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation*.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, less than one year before it was published, Fuller had recorded in his diary: "Much pain at heart today, while reading in Dr. Owen. Feel almost a sacred reverence for his character."<sup>8</sup>

As biographer Peter Morden has observed, this sacred reverence can be demonstrated in that "Owen's works were quoted extensively and with approval by Fuller in the first edition of the *Gospel Worthy*."<sup>9</sup> In the second section of the work, Fuller argued that faith is "the duty of all

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<sup>3</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Memoir*, in *Fuller's Works*, 1:2, 8–9.

<sup>4</sup> John Webster Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (High Wycombe: n.p., 1816), 359.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, "'A Great Thirst for Reading': Andrew Fuller the Theological Reader," *Eusebeia* 9 (2008): 16.

<sup>7</sup> Carl R. Trueman, "John Owen and Andrew Fuller," *Eusebeia* 8 (2008): 54. Indeed, Trueman writes, "by the year 1784, . . . it is clear that Fuller was already acquainted with Owen's polemical writings in the matters of Arminianism, atonement, indwelling sin, and the character of God." *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>8</sup> Fuller, *Memoir*, in *Fuller's Works*, 1:42.

<sup>9</sup> Peter J. Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)*. Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2015), 53.

men . . . under the sound of the gospel.”<sup>10</sup> In his advocacy that “every man is cordially to receive, and heartily to approve, whatever God reveals,” Fuller noted, “approbation of the gospel, or of God’s way of salvation is the distinguishing characteristic of true faith.”<sup>11</sup> Fuller then urged his reader to consider Owen’s writing on Justification, specifically his chapter on the nature of faith.<sup>12</sup>

Further buttressing his claim, Fuller then quoted Owen’s *A Display of Arminianism* for more than two pages of text.<sup>13</sup> Fuller’s purpose of quoting Owen was to demonstrate that it is the duty of all men to respond to the gospel in faith, yet as historian Carl Trueman notes, the subject of the quotation stems from Owen’s defense against the Arminian charge that “anything required as a duty of Christians cannot be included in the work of Christ.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, the context of Owen’s writing makes it clear that “Owen’s original point is not that which Fuller is making.”<sup>15</sup> However, the ideas are related and Fuller clearly believed that Owen’s statement on the matter stood in his defense.

In Fuller’s rebuttal of the Arminian objection against duty faith, Fuller summarized their argument, writing, “because an innocent creature, who stands in no need of a mediator, cannot while such approach to God in that manner; therefore, when he is become guilty and does stand in need of a mediator, it is not then his duty to come to God through him.”<sup>16</sup> He then quoted a paragraph from Owen’s *Display of Arminianism* which clarified what Fuller perceived to be the absurdity of their objection: “We have all now, *they tell us*, a power of believing in

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<sup>10</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 36.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>12</sup> See John Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith through the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, Explained, Confirmed, and Vindicated*, in *The Works of John Owen*, edited by William H. Gould (Reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 5:2–400.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–88. See John Owen, *A Display of Arminianism*, in *The Works of John Owen*, 10:100–08.

<sup>14</sup> Trueman, “John Owen and Andrew Fuller,” 55.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Trueman marshals this as evidence that Fuller did not have the theological acumen to understand and utilize Owen rightly.

<sup>16</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 113.

Christ, that is, Adam, by his fall, obtained a supernatural endowment, far more excellent than any he had before!"<sup>17</sup>

Elsewhere, Fuller marshaled Owen's *Death of Death in the Death of Christ* in his defense against the charge that if "the blessings of grace" are "all sovereign and free gifts of God through Christ," then it is "a very great absurdity" and "mockery to the Holy One, that God should require men to believe in Christ."<sup>18</sup> Fuller responded to this objection by noting that it "is of *Arminian extraction*, and has been answered long ago by the Calvinists, in their controversies with the Arminians."<sup>19</sup> Fuller then cited Owen's classic work. Mere pages later, Fuller concluded the section "with a lengthy quotation from Owen to the effect that God's hidden will of election is not be made the basis for public ministerial policy when it comes to preaching the gospel."<sup>20</sup>

Fuller recommended Owen's *Display of Arminianism* once more near the end of his work as he sought to answer varied objections to his overall thesis. Fuller wrote concerning the consistency of God demanding sinners exercise the gift of faith: "I beg leave to refer the reader to what DR. OWEN has said on this subject, . . . wherein he has fully proved the consistency of the same thing, in different respects, being *God's gift*, and *man's duty*."<sup>21</sup>

Fuller leaned on Owen's *Mortification of Sin* in his defense against the accusation that the non-elect cannot respond to the gospel in faith and, as such, heralds of the gospel are only to call for their outward reformation.<sup>22</sup> After again quoting Owen for almost an entire two pages, Fuller wrote that those arguing such "must have very different ideas from these of DR. OWEN."<sup>23</sup> Clearly, Fuller believed Owen to have been a respected authority by his readers sufficient enough to provide the necessary support to conclude the matter.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 116. Italics his.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 123. See John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, in *The Works of John Owen*, 10:140–428

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>20</sup> Trueman, "John Owen and Andrew Fuller," 55.

<sup>21</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 153. Italics and emphasis his. Once more, Fuller cites chapter ten of Owen's *Display of Arminianism*.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 170–71. See John Owen, *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers, etc.*, in *The Works of John Owen*, 6:33–40.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 171. Emphasis his.



In addition to the number of citations and references made to John Owen in Fuller's work, the manner in which Fuller referred to Owen bears observation and indicates his appreciation and reverence for the Puritan divine. Fuller referred to Owen throughout the work as "Dr. Owen," "the Doctor," and "the great Owen."<sup>24</sup> Moreover, after presenting a barrage of quotations from Elisha Coles, Thomas Ridgely, John Gill, and Herman Witsius (whom Fuller calls "very respectable writers"), Fuller referred to Owen as "the *last* of these great men."<sup>25</sup>

It is undeniable that John Owen played a prominent role in Andrew Fuller's thought as he penned *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation*.<sup>26</sup> Fuller's repeated use of Owen in support of his primary argument demonstrates the esteem in which he held Owen and weight he attributed to Owen's writings. Further, the manner in which he referred to the seventeenth-century Puritan demonstrates his respect and admiration for Owen. Yet, as will be demonstrated, both his references to Owen and the manner in which he made those references would be altered dramatically in the 1801 publication of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*.

### **John Owen in *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, 1801**

In the years following Fuller's 1785 publication, a theological shift is discernible in Fuller's writings. As David Allen has observed, "it is evident" that Fuller "was committed to particular redemption (limited atonement) in the Owenic sense of the term" in 1785.<sup>27</sup> Yet, his debates with General Baptist Dan Taylor, resulting from Taylor's objections to Fuller's work, provided the context and cause for a decided shift in his thought.

#### **Rethinking Particular Redemption**

Taylor was not content to argue with Fuller's repeated use of revered authors such as John Owen. Instead, Taylor repeatedly drew the debate over the extent of the atonement back to the words of Scripture.<sup>28</sup> He

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 49n, 86, 115, 137, 152, 153, 170, 171.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 138. Italics his.

<sup>26</sup> In his draft of the book, "there are no fewer than seven separate mentions of [Owen's] name." Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew*, 54.

<sup>27</sup> Allen, *The Extent of the Atonement*, 480.

<sup>28</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 66.

considered the words of men, however respected, to be of little value in comparison to that of Holy Writ. This concern for biblical fidelity over any given tradition “entirely mirrored Fuller’s own.”<sup>29</sup> In a reply to Taylor, Fuller commented that Scripture itself, not the pattern laid by respected forerunners in the faith, is that which determined the standard to follow.<sup>30</sup> Fuller had been careful to acknowledge that he defended Calvinism “not because of any prior commitment to Calvinism as a system,” but because “he believed the tenets he was defending to be scriptural, and therefore true.”<sup>31</sup> Yet, “following his debates with Dan Taylor, Fuller was persuaded that particular redemption in the sense of limited substitution . . . did not comport with Scripture.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, concerning his debate with Taylor, Fuller later confessed to his friend, John Ryland, “I freely own that my views of particular redemption were altered in that controversy. . . . I tried to answer my opponent . . . but I could not. I found not only his reasonings, but the Scriptures themselves, standing in my way.”<sup>33</sup>

At this point, Fuller felt it necessary to conform his thought concerning the extent of the atonement to his new understanding of Scripture. This is the development in his thought that continues to be debated today. It is clear that in 1785, Fuller had believed that Christ had “died *for some of the human race*.”<sup>34</sup> In 1801, however, Fuller’s view had been altered to the point that he felt compelled to write that the atonement of Christ could “be in itself equal to the salvation of the whole

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Indeed, Morden notes, “it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Fuller had more in common with this Arminian Evangelical [Taylor], steeped in the experience of Revival, than with either of his High Calvinist opponents [William Button and John Martin] from his own denomination.” Ibid, 68.

<sup>30</sup> Referring to Gill and Brine, Fuller wrote, “I have a high opinion of the respectable characters. . . . At the same time, the successors of these worthy men ought not to set them up as the standards of orthodoxy.” Fuller, *A Defence of a Treatise Entitled The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation Containing a Reply to Mr. Button’s Remarks and the Observations of Philanthropos*, *Fuller’s Works*, 2:421.

<sup>31</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 69.

<sup>32</sup> Allen, *The Extent of the Atonement*, 480.

<sup>33</sup> Fuller, *Six Letters to Dr. Ryland Respecting the Controversy with the Rev. A. Booth*, *Fuller’s Works*, 2:709.

<sup>34</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 106. Italics his.

world, were the whole world to embrace it.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, while the major thrust and line of argumentation from his 1785 *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation* remains—it is the duty of every lost sinner to respond to the gospel—Fuller deemed it necessary to rewrite the section on particular redemption in its entirety.<sup>36</sup>

### Rewriting Particular Redemption

In the first edition, Fuller had argued, “the act of trusting in Christ does not, in its own nature, necessarily imply that the party should *know* his particular interest in his death at the time; or that he should *have* such an interest at all, in order to make it his duty.”<sup>37</sup> Instead, Fuller believed that whether one know himself to be elect or not, submission and worship were appropriate response of sinners to Christ. He illustrated this belief by asking if a man guilty of treason was incorrect “to confess the truth, and cast himself on the mercy of his prince, and trust wholly to his clemency,” even if not guaranteed pardon.<sup>38</sup> As such, Fuller wrote, “There is no fear of Christ ever destroying any that thus venture upon him; but if there were, if he only saved *some* who applied for mercy, that would be a sufficient ground for all others to apply too, as not knowing but that they might be the objects of his favor.”<sup>39</sup> As Peter Morden observed, “This echoed Fuller’s own conversion experience, and he supported his argument with quotations from the Calvinist writers Coles, Ridgely, Witsius and Owen.”<sup>40</sup>

In fact, in his initial publication, Fuller had quoted Coles twice saying “Christ did not die for all,” and “The first act of faith is *not* that Christ died for *all*, or for *you* in particular: the one is not true; the other not certain to you.”<sup>41</sup> He had quoted Witsius as saying, “All, and everyone in particular therefore, to whom the gospel is preached, are not commanded immediately to believe *that Christ died for them*; for that is a

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<sup>35</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, *Fuller’s Works*, 2:374.

<sup>36</sup> For comparison, see Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 132–39 and Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, *Fuller’s Works*, 2:373–75.

<sup>37</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 132. Italics his.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* Italics his.

<sup>40</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 73.

<sup>41</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 135. Italics his.

falsehood.”<sup>42</sup> He quoted Ridgely as writing, “Faith and repentance may be asserted to be duties incumbent on all, and demanded of them, when at the same time it don’t follow that all are given to expect salvation upon the bare declaration that they are so.”<sup>43</sup> He then concluded with Owen, writing, “When God calleth upon men to believe, he doth not in the first place call upon them to believe that Christ died for them.”<sup>44</sup> Fuller wrote “that these very respectable writers, whose names are deservedly had in veneration in all the churches,” “allowed repentance and faith to be incumbent on men in general, and this they thought to be consistent with particular redemption.”<sup>45</sup> Each of these quotations is removed in Fuller’s revision except that of Owen.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, “There is no statement in quotation or by Fuller in this section of the second edition advocating limited atonement.”<sup>47</sup>

While it is notable that Owen’s quotation remained, the context in which it is placed had been altered entirely. Fuller’s point of emphasis is no longer that Christ did not die for all and that none can know if they are among the objects of the atonement, but rather, Fuller pivoted to argue that the particularity of the atonement does not exist in the provision of the atonement, but in “the sovereignty of its application.”<sup>48</sup> Fuller clarified this statement in a letter to John Ryland, noting,

the death of Christ *in itself* considered, *i.e.* irrespective of the *design* of the Father and Son as to its application, was sufficient for all mankind; that a way was opened by which God consistently with his justice could forgive any sinner whatever that returns to him by Jesus Christ; that if the whole world were to believe in him, none need be sent away for want of a sufficiency in his death to render his pardon and acceptance consistent with the rights of justice.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 137. Italics his.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Fuller retains a portion of the quote from Elisha Coles, but extracted any reference to a limited substitution or atonement.

<sup>47</sup> Allen, *The Extent of the Atonement*, 482.

<sup>48</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, *Fuller’s Works*, 2:374.

<sup>49</sup> Fuller, *Six Letters to Dr. Ryland*, in *Fuller’s Works*, 2:710.

Were the atonement limited in its provision, then, according to Fuller's new argument, "it might . . . be inconsistent with indefinite invitations. But it would be equally inconsistent with the free *forgiveness* of sin."<sup>50</sup> This was an unacceptable conclusion, according to Fuller, and therefore, it could not be the biblical teaching.

Instead, Fuller offered a different understanding of the atonement, arguing, "if the atonement of Christ proceed not on the principle of commercial, but of moral justice, or justice as it relates to *crime*—if its grand object were to express the Divine displeasure against sin, . . . no such inconsistency can justly be ascribed to it."<sup>51</sup> In this scenario, Fuller argued, "There is no contradiction between this peculiarity of *design* in the death of Christ, and a universal obligation on those who hear the gospel to believe in him, or a universal invitation being addressed to them."<sup>52</sup> Taylor's arguments had borne their fruit and Fuller's shift was complete.

As such, the context of Fuller's use of Owen in this section had changed. No longer was Fuller using Owen to defend the inability of the sinner to know that Christ died for him. Fuller believed that this was not the substance of gospel proclamation, indeed, it must not be. As he continued to quote Coles, "He that will know his own particular redemption before he will believe . . . begins at the wrong end of his work, and is very unlikely to come that way to the knowledge of it."<sup>53</sup> Fuller understood that this would be to trust in one's election rather than in Christ. Instead, Fuller used Owen's quotation in 1801 to emphasize that Jesus is the way of salvation made available to all men and that Christ had died for sinners in general, rather than any sinner in particular. Again, it is noted that this does not appear to be the original purpose of Owen's writing, but Fuller believed it to conclude his argument powerfully. The quotation by Owen remained in the second edition, but the argument for which it was used to support had altered entirely.

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<sup>50</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, *Fuller's Works*, 2:373. Italics his.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:373–74.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:374. Italics his.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

### Removing “The Great Doctor”

This alteration of Fuller’s use of Owen in *The Gospel Worthy All Acceptation* (1801) is not restricted to the section on particular redemption. In the second section of the new edition, where Fuller had referred his reader to consider Owen on Justification, especially the chapter on the nature of faith, no reference is made to Owen whatsoever.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Fuller’s quotation of Owen for almost three pages of text in the first edition is struck in its entirety. In its place, Fuller wrote, “This is for the same thing, in different respects, to be ‘man’s duty and God’s gift;’ a position which Dr. Owen has fully established; and somewhere remarks that he who is ignorant of it has yet to learn one of the first principles of religion,” with a footnote referring to Owen’s *Display of Arminianism*.<sup>55</sup> Thus, three pages of direct quotation is replaced with an acknowledgement and footnote. In his sixth section, “Of the Necessity of a Divine Principle in Order to Believing,” where Fuller had quoted Owen twice and encouraged his reader to read Owen’s *Display of Arminianism*, once again, no mention is made in the second edition to Owen at all.<sup>56</sup>

Fuller does not strike Owen from his revision entirely. Retained in Fuller’s second edition is the use of Owen revealing the absurdity of the Arminian argument against duty faith, as is his reference to Owen’s *Death of Death*.<sup>57</sup> Finally, Fuller’s use of Owen’s *Mortification of Sin* is retained in the conclusion of his work.<sup>58</sup> Whereas Owen seems to have been used as an unquestioned and final authority in the first edition, Fuller’s references to Owen are greatly diminished in the second edition

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<sup>54</sup> Compare Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 49, and Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy*, *Fuller’s Works*, 2:349–52.

<sup>55</sup> Compare Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 86–88, and Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy*, *Fuller’s Works*, 2:366.

<sup>56</sup> Compare Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 152–53, and Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy*, *Fuller’s Works*, 2:380–82.

<sup>57</sup> See Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 116 and 124 and Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy*, *Fuller’s Works*, 2:369 and 371.

<sup>58</sup> See Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, 170–71 and Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy*, *Fuller’s Works*, 2:390–91.

and are contained primarily to the refutation of Arminianism and the vast importance of preaching the gospel indiscriminately.<sup>59</sup>

Further, the titles with which Fuller had lauded Owen, such as "the great Owen," and "the Doctor," in the first edition were changed entirely in the second edition. Owen was now referred to only as "Dr. Owen" in the second edition—apart from the sections in which his name was struck from the text altogether, even when a citation to one of Owen's works was retained.<sup>60</sup> At this point, Alan Clifford's note that "Andrew Fuller . . . in a letter to Jonathan Edwards' pupil Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803) dated 17 Mar. 1798, . . . lamented the continuing influence of Owen," bears consideration.<sup>61</sup>

The manner in which Fuller deferred to Owen in the first edition had changed in the second. The language with which Fuller had described "the great Owen" had been subdued. Sections where Fuller continued to use Owen in support of his thesis were restricted to the refutation of Arminianism and Arminian objections to Fuller's thesis. The view of the atonement which Fuller was defending was no longer in line with that of

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<sup>59</sup> It bears noting that Morden has argued, "there was a continuing influence, with Fuller quoting more from the seventeenth-century Puritan in the second edition of the *Gospel Worthy* than in the first." (Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew*, 54–55.) He supports his argument by noting that the second edition contains a new quotation from Owen that was not present in the first edition. Yet, as this paper demonstrates (it is hoped), the inclusion of one new quotation does not offset the removal of numerous others. Thus, while Owen's influence continues into the second edition, it is diminished.

