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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Fall 2019 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 generous assistance, and also to Mrs. Kaylee Freeman, for all her work as Journal secretary. I would also like to thank Mr. Pat Hudson, who as Institutional Editor at Midwestern, provided invaluable help in preparing this issue for publication.

We are honored to begin this issue, by publishing a symposium on Fred Sanders' volume, *The Triune God*. This scholarly collaboration features responses from Wesley Hill of Trinity School for Ministry, Stephen R. Holmes of St. Andrews University, and Paul T. Nimmo of Aberdeen University, together with an introduction and assessment of each respondent by Fred Sanders. Next comes Midwestern's 2019 Faculty Address, which was presented by Michael D. McMullen, in which he shared aspects of his research into the impact and unpublished writings of William Wilberforce.

Our final three articles begin with Ryan Rippee's helpful contribution to studies on Spurgeon, with an analysis of the work of the Father in the thought and writing of the great preacher. Our penultimate piece, by Jason Kees, is a careful study of how the inauguration of the Last Days is presented in the first chapter of Mark's Gospel. Our final contribution, from J. Tristan Hurley, is a thought-provoking article examining how God may be using visions and dreams today, especially in missionary situations.

We again close this issue of the MJT with a number of relevant and thought-provoking book reviews, helpfully secured and edited by Dr. Blake Hearson.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

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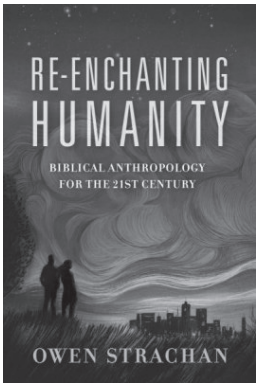

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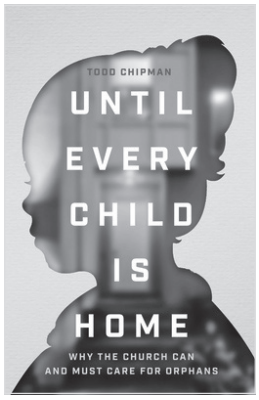

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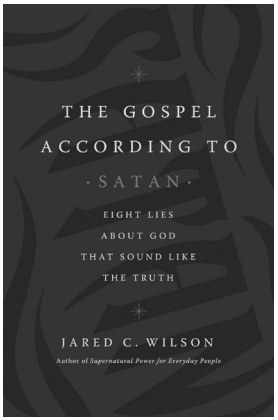

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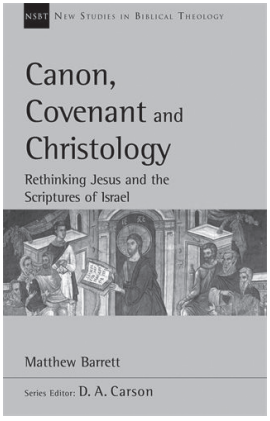

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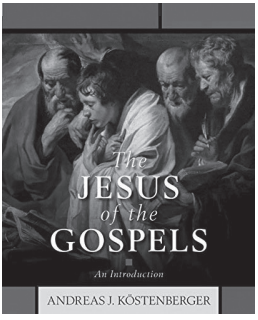

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for the Church
MIDWESTERN
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Book Symposium on *The Triune God*

FRED SANDERS
Professor,
Associate Director, Torrey Honors Institute
Biola University

Introduction by Fred Sanders

This suite of responses to Fred Sanders' book *The Triune God* (Zondervan, 2016) were originally read in a symposium at the 2016 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. It was the Reformed Theology Group that drew these theologians together to reflect on the book. Mark Bowald did most of the organizational work to make it happen; Tom McCall also gave a response and participated in the discussion.

Beyond What is Written?
Reading the Bible with Fred Sanders' *The Triune God*

WESLEY HILL
Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies,
Trinity School for the Ministry

Introduction

It is a pleasure to respond to Fred Sanders' beautifully written and powerful new book on the Trinity. It is a comprehensive and compelling treatment of the doctrine, as exegetical as it is tradition-conscious, as judicious as it is generous, and it will be read with profit by scholars and students alike.

My own expertise lies in the area of biblical exegesis, so I will attempt a response from that angle. Happily, Sanders' book is filled both with trinitarian exegesis and also rich second-order reflection on what trinitarian exegesis is and what it is for. So the book itself is one that invites this kind of response.

In particular, I want to query Sanders' book, and, I hope, advance its basic thrust, in two areas. In the first place, I want to probe more deeply the relationship between, on the one hand, what Sanders calls "grammatical-historical exegesis" and, on the other, dogmatic or systematic theology. More specifically, I want to suggest that Sanders' account of this relationship is salutary as far as it goes but also that it might go a bit further and unpack trinitarian doctrine as the divine ontology that Scripture's affirmations and narratives require.

Second, I want to reflect with gratitude on Sanders' recognition that modern grammatical-historical ways of reading Scripture might offer new roads by which to arrive at the old destination of trinitarian doctrine. This is a conclusion to which my own study has already led me, and I want to deepen Sanders' suggestive observations in this area.

On the Nature of Dogmatic Theology

In multiple chapters (and especially chapter 6) of his book, Sanders reflects at length on the place of biblical exegesis in trinitarian theology, arguing that the Trinity is indeed a biblical doctrine, even if the vocabulary and conceptual apparatus of developed fourth-century conciliar definitions (and their subsequent commentary) is absent from the Old and New Testaments.

In the course of developing his account, Sanders makes several claims. The first is a kind of pre-exegetical or meta-theological recognition that Scripture is the divinely authorized verbal interpretation of the events of the trinitarian missions—the Father sends the Son and Spirit in history—and, as such, is not so much the origin of trinitarian theology as it is its authoritative vehicle: Scripture is the self-attestation of the God who is revealed as triune. Scripture has its being "in" the Trinity, and not vice versa. In this sense, the quest to "find" the doctrine of the Trinity "in" the Bible is the effort to find out in what way the extra-Scriptural God exists, has acted, and will go on acting for the church and in the world. This is more than a clever Barthian flourish: it is meant to properly locate the doctrine of revelation and Scripture in relation to their Lord, the triune God himself.[1]

[1] Here fruitful comparison might be made with John Webster's many essays which argue for a "dogmatic location of the canon" vis-à-vis the doctrine of God.