<sup>60</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, *Fuller's Works*, 2:371.

<sup>61</sup> Alan Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640–1790: An Evaluation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 122n13. While a letter on this date addressed to Samuel Hopkins was located in the Angus Library at Regent's Park College in Oxford, such lament is completely absent in its content and foreign to its purpose. (See Appendix.) As such, scholars are divided on the manner in which to respond to Clifford's note. While none would go so far as to accuse Clifford of inventing such a letter, it has been observed that Clifford's advocacy that Fuller had moved in a Baxterian direction away from the position of Owen would be bolstered by the presence of such a letter. Yet, Clifford is generally considered a trusted and careful historian, and such a letter may, in fact, exist in the archives of the Angus even if the present researcher has not been able to locate it. Thus, Clifford's statement bears consideration, but cannot be used to settle the matter of Fuller's final appraisal of Owen.

Owen. Indeed, the observant reader detects a hint of Jonathan Edwards's influence in Fuller's shift from a commercial to a criminal (or governmental) understanding of the atonement. Clifford's note, then, is not an absurd impossibility. Rather, it may provide helpful context and explanation of Owen's diminished role in Fuller's writing.

### **The Influence of Jonathan Edwards**

Any discussion of influences in Fuller's theology is incomplete without a consideration of New England Divine, Jonathan Edwards. At Fuller's ordination at the church in Soham, Robert Hall had recommended "*Edwards on the Will* to [his] careful perusal, as the most able performance on the power of man to do the will of God."<sup>62</sup> In a humorous reflection, Fuller recalled confusing Hall's recommendation with the work of John Edwards, an Episcopalian Calvinist. Fuller considered John Edwards's *Veritas Redux* "a good book; but it did not seem exactly to answer Mr. Hall's recommendation. Nor was it till the year 1777 that [he] discovered [his] mistake."<sup>63</sup>

Once Fuller realized his error and read the correct Edwards, as Nettles wrote, "Fuller made sure the world knew [of his appreciation for Edwards] by his many quotes of Edwards, his unabashed integration of Edwards' ideas into his own major works, and his open testimony to the usefulness of Edwards ideas by letter and diary, and memoir."<sup>64</sup> In 1781, Fuller recorded his appreciation of Edwards: "I think I have never yet entered into the true idea of the work of the ministry. . . . I think I am by the ministry, as I was by my life as a Christian before I read Edwards on the Affections."<sup>65</sup> Further, in 1790, Fuller reflected, "I have read some of Jonathan Edwards' sermons, which have left a deep impression on my heart."<sup>66</sup>

Fuller was reading Owen, especially *Mortification of Sin* and another work on "spiritual mindedness," during the same period as his reading of

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<sup>62</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Memoir, Fuller's Works*, 1:15.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Thomas J. Nettles, "The Influence of Jonathan Edwards on Andrew Fuller," *Eusebeia* 9 (2008): 97.

<sup>65</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Memoir, Fuller's Works*, 1:25. See Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2., ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:56.



Edwards's sermons.<sup>67</sup> A comparison of Fuller's remarks in his diary concerning the two authors proves insightful. Morden observed, "When he reflects on something from Owen, with his strong emphasis on rigorous self-examination, there is a tendency to introspection and unhappiness; when he reflects on Edwards, there is generally a much more optimistic tone. This was almost certainly unconscious on Fuller's part. *But he was clearly moving in Edwards' direction.*"<sup>68</sup>

Such movement can be demonstrated further in Fuller's remark to Timothy Dwight, who was president of Yale College when it granted Fuller a Doctor of Divinity in 1805.<sup>69</sup> Fuller wrote, "The writings of your grandfather, President Edwards, and of your uncle, the late Dr. Edwards, have been food to me."<sup>70</sup>

The image of Jonathan Edwards's works serving as Fuller's food persists, as Nettles has reflected, "Fuller took the difficult ideas of Edwards, digested their spiritual implications and used them for the good of souls. Both his personal counsel and his pulpit ministry show the helpful effects of the integration of ideas for which Edwards was largely the catalyst."<sup>71</sup> Indeed, "Fuller's own text duplicated the thought and, at times the exact language, of Edwards."<sup>72</sup>

Fuller's reliance on Edwards, and that of the circle of friends of which he was a part, had led some to claim in 1814, "If [John] Sutcliff and some others had preached more of Christ, and less of Jonathan Edwards, they would have been more useful."<sup>73</sup> Fuller's response speaks to his appreciation of Edwards: "If those who talked thus preached Christ half

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 1:56, 57. Morden believes this reference to a "work on spiritual mindedness" to refer to John Owen, *The Grace of Duty and Being Spiritually Minded*, in *The Works of John Owen*, 7:267–306. See Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 165n30.

<sup>68</sup> Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, 165. Emphasis mine.

<sup>69</sup> This was the second time such a degree was given to Fuller from America. In 1798, another institution—the College of New Jersey (later, Princeton University)—had bestowed the title to him under the presidency of Samuel Hopkins.

<sup>70</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Memoir, Fuller's Works*, 1:85.

<sup>71</sup> Nettles, "The Influence of Jonathan Edwards on Andrew Fuller," 113–14.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>73</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Memoir, Fuller's Works*, 1:101.

as much as Jonathan Edwards did, and were half as useful as he was, their usefulness would be double what it is.”<sup>74</sup>

**Jonathan Edwards in *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation*, 1785 and *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, 1801**

Fuller’s son, Andrew Gunton Fuller, wrote that his father’s initial draft of that which became *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation* was penned in 1776.<sup>75</sup> This provides the contemporary historian difficulty in ascertaining Fuller’s consideration of the place of Edwards in the 1785 publication. As Fuller made evident in his memoirs, he did not read Jonathan Edwards’s work until 1777—one year after the initial penning of his draft.<sup>76</sup>

Yet, Edwards’s inclusion in Fuller’s research is clear. Fuller wrote in the preface, “I have read and considered . . . Mr. Jonathan Edwards’ *Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will*, with some other performances on the distinction of *natural and moral ability, and inability*. I always found great pleasure in this distinction.”<sup>77</sup> The rediscovery of this draft, once thought lost to history, has brought clarity to the matter.<sup>78</sup> The handwritten draft is entitled, “Thoughts on the Power of Men to do the Will of God, Wrote in 1777, or 1778.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, it seems that Gunton Fuller’s statement that his father’s draft was “*endorsed* with the date of 1776,” mandates

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Men Worth Remembering: Andrew Fuller* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), 168.

<sup>76</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Memoir, Fuller’s Works*, 1:15.

<sup>77</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, v. Italics his. See Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>78</sup> The draft, entitled “Thoughts on the Power of Men to do the Will of God, Wrote in 1777, or 1778,” is housed at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Archives at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

<sup>79</sup> Indicating the difficulty in reading the handwritten draft, Chun reads the title as, “‘Thoughts on the Power of Men to do the Will of God,’ dated ‘approx. on 1778.’” Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*. *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions* 162 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 40. As such, what one reader reads as “1777, or 1778,” Chun reads as “approx. on 1778.”

clarification.<sup>80</sup> Fuller's research had begun upon his calling to pastor the church in Soham. According to his son, Fuller began drafting the results of his research in 1776, but the draft was "written *probably* at intervals."<sup>81</sup> It seems that while Fuller began drafting his thoughts prior to his reading of Jonathan Edwards, his son's statement "would increase the likelihood of making *Freedom of the Will* the first exposure that Fuller had to the concept of 'natural and moral inability.'"<sup>82</sup>

Of Edwards's distinction, Fuller wrote, "it appeared to me to carry with it its own evidence, was clearly and fully contained in the scriptures, and calculated to disburden the Calvinistic system of a number of calumnies with which its enemies have loaded it, as well to as to afford clear and honourable conceptions of divine government."<sup>83</sup> His assessment of the importance of Edwards increased in the appendix that he attached to the second edition, wherein he wrote in a footnote, "no man will be allowed to have possessed a clearer insight."<sup>84</sup>

Further, "it is evident that Edwards's usage of governmental language [concerning the atonement] may have been influential on Fuller."<sup>85</sup> Fuller's language in the second edition concerning the atonement in the section on particular redemption reflects his appropriation of Edwardsean thought. Fuller wrote,

if the atonement of Christ proceed not on the principle of commercial, but of moral justice, or justice, as it relates to *crime*—if its grand object were to express the Divine displeasure against sin, (Rom. 8:3,) and so to render the exercise of mercy, in all the ways wherein sovereign wisdom should determine to apply it, consistent with righteousness (Rom. 3:25)—if it be in itself equal to the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to embrace it—and if the peculiarity which attends it consist not in its insufficiency to save more than are saved, but in the sovereignty of its application—no such inconsistency can justly be ascribed to it.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> A. G. Fuller, *Men Worth Remembering*, 168. Italics his.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. Italics his.

<sup>82</sup> Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards*, 41.

<sup>83</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ*, v.

<sup>84</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, *Fuller's Works*, 2:411n.

<sup>85</sup> Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards*, 168.

<sup>86</sup> Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, *Fuller's Works*, 2:373–74. Italics his.

The inclusion of this language alongside the removal of any statement in support of a limited extent of the atonement demonstrates both a decided shift in Fuller's conception of the atonement as well as the theologian whom he was willing to follow in that conception. Chun observes, "Fuller, like Edwards, held to a view of the multifaceted nature of the atonement—and denied the concept of the atonement where penal substitution and governmental theory are necessarily viewed as mutually exclusive concepts."<sup>87</sup> Though Fuller was determined to advance Scripture's teaching on the matter above that of any man, Edwards's writings provided the vocabulary of Fuller's new understanding.

Abraham Booth, a contemporary of Fuller, objected to this move in Fuller's second edition of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* and accused him of "having changed [his] sentiments; with agreeing with [Richard] Baxter in several of his leading peculiarities; and with denying the doctrines of imputation and substitution, in the sense in which Calvinists commonly hold and have held them."<sup>88</sup> Indeed, Booth observed in Fuller's writings an increasing-similarity with the theology coming from America, especially from the followers of Edwards.<sup>89</sup>

Note Booth's accusation of Fuller being in agreement with Baxter; this is regarded as being in opposition to the position advocated by none other than John Owen, whom Booth cites repeatedly in his writings against Fuller.<sup>90</sup> In 1803, Fuller acknowledged such, writing, "It is true, I

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<sup>87</sup> Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards*, 172.

<sup>88</sup> Fuller, *Six Letters to Dr. Ryland*, in *Fuller's Works*, 2:702.

<sup>89</sup> Thus, when Booth took aim at Samuel Hopkins in *Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners*, in *The Works of Abraham Booth: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church Assembling in Little Prescott Street, Goodman's Fields, London: With Some Account of his Life and Writings* [London: J. Haddon, 1813], 2:1–232.), Fuller confided to William Carey, "I believe it was his intent to oppose our Sentiments, and that he chose to attack us under Hopkins' name." "A. Fuller to W. Carey, 6 Sept 1797," *The Letters of Andrew Fuller*, Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford. The next year, Fuller lamented that Booth was "rigidly set against everything from America." "A. Fuller to W. Carey, 22 August, 1798," *The Letters of Andrew Fuller*, Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford.

<sup>90</sup> Indeed, such was Booth's reliance upon John Owen in his criticism of Fuller's new view that at times, Owen's words take over multiple pages Booth's work.

have found several of my own sentiments maintained by Mr. Baxter.”<sup>91</sup> Booth's accusation developed into a public debate in which the two Particular Baptists represented two streams of thought: Booth defended the Reformed English tradition of John Owen, whereas Fuller stood squarely in the lineage of Jonathan Edwards.

### Conclusion

Andrew Fuller had once cited John Owen in defense of his position and even advocated that his own theology could properly be termed “Owenism.”<sup>92</sup> Owen, alongside Gill and Bunyan, gave Fuller a theological vocabulary and had provided Fuller with the theological foundation upon which he constructed his own understanding of Scripture. There is no denial that Owen was critical to Fuller's theological development. Yet, Abraham Booth marshaled John Owen's words against Fuller's new position on the atonement and Fuller answered with those of Jonathan Edwards. In his sixth letter to Ryland, responding to Booth's accusations and written in 1803, Fuller remarked, “The greatest, though not the only, instruction that I have received from human writings, on these subjects, has been from *President Edwards's Discourse on Justification*. That which in me has been called “a strange or singular notion” of this doctrine is stated at large, and I think clearly proved, by him.”<sup>93</sup>

As such, while Owen helped lay the initial foundation for Fuller's theology, he was not the most instrumental in the construction of his mature theological thought.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, Owen's influence, once so prevalent in Fuller's thought and writings, continued, but in a very diminished capacity.

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See Booth, *Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners*, in *The Works of Abraham Booth* (London: J. Haddon, 1813), 2:103–09.

<sup>91</sup> Fuller, *Six Letters to Dr. Ryland*, in *Fuller's Works*, 2:714.

<sup>92</sup> *Theological and Biblical Magazine* (London: Button & Son, 1804), 112.

<sup>93</sup> Fuller, *Six Letters to Dr. Ryland*, in *Fuller's Works*, 2:715. See Jonathan Edwards, *Justification by Faith Alone*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 19, ed. M. X. Lesser (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 143–242.

<sup>94</sup> Clint Sheehan, “Great and Sovereign Grace: Fuller's Defence of the Gospel against Arminianism,” in “*At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word*”: *Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*. Studies in Baptist History and Thought 6, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 85.

**Andrew Fuller's Letter to Samuel Hopkins, March 17, 1798**

To Dr. Hopkins, New England.

Kettering. March 17, 1798.

One of our ministers has told the world that a *diploma* was conferred upon me by the College of New Jersey. I do not know that it is so, as I have received no direct account of it. If I had, I should have written them a respectful letter, expressive of my gratitude for their having offered such a token of respect, and acknowledging what is the truth; that I should esteem it as coming from that quarter which, beyond any other in the world, I most approved, but declining to accept it, partly because I have not those qualifications which are expected to accompany such titles, and partly because I believe all such titles *in religion* to be contrary to our Lord's command, Matt. xxiii, 8."

*From The Spurgeon Library*  
The Conversion of C. H. Spurgeon:  
A Lecture given at the Artillery Street Evangelical  
Church, Colchester, England, July 13, 2018

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*The following lecture was given to faculty and students attending the Midwestern Seminary United Kingdom Study Tour during the Summer of 2018. The Artillery Street Evangelical Church in Colchester is the meeting house in which C. H. Spurgeon underwent his conversion and remains a congregation focused on proclaiming the same gospel message now as it was then.*

When thinking how best to assess and categorize the life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), a phrase used by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:3 comes to mind. For the totality of his life as a Christian, Spurgeon had “a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” His sight was set on Jesus Christ from the moment he “looked” to him in his conversion.

Spurgeon was born June 19, 1834 in Kelvedon, a village just down the road, southwest from Colchester. He was the oldest of 17 children, and his father was an Independent minister who regularly traveled. Thus, from age one to five, Spurgeon lived with his grandparents in Stambourne, another village located to northwest of Colchester.

Spurgeon remained close to his grandparents and his grandfather, also an Independent minister, had a study in his home filled with books. Among those books, Spurgeon discovered Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, the works of the English Puritans, and, a lifelong favorite, Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

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<sup>1</sup> This lecture was aided by the research of students studying Spurgeon at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Spurgeon Library: Phillip Ort, Brandon Rhea, and Nathan Rose. For more information on the Spurgeon Library, see <https://www.spurgeon.org/>

Reading is what Spurgeon did as young boy. When others were outside, Spurgeon was always with books.

This relationship with written words found reinforcement at home. Spurgeon's mother regularly gathered the children on Sunday evenings to explain Scripture, read aloud books, and pray. In his *Autobiography*, Spurgeon recounts:

Yet I cannot tell how much I owe to the solemn words of my good mother. It was the custom, on Sunday evenings, while we were yet little children, for her to stay at home with us, and then we sat round the table, and read verse by verse, and she explained the Scripture to us. After that was done, then came the time of pleading; there was a little piece of Alleine's *Alarm*, or of Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, and this was read with pointed observations made to each of us as we sat round the table; and the question was asked, how long it would be before we would think about our state, how long before we would seek the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

Often Spurgeon's mother would pray: "Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ."<sup>3</sup> This thought of his mother standing against him was unbearable and caused him to seek the Lord.

Spurgeon would later say:

Fathers and mothers are the most natural agents for God to use in the salvation of their children. I am sure that, in my early youth, no teaching ever made such an impression upon my mind as the instruction of my mother; neither can I conceive that, to any child, there can be one who will have such influence over the young heart as the mother who has so tenderly cared for her offspring. A man with a soul so dead as not to be moved by the sacred name of 'mother' is creation's blot. Never could it be possible for any man to estimate what he owes to a godly mother.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Autobiography*, 1:68.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.



His mother's prayers were answered when Spurgeon was 15. At this time Spurgeon was experiencing deep conviction of sin saying, "I do speak of myself with many deep regrets of heart. I hid as it were my face from Him, and I let the years run round."<sup>5</sup> But, soon the Holy Spirit would press the conviction of sin upon Spurgeon's soul:

My heart was fallow, and covered with weeds; but, on a certain day, the great Husbandman came, and began to plough my soul. Ten black horses were His team, and it was a sharp ploughshare that he used, and the ploughshare made deep furrows.<sup>6</sup>

In these words, Spurgeon described his young heart as "fallow" and "covered with weeds." But one day, the "great Husbandman" began to plow his soul with a team of "ten black horses," one for each commandment under which Spurgeon stood condemned.