But from there, second, Sanders begins to flesh out what he means when he says that the specific articulation of trinitarian theology is not to be found *in* the Bible per se. What Sanders argues is that there is indeed a fairly trivial sense in which trinitarian doctrine is not "in" the Bible: there is no one proof-text that sounds like the so-called Cappadocian settlement. But there is a much more significant sense in which trinitarian doctrine is indeed a straightforwardly exegetical derivation or even description: if the ending of Matthew's Gospel insists that the baptism of Christian converts be in the singular name of three characters, Father, Son, and Spirit, then to comment that this ending evinces a *threeness*—or *Trinitas* in Latin—which includes a certain *oneness* as well is simply to "say what [Matthew] said." Trinitarian doctrine aims to articulate an identical theological judgment as the biblical text does.[2]

But, second, Sanders presses on from there to make a bolder claim not only that there is a certain three-in-oneness at work in various biblical passages but also that there are (to quote Cornelius Plantinga) "highly developed patterns of reflection" on this three-in-oneness. We have triadic formulae such as Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:13. But we also have texts like John 5:26, in which Jesus the Son's relationship to the God whom he calls Father is one in which he shares the Father's own "life in himself" (which is to be distinguished from the borrowed life of redeemed creatures) *and* one in which that shared life is *granted to him by the Father*. In this way, Scripture furnishes what Sanders, along with others, calls the "raw data" of trinitarianism *as well as* a kind of layered reflection on how that raw data is assimilated into both narrative and, for lack of a better term, ontological or metaphysical affirmations.

The third claim Sanders makes—and the one I wish to linger on for a moment—is one he states in a variety of ways. He suggests that trinitarian theology is a kind of "re-speaking" of Scripture, albeit in a different idiom. It is an organized, systematic, historically and culturally conditioned way of attempting to re-articulate, in a given time and place, what has already been said in the Bible. Theology, he writes in one place, "is a matter of listening actively to scripture and saying back what we

[2] Here I allude to an essay to which Sanders references multiple times, David S. Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," *Pro Ecclesia* 3/2 (1994): 152-64.

understand by what we are hearing." Careful to maintain that such re-sayings must be, in large measure, continuous with Scripture's own verbiage, Sanders appears to envision dogmatic theology not as a simple repetition of Scripture nor as an improvement upon Scripture's own messier way of putting things but rather as a kind of second-order re-proclamation, in a slightly changed language, of the Bible's own proclamation.

And it is here that I wonder whether enough has been said, or whether what has been said has been said precisely enough. Is it that a claim like "The Son is God from God, begotten by the Father from all eternity" is best understood as a re-statement in a different conceptual idiom of a judgment Scripture has already made? Or might a more nuanced understanding be needed?

In a recent essay, my fellow panelist Stephen Holmes has made the suggestion that "theology is more than collating the Biblical passages; it is, in the classical tradition, mostly the task of trying to imagine what must be the case for everything in the Bible to be true."[3] Or, more fully:

> [T]he work that we would now name 'systematic' in the fourth century was not an attempt to construct a logical edifice out of the texts of Scripture, so much as an attempt to imagine what must be true for every text of Scripture to be taken as true in plain sense. Systematic theology, that is, is not a task of building on top of Scripture—building a system up taking the various biblical claims as axiomatic—so much as a task of building beneath Scripture—constructing an underlying set of conceptions and distinctions that allows the whole ofScripture to be taken seriously without resort to hermeneutical gymnastics.[4]

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[3] This sentence is actually taken from a blog post that appears to have served as a precursor to the essay in question: Steve Holmes, "The place of theology in exegesis: reflections inspired by Kevin DeYoung," *Shored Fragments*. <https://shoredfragments.wordpress.com/2012/03/06/the-place-of-theology-in-exegesis-reflections-inspired-by-kevin-deyoung/>. (Accessed 12 November 2016.)

[4] Stephen R. Holmes, "Scripture in Liturgy and Theology," in Angus Paddison (ed.), *Theologians on Scripture* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2016), 105-18, at 117.

On this account, one might understand the claim "The Son is God from God, begotten by the Father from all eternity" not so much as a worked-out implication or edifice built on Scripture's foundation or a restatement of a biblical truth. One might rather understand it as the attempt to spell out the theological substructure embedded and submerged within the Bible that allows a biblical author such as Paul to ascribe the reverential substitute for the divine Name *kyrios* to Jesus Christ, thus implying Jesus' deity and equality with the God of Israel, and another biblical author such as the author of the Fourth Gospel to describe the Son has having been granted life in himself by the Father, thus implying an eternal relationship of reception from the Father. The dogmatic statement of trinitarian theology—"The Son, who is God, is begotten…"—is the result of the effort to plumb the depths of all of Scripture's combined affirmations, so as to allow the biblical chorus to swell to its full height without being muted in any way. Sanders sees trinitarian doctrine as a faithful outworking or re-preaching of biblical truth—and on this I think, insofar as I understand him, that I agree. But might it be better to see trinitarian doctrine more specifically as a kind of teasing out of the ontology which is *there* in the Bible but never preached in the Bible *as such*? If so, then trinitarian doctrine is indeed biblical but less in the way that, say, "a theology of contemporary American cultural engagement" might be a faithful application of biblical truth and more in the way "a theology of salvation" might be an articulation of the underlying and veiled theological mechanics that permit the biblical writers to preach what they preached.

Having read Sanders' book, I am convinced he would largely, if not entirely, agree with this analysis. But when he makes statements such as, "Trinitarian theology is a complex discourse based on an insight into the overall meaning of scripture," I would want to insist that such statements are best understood as shorthand not for the claim that Scripture's various propositions can be assembled into a trinitarian theology but rather for the claim that Scripture's various affirmations (and acclamations and narratives and…) are displayed as interlocking and non-competitive when trinitarian conceptualities and categories are elucidated. And I hope that we might see more exploration of this distinction in any follow-up work that Sanders may attempt on the heels of this book. Put another way, when Sanders says that his book is largely an effort to "give dogmatic guidelines for trinitarian exegesis," implying

that trinitarian dogma functions as a sort of grammar that helps our biblically faithful theological speech come to articulation, I hope that he may also pursue the matter from the other direction, answering with more nuance the question of how the Bible's faithful speech is more fully understandable as faithful when we trace out the grammar to which its speech conforms.

On the Achievements of "Modern" Exegesis

One of the most stimulating portions of the book for me as a New Testament specialist was Sanders' discussion of how "creative new ways of demonstrating the doctrine of the Trinity are emerging" even as grammatical-historical exegesis has called into question some older proofs (such as the so-called Christophanies of the Old Testament). At one level, this might suggest a blind commitment to traditional doctrine for its own sake, if we now are casting about for new exegetical rationales for maintaining it. But it need not do so. Rather, Sanders suggests, this newer trinitarian exegesis is equally readable as our "cultivat[ion], in a way appropriate for our own time, the interpretive practice which produced [the early church's holistic interpretation of scripture]."

Several comments may be made about this claim. In the first place, Sanders is simply right that much of the so-called newer "trinitarian" exegesis is rather different from its patristic wellspring. It may be worth taking a moment to sketch, in a way that Sanders does not in his book, the shape and content of some of this exegesis.

Richard Bauckham's important 1998 Didsbury Lectures, published as *God Crucified*, are a case in point. With great theological subtlety, Bauckham argues that Paul envisioned what he describes as the "inclusion" of Jesus in the "unique identity" of Israel's God. For Bauckham, "identity" is a term related to, or indeed constituted by, narrative. "Identity" is "who someone is." Hence, "[r]eference to God's identity," writes Bauckham, "is by analogy with human personal identity, understood not as a mere ontological subject without characteristics, but as including both character and personal story (the latter entailing relationships)."[5] The identity of the God of Israel is, we might say, the

[5] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel:* God Crucified *and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 6 n. 5.

story of God's mighty acts in Israel's history and the narrative of God's relationship in covenant with Israel.

"The value of the concept of divine identity appears partly," for Bauckham, "if we contrast it with a concept of divine essence or nature."[6] Whereas the former is concerned with the "name" and the "act[ing], speak[ing], [and] relat[ing]" that God does, the latter is a static category, answering the "what" rather than the "who" question.[7] The payoff of this narrative approach, according to Bauckham, lies in the way it can explain, for instance, Paul's exalted view of Jesus and also the absence of any categories of "substance" or "ontology" in Paul's letters. For Bauckham's Paul, Jesus is involved in the creation of the world as the pre-existent Son (1 Corinthians 8:6) and in the consummation of all things insofar as he reigns over all things at God's behest (Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28), and *just so* is he identified with the God of Israel. But he is not thereby a sharer in the divine "essence," that category not being a Jewish, first-century one.[8]

By contrast, Bauckham's reading of the Patristic era is one which the fundamentally Jewish/Hebraic categories of both Paul and his Old Testament background are increasingly forgotten or marginalized as the church fathers shift "to categories focused on divine being or nature—what God is."[9] Bauckham grants that the *homoousion* made its initial appearance in a narrative-creedal context (insofar as the Nicene and Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creeds pick God out by way of the narrative of the history of Jesus), but he is less sure that the Hellenistic categories

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[6] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 7.

[7] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 6, 7.

[8] One can chart a connection between Bauckham's exegetically-based arguments and the larger theological project of thinkers such as, e.g., Robert Jenson who speak of "the old dissonance between the metaphysical principles of the Greeks and the storytelling of the gospel" (*Systematic Theology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], 1:112).

[9] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, p. 58. Bauckham thus subscribes to a version of what Paul Gavrilyuk has called "the theory of theology's fall into Hellenistic philosophy" (*The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought*, Oxford Early Christian Studies [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 5, 176).

the Fathers employed were able to articulate "the revelation of the divine identity in the human life of Jesus and his cross."[10] As he puts it, the

> categories of divine nature and the Platonic definition of divine nature which the Fathers took for granted proved serious impediments to anything more than a formal inclusion of human humiliation, suffering and death in the identity of God. That God was crucified is indeed a patristic formulation, but its implications for the doctrine of God the Fathers largely resisted.[11]

Here, then, is an example of a kind of contemporary "trinitarianism" whose exegesis is relentlessly theological and uses much of the language of the tradition in articulating its conclusions but whose arguments and explicitly and firmly set over against patristic trinitarian exegesis, with the latter's interest in what Scripture implies about the divine nature.

This is a significant development in the history of Christian trinitarian reflection, and I wonder whether Sanders is overly optimistic about its continuity with its antecedents. Just as many contemporary systematic treatments of trinitarian theology note the radical gulf separating more "social," "personalistic" trinitarianisms and more traditional, so-called "essential" ones (one thinks here, for instance, of Catherine Mowry LaCugna's criticism of Aquinas or of Colin Gunton's criticisms of Augustine), so also many contemporary exegetical arguments for trinitarianism scarcely resemble older exegeses to the point that one begins to reach for strong language to describe the chasm that separates them.[12] Is there a more than linguistic connection between the trinitarian exegesis of John 1 that, say, Augustine performs, in which the singular divine essence is eternally communicated by the Father to the Son and the more contemporary trinitarian exegesis of Philippians 2 by, say, Michael Gorman in which Paul is said to be "reconstructing the

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[10] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 58.

[11] Ibid.

[12] One might compare Bauckham's more recent admission that he finds the twentieth century's social doctrines of the Trinity more fruitful for Johannine (and, one gathers, wider biblical) interpretation than he does the mainstream of the so-called "Western theological tradition": Richard Bauckham, "Divine and Human Community," in *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 21-41, at 36-39.

meaning of God's essential attributes and thus the meaning of divinity itself"?[13] I want to say that there is, but I am also aware of the difficulty of giving a straightforwardly affirmative answer.

The second observation I want to make about Sanders' reading of contemporary trinitarian biblical exegesis is that he accepts the need, in principle, for a *renewal* of trinitarian exegesis and not simply a *repristination* of past examples of it. Regardless of whether contemporary exegetical performances like those of Richard Bauckham or Michael Gorman above represent the best way forward, Sanders does admit that "[c]ertain techniques of [pre-modern or pre-critical trinitarian] interpretation are so temporally bound and culturally located as to be unavailable to modern academics," and, at the same time, that "the tools, techniques, and standards of modern biblical studies are warranted and legitimate [and thus] the way forward must be to use them better, more fully, and more strategically."

As a practitioner of modern critical reading methods, I think I am largely in agreement with Sanders on this score. In company with other contemporary exegetes, such as Walter Moberly, I would wish to maintain that

> Christians should seek to relearn, downwind of modernity (and so not unlearning its lessons), older (biblical, patristic, medieval) conceptions which construe the nature of God and the world in ways many today find difficult to conceive (so deeply embedded are the seventeenth-century mental habits) but which must (for the sake of Christian truth) be freshly articulated and re-appropriated in our postmodern context.[14]

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[13] Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 25, 27, 28: "Christ's divinity, and thus divinity itself, is being narratively defined as kenotic and cruciform in character.... Paul is doing in Philippians 2 something very similar to what he does in 1 Corinthians 1: reconstructing the meaning of God's essential attributes and thus the meaning of divinity itself. Like the wisdom of God and the power of God, so also the very form of God is displayed for Paul on the cross by the one who was and is equal to God.... God, we must now say, is essentially kenotic, and indeed essentially cruciform."

[14] R. W. L. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 36.

And yet I confess that I have not yet worked out to my satisfaction exactly how to hold this appreciation for grammatical-historical reading together with an ongoing affirmation of the authority and importance of figural (and indeed allegorical and "radical") readings of Scripture, not least those modeled within Scripture itself(!), for a renewed contemporary trinitarianism. Does grammatical-historical exegesis need to serve as a kind of bedrock starting point for and tethering check on more figural approaches, in a way akin to how the literal sense grounded other senses in the medieval *Quadriga*? Or does grammatical-historical exegesis need to occupy some kind of subordinate role in the exegetical scheme?[15] In short, are newer ways of reading the Bible normative now, and, if so, why? To make the question concrete, if the church fathers could find the Trinity in the first-person plural pronouns of Genesis 1, for example, while most biblical scholars today would view such a move as a violation of that text's original grammatical-historical sense, does the biblical scholarship of today then trump the fathers? Or to take another example, should contemporary trinitarianism, while acknowledging the lack of authorial-intentional grounding for such a reading, view the fourth figure in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's furnace as a pre-incarnate Second Person of the Trinity?[16] And if so, what does that imply about the normativity, or lack thereof, of the grammatical-historical approach? As an exegete myself, I would benefit from reading and engaging with Sanders' further reflections in this area.