In this state, Spurgeon sunk lower and saw himself to be nothing but "rotteness, a dunghill of corruption." While Spurgeon would later acknowledge that "A spiritual experience which is thoroughly flavoured with a deep and bitter sense of sin is of great value to him that hath had it," it was overwhelming for young Spurgeon.<sup>7</sup> In late 1849, Spurgeon visited different churches in and around Colchester, but without much relief or encouragement. He explains:

From chapel to chapel I went to hear the Word preached, but never a gospel sentence did I hear; but this one text preserved me from what I believe I should have been driven to, - the commission of suicide through grief and sorrow. It was this sweet word, 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'<sup>8</sup>

When Spurgeon was in the "hand of the Holy Spirit" and experiencing a "clear and sharp sense of the justice of God" he could not believe in *substitution*; the "sum and substance of the gospel." For Spurgeon the central question was "Who would or could have thought of the just Ruler dying for the unjust rebel?" Yet, while Spurgeon then did not believe that

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>7</sup> *Autobiography*, 1:76.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 95.

“it was possible that *my* sins could be forgiven,” soon the “Great Change” would take place.

During this period, Spurgeon was employed as an “usher” for a private school in Newmarket. As an ‘usher’ Spurgeon was both student and tutor for this school, paying for his tuition by his work. When the school closed temporarily in December due to an outbreak of fever, Spurgeon returned home to Colchester.

On one Sunday morning Colchester was hit with a substantial snowstorm. Spurgeon, while en route, stumbled into a private Methodist church hidden in a back alley.<sup>9</sup>

The regular minister was unavailable that morning and an unidentified lay preacher took the pulpit. By Spurgeon’s account, this person spoke quite ineloquently for about ten minutes on the passage, ‘Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth’ (Isaiah 45:22).<sup>10</sup>

Thanks to the providence of a snowstorm, Spurgeon found himself subject to the ‘preaching’ of a man who he claims was “really stupid” and “did not even pronounce the words rightly.”

Nevertheless, the message from this crude preacher effectually struck a chord in Spurgeon’s anguished soul, for at the end of the service the preacher looked squarely at Spurgeon and said, “Young man, you look very miserable.” Spurgeon recounted his thoughts:

Well, I did but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit about my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home.

He continued, ‘and you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don’t obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.’ Then lifting his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do,

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<sup>9</sup> In recent years, three pews from this Primitive Methodist Chapel on Artillery Street, Colchester, where Charles Spurgeon was converted, were kindly donated by the current congregation of Artillery Street Evangelical Church to The Spurgeon Library at Midwestern Seminary. Visitors to the Library can see an artist’s depiction of the scene described here as well as see the actual pews on which many people of this era sat to hear preaching like Spurgeon heard on that day.

<sup>10</sup> *Autobiography*, 1:105.

'Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but look and live.'

I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, 'Look!' what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him.<sup>11</sup>

And at that moment Spurgeon "saw at once the way of salvation." He *looked* to Jesus Christ and *lived*. From that moment Spurgeon knew he was no longer under the "frown of God," but could now say, "my Father smiles." The joy of that day was "utterly indescribable" as the teenage Spurgeon rejoiced, "I am forgiven, I am forgiven, I am forgiven!"

Spurgeon later would say:

When I first received everlasting life I had no idea what a treasure had come to me. I knew that I had obtained something very extraordinary, but of its superlative value I was not aware. I did but look to Christ in the little chapel, and I received eternal life. I looked to Jesus, and He looked on me, and we were one forever. That moment my joy surpassed all bounds, just as my sorrow had before driven me to an extreme of grief. I was perfectly at rest in Christ, satisfied with Him, and my heart was glad, but I did not know that this grace was everlasting life till I began to read in the Scriptures, and to know more fully the value of the jewel which God had given me.<sup>12</sup>

What Spurgeon discovered on January 6, 1850, was the "sum and substance of the gospel...*Substitution*."

If I understand the gospel, it is this: I deserve to be lost forever; the only reason why I should not be damned is, that Christ was punished in my stead, and there is no need to execute a sentence twice for sin. On the other hand, I know I cannot enter Heaven unless I have a perfect righteousness; I am absolutely certain I

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>12</sup> MTP 31:395.

shall never have one of my own, for I find I sin everyday; but then Christ had a perfect righteousness, and He said, 'There, poor sinner, take My garment, and put it on; you shall stand before God as if you were Christ, and I will stand before God as if I had been the sinner; I will suffer in the sinner's stead, and you shall be rewarded for works which you did not do, but which I did for you.'

I find it very convenient everyday to come to Christ as a sinner, as I came at the first. 'You are no saint,' says the devil. Well, if I am not, I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Sink or swim, I go to Him; other hope I have none. By looking to Him, I received all the faith which inspired me with confidence in His grace; and the word that first drew my soul — 'Look unto Me,' — still rings its clarion note in my ears. There I once found conversion, and there I shall ever find refreshing and renewal.<sup>13</sup>

That morning Charles Haddon Spurgeon looked to Jesus Christ and was saved. That morning Spurgeon found the joy of Christ, and as he put it, "I could have danced."

Interestingly, Spurgeon returned to that same chapel the next week and took issue with the Pastor's preaching on Romans 7.

The next Sunday I went to the same chapel, as it was very natural that I should. But I never went afterwards, for this reason, that during my first week the new life that was in me had been compelled to fight for its existence, and a conflict with the old nature had been vigorously carried on. This I knew to be a special token of the indwelling of grace in my soul, but in that same chapel I heard a sermon upon "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And the preacher declared that Paul was not a Christian when he had that experience. Babe as I was, I knew better than to believe so absurd a statement.

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<sup>13</sup> *Autobiography*, 1:113.

What but divine grace could produce such a sighing and crying after deliverance from indwelling sin? I felt that a person who could talk such nonsense knew little of the life of a true believer. I said to myself, 'What! Am I not alive because I feel a conflict within me? I never felt this fight when I was an unbeliever. When I was not a Christian I never groaned to be set free from sin. This conflict is one of the surest evidences of my new birth, and yet this man cannot see it, he may be a good exhorter to sinners, but he cannot feed believers.' I resolved to go into that pasture no more, for I could not feed therein. I find that the struggle becomes more and more intense, each victory over sin reveals another army of evil tendencies, and I am never able to sheathe my sword, nor cease from prayer and watchfulness.<sup>14</sup>

On May 3, 1850, Spurgeon received baptism in the River Lark. As his family were Congregationalists, his mother was saddened to learn her son would pursue believer's baptism. She had said to him that while she prayed for his conversion, she did not pray he would become a Baptist. Spurgeon responded, "Ah, mother! the Lord has answered your prayer with His usual bounty, and given you exceeding abundantly above what you asked or thought."<sup>15</sup>

By August 1850, Spurgeon preached his first sermon and then was called, in 1851, as pastor in Waterbeach, a village near Cambridge.<sup>16</sup>

Recently I read where Andrew Atherstone, of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, was lecturing on Spurgeon and he made a very helpful observation about that sermon Spurgeon heard in Colchester and how God used it in his conversion. He recount that there are three key elements of his conversion. First, God's sovereignty over the circumstances of it. Second,

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<sup>14</sup> MTP 31:395-396.

<sup>15</sup> *Autobiography*, 1:69.

<sup>16</sup> For the next three years, he would hone his craft and record his sermons in nine notebooks. These notebooks were lost to publishing history as, until now, the only attempt at publication was undertaken by Spurgeon himself in 1857. That has changed with the publication of *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon* from B&H Academic in recent years.

God's powerful Word that convicted him. Third, God's use of Christ-centered preaching.<sup>17</sup>

Atherstone observes that all of these would remain the key components of Spurgeon's ministry throughout his life—God's sovereignty, God's Word, and Christ-centered preaching.

From his conversion in the chapel on Artillery Street, Spurgeon kept his gaze set on his "sincere and pure devotion to Christ." As such, much like that preacher, Spurgeon pointed many others to "Look" as well.

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<sup>17</sup> Andrew Atherstone, "Andrew Atherstone on C H Spurgeon," at the 2018 Evangelical Ministry Conference. Available from <http://acl.asn.au/andrew-atherstone-on-c-h-spurgeon/>

***Life in the Presence of God: Practices for Living in Light of Eternity.***  
**By Kenneth Boa. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017. 256**  
**pp. \$17.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8303-4516-3.**

Following in the mystic lineage of Brother Lawrence, Watchman Nee and Frank Laubach, *Life in the Presence of God* exhorts readers to enjoy abundant life by experiencing the presence of God. Kenneth Boa, who serves as president of Reflection Ministries, needs little introduction within the field of spiritual formation. He speaks regularly as a much sought-after speaker and has authored numerous works, including *Rewriting Your Broken Story* and *Conformed to His Image* (Zondervan, 2001).

Boa begins *Life in the Presence of God* by stating, “My goal is simple: to learn with you how to practice the presence of God better in every facet of our lives. By practice, I mean discerning and developing habits of awareness of God’s presence—if not all day, every day, at least much more often than most of us typically do” (1). With that purpose in mind, he organizes his book into two parts. The first part of the book covers the biblical basis of the topic. Taking up much less space than the second part of the book, this section consists of four chapters. The first chapter begins by asking the reader, “What do you really want?” Boa asks this question to help the reader determine whether he or she wants God or the things that He provides. He summarizes that the secret is life in Christ and then shares ways in which people can come into this mystical union. Chapter two explores the biblical images used to convey the Christian’s union with Christ. These images include: abiding in the vine, setting your mind and heart, walking, running and offering yourself up to God. Building on the exploration of the example of Jesus set forth in chapter three, chapter four considers walking with God. Bible character studies supplement the section by considering the examples of Adam and Eve, Enoch, Abraham, Moses and David. The rudimentary nature of these initial chapters will prove instructive to new believers and provide reminders to seasoned saints.

The second part turns to praxis by informing his audience on how to practice God’s presence. The section starts with exercises and training practices to help readers cultivate their ability to enjoy God. Chapter six delivers the most innovative content found within *Life in the Presence of God*. While investigating the topic of “Rewiring Your Mind,” Boa

introduces his audience to the latest findings on neuroplasticity. This content distinguishes Boa's work from other books on the topic, and particularly the classics in the field. "Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to reorganize itself," explains Boa (113). An individual's brain is "specially wired for ongoing growth," particularly through experience, emotional arousal, repetition and focused attention (112). This can have negative possibilities by engraining bad, persistent habits, but can also be positive in aiding a person's growth in godliness. Regarding this positive aspect, he summarizes, "It's feasible to train our minds to be more open to God. To adapt our thinking to see the world like he sees it. And to reorganize our lives around practices that help us become more aware of his presence" (113). Practitioners can achieve these possibilities regardless of age, intellect or other possible limiting factors.

Chapter seven challenges readers to hone their worldview in order to see the world as God sees. The next chapter tackles the "single greatest threat" to applying the book—busyness. Like chapter six, this content also distinguishes *Life in the Presence of God* from the classics by addressing current activities and devices that steal an individual's time. As Boa offers instruction on reorganizing time, he reminds readers that many of these activities can be limited or even eliminated. He proposes that even in the midst of appointments, interruptions and daily responsibilities, one can still find ample time to experience God.

The next three chapters deal with specific topics that can help a person on his or her journey of enjoying the Lord's company. The first topic is suffering. Without minimizing the subject, he proposes that even suffering can be a means to adore God. Next, he handles "Repenting of Sin" by covering the subjects of identity, dealing with temptation, and making things right with God and others. After this, he dedicates a chapter to the importance of "Remaining in Community" in order to grow and flourish. He concludes the book by inviting readers to reimagine a life with the book's contents put into practice as people prepare for their eternity.

Boa accomplishes his purpose of offering challenging insights and real-world practices that help his audience experience and enjoy God's presence. The simple, yet practical content of each chapter will help inform new believers and offer new guidance and fresh disciplines to those who have long walked with the Lord. The chapters include "Practice Tips" and conclude with doable exercises under the section headings:



“Listen to God in His Word” and “Practice His Presence.” These resources help the reader apply what he or she has learned in each chapter. Along with all of this, the author and publisher make available more practices, exercises, and resources through a free online training guide entitled “A Guide to Practicing God’s Presence.” With over two hundred pages of content, this guide is a terrific means for further growth. The busy and hectic nature of modern life often lulls the believer into an unawareness of God’s abiding presence. *Life in the Presence of God* offers tangible ways to shatter this impoverishing obliviousness.

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***40 Questions about Church Membership and Discipline.* By Jeremy M. Kimble. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2017. 272 pp. \$19.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8254-4445-6.**

Church polity is a difficult subject to teach in a seminary. Students often come from a variety of church backgrounds and will serve in many different church traditions. Instructors must tread carefully on these matters and sometimes neglect to teach on it at all, but one of the first lessons that a pastor must learn is the importance of church polity for a healthy church. For many church leaders, this is a subject that they will have to study on the job. For this reason, Jeremy Kimble’s *40 Questions about Church Membership and Discipline* is an important resource for students and pastors alike in exploring the Bible’s teaching on the aspects of membership and discipline.

*40 Questions* is organized into forty chapters, divided into four parts. Part One makes a case for the importance of this topic and provides definitions. Kimble observes a growing ambivalence and apathy among Christians towards the institutional church in this day, and his goal is to “refute such thinking and establish the critical importance of church membership and discipline in the life of the Christian” (15-16). After defining the church as the people of God saved by Christ and incorporated by baptism (21), he then defines church membership as the “formal relationship between the church and a Christian” characterized

both by the church's oversight and the individuals' submission to one another (27). Discipline, on the other hand, is the authority given by Christ to the church "to maintain order through the correction of persistently sinning church members" (34).

Part Two works through fifteen questions dealing with church membership, including theological, ministerial, and practical questions. In the first section, Kimble provides the biblical and theological foundations for understanding church membership. While explicit instructions about church membership itself are not found in Scripture, "the concept of... and implications for membership are" (45). One chapter gives an overview of Old Testament trajectories and New Testament instructions (with another chapter devoted to Matthew 16), demonstrating that God's people have always been distinct from the world and in covenant with one another. Kimble also provides a brief overview of church history, showing how regenerate church membership was quickly lost with the rise of paedobaptism and the combination of church and state. It was only with the Reformation and the establishment of Free Church Protestantism that the church recovered a proper understanding of membership, and this recovery continues to this day. The next section continues with questions related to the impact of church membership on a church's ministry, both in promoting discipleship and healthy leadership. It also includes an important chapter on the fact that church membership may look different from church to church, depending on context. The last section addresses practical matters, from common objections to the age of membership to membership removals and beyond.

Part Three follows the same three sections as before, but now dealing with church discipline. In the first section, Kimble explores theological themes of exile and discipline in the OT and then devotes three chapters on NT church discipline texts: Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5, and a variety of other texts. While church discipline "is not as expounded upon as frequently as other doctrines in the NT, it is certainly cited and holds great importance for the doctrine of the church" (165). Kimble also provides a historical overview of church discipline, showing how it was neglected and altered in the early and medieval church, but recovered at the Reformation, though in the Modern Era, it is once again in decline. The next section works through various ministry questions, relating church discipline to discipleship, leadership, restoration,

implementation, and more. Finally, Kimble works through practical questions, once again answering common objections, providing best practices, and presenting the benefits, goals, and limitations of church discipline.

Part Four concludes the book by tying church membership and discipline to the rest of Christian theology and the Christian life: “they serve as a reminder that theology is not merely esoteric; it truly affects the way one lives the Christian life” (262).

While there is much to be commended about this book, a few limitations should be noted first. Kimble’s teaching is more specifically on membership and church discipline in a credobaptist and Congregationalist context. Christians coming from paedobaptist churches or churches with different governing structures (Presbyterian or elder-ruled) will need to consider how to translate certain aspects of his teaching for their contexts. Additionally, this book provides an overview of this subject, but by no means is it a manual for ministry. Those who are looking for answers to specific questions might not find them here. There are many more questions related to these subjects, particularly when it comes to the countless issues and circumstances that can arise during pastoral ministry. The aim of this book is not to provide an exhaustive guide, but an overview and defense of these two doctrines.

In spite of these limitations, this reviewer is glad to recommend this book to church leaders and members alike. Perhaps the greatest strength of this book is Kimble’s biblical defense of membership and discipline. One of the most common objections to these doctrines is, “Where is this in the Bible?” Though Kimble gives an overview of church history, he only uses it to help the reader understand the present context. But in making a case for church membership and discipline, Kimble argues from Scripture, placing it in the larger context of biblical theology and dealing with specific texts. When one connects membership to the theological theme of God’s covenant people being distinct from the world, they will see it not only in a few prooftexts but throughout the storyline of Scripture. For pastors and teachers who are looking to teach their congregations, Kimble provides a convictional, rather than pragmatic, understanding of church polity that is rooted in Scripture.

Additionally, Kimble offers pastoral wisdom for applying membership and discipline in the local church. While he is coming from a Baptist, congregational context, much of his practical teaching will be

applicable in all contexts. For example, as leaders consider how to introduce the practice of church discipline to their churches, Kimble counsels them first to teach on church membership, cultivate a culture of discipleship, and work on their church structures (201-202). Undoubtedly, this is a helpful guard for any zealous pastors who might seek to introduce such a practice too quickly, bringing division to their congregations. While one should not expect this book to answer every question, it does provide a solid starting point for applying these doctrines in the church.

For all of those who are looking for a biblical understanding of the church and a robust vision of ministry, they should read this book and begin putting it into practice in their churches.