Finally, I may simply note that I am also beginning to wonder how *great* a gulf separates (at least some) pre-critical exegetical arguments for

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[15] Someone like Dale Martin would simply deny modern historical criticism, and its determination to locate one meaning of the text in accord with the human author's intention, a place as the final arbiter of Scripture's interpretation: "As one method for reading Scripture among others, [historical criticism] is not only appropriate but often quite valuable. What I am arguing is that any insistence that historical criticism is *necessary* or provides the *ruling and controlling* meaning of the text offends the theological notion of the communion of saints and is therefore not theologically defensible" (*Sex and the Single Savior* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006) 10. Cf. Stephen E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 36.

[16] As artfully attempted in Richard B. Hays, "Who is the God That Will Deliver You?" in Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (eds.), *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 306-10.

trinitarianism and (at least some) modern, critical exegetical arguments for trinitarianism. Not all of the patristic and other pre-modern arguments were figural or allegorical, and many of them sound not too dissimilar from some of the newer exegesis. Consider, for instance, this passage—chosen from among a number of other possible authors—from Martin Luther's 1535 *Lectures on Galatians*, in which Luther is commenting on Paul's opening salutation in Galatians 1:3, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ":

> The true deity of Christ is proved by this conclusion: Paul attributes to Him the ability to grant the very same things that the Father does—grace, peace of conscience, the forgiveness of sins, life, and victory over sin, death, the devil, and hell. This would be illegitimate, in fact, sacrilegious, if Christ were not true God. For no one grants peace unless he himself has it in his hands. But since Christ grants it, He must have it in His hands.[17]

Luther's exegetical point is that the powers and activities ascribed to Jesus in this passage are divine prerogatives. His claim seems to be that the functions attributed to Jesus here are ones that are reserved in the Old Testament for the God of Israel. Having made this observation, Luther concludes not so much with a diachronic reflection on how the early Christians came to "include" Jesus within their understanding of Jewish monotheism (that being, of course, the route of contemporary scholars like Bauckham). But he does reflect on what this means about the ontology of the man Jesus: he must be more than a man, indeed he must be "true God," if Paul's attributions are not to amount to blasphemy.[18]

This strategy is not new; the Cappadocians and other fathers had already made use of such arguments from Christ and the Spirit's actions in the economy to what faith must say about their ontological status. But nor is the strategy passé now, and that is my point here: the way Luther goes about making his point about the equality between Father and Son is one that reappears in similar, if not identical, guise in much of the so-called "early high Christology" research carried out in the New Testament

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[17] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535, Chapters 1-4*, LW 26 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 31.

[18] Compare on this C. Kavin Rowe, "Romans 10:13: What is the Name of the Lord?" *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 22/2 (2000): 135-73, at 171-3.

guild of today. What this might suggest, in turn, is that there is room to explore the possibility of our own "exegetical amnesia"[19]—the way we have arrived, via Bauckham and Gorman and C. Kavin Rowe and Matthew Bates and others, at a view of the Bible as trinitarian, only to realize that our forebears got there first, after taking a very similar route to the one we ourselves took. My hope is that we might see more from Sanders on this theme in the future: more discussion of how the exegetical dimensions of traditional trinitarian theology open up into (or, occasionally, fail to open up into) the current efforts at a renewal of trinitarian exegesis.

It is, of course, all to the great credit of Sanders' book that it raises these intriguing and endlessly fascinating questions. One finishes this book not only with gratitude but with expectation and a renewed determination for theological exploration as well.

Defining "Doctrine" and Seeking a Third Way: Reflections on Fred Sanders' *The Triune God*

STEPHEN R. HOLMES
Principal of St. Mary's College,
University of St. Andrews

Introduction

There is much to like in Fred Sanders' new book, and much to admire. His primary orientation of doctrine to praise is not just right, but a welcome departure from contemporary scholarly norms; his insistence on the primacy of Scripture, and the proper modesty of systematic theology as seeking only to witness to Scripture, is something we should not just applaud but echo—and indeed heed. He understands Trinitarian doctrine, and its history, and deploys deep learning with effortless charm and great generosity to all those he interacts with. He leads us down by-

[19] I borrow this highly suggestive term and concept from Dale C. Allison, "Secularizing Jesus," in *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and its Interpreters* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 1-26, at 9.

ways of the Christian tradition that are always fascinating and instructive—and that only add to the increasing list of books I must find time to read. Most of all, his concern that the foundational doctrine of the Trinity should be shown to have secure Biblical moorings, the concern that drives the text, is one that we could wish many more recent writers on the doctrine had shared. Had our Trinitarian revival been more solidly grounded in Scripture, and less desperate to defend the doctrine on grounds of utility, we might have done better.

It is, that is to say, an excellent book and a welcome addition to the—admittedly crowded—shelves of Trinitarian theology. It deserves to stand out from that crowd, to be widely read and widely discussed. All that said, I am slightly uncomfortable with the central premise, and I think that reflecting on that disagreement might help elucidate—not so much the doctrine of the Trinity, where I believe Sanders and I stand shoulder to shoulder, but the right way to relate systematic theology to Scripture. To put the point in a sentence, Sanders seems to want to say that only deductive argument from Scripture may give us useful theology; I see in the doctrine of the Trinity the classic case where inductive argument was vital. That rather obscure methodological difference has significant implications.

Defining Doctrine

My argument begins with a fairly thick definition of what we mean when we say, 'the doctrine of the Trinity'. Let me start in hearty agreement with some points Sanders makes in criticizing what he calls 'piecemeal proofs' of the doctrine. He offers us Warfield or A.H. Strong reducing the doctrine of the Trinity to a series of terse propositions, each of which is then proved exegetically. Sanders is characteristically charitable towards his examples, noting weaknesses in their piecemeal constructions, but refusing to ascribe that to any intentional failing. These examples do, however, invite us to reflect on what we mean when we say 'the doctrine of the Trinity'.

Sanders offers us Strong as summarizing the doctrine in six heads (173-4), viz:

> 1. In Scripture there are three who are recognized as God.
> 2. These three are so described in Scripture that we are compelled to conceive of them as distinct persons.

> 3. This tripersonality of the divine nature is not merely economic and temporal but is immanent and eternal.
> 4. This tripersonality is not tritheism, for while there are three persons, there is but one essence.
> 5. The three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are equal.
> 6. Inscrutable yet not self-contradictory, this doctrine furnishes the key to all other doctrines.

The last point contains an interesting assertion, that the doctrine is 'not self-contradictory', which I suggest is of a subtly different order to the rest. The previous five points are propositions that may, in principle, be proved by Biblical exegesis (I believe each of them can be so proved, indeed). Can the assertion that these five points are 'not self-contradictory' be proved from Scripture? Well, it is not theoretically impossible: if we had a biblical text asserting the logical coherence of these various claims, we could appeal to it. Unfortunately, we do not in fact have such a text.