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***How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets.* By Peter J. Gentry. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017. 130 pp. \$17.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1433554032.**

Peter Gentry is the Donald L. Williams Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. His purpose in writing this book is simple and straightforward. He writes, "What I hope and pray is that this book will help *all* believers learn how to read and understand the texts of the biblical prophets on their own" (p. 14). Gentry pursues this goal by describing seven characteristics of the prophetic literature: 1) Exposing Covenant Disloyalty, 2) The Purpose of Announcing Future Events, 3) The Function of Repetition in Hebrew Literature, 4) Why So Many Speeches about Foreign Nations, 5) Where the Past Becomes a Model for the Future, 6) Apocalyptic: The Use of Metaphors and Symbols, and 7) Chronology and Literature That Paint Panoramas (p. 14). These are the topics of the seven chapters of his book. To evaluate the merits of this book, an examination of its positive elements, its negative elements, and a brief, summative review of the book are in order.

Gentry's work covers a significant amount of ground in a short space. He sets the biblical prophets in the context of the biblical covenants (especially the Mosaic covenant) and argues that their primary function was to invite Israel back to covenant faithfulness. He then explains the literary devices that the biblical prophets use (word pairs, chiasm, etc.). Finally, he illuminates the unclear (foreign) elements of the biblical prophets (i.e., oracles concerning the nations and language about the future). He covers such a vast array of material in 115 short pages. Indeed, one of the greatest strengths of Gentry's brief work is its comprehensiveness. This book provides a thorough starting point for anyone who wants to learn how to read the prophetic literature. However, comprehensiveness is not the book's only strength. Gentry's insights into the prophetic literature are fecund. I will outline three of his insights here. First, Gentry describes Hebrew poetry as progressively repetitive (recursive) in nature (pp. 41–42). Hebrew poetry repeats the same idea from different angles to cement the concept in the reader's mind and thereby displays the breadth of the idea. This phenomenon occurs at the micro-level (parallel lines) and macro-level (repeated discourses) in prophetic literature. Among other things, this repetition illuminates many perplexing texts in the prophets. For example, Isaiah 34:5 says that YHWH's sword has drunk its fill in the heavens and that his sword descends for judgment upon Edom. Gentry contends that Isaiah 24:21 explains Isaiah 34:5 when it says, "On that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on earth." Isaiah 24:21 shows that YHWH's sword drinks its fill in the heavens by punishing heavenly powers and it descends for judgment on Edom by punishing earthly kings. In this instance, repetition clarifies the meaning of an earlier text in addition to instilling a new idea in the reader's mind. Gentry aptly notes that this is an interpretive benefit of the recursive nature of prophetic literature.

Second, Gentry dispels the popular notion that prophecy is simply prediction about the future (especially the distant future). Instead, prophecy is revelation from God about Israel's and Judah's present and future circumstances. As a divine word about the present, the prophets of Israel and Judah confronted social injustice in their times and called God's people back to covenant faithfulness. As a divine word about the future, the prophets foresaw and predicted pivotal events in the near and distant future. None of this is revolutionary, but Gentry makes the

insightful point that the prophets validated their prophecies about the distant future by their prophecies about the near future. The fulfillment of the “near” prophecies ensured the fulfillment of the “far” prophecies (e.g., Isaiah 7–9). He even argues that this feature governs the macro-structure of some of the prophetic books (e.g., Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah). According to Gentry, these prophets intentionally interweave near prophecy with far prophecy to validate the far prophecy.

Third, Gentry elucidates the prophet’s nuanced depiction of the future. He suggests that the prophets use typology (chapter 5), apocalyptic language (chapter 6), and the already/not-yet paradigm (chapter 7) to describe the future. Again, this analysis is not revolutionary. Nevertheless, Gentry describes these literary devices with clarity, enabling the non-specialist to handle this material. For example, Gentry outlines six common features of apocalyptic literature to aid the interpreter in understanding apocalyptic imagery. Gentry’s adept and user-friendly description of these literary devices is a major strength of this book.

Despite its many strengths, Gentry’s work also contains notable weaknesses. Chapter seven, *Describe the Future, Part 3: The Already and the Not Yet*, is far too short (5 pages). Moreover, in certain places, his writing style is somewhat choppy and hard-to-follow (unlike his other publications). He also includes unnecessary attacks on biblical criticism throughout the work. For example, he says, “Those narratives about the creation story were not composed from different sources, as scholars have mistakenly proposed from the eighteenth century onward...” (p. 44). This sweeping generalization ignores the complexity of this issue and it promotes simplistic thinking about a complicated subject. He could at least show more nuance when discussing this matter. Gentry’s attacks on biblical criticism here (and elsewhere in the book) appear to align with his intention to prove single authorship of Isaiah. This is a noble goal, but since it is tangential to his primary purpose in this volume, it should have been left out. Finally, some of Gentry’s examples throughout the volume are weak. For example, Gentry argues for a chiasm in Isaiah 33:13–24 (pp. 47–50). His assessment is questionable even on a surface-level reading of the text. He also contends that Paul refers directly to Isaiah 27:12–13 in 1 Thessalonians 4 when he envisions a trumpet blast on the final day. However, he does not defend this bold assertion. Such a strong claim should be backed by careful analysis.

In summary, Gentry's work is an accessible introduction to reading the prophetic literature. It would be especially useful in an Old Testament Introduction course at the Bible college or seminary level. Nevertheless, it is too brief. I hope that he will lengthen the material and publish a second edition. Moreover, an academic version of the work (which he is more than qualified to write) is a desideratum.

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***Contemplation and Classical Christianity: A Study in Augustine.* By John Peter Kenney. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013. 191pp. \$35.00, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0198758822.**

John Peter Kenney describes his latest work as a prequel to his 2005 volume, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Re-Reading the Confessions*. In that work, Kenney sought to rescue Augustine's mystical experiences described in *Confessions* from the assumption that such mysticism was of a common variety. Contrary to some interpreters, Augustine's was a much more theologically rich and biblically focused sort of mysticism. In *Contemplation and Classical Christianity*, Kenney focuses on Augustine's earlier works in light of the Platonist tradition which preceded him, the tradition that he subsequently Christianized. Analyzing Augustine's development of contemplation in light of the Platonic tradition (mediated to Augustine via Plotinus) sheds considerable helpful light on the *Confessions*, and demonstrates the "Classical Christian" notion of contemplation aided by grace and mediated by divine revelation.

In chapter 1, Kenney provides a thorough summary of contemplation within pagan monotheism, focusing heavily on Plotinus. In this chapter, Kenney does well to remind readers that Augustine was simply not a baptized Platonist, but rather appropriated the Platonist tradition in a "nuanced and complex" fashion (p. 11). Therefore, Augustine's Platonism is not simply a Christian variant. Though Augustine owed his appreciation of transcendence to the Platonists, his view of contemplation would soon leave behind many elements of the Platonic system. Kenney's main concern is not with this argument so

much as it is to show the central themes that were of interest to Augustine. Such shared interests centered on the question of how humanity acquired knowledge and experience of transcendence, particular as these related to God.

In Chapter 2 and 3, Kenney looks specifically at the early Christian (note pre-baptismal) writings of Augustine at Cassiciacum. In this season of Augustine's reflection, the transcendence of Platonism gave him a greater appreciation and understanding of the Christian religion of his childhood (38). Having rejected Christianity as a dingy and simplistic faith, Platonism broke open the door so as to finally show him the supreme spiritual qualities of Christianity. This was not a syncretism of Plato and Jesus, but simply a selective use of ideas to better appreciate and approach the True Idea, which is Christ. Thus, even at this early stage, Augustine was selectively using Platonic notions while rejecting those that did not square with core Christian teaching. Augustine's "most striking revision of Platonism" was the assertion that God seeks after fallen souls as a personal and present deity, contrary to Platonist thinking or even Manichaeism renderings (54). From here, Kenney lays out in more detail what was unique about Augustine's view of contemplation in chapter 3. Education and the love of Wisdom all contribute to knowing and contemplating God. The early dialogues of Cassiciacum already demonstrated these distinctive themes, which were replicated in *Confessions*, particularly Book 7. As Augustine advanced, he modified his views slightly to more clearly address the nature of man's fallen soul (p.86-92).

In chapter 4, Kenney moves from these early writings to those that were written after baptism and ordination, as Augustine entered a time of concentrated study of Scripture. Augustine continued to focus on the notion of transcendence, yet increasingly asserted man's inability to attain such a state apart from grace. Divine assistance is necessary because every facet of man's constitution, including our reason, is in a fallen state. Both the "beauty of the divine image" and the "scrambled darkness" are present when one embarks on the journey of contemplation (105). Kenney relates Augustine's journey of transcendence not only to Platonic reflection, but also to a desire to address concerns aroused by Manichaeism. In seeking to avoid a radical dualism as proposed by Mani, Augustine argued that the failure of the soul to achieve contemplation is not due to any sort of innate evil caused



by the body, but to the consequences of a rebellious and fallen soul. This said, Augustine's vision included humility and recognition of one's frailties in the task of regular and sustained contemplation. Contemplation was therefore not the "final and sustainable state of spiritual sanctity, but the quotidian task of the fallen soul" (p. 118).

In chapter 5, Kenney moves to Augustine's *Confessions* and the specific ways that he expressed and defended his vision of contemplation. Focusing on books 7, 9, and 12, Kenney highlights Augustine's adherence to God's transcendence and his defense of a form of unmediated contemplation. This contemplation is brief and pursued through a life of faith and virtue, rather than adherence to philosophy or liberal arts. It is also only possible because God is already present in the believer's life, and even then, still offers divine assistance. Augustine's mother, Monica, recognized that such contemplation was Spirit-led and connected to the life of the church (155). Kenney also notes that such contemplation enlightened Augustine and Monica regarding the "exile of their souls" (154). Therefore, contemplation was not the end, but the beginning of a new life seeking after the one true God.

Kenney provides readers with helpful insight in a readable form. This is especially admirable given the complex subject matter at hand. The question of Augustine's relationship with Platonism is an age-old debate, and Kenney proves to be a helpful conversational partner in engaging this topic. With this in mind, readers may notice a lack of interaction with contemporary sources. This is mitigated by his masterful grasp of Augustine's early writings and reflections. Kenney is enjoyable to read and helpful in understanding early Augustine platonic reflection and relating it to the wider devotional life of Augustine. This book is recommended for those seeking to better understand Augustine's earlier writings, as well as those interested in Augustine's reflection on the soul's relationship to God.

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***The Early English Baptists, 1603-1649.* By Stephen Wright. Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2006. 288 pp. \$70.68, Hardback. ISBN 978-1843831952.**

The pantheon of English Baptists claims some of the most foundational and well-known individuals, including Smyth, Helwys, and Bunyan, yet Stephen Wright begins his work with the weighty claim that his research will defy the dominant view of a simple dichotomy of early English Baptist groups between General and Particular. Could there really be any unity in a period wrought with transition, persecution, and absolutism? Giving ready examples from historical events both known and unknown, the book often asks a new question of an old source in the effort to bring back the complicated and nuanced history of a very loose and disjointed movement. While the task of arguing from the simple to the complex is large, Dr. Wright is certainly up to the challenge. He received his Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of London after working on his dissertation, which eventually became this book. If scholars have abandoned the seventeenth-century English Baptists as a mine exhausted of resources, Wright makes the point that there is still much more to learn from this period. This motivates him to provide ample sources at every juncture. By the end of the book, Wright promises to provide new information to even the most seasoned scholar in English Baptist history.

The book begins by introducing the reader to the world of the English church prior to early Baptist emergence. Wright describes the interlocking of the secular and sacred worlds of church and state (3), as well as the difficulty any new or outside religious group faced when all opposing voices were silenced, with the good intention of maintaining political and religious authority. Wright argues that in this climate, men like John Smyth were pushed out of England before they ever encountered Anabaptist movements on the Continent. The example given is Smyth's conversion to believer's baptism and subsequent baptism of both his church members and himself, all of which occurred *before* his merger with the Anabaptist Mennonite church (8). Wright claims this as evidence that Smyth had not yet found a faith group that represented his personal beliefs and teachings, and that the event did not thus signify a new movement as much as it revealed that these groups were not as connected or unified as some might assume. Throughout,

Wright uses this type of analysis to promote a uniquely English Baptist movement that may have borrowed from other groups but nevertheless rose independently of their leadership.

The chapters move chronologically, beginning with the very same man used as an example in the introduction: John Smyth. The biographical material describes him and his setting well and the first chapter tackles the Puritan, Separatists, and Baptists from 1603-10 and makes Smyth the instigator of much turmoil over the autonomy of the local church and the calling of pastor (14).

The book then moves on to look specifically at the Baptist movement in England in the formative years of 1611 to 1638. During this period, Baptists were facing continued opposition from the established church, yet they saw growth and scholarship abound. Wright then presents the “The Restoration of Immersion and Baptist Alignments, 1638–44” in chapter three. The evolution of Baptist theology is kept tethered to the timeframe as rituals and beliefs were developed and adopted by more and more groups. Wright offers the historical narrative, then explains the reasoning behind it.

In one example, many people still struggled to reconcile their new and personal beliefs with the very large decision to completely denounce the officially sanctioned Church of England that had played a significant part in the lives of most Christians in that period. In fact, Wright states that some churches identified as “semi-separatist” – that is, they were not *completely* separate. This caused division in one such church, as Wright notes on page 75: “Several groups of this semi-separatist church left because of its refusal to repudiate the Church of England.” This was a major concern because, while an individual might have been able to uproot and move to the Continent, an entire church could be subject to major penalty for this no-small decision.

This chapter does go on to analyze how and why the practice of immersion came back into prominence. In an earlier chapter, Smyth likely used a basin to self-baptize. Wright describes the Dutch connection and the influence of some Reformed groups that helped bring back the immersion process. This ambiguity and inconsistency is intriguing, and thankfully included in Wright’s account. This chapter also presents some differing views concerning the rise of General Baptists and their emphasis on free will. Interestingly, even some of its founders wrote against Arminian doctrine, causing great controversy (99).

Further chapters include "Internal Discussions and External Alignments, 1642–5," "The Baptists and Politics, 1645–7," and "The Army, the Levellers and the Revolution." These chapters discuss the issues that arose when the new Baptists began to work out how to integrate into society. Would they participate in government? Would they join the military? Such questions frequently settled on the side of non-involvement.

The parameters of Wright's argument are laid out in the introduction of the book: to add depth to the scholarship on early English Baptists. Yet the book does much more than simply explain the basic divisions and their beliefs. Wright describes the historical background for the Baptist movements, taking them out of a vacuum and explaining the "why" behind each movement. This causes the book to rise far beyond elementary scholarship. Instead, Wright attempts to offer the reader a tour of the early Baptists' hearts and minds – an attempt that this reviewer believes he accomplishes.

Wright offers a litany of sources and footnotes for further analysis – many of them contemporary to the events unfolding in the text. He returns to some already-parsed Baptist works, but very often delves into underutilized or previously unknown sources. For example, Wright tells the story of how Smyth and Helwys embraced believers' baptism. He writes: "It is now accepted that he [Smyth] did baptize [sic] himself. Robinson reported this 'as I have heard from themselves.' 'Mr. Smyth anabaptised himself with water,' says Ainsworth: 'he and his followers having dischurched themselves and dissolved their communion; yet he in that state, preached, and anabaptised himself and then anabaptised others'" (33).

While many other books on the subject simply state that Smyth baptized himself, Wright offers the same information in the words of multiple sources. The archaic spelling and unusual words like "anabaptised" immerse the reader in the story. Other sources follow this quotation with the same richness and unique honesty.

Academically, Wright is careful. He rarely makes any value statement or judgment without providing an exhaustive anthology of references as to why his statement is valid. This does make the reading laborious at times, yet equally adds to the richness of the content, which borders more on a reference work than a monograph at points.

Wright does not, however, abandon his role as writer and expositor. We often see his own analysis arriving only after he has shared the primary passage, much as a minister might exposit Scripture in a sermon. Wright states only a few paragraphs after the earlier quotation: "The most controversial aspect of Smyth's career was his decision to rebaptise himself" (34). He asks the same questions that most researchers would ask: "Why not find someone else to do it?" And then Wright subsequently uses that as a platform to describe the divisions that were present even in these like-minded groups. Though he would later join with the Mennonites, at this stage, Smyth was still struggling with having his calling recognized and agreeing on "succession in ordination" (34).

That very same honesty with the often-troubling subject matter is another strength of Wright's book. In location after location, the text bluntly gives examples of how hard ministry was during the given time period. Continuing to use Smyth as a case study for this review, Wright states: "In March 1605 Smyth provided more evidence of his difficulties in finding acceptance as a clergyman of the established church" (15). He goes on to describe how Smyth had to respond to unjust accusations against him as a pastor.

Speaking more generally in the same portion of the book, Wright quotes Smyth as he laments that "persecution is a great discouragement to a minister, and it driveth many a godly man to his dumps, and interrupteth his ministry, or at the least, the cheerfulness in his ministry" (15). This offers invaluable perspective on the characters as real people facing the very real struggles of ministry. Once again, a survey text could have reworded these hardships and glorified Smyth as a pioneer, yet here we see him speaking openly of losing cheerfulness and even falling into depression. For all the sources where the subject, or their chronicler, would seem to glorify or even revel in the persecution, Smyth would rather not have experienced it. Wright offers a refreshingly honest approach to historical theology.

The book also benefits greatly from the chronological layout. The theological developments were complicated through this period and can only really be understood as they built on or reacted to other ideas *a priori*. Other books of this genre attempt the same type of work from a topical viewpoint, and while the organization is convenient to study the evolution of a particular belief, it is impossible to maintain any sort of

coherent timeline in the mind of the reader as to what events and personalities were interacting with the ideas themselves.

Wright brings the best of history and theology to the forefront as he offers a friendly, but unapologetic voice. He presents the complexities of the period and its players without sounding as if he is recounting the deeds of great heroes. His own epic is one of nuance, compromise, and struggle – a rare, but real-life opportunity to be transported into the minds of seventeenth-century ancestors of the equally complex modern Baptists we know today.