The proof of the claim of non-contradiction lies not in exegesis, but in the assertion of a Scripture principle: because God's revealing work is perfect, those things which may be proved by appeal to Scripture are each true, and truths cannot stand in contradiction to each other. We should, of course, accept this argument, but we might also at times feel a need, or perhaps a temptation, to engage in apologetic work—accepting as a matter of faith that certain propositions do not contradict each other, we nonetheless want to offer an account of how it is they do not contradict each other, despite appearances to the contrary.

Take for example the twin claims 'God desires all Christians to flourish' and 'God demands sexual abstinence from unmarried Christians'. In a culture—such as the late modern West—which assumes that human flourishing is impossible without erotic fulfilment, these two propositions appear to many to be flatly contradictory. We could of course simply rely on exegesis to demonstrate the truth of both claims and assert their coherence on the basis of our Scripture principle, but the pressure to do some more work, to offer a deconstruction of cultural accounts of human flourishing and a construction of a different, more Biblical, anthropology, is surely one we can all understand, and one that,

in formal academic writing, or informal apologetic conversations, many of us will have engaged in.

I have argued in various places that much of the patristic development of trinitarian dogma was work like this, attempts to articulate and demonstrate a conceptuality under which apparently contradictory exegetical claims could be shown to cohere.[20] Strong gives us Biblical propositions; is this what we should call 'the doctrine of the trinity,' or does that doctrine properly contain those conceptual developments offered by fourth-century Fathers to demonstrate the coherence of the biblical claims? Let me propose a rather different proposition: 'Relational distinctions may exist in a spiritual substance without compromising its ontological simplicity'. Anyone familiar with the fourth-century debates, or with Augustine, will recognize this as a necessary proposition for trinitarianism as it was there defined, stated explicitly in Augustine, and more-or-less explicitly in Gregory of Nazianzus's *Theological Orations*. Is this claim a part of the patristic doctrine of the trinity or not?

It is possible to answer in the negative: the doctrine of the Trinity consists of those statements, like Strong's above, which must be believed; the apologetic and explanatory work that makes it easier to believe by demonstrating a route to coherence is helpful, but not properly a part of the doctrine. I suppose, however, that most of us would instinctively answer in the positive: this is part of the doctrine of the Trinity, yes. My argument will proceed on the basis of this positive answer.

Doctrine and Scripture

Sanders offers us three accounts of the possible relationship of doctrine to Scripture, one of which he discards (171). The first is what we might term naive biblicism: only that which is plainly taught in Scripture is to be believed. Sanders rejects this quite quickly—he has to of course; if it is right then there is no hope for trinitarian doctrine, with all its unbiblical language of persons, essence, and, well, 'trinity'. Let me pause here for a little however, since one of the themes of Sanders' book is that theologians ought to be particularly responsible to the text of Scripture, and so these straightforwardly biblical propositions ought to be of

[20] See particularly my 'Response: In praise of being criticised' in Thomas A. Noble and Jason S. Sexton, eds, *The Holy Trinity Revisited: Essays in Response to Stephen R. Holmes* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2015).

particular significance for us. Old Reformed doctrines accounts of the perfections of Scripture stood seriously on these points: Scripture is inspired, truthful, authoritative, sufficient, and perspicuous, and so the humble reader who believes what is plainly taught in its pages attains all knowledge necessary to salvation. When the *Quicumque vult* begins its account of technical trinitarian theology with the assertion that *quicumque vult salvus esse … ut teneat catholicam fidem* its basic error is a denial of the proper doctrine of Scripture. We do not need to believe what the church teaches about the Trinity to be saved; we do need to believe what the Bible teaches about the way of salvation.

Moving on, however, this could be heard as a rather classic evangelical pitting of Scripture against tradition, which of course I do not want to do—and nor does Sanders; the second option he rejects is one in which the doctrine of the Trinity belongs merely to the tradition of the church; let me quote him at some length:

> Perhaps because the doctrine of the Trinity is not explicitly formulated in scripture in the terms that have proven most useful for catechizing, refuting heresy, and making orderly, wissenschaftliche statements of the contents of Christian teaching, defenders can sometimes be found claiming that the Trinity is not so much a teaching of scripture as an artifact of Christian tradition. Certainly the conceptual elaboration of trinitarian theology in the early history of church doctrine is a great intellectual achievement. Nicaea alone is a mighty leap forward in doctrinal understanding, and each of the early centuries has some contribution to make. If, in grateful reception and employment of these theological tools, some advocates of the doctrine of the Trinity make unguarded statements giving the impression that the doctrine itself is the work of the church rather than the teaching of the Bible, we may safely hear them with forbearance. But if the claim is made in earnest, it must be corrected. (80-81)

This, I confess, is the point where I begin to hesitate slightly, a hesitation that turns on my account of the nature of the doctrine above. Of course, the sort of core propositions asserted by Strong are the plain teaching of Scripture; but it is not clear to me how to derive my claim about simplicity

and relations in a spiritual substance exegetically. That would seem to be fairly clearly the work of the church.

Now, Sanders has an answer to this, drawn in one of its formulations from no less an authority than the Westminster Confession which asserts that 'the whole counsel of God… is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.' There are, of course, things that are not expressly taught in Scripture but that may be derived from that which is taught therein; in the area of trinitarian doctrine there is, famously, no unambiguous claim in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit is God, but (as Basil argued in *De Spiritu Sancto*) this point is not hard to derive from what is taught in Scripture—or rather, it is not hard to derive if we accept a couple of core assumptions.

Basil's argument there turns more than once on a particular assumption about ontology. In contrast to a neoplatonic 'ladder of being' ontology, where things can occupy all sorts of positions between that which is least real—generally, unformed matter—and that which is most real—the deity, Basil argues for a dualistic ontology.[21] There are, crudely put, two ways of being: divine, eternal, necessary being and created, timebound, contingent being. The archangel is, in strictly ontological terms, no nearer God than the slug. This is important because all the apparently-pious attempts to say the Sprit (or previously the Son) is the highest of all creatures and the closest to God fall at this hurdle. As Basil puts it, "There is no middle rank: either he shares the divine rule, or he is a slave like me."

Now, this claim about ontology is interestingly different from the claim about the deity of the Spirit. The latter claim can be fairly easily expressed in a syllogism—in fact, Basil constructs a series of parallel syllogisms, but one will do as an example:

> Scripture asserts that only God creates,
> But Scripture also asserts that the Holy Spirit is involved in the work of creation,
> Therefore the Holy Spirit is God.[22]

[21] Basil, *De Spir. Sanc.*, 37, 45, 50-51.
[22] Basil, *De Spir. Sanc.*, 38.

The argument here is sound and straightforward and fits the extension of naive Biblicism that Sanders found in Westminster: the deity of the Spirit is deduced as a good and necessary consequence of those things taught clearly in Scripture. What, however, of the underlying claim about ontology?