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***Retrieving Eternal Generation*. Edited by Fred Sanders and Scott R. Swain. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 304pp. \$34.99, Paperback. ISBN 9780310537878.**

In response to the theological conversation that happened online in the summer of 2016 regarding Eternal Functional Subordination, Dr. Stephen Holmes of St. Andrews University said, “It is very hard, probably impossible, to do polemical theology well through the medium of blog posts.”<sup>1</sup> What Holmes was lamenting with this statement was the inability that the blogosphere has to carry nuance and precision in a conversation as meaningful as eternal relations and distinctions of the Godhead. Enter *Retrieving Eternal Generation*.

In *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, editors Fred Sanders and Scott Swain give readers what lacked in much of the online conversation in 2016: nuance, carefulness, and theological charity. Moreover, this work is a demonstration of how interdisciplinary theology should be done with biblical, historical, philosophical, and systematic theology working harmoniously to deliver the reader to a conclusion. In the case of *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, that conclusion is that the doctrine of

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<sup>1</sup> Holmes, Stephen. “Eternal Functional Subordination and Inseparable Operations.” Presentation at The Evangelical Theological Society, San Antonio, 2016.

eternal generation “secures Trinitarian theology against a broad array of disorders, sclerosis, and deflections” (18).

As far as structure, the book has three parts: Biblical Reasoning, Historical Witness, and Contemporary Statements. Each section consists of a collection of contributions by authors that span several denominations and institutions.

In Part One, Biblical Reasoning, each author either introduces a biblical theme and work through a series of pertinent verses, or introduces a particular text and does the exegetical work necessary to deliver the reader to a given conclusion. For the former, see chapters by Swain and Soulen, while Emerson, Gignilliat, Carson, Irons, and Pierce all fit into the latter category.

The second section of the book, Historical Witness, treats individual theologians and eras of theology. In terms of the individual theologians covered, Ayres examines Origen of Alexandria, Johnson works through Augustine, Larsen interacts with Edwards, and finally, Allen concludes the chapter with Barth. Unlike the other contributors in this section, Dixhoorn examines an entire era of theology by parsing Trinitarian perspectives of Post-Reformation thinkers.

The third, and final section of the book, Contemporary Statements, consists of three essays that are meant to add to current conversations regarding the doctrine of eternal generation and spans multiple disciplines including philosophy and systematic theology.

There is very little to critique regarding the book by way of content; of course, that depends largely on whether or not the reader agrees with the conclusions drawn in each chapter. It is certainly possible to negatively assess the book for lacking topics that it never set out to address in the first place. However, it is the opinion of this reviewer that the book accomplished what it set out to do. One critique that stands is that of flow.

Like many anthologies, there is an issue of stating the problem. Typically, in constructing a chapter, authors will begin by stating the problem. However, with a collection of essays all from different authors, this becomes either distracting or redundant. At times, *Retrieving Eternal Generation* falls into this error. It could have been more productive to devote a chapter solely to tracing the historical problem of a diminishing doctrine of eternal generation that acted as a unified reference point for the rest of the work.

Moving past this small critique, there is more benefit to this book than a brief review can do justice. Let us begin with the crucial reality that this book is “fair.” The authors are aware of the insufficiencies of their own arguments, as well as each other’s, which they own. For example, Carson critiques Lee Irons’ use of Hebrews 11:17 (89-90), but also does exegetical work to show that there have historically been passages used to defend eternal generation that should not have been (91). Furthermore, Makin admits that his philosophical model of causality is insufficient to make a legitimate case for the aseity of the Son (249).

Second, there is merit in each of the essays in their own right, yet the book is most convincing when viewed in light of its entirety. For example, Emerson cites Kevin Giles’ six reasons to reject eternal generation. The most important of the six is point one, which reads, “[Eternal generation] has no ‘biblical warrant’” (61). Emerson does a fine job demonstrating that readers should doubt this proposition due to Proverbs 8. Yet readers should further doubt the point when Emerson’s exegesis of Proverbs 8 is held together with Carson’s work on John 5, Gignilliat’s case of Micah 5:2, and Pierce’s essay on Hebrews 1.

While this brief review does not do the book justice, it will have to suffice to concisely mention helpful aspects of the book. Readers will benefit from the retrieval of a number of historical arguments for the doctrine of eternal generation, such as Augustine’s assertion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and not the “three brothers” (87), Dixhoorn’s introduction of underplayed theologians (Gataker, Featley, and Cheynell), as well as his captivating storytelling (183-202), the introduction to helpful theological categories that serve as explanation of difficult Trinitarian realities (such as Carson’s “unidirectional obedience”) (96), Emerson’s capable critique of eternal functional subordination and his advocacy for a more mature biblical/systematic hermeneutic (64-65), Sanders’ systematic display of the relationship between soteriology and eternal generation (260), and Makin’s four desiderata for defining eternal generation (247), as well as his three model proposal for philosophically defending the doctrine (248-258). These are but a few beneficial aspects of the work.

While there are sure to be readers who do not find the arguments in this book ultimately convincing, those readers who wish to oppose the arguments presented here should seek to provide answers to at least three questions: (1) What eternally differentiates essence in the Godhead



that does not dissolve into either tri-theism or ontological subordination? (2) What does it mean for Jesus, according to John 5, “to have life in himself” that is simultaneously “granted by the Father”? (3) What are we to make of the divine names that seem to imply familial generation (63)? Moreover, if “Son” is best understood in the economic Trinity only, what are we to make of pre-incarnate uses of the title, such as John 3:17 (86-87)?

In conclusion, *Retrieving Eternal Generation* is a strong biblical, historical, systematic, and philosophical defense of the doctrine of eternal generation. This reviewer recommends this work to any reader seeking an explanation or defense of this underplayed doctrine.

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***Spirituality for the Sent: Casting a New Vision for the Missional Church.* Edited by Nathan A. Finn and Keith S. Whitfield. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 253 pp. \$30.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-0830851577.**

A collection of frequently used words often emerges in written resources and conversations among scholars, pastors, ministry leaders, and Christians alike. For example, it is common to hear the descriptor ‘gospel-centered’ to characterize everything from a church’s budget to its small group curriculum. One also sees this in the ubiquitous uses of the homiletical designation of an ‘expository’ preacher. What does that mean, however, when there are such wide-ranging conceptions of biblical exposition? Certainly, few preachers want whatever label qualifies for the opposite of what one means by ‘expository.’ The title of this volume is arresting because the editors and their immensely qualified contributors seek to grasp two buzzwords saturating the Christian academic circles’ landscape and the broad evangelical church scene. In doing so, Nathan Finn and Keith Whitfield provide a clarifying answer concerning what many consider to be a confusing landscape: What does it mean to be missional, and how does missional Christianity relate to spiritual formation?

In their introduction, Finn and Whitfield alert readers to the growing interest in both missional theology and spiritual formation, yet few inquiries probe where these movements converge. One of the many strengths of their book is the intentional exploration into this intersection. Even the best investigative efforts to employ these terms fairly will fail if these terms are not investigated in their natural (and biblical) relationship. The editors “want evangelicals and other Christians to cultivate what we call a ‘spirituality for the sent’ that helps to foster a new vision for the missional church” (3). This goal is both admirable and warranted. Surprisingly, Finn and Whitfield seek this cultivation to materialize primarily from within the Christian academy, with the belief that scholars can create greater infiltration to all who are downstream of their influence. On the one hand, this approach is refreshing, because Christian scholars need the occasional nudge to keep their academic pursuits aligned with the ecclesial connections providing the foundations of their works. On the other hand, this approach requires a broad spectrum of scholars to prevent an unnecessary bifurcation among academic disciplines. In other words, if scholars are going to heed this admirable effort, it must not be restricted to the missions department of the local seminary. Instead, it necessarily requires the concerted efforts of systematic theologians, biblical scholars, practical theologians, church historians, and missiologists banded together. Finn and Whitfield not only recognize the necessity of each discipline having a role, but also wisely include a list of first-rate conversation partners representing these fields and more to situate this volume in a needed space within this subject matter.

In the first chapter, Finn and Whitfield trace the roots and the emergence of crucial terms such as “missional,” “*Missio Dei*,” “Missional Church,” and the influential leaders, organizations, and books associated with their usage. Additionally, they integrate a similar focus on the spiritual formation movement. The importance of the first chapter cannot be overstated. In addition to its acute historical analysis, the sweeping section on the development of the modern spiritual formation movement is the best ten-page summary of this topic in print. Mercifully, the editors rescue the reader from the ambiguities, which often linger in these discussions, by providing explicit definitions of their terms. Finn and Whitfield “propose three statements that will help us understand what it means to use the adjective *missional* to modify our church, life,

vision, network, and so on" (27). To be missional means living directed by the mission of God, living a life shaped by the mission of God, and living sent on the mission of God. Spiritual formation is defined as "the cultivation of grace-motivated spiritual practices and habits, drawn from the authoritative Scriptures and the best of the Christian tradition, which the Holy Spirit uses to foster spiritual maturity in the life of the believer for the glory of God, the health of the church, and the sake of the world" (29). These robust and clear definitions avoid the vague, unfortunate concoctions that all too often hinder substantive dialogue among interested parties.

This book consists of eleven chapters, the first being the editors' unpacking of the missional church and spiritual formation. The remaining chapters bring together a diverse collection of conversation partners for the reader. Some contributors are major voices in missional theology and spiritual formation, while others bring a focused perspective on a critical issue within these subjects. For the former, consider Craig Bartholomew's chapter on "Spirituality, Mission, and the Drama of Scripture," or Anthony Chute's and Christopher Morgan's chapter on "Missional Spirituality as Congregational." Each of these scholars has a footing within biblical and theological studies and provides thoughtful correctives to the discussion. For the latter, consider the provocative chapter, "Missional Spirituality and Justice," by Ma Elise Cannon. Readers have much to glean from her helpful distinctions between acts of service, compassion, mercy, and charity within conservative churches seeking to be more engaged with social justice. Cannon fills her chapter with practical wisdom and concrete suggestions for implementation.

The remaining chapters each have their strengths. Susan Booth issues helpful insights regarding God's presence throughout the biblical narrative and applies her insights to modern missions in her chapter "Missional Spirituality and Global Missions." Timothy Sheridan and Michael Goheen address "Missional Spirituality and Cultural Engagement," a familiar subject for these two established missional theologians. Not surprisingly for those familiar with Goheen, a combination of the Dutch Reformed tradition and keen insights from Lesslie Newbigin's pen linger throughout their critique of common Christian proposals for cultural engagement. Gary Tyra provides his seasoned voice to the subject of "The Contextual Nature of a Missional

Spirituality.” Tyra has written on this subject in other publications, and in this chapter, he exhorts readers to integrate a culturally sensitive spirituality with regard to methodology and contextualization.

Soong-Chan Rah’s chapter “Lament as Appropriate Missional Spirituality” offers a pointed critique of what he calls a “triumphalistic US Christianity,” whereby Americans maintain a “self-perception of privilege and the subsequent assertion as the saviors of the world” (145). As a corrective, missional Christianity seeks to correct many mistakes of the previous generations, but in doing so, it must incorporate a theology of lament, which guards against relapsing back into triumphalism. Diane Chandler addresses “Godly Love: The Primary Missional Virtue” in her chapter, where she highlights the exhortations and implications of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, believers are involved in the *Mission Dei* as they reflect divine love. In Gordon Smith’s outstanding chapter, “Missional Spirituality and Worship,” readers are reminded and encouraged that “the mission of God in the world cannot be understood and appreciated apart from the liturgical life of the church” (182). Smith winsomely weaves together the ecclesial necessities of a liturgical community, a catechetical community, and a missional community. Because of Pentecost, the power behind these pursuits is the Holy Spirit. The final chapter, “Journey in the Spirit” by George Hunsberger, is an excellent concluding chapter to this volume. He brings together some of the themes addressed in earlier chapters and unifies them into a more cohesive paradigm.

Overall, this volume contains considerable strengths. First, the editors are to be commended for their intentional pursuit of clarity regarding this important subject matter. This volume serves those seeking clarity in missional theology and those who seek to inquire more deeply into matters of spiritual formation. Their ability to achieve this combination within this volume rests in their vision and the contributors that they assembled. Second, the contributors provide a diverse voice to the discussion, and the importance of this fact cannot be overstated. This book is not merely an obscure collection of essays pushing a denominational agenda; instead, it is a collection of engaging articles written by men and women representing various strands of contemporary evangelicalism. Within this subject matter, this approach is necessary for inquiring readers. Third, a deep love for the church is

evident throughout each chapter. Even at moments of critique, readers will not lose sight of the goal of strengthening the church as it welds together individual spiritual lives within the whole of the church's mission.

As a matter of critique, an additional chapter would have been helpful for the average pastor who decides to read this book for further growth and ministry effectiveness. How does the pastor theologian of a local church use his weekly preaching time to shepherd his people into a missional spirituality? How does the goal of this book affect preaching? Certainly, this critique is minor, because, in some ways, various authors address aspects of this angle, but a specific chapter restricted to the role of preaching would have been a helpful addition to the local pastor who embraces what this volume encourages. The shortcomings are miniscule when compared to the numerous benefits this volume offers. Consequently, the chapters in this book are best viewed as conversation partners among believers seeking to unpack what it means to live within a spirituality for the sent.

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***Mind the Gap: How the Jewish Writings Between the Old and New Testament Help Us Understand Jesus.* By Matthias Henze. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017. 248 pp. \$39.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-5064-0642-8.**

Matthias Henze has produced a helpful introductory text aimed at acquainting readers with some of the lesser-known books from the late Second Temple period and demonstrating their relevance for understanding the life and message of Jesus within first-century Judaism. Unlike other introductory handbooks, the purpose of Henze's book is not to provide a survey of Second Temple history and literature. Instead, he has selected specific "case studies" from the New Testament that exemplify how the Second Temple literature can shed light on Jesus's life and ministry. Henze's main objective is to persuade the reader that "the Old Testament will not give us the context that can explain the

Judaism of Jesus” (34); rather, the proper context for understanding Jesus is found in the Second Temple literature.

In total, *Mind the Gap* consists of seven chapters that are divided into two parts (chapters 1–2 and chapters 3–7). Part One, entitled “Mind the Gap! Reading between the Old and New Testament,” is designed to give the reader a cursory overview of the history and literature of the Second Temple period. Chapter 1 contains a survey of the major historical periods from the Babylonian exile to the Roman era. Henze also briefly discusses the date of composition for most of the Old Testament literature and the canonical arrangement of the books in the Protestant Old Testament. In chapter 2, Henze introduces the reader to some of the non-canonical texts that were written during the late Second Temple period, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, *4 Ezra*, and *2 Baruch*.

Part Two of *Mind the Gap* is entitled, “The Jewish Jesus.” Chapters 3–6 were originally delivered as public lectures at the University of Sydney, Australia, in 2016. These four chapters contain case studies that are meant to demonstrate how the non-canonical Second Temple literature can help us, as modern readers, to understand the Jewish world of Jesus. Chapter 3 discusses messianic expectations in the late Second Temple period. Chapter 4 explains Jewish beliefs about demons and spiritual beings in the time of Jesus. Chapter 5 addresses Jesus’ and Paul’s view of the Jewish law. Chapter 6 looks at the topic of resurrection and the afterlife. The book concludes with an epilogue in chapter 7 that summarizes the relevance of the Second Temple literature for our understanding of Jesus within first-century Judaism. At the end of the book, Henze provides a brief section of suggested further reading and a helpful glossary of technical terms that might be unfamiliar to some readers who are new to this subject matter.

In general, Henze’s overall project is commendable. He has successfully distilled large quantities of history and technical information into an easily digestible text that is accessible to the average interested lay reader. Henze’s style is personable and conversational, and he comes across as knowledgeable without being overly academic. In chapter 1, Henze’s sketch of the history of the Second Temple period is succinct and lucid, although some scholars might take issue with the dates of composition that Henze assigns for some of the biblical books (particularly Daniel and Ecclesiastes). In chapters 3, 4, and 6, Henze

provides compelling examples of how the non-canonical Second Temple literature helps to elucidate our understanding of Jesus and his cultural milieu.

In spite of the strength of these chapters, there are some minor shortcomings. For example, in the discussion of demons and spiritual beings in chapter 4, it is surprising that Henze neglects to connect the Watcher Myth in *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* to Jude and 2 Peter. Such a discussion would have been enlightening to the reader and would have strengthened the objective of Henze's project.

Chapter 5 ("Did Jesus Abolish the Law of Moses?") is the least satisfying of the four case studies examined in the book. In this chapter, Henze's goal is to argue that Jesus did not abolish the Jewish law. The problem is that he only spends eight pages out of thirty discussing a few of the Second Temple texts concerned with the law (Ben Sira, the Damascus Document, and 4QMMT), and he does not actually use any of these texts as evidence for his argument. He only mentions these texts because they illustrate the "variety of understandings of the Torah toward the end of the Second Temple period" (133). Henze's argument is entirely based upon his exegesis of Matthew and Romans. This seems to undermine Henze's initial thesis that the Second Temple literature is crucial for a proper understanding of the New Testament. Besides the fact that this was probably not the most suitable example for a case study, there will also be some readers who are disturbed by Henze's interpretation of Paul. Henze, who draws upon the New Perspective on Paul, seems to hold a dichotomous view of God's salvific plan, in which the Gentiles are saved by faith and Israel is saved through the law.

One other significant deficiency in *Mind the Gap* is Henze's ambivalence about the purpose for his book. While Henze states at the beginning that his objective is to help readers see the importance of the non-canonical Second Temple literature for understanding Jesus, he gives an entirely different reason for his book in the epilogue. Here, he explains that his work is driven, in part, by a reaction against theological supersessionism and the anti-Semitism of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century German scholarship. Henze is motivated by a desire to demonstrate that the differences between Jews and Christians are not as great as many people think. This book is an attempt to instill in Christians a greater openness and acceptance of Judaism. Henze's two objectives conflict with each other at various times throughout his

project with the result that the book seems to lack focus. At the end, the reader is left wondering, “Does Henze want me to read these Jewish texts in order to better understand Jesus, or so that I will have a higher estimation of Judaism?”

Notwithstanding these deficiencies, Henze should be commended for his efforts to help people in the church understand Jesus within his first-century Jewish context. While some discernment is necessary, *Mind the Gap* will profitably serve as an *entré* into a deeper study of the Second Temple literature for lay, non-specialist readers who have an interest in the Jewish world of Jesus.

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***Four Views on the Church’s Mission. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology Series.* By Jonathan Leeman, Christopher J.H. Wright, John R. Franke, and Peter Leithart. Edited by Jason S. Sexton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 208 pp. \$16.99, Paperback. ISBN: 978-0310522737.**

Multiview books have become exceedingly popular in the digital age, especially considering that public theological arguments are more accessible than ever before. This is certainly the case with one of the most recent books in the Counterpoints Series, *Four Views on the Church’s Mission*. Sexton sees the church’s mission as “tied to the church’s very *being and constitution* as the people who by the Spirit have dynamically become the body of Christ” (11). In this book, four authors offer their positions and responses to the current debate on the mission (i.e. “being and constitution”) of a church. As for the authors’ qualifications and limitations, Sexton summarizes, “The writers of this volume have real limitations, are each Anglophile males, and possess British PhDs. Yet each in one way or another is connected to the church around the globe” (194). Each of these authors seeks to answer a few fundamental questions: “What is the church? What is the church *doing*? What *ought* it to be doing?” (193). At large, the authors provide their understanding of the church’s mission in either prioritist or holistic frameworks. Leeman



is the only one who belongs to the former camp, while the other three authors belong to the latter.

Leeman understands the church's mission to be *soteriological*. Throughout his chapter, he notes both the "broad and narrow terms" of mission (17). The narrow (or priestly) work focuses on *making disciples*, while the broad (or kingly) work focuses on *being disciples*. Leeman is resolute that "we should affirm both a narrow mission and a broad mission" (19). However, his "pastoral and programmatic sympathies liken with the narrow camp" (19). In this, Leeman shows his prioritist leaning. He has a couple of reasons for this. First, he believes the "church as an organized collective" has been authorized with priestly authority to *make disciples* and "every member of the church" has been authorized with a kingly authority to *be disciples* (20). The corporate church's specific job is to make disciples of all nations through "word ministry, like preaching and evangelism" (18). On the other hand, each church member's job is to live as a disciple in a loving, caring way. The second reason for Leeman's prioritist view is his understanding of hell. While the church – in two separate ways – should be concerned with both broad and narrow mission, the "eschatological wrinkle suggests that the narrow mission deserves special attention (i.e. priority)" (34). If hell is eternal suffering, then care for the soul is more important than care for the body or care for the earth. Therefore, the church should be most passionate about the salvation of lost souls. On the whole, Baptists will find themselves most comfortable with Leeman's understanding of the church's mission. Thankfully, he does not neglect either aspect of that mission; he only prioritizes one. However, he seems to lessen the corporate church's responsibility on the "secondary" issues. If one leans too hard toward Leeman's view, one might find oneself labeling churches that advocate for social justice as *culturally Marxist*.

Wright sees the church's mission as *participatory*. Like Leeman, Wright believes the church has both a broad and narrow mission, though he would never use those terms. He does not see one as more important than the other; in no way is he a prioritist. His reasoning is that the Bible does not explicitly make one more essential, and so, he does not want to employ what he sees as a faulty hermeneutic to come to that conclusion. What Leeman sees as two distinct aspects of mission, Wright sees as *one, whole mission*, for they are not "set in competition with each other" (71). He advocates for a "holistic, biblical mission" (75). His holistic view is

overtly and rightly cross-centered. “[The] cross must be as central to our social engagement as it is to our evangelism” (76). He summarizes the church’s “whole mission” into three categories: 1) *cultivating the church* (evangelism, teaching, baptizing, and nurturing), 2) *engaging society* (compassion and justice ministries), and 3) *caring for creation* (helping sustain life on earth). Unfortunately, while Leeman believes priority should be given to the first, Wright believes priority does not exist among the three. This is due to his understatement of hell, which he hardly ever addresses. As a holist, he emphasizes how the gospel affects more than the individual, but eternal perspective is not rightly considered. If hell is real, eternal, and horrific, then the narrow, priestly mission should be the church’s priority.

Franke extends the conversation on the holistic view. He writes on how the church’s mission is *contextual*. He understands God’s mission to be one of love. In like manner, then, the church’s mission should be a loving one. He says that the “mission of God in relation to the world... [is] love and salvation” (112). Franke’s understanding of “salvation” addresses more than the individual. He writes that “this salvation entails the liberation of the created order – humanity and the entire cosmos – from the powers of sin and death” (113). Franke concludes that the church’s mission should, *holistically*, include “liberation, transformation, new creation, peace, reconciliation, and justification” (114). Unlike Leeman, Franke is an annihilationist. This has far-reaching implications for priority in missions. If one believes hell to be *real and eternal*, one will *most seek* the salvation of lost souls. If one believes hell to be *real but temporary*, emphasis on evangelism will be lessened. Furthermore, Franke believes the church’s mission should be “radically contextual,” for the gospel has an “infinite translatability” (130). While this reviewer is thankful for his emphasis on the need for contextualization, Franke compromises the *oneness* of the gospel. In some places, this loving gospel can *mean* and *affect* one thing, while in another, it can mean and affect something else. The major shortcoming of this chapter is that Franke does not understand the gospel as essentially one, singular *story* of good news. His understanding is that “faith is pluralistic” (130). Franke affirms that the gospel is “both a message to be proclaimed... [and] a way of life in the world” (118). On the contrary, Paul’s understanding of the gospel is that it is solely a story of what has been done, and while one can contextualize this story, he cannot change it (Gal 1:8).

Leithart has the most unique contribution. He believes the church's mission should be *sacramental*, giving a greater priority to the role of the ordinances (i.e. baptism and the Lord's Supper). Leithart calls himself a revisionist, or a holist. His essay is an unbalanced one, for he seeks to correct an existing imbalance—that is, the imbalance of conversation on “the role of baptism and the Supper in missions” (156). His chapter is useful in that he focuses on a needed resurgence for the practice of the ordinances in missions. The problem is that, at times, he goes too far. He believes that the ordinances actually affect something, rather than symbolizing that which affects something. He writes, “Baptism and the Supper do not merely announce this fulfillment [of mission] but, as works of Christ's Spirit, *make it happen*” (168). He also says, “Baptism is not a *picture* of the nations being reunited; baptism *reunites* the nations. The Supper is not a *picture* of nations feasting together in the presence of God; it *is* the feast of the nations in the presence of God” (164). Leithart hardly writes at all about the symbolism of the ordinances, and how the conversion they represent is what ultimately has an effect. Furthermore, while he claims that his chapter is about bringing a neglected aspect into the light, he seems to overemphasize the role of the ordinances, even in his concluding definition of the church's mission: “Set up God's table. Invite folks to dinner. Make sure they wash up. Teach them how to eat together” (176). The ordinances surely are great and given *for us*, but they are not greater than the salvation that is symbolized and remembered through them.

As a whole, this book is highly recommended. In particular, each author focuses on the importance of the biblical theology of mission; that is, they provide support for their views from the entire canon of Scripture. For those who have followed this debate, *Four Views on the Church's Mission* will prove most beneficial. The authors interact well with the two most important books in this debate: Wright's *The Mission of God* (IVP Academic, 2013) and Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert's *What is the Mission of the Church?* (Crossway, 2011). Readers can also find pertinent material – in summarized form – in David Hesselgrave's *Paradigms in Conflict* (Kregel, 2005). Readers will find themselves agreeing more with one position than the others, but that furthers the point of this book and this series as well.

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***Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics: Mapping Divine and Human Agency.* By Mark Alan Bowald. Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press, 2015. 263 pp. \$16.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-57799-661-3.**

In his endorsement for Mark Alan Bowald's *Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics*, Kevin Vanhoozer writes that "theological hermeneutics has no more avid cartographer than Mark Bowald." This is a fitting description of Bowald and the work that he does in *Rendering the Word*: he takes on the role of theological-hermeneutical cartographer and maps out the state of theological hermeneutics as he saw it in 2007, when he first published this work with Ashgate. In 2015, *Rendering the Word* was picked up by Lexham Press and republished as part of their *Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology* series. Though there have been many developments in the "theological interpretation of Scripture" movement (TIS) since its first publication, *Rendering the Word* continues to make a helpful contribution to the topic by charting its key representatives in relation to one another.

Bowald's primary concern in this volume is to call attention to the role (or lack thereof) that divine agency plays within the systems of TIS's spokesmen. With the question of divine agency in view, Bowald charts these spokesmen in relation to one another within a triangular typology (more on this typology below). According to Bowald, divine agency plays too small a role in the hermeneutical processes of these spokesmen. It is Bowald's contention that the same Kantian ideas of the illegitimacy of antecedent judgments in epistemology, which occasioned the skepticism of higher biblical criticism, have continued to influence the very movement that objects to those ideas. TIS, he argues, is still influenced by Kantian skepticism in its dismissal of divine agency in the hermeneutical process.

Bowald begins his work by describing the stage of contemporary hermeneutics as set by Kantian epistemology. He describes Kant's epistemology and its two limitations that affect hermeneutics: (1) the assumption that "true knowledge" of God is impossible on account of finite man's inability to *experience* the infinite, and (2) the assumed illegitimacy of "other influences" and prior knowledge. Kant's epistemological assumptions therefore necessitate a hermeneutical skepticism with respect to divine agency. To the degree that Kantian

philosophy has influenced theological hermeneutics, Bowald argues, this skepticism remains in the hermeneutical process.

In chapter two, Bowald explains the triangular typology he uses throughout the rest of the volume. The upper plane of the triangle refers to divine speech agency and the bottom to human speech agency. The triangle's bottom-left corner refers to the text, its bottom-right to the reader, and its top to God. Hermeneutical systems that operate toward the far bottom-left side are imminently concerned with what the text's human authors have *written*, and not at all concerned with divine agency (top corner) or the role of reader response (bottom-right corner), et al. The further a system moves into one corner, the further it moves away from the other two. With this framework set in place, the next three chapters are dedicated to examining figures who operate primarily within one of the triangle's three corners.

In his third chapter, Bowald gives an overview of type one by using Hans Frei (particularly his earlier work), Kevin Vanhoozer, and Francis Watson as representatives. According to Bowald, the commonality between these three figures is that they are primarily concerned with discovering meaning by examining the text of Scripture itself, though it is notable that each of these figures undergoes a unique transition of sorts. For example, Frei begins by insisting that meaning is found decisively and solely within the narrative (i.e., *not* from extratextual sources), and eventually makes a drastic move over into type two, where he insists meaning is derived in diachronic conversation between the church and the text. These figures' hermeneutical frameworks are not static, and Bowald makes this point clear.

Chapter four surveys David Kelsey, Hans Frei (focusing on his later work), Werner Jeanrond, and Stephen Fowl to illustrate type two: hermeneutics that focus primarily on the human agency of the reader. This type can be further subdivided between those who emphasize the role of human agency in *diachronic reading* (the interpretation of the reading community throughout the centuries) and *synchronic reading* (the interpretation of each generation's reading community). According to Bowald, Kelsey's and Fowl's hermeneutics are ecclesiastically pragmatic; contemporary Christians determine Scripture's meaning by its use (*synchronic*). As mentioned above, Frei's later hermeneutic sees Scripture's meaning as a product of semi-fluid conversation between the text and its interpretative community (*diachronic*). Jeanrond, an extreme

example of type two, argued that every reading of the text offers a new meaning, since all context and historical intent surrounding a text was lost the moment it materialized (radically *synchronic*).

In chapter five, Bowald surveys the work of Karl Barth, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and James K. A. Smith as representatives of type three. Each of these authors emphasize that the interpretative task ought to be concerned with what God is doing in revelation and in the hermeneutical process. Barth attributed a significant role of divine agency in hermeneutics, going so far as to argue that Scripture, as witness to revelation, *becomes* the word of God when (according to God's activity) it effectively bears witness to Jesus. Barth was a Christ-centered type three. Wolterstorff proposed a very practical type three hermeneutic consisting of two steps: (1) determining what God was saying through the human authors when they wrote, and (2) determining what God is saying through the text now. Smith is very near to type two, insisting that meaning is determined by the interpretative community both in its *synchronic* and *diachronic* reading. According to Smith, the text's ambiguity that requires the communal context (which determines the text's meaning) is intentional on God's part, and it is God's action in the hermeneutical process. In other words, God acts through the community's response to the text's ambiguity.

Bowald concludes *Rending the Word* by summarizing the overall argument of the volume (i.e., that TIS has, by and large, neglected to heed appropriate attention to divine agency in the hermeneutical process), and by offering a proposal for a way forward. Bowald's proposal is a dynamic hermeneutic that he calls "divine-rhetorical hermeneutics." This hermeneutic borrows the Aristotelian rhetorical categories of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. He insists that all three of these aspects of rhetoric inform one another; *ethos* (i.e., the character of the speaking agent) establishes the reliability of—and demands the reception of—*logos* (i.e., the content of the speaking agent's speech act), informing its appropriation in the *pathos* (i.e., the response of the speech act's receivers).

To lay out the hermeneutical distinctives of so many original and prolific thinkers is no small task, and Bowald excels in doing just this. Bowald's ability to condense and describe the unique contributions of these figures is truly impressive, and for that, he ought to be commended. However, there are some important criticisms to raise, beginning with the central triangular typology that he uses. The terms of the triangle are

fairly subjective and are therefore only helpful to those who already agree with Bowald about them. Further, after laboring to fit all of these authors and their hermeneutical processes into this triangular typology, Bowald himself rejects the typology as the ideal context for construing a hermeneutical framework in place of his own proposal (i.e., divine-rhetorical hermeneutics) (238). In this way, Bowald seems to give himself an unwarranted level of privilege that he withholds from the authors he analyzes; they are rigidly forced to occupy a space he is not willing to occupy. Why should Bowald be allowed to leave the triangle?

Further, Bowald's own proposal is counterproductive in its most crucial point. Bowald argues for the primacy of divine *ethos* (i.e., the character of God, the divine agent) and its relation to the *logos* (i.e., the inspired text of Scripture; the communication of the divine agent) and *pathos* (i.e., the reader's reception and application of the *logos*) in his divine-rhetoric hermeneutic. Structurally, this is brilliant and it addresses the need that Bowald highlights all throughout the volume. However, rather than allowing for the divine agent to establish his own *ethos* (that is, through the self-revelation of Scripture), Bowald makes a bizarre turn and *undermines* the perspicuity and authority of Scripture by insisting that non-divinely-inspired sources ought to establish *ethos*: "To begin, this requires not the jettison of one's confession and catechesis: to the contrary, to prepare to listen to the living word of God begins with learning all one can about this God and his Word. So: the study of church history, of dogmatics, of traditions of reading and so on, is prerequisite" (240). This seems to undermine the notion that the divine agent communicates himself directly through the inspired text. Instead, the text is minimized as *a* divine self-communication, one that is unavoidably misunderstood apart from church history, dogmatics, and traditions of reading. These are "prerequisite" to interpreting Scripture. They are thus elevated to a *de facto* place of authority alongside the revelation itself.

Despite the fact that Bowald succumbs to some of the same pitfalls that he argues that other authors have fallen into, his greatest contribution in *Rendering the Word* is that he highlights two important hermeneutical necessities: (1) the unavoidability of depending on divine agency in theological hermeneutics (consciously or otherwise), and (2) (in a roundabout way) the impossibility of harnessing divine agency into a tidy method. Bowald critiques authors who relegate divine agency into

the background of their hermeneutical task while his own approach amounts to little more than the same relegation, albeit with more explicit and frequent discussion *about* the background. This seems to be the unavoidable conclusion, given the premise of divine agency to begin with: if divine agency in Scripture (both in its genesis and its reception by readers) is God's action, then the reader's relationship to divine agency must be passive. Divine agency, by definition, can only be appropriated into the hermeneutical process through faith—not in the colloquial sense of leaping into the dark, but in the theological sense of looking to God to meet a need. Arguing for the need of such a humble theological-hermeneutical method is Bowald's primary aim in *Rendering the Word*, and qualms about the particularities of his unique proposal notwithstanding, he succeeds in this endeavor.

Because of the shortcomings of Bowald's highly technical, idiosyncratic triangular typology, this work is not recommended to many readers. It is too problematic for the reader who is not already convinced of many of the points for which Bowald argues. It is, however, highly recommended (particularly its middle section) to readers curious about the unique contours of the TIS spokesmen that Bowald analyzes. Such a recommendation, however, comes with two caveats. First, *Rendering the Word* is not user friendly—it is highly technical and difficult to follow. Second, Bowald shines when he is describing the work of others, but dims when prescribing a way forward. In other words, to the inquiring reader: Bowald is a much better cartographer than he is a trailblazer.

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***Karl Barth: An Introductory Biography for Evangelicals.* By Mark Galli. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017. 176 pp. \$18.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8028-6939-5.**

Few theologians greet the academic world with a self-published commentary that is, upon first appearance, a dud. Fewer still go on to titanic levels of influence in their field. And yet, Karl Barth, despite the initial cold reactions to his *Romans* commentary, captured the hearts and



minds of countless twentieth-century Protestants by countering theological liberalism and constructing a unique theological paradigm that provided satisfactory answers in an age of upheaval. His shadow over the previous century is inescapable. But does he have anything to offer modern evangelicals, or is it time to step out of his shadow, to leave it behind as an artifact of a bygone era?