I cannot imagine a similar syllogistic argument based on the clear teaching of Scripture for this claim—and nor can I remember seeing one offered in the literature. Now, the limits of my imagination and reading are not a good source of theological data, and if it were this one proposition, I would shrug and decide that I'd probably missed something obvious, whilst making a mental note to ask someone better read than me. But we repeatedly come across assumptions like this in the development of trinitarian doctrine: propositions that are often basically philosophical, but that become determinative for the way texts are read. My proposition above about how relations and simplicity sit together in a spiritual substance was deliberately one of the more abstruse, but it is fairly characteristic. To list a few others, more or less at random: 'Divine hypostases are distinguished by relationships of origin and not otherwise;' 'God is not a member of any genus'; 'God's relationship to creation is a mixed relation, real on the side of the creature but logical on the side of God'; 'God is *actus purus sine ulla potentia*'; 'human language is incapable of direct reference to the divine essence'.

None of these propositions is unbiblical, in the sense of going against Scripture, and for some of them I can imagine how I might begin to reach for certain Biblical claims which appear to be moving in the right sort of direction, but if claims like this can only be accepted if they can be shown to be deduced as good and necessary consequences of Scripture, then we have a huge exegetical deficit.

Now, Sanders has a weighty argument against imagining that the doctrine of the Trinity is an invention of the church in the sentences immediately following the ones I quoted above:

> The church fathers claimed to find the doctrine of the Trinity in scripture. The opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity replied that it was not in scripture, but only in the arguments of the church fathers, imposed on the Bible rather than read there. There is something perverse in latter-day defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity agreeing with the anti-trinitarians of the patristic age while thinking they are defending both the Trinity

> and the church fathers. This, rather obviously, will not do. The way to be patristic is to learn to discern the doctrine of the Trinity in scripture, as the fathers did, and not to blame the doctrine on churchly creativity, as their opponents did.

To which I want to say—not quite. As I have pointed out in print before now, one of the characteristic moves on both sides of the fourth-century debate was a certain willingness from time to time to step back from the immediate task of exegesis to propose some conceptual clarifications and distinctions, which would then be brought back to the text in the hope that they would make it easier to receive the whole counsel of Scripture. Most of the propositions I have noted above belong here. They are not so much deduced from Scripture as offered to Scripture in the hope that they will make the task of reading Scripture easier; insofar as they do, they are accepted as useful parts of the doctrine.

Sanders in fact deploys an argument like this himself at least once in the book: in chapter 5, in a section entitled 'internal actions of the Trinity', we read the following: "But this scholastic-sounding translation into the conceptuality of internal actions is fruitful in several ways. If we do not unpack trinitarianism using this conceptuality, it will be hard to deal with a number of pressures." (130) The move here is defended not because it can be derived exegetically, but because making it allows us to better defend those other things that can be deduced by good and necessary consequence.

The arguments here are, I suggest, in inductive, not deductive, form. They are more nearly the arguments of a historian than of a mathematician. Perhaps suggested by the Bible, perhaps borrowed from elsewhere, they are offered as interpretative schemes that will claim some justification if they are found to help us to read the text better. They are not things that can be 'by good and necessary consequence deduced from Scripture' and because of this they are always slightly tentative, open to correction, perhaps by being replaced, more likely by being modified slightly to be made more useful. I propose that much that we would tend to think of as 'the doctrine of the Trinity' is more nearly of this form than another. It is a result of 'churchly creativity', but not 'imposed on the Bible', rather offered in humble expectation that it might help us to better read the Bible. It is imaginative apologetic work that is there to help those of us who faithlessly struggle to accept the naive

Biblical truths because our critical faculties are too well-honed—to help those of us, that is, who are by temperament theologians.

On the Task, the History, and the Topography of Theology: A Response to *The Triune God*

PAUL T. NIMMO
Professor Systematic Theology,
University of Aberdeen

Introduction

My presentation to you today unfolds in three sections. First, I want to give expression to some of the reasons for my warm appreciation of Fred Sanders in undertaking to write this particular book at this particular time. Second, I want to outline explicitly, if briefly, the areas of broad agreement between my own theological position and the theological claims of his volume. This is an important move, as it will help to locate the occasional questions and hesitations which I have about this work within an over-arching context of broad and enthusiastic affirmation. Third, then, I want to indicate three points at which I would seek to register demurral or uncertainty in respect of his book – one pertains to the task of theology, one pertains to the history of theology, and one pertains to the topography of theology.

Opening Appreciation

To begin with, I wonder if I might express my warm appreciation of this volume as a contribution to the contemporary landscape of systematic theology. We have already heard something this afternoon concerning the purpose of this book and its contents, and I do not want to retread already well-trodden ground. But I do want to affirm at least in brief some central points. First the aim of the book to secure our right thinking and right speaking – and thus right preaching – of the triune God is a deeply important one. This need for clear guidance in respect of our ordering our 'theological language' of the Trinity [19] is not only an ever-present one; it is also a particularly compelling one in the current theological setting, where the doctrine of the Trinity is put to at times

surprising and at times questionable use to justify a rather wide variety of Christian thought and practice. Second, the trajectory of argumentation in the book – which effects this securing of the orthodoxy of our understanding by way of attending to the revelation of God – seems to me to be exactly the right trajectory to follow. That this leads the book to what it describes as an 'unconventional' structure [19] is no weakness in this regard but a strength, attesting the desire to discipline our understanding of the revelation of God by the content of the revelation. And third, the detailed attention to resources afforded by the book across this trajectory is deeply informed and deeply informative. For all the concision of the book, Sanders has marshalled and mastered an almost dizzying array of material – scriptural, liturgical, and dogmatic – to present a dense yet robust case for knowledge of the Trinity. The host of witnesses upon whom he calls span not only the centuries but also the denominations.

Aside from appreciating the aim, structure, and material of the book, however, I enjoyed particularly the humour of the book. Sometimes in the footnotes, but also elsewhere, there seemed to be a real and to my mind entirely appropriate sense of play within the work. A lament for the ongoing over-use of Rublev's icon of the Trinity on the cover of theological texts [73n3], an observation that modern students of theology do not expect immediate teaching on heaven and hell on their curriculum [184], and the discourse on Johann August Urlsperger, who popularised the terms essential and revealed Trinity [149–150] – in each there were substantial material points to be made, but also a welcome lightness of authorial touch.

Mutual Terrain

Given that it is of the essence of any response to anything to offer some questions and register some hesitations, it may be as well to affirm clearly my agreement with much of the methodological and material substance of this impressive book. There are broad swathes of material in Sanders' book to which I would simply want to say 'Yes' and 'Amen'. I have already mentioned the desire to work from where the Trinity is revealed in the economy of God to the doctrine of the Trinity as being both robust and helpful. And to this agreement I would add many of the traditional orthodox affirmations made in the book: that God is one in substance and three in person; that the distinctions between the persons

of the Trinity are truly eternal and not merely economic; that the persons are distinguished by their relations of origin; and that the persons work indivisibly in the divine economy.