In *Karl Barth: An Introductory Biography for Evangelicals*, Mark Galli, Editor-in-Chief at *Christianity Today*, argues that Barth does indeed have much to offer contemporary evangelicals. In fact, Barth is *precisely* the voice that evangelicals need, not only because of his influence but also because of the particulars of his theological method and vision. Further, because of a resurgence in scholarly engagement with Barth, Galli believes that “Barth’s theology . . . will increasingly make its way into grassroots evangelicalism” (12). Therefore, pastors and scholars need a foundation to engage thoughtfully with Barth’s ideas. Galli offers his volume as an accessible synthesis of Barthian scholarship as well as an apologetic to recapture the usefulness and insight of the Swiss theologian.

Galli’s strategy of weaving Barth’s story with his key contributions gives the reader a compact yet thorough understanding of the man and his work. Galli does not intend his volume to be a detailed biography in the vein of Busch’s *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* nor an advanced treatment of his thought like McCormack’s *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*. Instead, Galli highlights the critical events in Barth’s life and the critical themes in two notable works: *Romans* and *Church Dogmatics*.

The scenes one expects in an introductory biography appear: Barth’s early pastorate, his growing objection to and eventual break from Protestant Liberalism, his disgust with the Nazi regime (and his courage in defying it through the Barmen Declaration), his professorial and writing career, and snippets from his family life. Galli tells Barth’s story in a crisp and compelling fashion—not surprising given Galli’s role at *Christianity Today*. Interspersed throughout the book are vignettes that make the titanic figure more human. This reviewer especially appreciated Galli’s brief reference to Barth’s simple, unrefined, yet beautiful prison sermons—worthwhile reading all too easily lost in the sea of his heady corpus (130-131).

As mentioned, while referencing numerous projects, Galli focuses on *Romans* and *Church Dogmatics* to elucidate Barth's theological themes. Galli uses *Romans* to outline Barth's dialectical theology (43). He uses *Church Dogmatics* to emphasize Barth's understanding of the Word of God and reconciliation, both of which have caused hesitation among evangelicals (108). Nonetheless, Galli draws upon these sources as the primary rationale for the argument that Barth is as relevant as ever. He stresses that these works articulate a faith not defined by internal feeling but by a sovereign God who imparts an alien righteousness. Because of the West's fascination with the individual, Galli believes Barth's theology provides a helpful corrective at this point.

The strengths of Galli's volume lie in his storytelling ability, his compelling argument that Barth is worth engaging today, and his honesty regarding Barth's shortcomings. In fourteen concise chapters, Galli moves between Barth's life, his writings, the philosophical and religious traditions he inherited and augmented, and the socio-political environment he inhabited. But despite the whirlwind that is Barth, Galli's prose remains tight and focused. He makes a credible case as to why Barth's theology is a potential solution to modern evangelicalism's "anthropocentric" tendency (145). Finally, Galli serves readers well by giving his own cautions regarding Karl Barth. He recognizes that Barth "taught some things that create more problems than they solve" (xvi). He does not avoid Barth's domestic failings. Despite an overwhelmingly positive tone, Galli in no way intends to fashion Barth into a "theological savior" (145). His goal is more modest: to show that "the theology Barth eventually found bankrupt, and so ardently battled, is a theology we understand and identify with at some level" (145). Galli is successful in demonstrating why Barth is worth engaging, while also refusing to endorse every jot and tittle from his pen.

The weakness with any introductory biography is its inherent inability to address everything. *Somebody* will find *something* left out. Galli's volume does not escape this dilemma, though his target audience likely will not be aggravated. This reviewer desired to see a greater treatment of Barth's relationship with American evangelicals (biting and dramatic at times). Specifically, as one more sympathetic to the Neo-Evangelicalism of Carl F. H. Henry than the Neo-Orthodoxy of Barth, this reviewer found Galli's representation of the Neo-Evangelicals to be a bit unfair. Henry and Billy Graham are both quoted in such a way as to color

them as immensely hostile to Barth. And while they were certainly *not* theological friends (one recalls the famed Henry-Barth press conference dialogue, full of tension and resulting in Henry's delivering of perhaps the best extra-biblical use of Hebrews 13:8), *neither* were they outright foes. As the founding editor of *Christianity Today*, Henry made the occasional positive reference to Barth's contributions. Further, in his *Confessions of a Theologian*, Henry remarks, "Whenever I conversed with Karl Barth I had the clear sense that, however flawed was Barth's dialectical theology, I was in the presence of a believer in the gospel" (243). Still, the reader leaves with the sense that Henry and the Neo-Evangelicals were a crusty cadre diametrically opposed to everything Barth. Yes, their disagreements were unquestionably deep (Henry devoted numerous articles to debunking various aspects of Barth's theology). However, they were also more complex than one may gather from Galli's understandably brief (given his goals) presentation.

Finally, the volume falls victim to a chronologically unavoidable weakness. Just before the book's publication, *Theology Today* published Christiane Tietz's article "Karl Barth and Charlotte von Kirschbaum," which contained shocking details of Barth's adultery with his assistant. While Galli references this aspect of Barth's life, these revelations require more than passing mention in future accounts. Thankfully, Galli has responded thoughtfully and thoroughly in his *Christianity Today* online article entitled "What to Make of Karl Barth's Steadfast Adultery" (published October 20, 2017).

Overall, *Karl Barth: An Introductory Biography for Evangelicals* is an enjoyable primer on the theological giant and offers convincing reasons as to why evangelicals will benefit from grappling with Barth's ideas today. Though scholars are not Galli's target audience, the book deserves a wide reading among pastors, students, and laypersons (and scholars may gain a tip or two on how to wed delightful prose with serious research). If readers heed Galli's cautions, they will see why he still believes in Barth. Ultimately, Galli commends Barth to evangelicals not because of his genius or insight, but because he relentlessly drives people back to their Bibles (xv)—a high compliment for a flawed and fallen man and a needed exhortation for today's flawed and fallen world.

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***All That is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism.* By James E. Dolezal. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017. 176 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1601785541.**

There is nothing more elemental to theology than the doctrine of God. This important book examines the doctrine of God and current controversy over how best to rightly understand and articulate that doctrine. James E. Dolezal is a professor of theology at Cairn University. This book is based on a series of lectures that Dolezal presented at a Reformed Baptist pastors' conference in southern California in 2015. It reflects a more popular version of the author's monograph *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Pickwick Publications, 2011), a revision of his doctoral dissertation at Westminster Theological Seminary.

In *All That is in God*, Dolezal defends what he describes as "classical theism" over against "theistic mutualism" or "theistic personalism." The problem, according to Dolezal, is not just that some liberal theologians have departed from classical understandings of the doctrine of God in modern movements like "open theism" and "process theology," but that a number of evangelical theologians and philosophers have also increasingly adopted and advocated a "softer" form of "theistic mutualism." According to Dolezal, the "significant doctrinal flashpoints" in this controversy are most notably related to the doctrines of "divine immutability, simplicity, eternity, and substantial unity" (7). His desire is to rehabilitate "the catholic orthodoxy of the older Reformed confessions and theologians" (8).

Dolezal gives attention, in turn, to each of the four "flashpoints" noted above. He begins with immutability by sketching the classical understanding of divine self-sufficiency or aseity. Since nothing in God is derived or caused to be, God is not subject to change. "Classical theists insist that God is being, not becoming" (15). If God is "pure being," then "it follows that He cannot undergo change" (17). Mutabilist language in Scripture is, therefore, to be taken figuratively. Modern theologians, however, have pushed back against the classical view in an attempt to soften its "perceived austerity" (22). This has been true even in Calvinistic circles. Dolezal suggests that scholars like Bruce A. Ware have endorsed "the idea of a God who is subject to alterations of being" (27).

He contends that “Ware’s theology proper” is “a form of modified theistic mutualism rather than of modified classical theism” (28). He notes similar difficulties in the theologizing of J. I. Packer and Rob Lister. Theistic mutualism, Dolezal concludes, is “like an acid that cannot but burn through a whole host of divine attributes” (35). It is not simply a “variation or refinement” of classical theism but “more like a demolition and wholesale replacement” (35).

Dolezal proceeds to examine the doctrine of divine simplicity, which he describes as “the indispensable centerpiece” of theology proper (38). God is without parts. One cannot distinguish between God’s essence and God’s attributes. As the title of this book reflects, “all that is in God is God” (41). Though Dolezal concedes that this doctrine is supported by “no single Biblical prooftext,” he contends that it is there “by way of good and necessary consequence” (44). He sees three biblical doctrines, in particular, as supporting divine simplicity: divine independence, infinity, and creation. Divine simplicity is also affirmed throughout church history, from the patristic to medieval to reformational to modern periods. Thus, it constitutes “a baseline, a controlling grammar for all our thoughts and beliefs about God” (58). This fundamental doctrine has of late, however, been ignored, denied, or distorted by theistic mutualists. Dolezal suggests that Bruce A. Ware and others ignore divine simplicity when they claim that God can acquire being that he does not possess in his essence. The likes of John Feinberg deny it by claiming that it has no biblical warrant. John Frame and others distort it by making use of univocal religious language that has constructed a “complex-essence” view of God, seeming to regard “God’s divinity as a sum of discrete properties” (74). God is not, however, a composite of his attributes. According to Dolezal, the undermining of the classical theistic view of simplicity risks subversion of God’s “ontological absoluteness” (78). Thus, he urges recovery of the old commitment to divine simplicity and forsaking “the misguided path of thinking that our thought or language adequately computes the mysterious manner of God’s existence” (78).

Dolezal turns next to the doctrine of divine eternity. Theistic mutualists have, he claims, tended to posit that if God is truly related to the world in some meaningful way, he must “experience the passage of time” (81). The classical view of God, however, holds that since God is perfect, “no new state of being can come upon him, and neither can any state of being slip away from Him” (82). Thus, God is eternal, and his

eternity is timeless. Dolezal acknowledges that the scriptural descriptions of God's eternity as timeless are not always as clear as one might hope, but this doctrine is supported by other classical doctrines affirmed by Scripture, like divine infinity, immutability, and simplicity. Theistic mutualists, however, have undertaken either to replace, modify, or augment the classical view. Dolezal cites Christian philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff as suggesting that we should speak of God as "everlasting," rather than eternal. Others, however, have simply modified the concept of divine eternity by holding that God was beyond time only until the creation. William Lane Craig is an advocate for this "timeless turned temporal" view. Finally, some suggest that God's timelessness must only be augmented by some degree of temporality. Dolezal cites here John Frame's view of "two modes of existence" in God. According to this view, "if God acts in time, then He really exists temporally" (93). Dolezal warns, however, that this third option requires the abandonment of divine simplicity. Eternalists maintain, contrary to the theistic mutualists, that even creation must be understood as "an eternal act of God that produces a temporal effect" (100). According to Dolezal, nothing less than "true religion is at stake," for to abandon divine eternity is to abandon the classical view of God altogether (104).

The final "flashpoint" is the substantial unity of God. Dolezal suggests that theistic mutualists face fundamental problems with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. Without divine simplicity, the three persons of the Godhead might be taken as three parts of God (modalism or Arianism) or as three discrete gods (tritheism). Dolezal notes that some evangelical theistic mutualists, including William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, have tended toward "compositional models" of the Trinity, like "social Trinitarianism." He also sees related problems in recent debates concerning the views of the eternal functional subordination of the Son, as advocated by Wayne Grudem and Bruce A. Ware. All in all, Dolezal suggests that the neglect of divine simplicity has created a "trinitarian dilemma" for some theistic mutualists (134).

Having surveyed these "flashpoints" Dolezal concludes that theistic mutualism "is not a promising way forward" (136). Classical theism "is not in need of a replacement model" (137). The old, confessional affirmations of divine immutability, simplicity, eternity, and substantial unity should be upheld.

*All That is in God* is tightly written and cogently argued. This is a didactic work, in that it positively and winsomely teaches the classical view of theology proper and gives special emphasis to the importance of divine simplicity as the fundamental “grammar” of theology. It is also a polemical work, in that Dolezal convincingly, clearly, and charitably challenges ways in which some evangelicals have departed from classical theism.

Pastors and teachers will profit from reading this work in at least two significant ways. First, it will challenge them to speak carefully and accurately about God in their preaching and teaching. Second, it will help them to be discerning in reading theological works that discuss the doctrine of God, including those that come from evangelical and Calvinistic authors.

This book also raises some interesting tangential points bearing on the relationship of the theology of confessional Protestantism and broader Christianity. If one holds to the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689), a daughter to the Westminster Confession of Faith, as does Dolezal, one affirms a confession that teaches that the triune God is “without body, parts, or passions” and that this God is “immutable” and “eternal” (2:1), as well as “all-sufficient” (2:2). Thus, if one faithfully subscribes to the confession, one necessarily affirms the classical theism or “catholic orthodoxy” of historic Christianity, which includes the doctrine of divine simplicity. The Protestant framers of the confessions were, on this point at least, in agreement with both Rome and Constantinople. Indeed, Dolezal can cite both the Roman Catholic philosopher Edward Feser and the Eastern Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart, as well as the Puritan John Owen, in support of his defense of divine simplicity. Dolezal suggests the Enlightenment as the most likely culprit in decoupling moderns from classical theism, betraying “how much mechanistic Enlightenment thinking has impacted Christian theology” (64). Broad evangelicals who were never tethered to any of the full-orbed Protestant confessions were clearly even more vulnerable to drifting. Dolezal and classical theists, however, will also need to be prepared to be challenged from evangelical brethren as to whether they have put more stock in Thomism than Biblicism. Overall, however, I believe that Dolezal’s points are very well taken.

This work is an important call for clarification and unity on this most fundamental of doctrines: God.

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***Deeper Magic: The Theology Behind the Writings of C. S. Lewis.* By Donald T. Williams. Baltimore, MD: Square Halo Books, 2016. 287 pp. \$16.99, Paperback. ISBN 13-978-1941106051.**

Donald T. Williams is an English professor at Toccoa Falls College, where he teaches a biennial senior seminar on C. S. Lewis. He has also lectured on and authored multiple books on Lewis and his greatest influences, namely, George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, and J. R. R. Tolkien. This depth of knowledge is evident in the familiar and clear manner that Williams expounds on Lewis' theology.

*Deeper Magic*, so named after the superior power of Aslan, seeks to critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of Lewis' unified theology from a "conservative Evangelical perspective," a task not undertaken before this work (13-14, 158). To achieve this goal, Williams systematically deconstructs and evaluates Lewis' beliefs in major theological categories, including chapters on Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and many others. Williams even includes a wonderful excursus on the soundness of Lewis' Trilemma, an apologetic supporting the divinity of Christ. This examination is surprisingly complex, given the fantastical nature of many of Lewis' works.

Lewis created fictional works because he believed that this medium enabled him to communicate Christian truths in a potent manner unattainable through traditional means (18). He possessed a "fertile imagination" and "sharp logical mind," which was enriched by J. R. R. Tolkien and George MacDonald, prominent fantasy novelists (13, 15). This led to the birth of some of his most prominent works: *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Space Trilogy*, and *The Screwtape Letters* (15). Williams mines these works, showing how Lewis tackled theological issues in them that most authors would be hesitant to address. In *The Silver Chair*, Lewis presents Anselm's classic ontological argument for God (77-79); in *The*



*Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the process of sanctification (188); and in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, penal substitutionary atonement (157-58). These passages provide an insightful look into Lewis' beliefs, but as fictional works, they do not have a direct correspondence with the real world.

Lewis refers to these works as 'supposals,' trying to imagine how God might interact in a land like Narnia, where animals speak and Jesus was incarnated as a lion (17-18). Despite the difficulty in distinguishing Lewis' beliefs from his artistic freedom, Williams does not shy away from the challenge, and his evaluation of the aforementioned passages (and others) is most informative. It yields insights into Lewis' theology that Lewis does not address elsewhere, in part because of his focus on mere Christianity.

In his books and public speeches, Lewis sought to convince people of the truthfulness of Christianity, but he offered little help in deciding between whether to be Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox. For this reason, Williams relies heavily on Lewis' letters, as Lewis "allowed himself in private correspondence to take positions he would not have taken publicly" (19). Enthusiasts of Lewis will find great pleasure in reading Williams' examination of these works, as they offer a novel look into Lewis' beliefs about sanctification, purgatory, and many other issues (197, 204).

Despite these gems, readers will at times feel disappointed with the scant material addressed, wanting a more detailed picture of Lewis' beliefs. This deficit is most apparent in the section on ecclesiology. While Williams provides a substantial analysis of Lewis' critique of Mariolatry, the section on the papacy is brief, and the chapter is silent on Lewis' views concerning baptism and the Lord's Supper (180-85). These holes are not a failure of Williams, however, but the result of Lewis' focus on mere Christianity (175-77). Lewis' works served as a testimony to the unbelieving community, rather than dogmatic treatises on divisive issues, fostering the "dog-fights between professing schools of 'Christian' thought," (Lewis, quoted on pg. 19). William's fault is much graver: marginalizing the theological errors of Lewis.

Williams provides a brilliant analysis of Lewis' works, comparing them to the classic evangelicalism, but upon identifying points of departure, he is too quick to excuse Lewis' faults. For example, upon establishing that Lewis was not an inerrantist, Williams attributes this

error to ignorance and “informational hastiness” (68-69). Williams makes similar claims concerning Lewis’ deficient theology on total depravity and soteriology (115, 165). In so doing, Williams asserts that Lewis would have rejected Anglicanism in favor of evangelicalism had he been better informed. This fails to acknowledge the depth of Lewis’ conviction and betrays a certain arrogance, holding that evangelical beliefs on divisive issues would be resolved by remedying a person’s ignorance. While this blunder is frustrating, it only slightly mars an otherwise commendable book.