Beyond these standard – though nonetheless significant – tropes of agreement, I found much to admire and commend in a range of other points in the book: the lovely use of the terminology of magisterial and ministerial in reflecting upon the sources of theology [92]; the profoundly canonical approach to Scripture unfolded first in theory and later in practice [101 cf. 182]; the genuine questioning of the terminology of immanent and economic Trinity [148]; the heuristic use of the prosoponic method in the exegesis of the Old Testament [229]; and my absolute favourite, a firm rejection of the need for artificial Trinitarian symmetry [244]. In these, as at many other points in the book, I found my own views confirmed and informed by Sanders.

Possible Differences

Rather than spend more time dwelling on the vast array of material with which I agree in the book, let me turn, in intentionally unbalanced fashion, to areas of potential difference. As I heralded at the beginning, I want in what follows to reflect on three areas in which I may have questions or reservations concerning the book. I should note that none of these should be taken necessarily to reflect disagreement with Sanders – at least not ahead of his response! But they may indicate matters in respect of which we have different inclinations, or in respect of which we would allocate attention and emphasis differently – and both not only, perhaps, in respect of our exposition of the Trinity, but perhaps in our theological work more broadly.

On the Task of Theology

The series editors – Dr. Allen and Dr. Swain, who are to be warmly commended for their initiative in formulating and advancing this worthy series of *New Studies in Dogmatics* – state in the series preface that "Dogmatic theology … is a conceptual representation of scriptural teaching about God and all things in relation to God' [15]. More particularly, Sanders intimates early in the book that Trinitarian theology, in particular, is a 'doxological movement of thought that gives glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by beginning with confession of the work of God in salvation history and then reasoning back to its

antecedent principles in God" [20]. Or again, more concisely, he writes that "All theology ought to be doxology, but Trinitarian theology in particular is essentially a matter of praising God" [25]. Indeed, for Sanders, "Theology is not itself if it is not also praise" [28]. And there is much in all this that seems wise. But I do have a slight reservation about this doxological construal of theology.

My hesitation about affirming this construal of theology as praise lies in the danger of conflating third-order speech about God with fourth-order speech about God. To explain: we might take the conversation of Father, Son, and Spirit to be the original, first-order speech about God – here, in line with the intention of the book as I see it [74], I do not over-differentiate so-called immanent from so-called economic. And we might take second-order speech about God to refer to the divine address to humanity, indicatively exemplified by Incarnation and Pentecost and narrated and exemplified in Scripture – again, I hope, in line with the book [100]. If this is right, it would mean that third-order speech about God might be construed as our response directly to the Trinitarian God in praise and worship, in prayer and confession, in lament and in exultation – a direct communication with God, a vertical transaction. And here, I think, we begin to differ.

For it seems to me that Sanders would locate theology as third-order speech, belonging precisely to the genre of praise. But I am not fully persuaded about this, and instead, I think I would rather construe theology as fourth-order speech. Now I do not deny that theology can flow or be required by from worship or that worship can lead into or further require theology. Nor do I pretend that fourth-order speech about God can take place without the grace and mercy of God or that it is somehow a purely human activity, whatever that might mean. And I certainly recognise that in its own way theology is surely a response to God and the address of God.

But I do struggle to consider theology itself as primarily a third-order event of the order of praise and worship. It seems to me that in terms of its habitual contexts, and in terms of its intended addressees, it is rather different. So, for example, when Peter writes that we should "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have," (1 Peter 3.15), it is clear that to give such an answer would be to give a quasi-theological account whose giving and whose content would praise God. But the praise of God would not seem

to be the primary thing in view here. Theology can take place for a host of reasons that serve the purpose of worship and of truth in worship – it can correct the preaching of the church, for example, or serve as normative rule of faith for exegesis. But I think that there is always a movement from worship to theology or from theology to worship. Otherwise, the danger is that everything is worship, and where that is true, perhaps nothing is truly worship.

To render this point in a very basic, concrete, and personal way, I have a different feeling when I am worshipping God than when I am doing theology. And I am not sure I am doing it wrong …

On the History of Theology

Sanders is quite clear from the outset that his task is not to write a history of theology – he readily acknowledges that "the history of doctrine receives little direct attention in this outline" [23]. And that is entirely fair: I am sure the word limit for the volume was pressing and acute! And yet there is a potential downside to this. The book offers a lovingly crafted and deeply contemplated account of the divine missions of Incarnation and Pentecost and indicates how on scriptural grounds the orthodox Trinitarian account of God as three persons in eternity is what arises. And as noted above, I do not want to disagree with this conclusion materially.

But as Sanders knows well, the journey of the Christian churches of the patristic era towards this conclusion was anything but serene. He acknowledges clearly that "Clarity and precision on this matter were gradual accomplishments, of course, and much could be said about the various paths followed by patristic theologians arguing from their diverse theological cultures" [115–116]. And, indeed, as is well known to historians of theology, for almost the entirety of the first three centuries of the church, theologians – even the best and still cited ones – tended to be either economic Trinitarians such as Irenaeus or subordinationist Trinitarians such as Origen. And I wonder in this light whether Sanders is being rather generous when he writes of "the naive subordinationism that crept in at the edges of otherwise orthodox authors before Nicaea" [96n2]. After all, even after Nicaea, there was dispute enough about these theological matters.

In other words, even with Scripture in hand, the same Scripture that we have today and to which we must always return, and even with

Incarnation and Pentecost as present realities in mind, arguably far more present than to many Christians today, the early church and its theologians truly struggled to reach the doctrine of the Trinity which we know and cherish. It may well be a scriptural doctrine [92] – in fact, I agree entirely with Sanders that it is – but it was one which took deeply spiritual and biblically informed and highly ascetic believers more than three centuries to reach its settled and conclusive form. To write, then, that "the Trinity is 'not so much inculcated as presupposed' in the New Testament" [76] seems to be able to refer only to the simple fact that God is Father, Son, and Spirit, and not to the doctrine of the Trinity as such.

All of this is to say that while Sanders attends eloquently to the criticism and rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity in the modern era, it would have been fascinating to have some account from him of this difficulty between orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy in the early church.

And this leads me, rather mischievously, to consider what confession of the Trinity is necessary for salvation. We are told by Paul that 'if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved' [Romans 10.9], and we are also told by Paul that 'no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit' [1 Corinthians 12.3]. So if we were to believe in a purely economic Trinity, as so many of the Christians and theologians of the early church did, would that be sufficient – or is belief in the eternal hypostatic distinction of the persons of the Trinity necessary for the Christian in addition?

On the Topography of Theology

One of the interesting decisions that Sanders makes is to focus within salvation history on the events of Incarnation and Pentecost [95]. If I am right in discerning his intentions, the principal reason for doing this is that it allows him to focus on the missions of the Son and Spirit – the 'central events of the economy' – and to see in these temporal sendings the eternal processions of the Godhead [114]. And the focus in his doctrine of the Trinity on missions and processions is one way for him to achieve his goal of steering us away from the conceptuality of the immanent and economic Trinity [153] to more helpful and fertile dogmatic terrain.