*Deeper Magic* showcases Lewis’ wit while providing much-needed help in understanding Lewis’ fictional works as supposals. It has great depth, drawing upon the breadth of Lewis’ publications, broadcasts, and letters to present Lewis’ theological beliefs in every category about which he cared to write. Given the nature of the work, Williams presumes that his audience has a basic understanding of Lewis’ classic works (i.e., *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Space Trilogy*, *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*). While *Deeper Magic* is comprehensible without having read these works, certain passages will be difficult to understand, as quotations from these works are presented with minimal context. Were Lewis to review *Deeper Magic*, I expect that after making modest changes, he would give it an affirming nod, saying, “Yes, that is what I believe,” before adding a snarky quip to the effect of “though I pity the chap who went to such pains to create it.”

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***The Secret of Chabad: Inside the World’s Most Successful Jewish Movement.* By David Eliezrie. New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2015. 432 pp. \$29.95, Hardback. ISBN 978-1-59264-370-7.**

*The Secret of Chabad* seeks to present the reader with an unprecedented inside look at the beliefs, history, and remarkable expansion of Chabad, a subset of Orthodox Judaism perhaps best known for its outreach efforts toward the broader Jewish world, which contrasts sharply with the isolationism of other Chassidic groups. The author, Rabbi David

Eliezie, is certainly one of the most qualified scholars to write such a work, having been in Chabad for over five decades and having served in a number of significant roles in the organization—most significantly as a personally selected shliach (emissary sent to represent Chabad’s ideals and minister to the physical and spiritual needs of Jews within a particular region) of Chabad’s most treasured figure, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (affectionately referred to as “the Rebbe”).

Rabbi Eliezie begins with his own introduction to the Rebbe at the age of fourteen, recalling how he was amazed by the Rebbe’s compassion and kindness, which flowed from his vision to “redefine Judaism in the modern age as a balance of tradition and compassion, observance and responsibility” (ix). In Chapter 1, he tells the story of Gabi and Rivkie Holtzberg, the shluchim of Mumbai, India, murdered in 2008 by terrorists attacking numerous locations in the city, including the Chabad Center. The entire nation of Israel mourned the tragedy; a loss for Chabad is a loss for all Jewish people, religious or otherwise (22-25).

The second chapter presents a short biography of Chabad’s Sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, as he brought Chabad’s ideals from war-torn Europe and Russia to America. Chapter 3 covers the early life and inauguration of the Seventh Rebbe, as well as his tone-setting agenda: “The Rebbe called upon each person to recognize his responsibility to uncover the holiness latent within himself, to reveal the inherent holiness of the world and to take responsibility to similarly inspire others” (65). The Great Escape, a clandestine exodus of over 1,000 Chassidic Jews from Communist Russia, is the main subject of chapter 4. Chapter 5 recounts several stories of Chabad’s earliest outreach efforts in America, which led to the innovation known today as the Chabad House.

Chapter 6 covers the Rebbe’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, for which he asked his shluchim to open 71 new institutions—a goal met twice over in Israel alone (122-124). Eliezie then discusses Chabad’s conflicts with other forms of Judaism in chapter 7, focusing primarily on the Menorah Wars of the mid-1970s. Chapter 8 concerns Chabad’s financial side: their motivations for and methods of raising support in their local communities. Chapter 9 recounts Chabad’s extraordinary efforts to meet Soviet-era Russian Jewry’s physical and spiritual needs. Eliezie fast-forwards in chapter 10 to post-Soviet Russia and Chabad’s efforts to rebuild Jewish identity there. The eleventh chapter covers Chabad’s

apolitical work in Israel to bridge the gap between observant and secular Jews.

Chapter 12 emphasizes the role that the yeshiva (Jewish school for religious education) plays in Chabad's fortitude and mission. The thirteenth chapter addresses the difficulties that Chabad has experienced balancing traditional values with modern global engagement. Finally, in chapter 14, Rabbi Eliezie explores Chabad's massive success since the Rebbe's death in 1994, boldly predicting that the majority of the next generation's American Jews will be Orthodox or on the path toward fuller observance (335-337). His afterword recounts the day of the Rebbe's death and the shluchim's promise to continue his mission.

One particularly attractive element of Rabbi Eliezie's work is that his rhetorical methodology mirrors the Bible itself: rather than state their ideas as lists of categorical indicatives (e.g. "God is powerful," "Chabad is family"), they *illustrate* such principles primarily through the medium of storytelling. Rarely will one find the sentence "God is powerful" so plainly stated in the biblical text, but one will find the principle abundantly illustrated through such stories as the Exodus, wherein Yahweh demonstrates his authority and power by sending ten plagues upon the Egyptians, each of which challenges a specific Egyptian deity. Likewise, Eliezie rarely states that Chabad is family; he instead illustrates it through such stories as those of the Holtzbergs and the Rebbe's wife, Chaya Mushka.

In the former case, the shliach in Perth, Australia, Shalom White, heard about the Mumbai terrorist attack and made the thirty-hour plane trip to Tel Aviv to attend the Holtzberg funeral. Once there, he ran into an old friend from yeshiva and explained why he had come so far for someone he had never even met: "[H]e was a fellow shliach – I had to come. We were both shluchim, we were brothers" (23). This bond of selfless camaraderie so influenced Rabbi White's old friend, Rafi Goldmitz, that he left his teaching career to become a shliach in the Negev (24-25). In the latter case, when the Rebbetzin died, the Rebbe naturally wanted to spend his grieving period with his closest family. Who were these family members that he brought to his home after the interment? His shluchim, of whom he ordered that a multivolume photo album be published in the Rebbetzin's memory; those volumes remained his most treasured possessions until the day of his death (339-342). These stories illustrate that Chabad is no mere religious affiliation, but a

family bound together by values of Torah and a love for all Jewish people. All other chapters function similarly (chapter 6—Chabad is ambitious; chapter 9—Chabad is fearless; chapter 13—Chabad is innovative, etc.).

*The Secret of Chabad's* largest problem regards its accessibility. While Rabbi Eliezer often explains ideas and phenomena that are not common knowledge—e.g., Chabad yeshivot sometimes experience tension between the Roshei Yeshiva and Mashpi'im (teachers of Torah's revealed and mystical portions, respectively, 269-273)—more work could have been done to clarify esoteric topics for the uninitiated reader. For example, most can glean from pages 32-35 that what separated Chassidism (out of which Chabad eventually emerged) from other forms of Judaism during its formative years was an emphasis on "religion of the heart" in addition to the "religion of the mind" of their opponents, the Mitnagdim. One of the ways that this was accomplished was through dissemination of Kabbalah, which is an important concept, but is not defined much beyond "hidden Jewish mysticism." Moreover, the majority of people do not know what distinguishes Chabad from the broader category of Chassidism, which is itself distinguished from the broader category of Haredism, which is itself distinguished from the still broader category of Orthodoxy. It is thus easy to see why many readers can lose their way in this volume.

A potential counterargument is that the demographics of the intended audience are quite narrow, so it would be reasonable to assume that anyone interested enough to read the book would already possess a baseline of knowledge about modern Jewish faith and practice. Moreover, it might be argued that to provide a full-orbed explanation of all terms and factors relevant to the state of Chabad today would necessitate a far larger project. These are valid points, but the story of Chabad's qualitative and quantitative success in light of an otherwise secularizing global culture is nevertheless hindered from reaching and inspiring a far larger audience. This is a shame, because Chabad has much to teach anyone, religious or otherwise, concerning sacrifice, humility, and dedication to a goal higher than oneself.

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***God's Ambassadors: The Westminster Assembly and the Reformation of the English Pulpit, 1643-1653.* By Chad Van Dixhoorn. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017. 215 pp. \$40.00, Hardcover. ISBN 9781601785343.**

In *God's Ambassadors*, Chad Van Dixhoorn, professor of historical theology and church history at Reformed Theological Seminary, skillfully draws from the minutes and papers of the Westminster Assembly and other primary sources to tell the story of a forgotten, yet crucial aspect of their proceedings. The assembly is best known for the confession of faith and catechisms that they produced – documents still influential in circles touched by various strands of Reformed theology. However, those with only a cursory knowledge of church history and theology may be unaware of the assembly's ongoing concern and efforts regarding preaching in seventeenth-century England.

The book sets the Westminster Assembly in its historical context, that of an English church changed by the Protestant Reformation, but inseparable from the English crown. By 1643, the Bible had been legally available in common language translations for over a century. Yet John Calvin's vision for preaching, so formative among those who fled to Geneva during the Marian persecutions (1555-1558), had not fully taken hold in Elizabethan England. Calvin saw the preacher as an ambassador for God who simply delivered God's Word and, as a student who learned from the Master at the school of the Bible, was tasked with only passing on what he had been taught (19). Yet England suffered from pulpits where ministers read the homilies of others. Furthermore, some ministers obtained their appointments through corruption, some lived scandalously, and it was obvious that some either did not possess the gift of teaching or were not exercising and developing it.

The English church, wed to the state, suffered from Elizabeth I's low view of preaching, in which she was content with a handful of preachers who administered sacraments but failed to expound the Bible (23). Some sought to improve the state of preaching through opportunities for fellowship and training in the study and preparation of sermons from the Bible. The state church eventually quelled these meetings, known as "prophesyings." Edmund Grindal, archbishop from 1576-1583, found his duties curtailed after about a year of cooperating with those hungry for pulpit reform, when he refused to comply with the queen's directive to

stop the prophesyings (22-23). His successor, John Whitgift, followed the queen's desires. A more favorable environment for preaching arrived with the reign of King James, but Archbishop William Laud opposed it during the reign of Charles I (26-29). While the pulpit had no friend in the king or head cleric, it found one in the Puritan-influenced Long Parliament of 1640, which even called for the printing of sermons and convened the meeting of theologians and ministers in the Westminster Assembly to deal with matters of church governance (30, 36). From 1643, amid civil war, until 1653, at the beginning of the Protectorate government under Oliver Cromwell, the Westminster Assembly held its meetings.

These meetings included discussions of church governance and Christian doctrine, but their members also used them to address concerns about unqualified and untrained ministers. Their reforms included examining and removing some ministers from pulpits, coming to terms on qualifications for pastoral candidates, detailing the considerations of ordination, evaluating candidates, and providing documents to guide churches in what their public worship and the office of the minister, including his preaching, should entail.

Van Dixhoorn provides both historical and theological reflection, delving into the thought processes behind the assembly's views of preachers, preaching, biblical interpretation (focusing on Christ-centered exegesis), and the role of the Spirit in preaching. Three helpful appendices and a bibliography round out the book. "The Duties of a Minister," "The Directory for Ordination," and "The Subdirectory for Preaching" give the reader direct access to the assembly introduced by the author.

*God's Ambassadors* tells its story with concise and selective presentation of the assembly's history, deploying a liberal sprinkling of poignant quotations. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, "The clergymen that filled the pulpit could administer sacraments and read sermons, but as the godly were quick to point out, 'reading is not feeding'" (18). The 1641 House of Commons declared preaching as "the way to bring People into a state of Salvation" and the minister "as an ambassador, to publish and spread abroad the mind and message of God touching Man's duty, and salvation, and to instruct the Church of God" (30).

While the book is sympathetic toward the assembly and its concerns, the author provides helpful analysis and evaluation. For

example, he points out that the assembly apparently overlooked the strategy and goal of the previous prophesyings, which aimed at equipping and improving existing ministers. A similar approach could have eliminated the need for replacement of ministers who simply needed more training, of which they might have availed themselves (99-101).

As a specialized study, the book assumes some general knowledge of the history of England and the church, especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as the ability to read the older English archaisms of its primary source quotations. Without such knowledge, the book may prove difficult to grasp – a consideration that should not repel readers, but cause them to improve their minds to acquire the treasures of this study. Though academic, the book is immensely practical, addressing matters of ongoing concern to the contemporary church, such as the moral and educational qualifications for ministry, the proper subjects of ordination, and whether biblical warrant exists for lay preaching. The primary sources exude pastoral concern and practical instruction for ministers and churches. For example, the Subdirectory for Preaching includes such gems as the following:

In Raysing doctrines from the text, his care ought to be That the matter be the truth of God, & what he speaketh he speaketh as the Oracles of God. 2ly, That it be a truth contained in or grounded on that text, that the hearers may discern how God teacheth it from thence. 3dly, That he cheefly insist upon those doctrines which are principally intended, & make most for the edification of the hearers (194).

Van Dixhoorn's treatment of the assembly's pulpit reform efforts deserves attention in the fields of church history, historical theology, biblical hermeneutics, and homiletics, especially in seminaries and graduate schools, but is also useful beyond academia. Educated church members and leaders, regardless of their church tradition, would also benefit from engaging with the issues raised by the book. Those who aspire to the pulpit, those who examine and ordain, those who call, and those with the opportunity and appointment to preach should wrestle with the same concerns that burdened the Westminster Assembly:



to see a God-approved, Christ-exalting, Spirit-empowered, Bible-preaching ministry marked by moral integrity and faithful teaching.

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***The Essentials of Christian Thought: Seeing Reality through the Biblical Story.* By Roger E. Olson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 234 pp. \$18.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-310-52155-6.**

Roger E. Olson is professor of theology at George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University. In this book, he challenges every major Christian metaphysical perspective on “the ultimate reality” to examine whether its tenets have origin directly in the Bible as divinely revealed or in reason-based secular philosophies that have mixed with biblical revelation. Following the key principle that the ultimate reality, God Himself, is supernatural and personal but not human, the author walks through the falsehood of competing doctrines such as Manicheism, pantheism, and naturalism before arriving on a philosophical view justified within Scripture. From this guided view of God, Olson derives a view of the world as “God’s good but dependent, contingent, creation, and also God’s freely chosen counterpart and yet broken and corrupted” (186). His biblical anthropology presupposes the truth of Psalms 8 and 14 in observing both mankind’s special exalted place in creation and responsibility for the present state of human brokenness. As an aid for the reader in grasping a Christian metaphysic within his own terms, the author inserts seven “interludes” to minimize misunderstanding of explained concepts and to connect the concepts to each other; these also conveniently serve to portion out the text for reading in short, digestible segments and to clarify Olson’s mission to reopen dialogue in areas of philosophy that have become more distant from each other in the last three centuries.

This book excels in defending the idea that the Bible presupposes one ultimate reality—the Lord God Almighty, with certain attributes revealed in Scripture— and in challenging the source in secular philosophy from which other presuppositions would come. Olson is a

strong, keen, and consistent manager of thorny questions involving theodicy, original sin, and morality. He deals well with the idea that God is a personal being and not being itself, thereby allowing the Christian no philosophical ground for panentheism, either intentional or accidental (146-147). With similar reasoning, he addresses numerous subtle ambiguities in doctrine, each time resolving that Scripture is not ambiguous.

The author's laudable commitment within this text to biblical authority augments a healthy self-awareness and humility when establishing the veracity of the sources from which he and his contemporaries have derived their worldviews. Furthermore, the author accounts for bias by not "protecting" any metaphysical construct, including his own, from sharp warnings about realities and teachings that stem more from Greek, Eastern, or even Zoroastrian sources than from the word of God. If any belief system or practice here addressed is inconsistent with Scripture, regardless of the source of the inconsistency, the system's shortcomings and "other sources" lie exposed under Olson's metaphysical searchlight. This can help the reader to be more careful and mature in recognizing and stating his actual beliefs according to the Word of God. In short, Olson is right to challenge the believer's thought process from Scripture, and no believer's thought process is left unchallenged.

As captivating and careful as the volume is when speaking on general principles, at least four hazards complicate a Christian's attempt to benefit from the text: poor semantics, unexplained minutiae, unsubstantiated claims, and unapplied concepts. Semantically, the author highlights many words and phrases which have taken on a meaning inconsistent with the original meaning and applies deeply specific "original" meanings to the words used. Examples include Olson's use of "humanism," "supernatural," "eternal," and "science" within the text. While he clearly explains his application of the words as being an "original usage" without many contemporary connotations, the practice of linguistic prescriptivism here becomes a small stumbling block in the text's dialogue with recent literature that presumes contemporary connotations. Once grasped, though, the language of the book is consistent and uniform in its application.

When Olson enters the concept of God's eternality on pages 156-160, the large concepts are presented without room for specific

explanations. This example is the most prominent of a few key places in the text where insufficient detail is given to form a clear grasp of a concept, much less achieve the book's aim in using the Bible to source and verify a presupposition. The text lacks the necessary detail that a Christian would want for evaluation of Olson's claims against Scripture; thus, some of these claims are written to seem counterintuitive (perhaps aiming for shock value with the reader), but are, for the reader's ability to verify, neither biblical nor un-biblical. Here also is the hazard of unsubstantiated claims—the author argues and justifies many of his points from philosophers who uphold the Bible rather than from the Bible itself. Dependence on even well-grounded, biblical philosophers (while their input is invaluable and their instruction important) is no substitute for adhesion to the Word of God as given, meaning that the author's biased view is poorly managed in this aspect.

The only remaining hazard, unapplied concepts, is a perfectly understandable one given the extent of material this project aims to address and the project's length. The book simply lacks the needed length to move from the theoretical reality of the biblical metaphysic into the practical aspect when applied to an individual Christian's experience of God's Word and the world around him. The lay Christian, a substantial subset of the author's stated intended audience, receives little practical instruction for resolving his now-challenged presuppositions nor for understanding the bearing of the instructed presuppositions of God and the Bible upon his daily life. In this aspect, the text is more relatable by far to the career theologian or philosopher than to the church member in the back pew.

With the understanding that Olson's aim is to challenge the source of a metaphysical construct, a view of "ultimate reality," in piecemeal fashion, the book is a worthy reminder of how bias can impact any Christian's view of God and His relationship with mankind. Olson rightly recognizes and warns the contemporary philosopher, in means that communicate clearly to postfoundational, postmodern, and postliberal understandings, that to presume upon the Bible and some philosophy that "explains it" is to fail to presume the truth of the Bible at all. Although other resources are more accurate and thorough in demonstrating what the truth of the Bible is, especially on individual doctrines and hermeneutics, Olson uses a combination of antiquity and modernity to stand in an ancillary void alongside other works in

metaphysics to show that the Bible is sufficient and authoritative for forming the Christian understanding of God's ultimate truth as supernatural and personal.

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