To turn to the mission of the Son in particular, however, it is striking to me how Sanders seems to say very little in his doctrine of the Trinity

about the cross. Now I know full well that this book is not an account of the atonement or even of salvation. But even so, it seems to me that the event of the cross might be a core terrain for theological reflection on the doctrine of the Trinity. The book does acknowledge that 'The desire to point to the cross as the center of all theological action is in itself understandable and may derive from a healthy intuition' [135]. And this certainly offers encouragement in respect of my instincts here. Yet the succeeding sentence continues 'But failure to recognize the antecedent activeness in the life of the living God is debilitating for attempts at thoroughly Trinitarian theology' [135]. And the example of Moltmann is cited as a clear example of how staurocentric theology can go astray.

Yet it remains a matter which causes me to hesitate that the revelatory potential of the doctrine of the cross for a Trinitarian theology is so little exploited here. Or even, given the limits of space both here in the text and in the later chapter of New Testament exegesis, that the cross is so little referenced. Again, perhaps, the sense that emerges from the text is one of serenity – the missions smoothly follow from the processions, and salvation is affected smoothly by the missions. Yet the scandal of the cross, the depths of the incarnation, the gravity of the abandonment, the despair of the disciples, the rending of the Temple – these more disruptive, chaotic, visceral aspects of salvation history seem to be downplayed when incarnation and not crucifixion becomes the focus of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is not that they are denied or excluded, of course … but they are not quite centre-stage. And one need not argue that the historical event of the cross constitutes the being of the Trinity in the manner of Moltmann to acknowledge that the cross reveals something about the being of the Trinity which goes beyond the act of incarnation.

Now it may be that Sanders would agree with all of this, and counter that it is simply the case that none of this is directly pertinent to the particular focus of his work on the doctrine of the Trinity and that such considerations have more to do with other dogmatic loci. And if so, he may be right, and he may have much of the theological tradition on his side. But I have a lingering hesitation at just this point. I am not quite so sure that the life of the Trinity – however it be construed, and in line with Sanders' intention to sideline the awkward distinction between immanent and economic Trinity – can remain so isolated from consideration of the cross. If the incarnation is a necessary dimension of

Trinitarian reflection, then surely the crucifixion as the necessary and inexorable culmination of the incarnation, is similarly necessary, at least in some sense. Or even more than necessary – it is not simply one episode of salvation history, after all.

God is certainly revealed in the Incarnation – and of course at Pentecost. But we are told to preach Christ crucified, a God who did not think it unworthy not only to take on human flesh but also to die on a cross. And I am not quite sure that we can treat such material only under the rubric of Christology and soteriology without accounting for it more directly in the doctrine of the Trinity, as if the Trinity has a sanctuary utterly untouched by any involvement with the economy. The danger in view is that we risk rendering the Trinity a rather abstract doctrine, in just the kinds of way Sanders himself fears can happen if it is not handled correctly [148].

Conclusion

I suspect that I have said enough to give you an indication of some of the main places where I harbour reservations and questions for this work *The Triune God*. And as I noted at the start, I have focused on these rather than the vast areas of agreement which I would register with Sanders. The perceptive will note that in the case of each of my reservations, I have asked for more from the author – more on the relation between worship and theology, more on the history of theology, and more on the cross and theology. But such is the curse of having written such an excellent book on the Trinity – the reader is left wanting more. And that surely is not only a high compliment to its author, but also a testimony to the great success of the author in his quest to encourage us to seek a greater understanding of the triune God whom we worship.

Catching Trinitarian Theology from the Bible: A Response to Some Very Good Readers

FRED SANDERS
Professor,
Associate Director, Torrey Honors Institute
Biola University

In the seasons of academic life, there may be no season longer, more filled with foreboding, or riddled with worry than the season that stretches between publishing a book and reading the first public reviews from peers. I feel extremely fortunate that my book *The Triune God* drew these early responses from such accomplished colleagues as Wesley Hill, Stephen Holmes, and Paul Nimmo. These are keen and sharp-eyed scholars, each deeply involved in precisely the theological matters that my book is devoted to expounding. Together they represent the world of sympathetic scholarly interlocutors that are capable of estimating a book's contribution to the field. While a book of this sort was written with a broader audience in mind, and needs to find and serve that audience in order to justify its publication, it would almost be worth writing a book just to earn the expert scrutiny and articulate assessment of a select set of readers like this. At any rate, I am honored that *The Triune God* has gained the attention of these scholars, and it nearly goes without saying that I am relieved and gratified at the generally positive reception they gave the work.

In all three responses, what is most prominent is a set of methodological concerns. Those concerns have mostly to do with the question of how the doctrine of the Trinity is related to the form and content of scripture. That is especially appropriate because *The Triune God* is an attempt to draw out the scriptural element of trinitarian theology. That is, although I intended the book as a piece of systematic theology (in particular a study in dogmatics, as the series title *New Studies in Dogmatics* has it), I deliberately included a great deal of reflection on biblical theology, interpretive strategies, and hermeneutics. The point of doing so was to insist that biblical matter needs to be prominent in doctrinal theology, and to enact the kind of systematic theology that doesn't hold itself aloof from biblical work. As a rough goal during the writing of the book, I wanted about half of the finished volume to be

devoted to dealing directly with the biblical element of trinitarianism. Holding to this goal made the book a little bit eccentric among modern trinitarian theologies written in an academic register, and gave it some formal similarities to patristic treatments of the doctrine (and, not coincidentally, to the raft of devotional works on the Trinity written in a more popular idiom). Handling the doctrine of the Trinity as a doctrine that arises from scripture raises questions, of course. I tried to raise and answer a lot of those questions in the book itself. One of the things that becomes obvious in these responses is that no matter how successfully I may or may not have answered some of the questions I posed for myself in the book, nevertheless I raised more questions than I could answer! In their responses, Hill, Holmes, and Nimmo continue the book's project by addressing some of those unanswered questions and providing some of their own solutions. In what follows I offer a few thoughts on those responses.

In Response to Wesley Hill:

There was a time in the 1990s when theologically sophisticated work by New Testament scholars was extremely scarce. I vividly remember reading Francis Watson's *Text and Truth* (1997) and thinking how unusual it was to see a biblical scholar who could reach so far into the territory of systematic theology. I found that kind of interdisciplinary reach truly inspirational, and often considered what it would take for a systematic theologian to reach out toward the territory of biblical studies. It's tempting to think of that kind of interdisciplinary work primarily as a matter of a scholar's range of competence, or intellectual capacity for breadth of thinking. But the boundaries between disciplines are also more or less policed in both directions by gatekeepers who turn away trespassers. So those who would work across boundaries need not only intellectual scope but also courage, stealth, and the creativity to negotiate a safe crossing. I have no doubt that it is more costly for a biblical scholar to reach out toward systematics than it is for a systematician to reach out toward biblical studies; and my admiration has only grown for Bible people who make the stretch. I am greatly cheered to note that such scholars are easier to find at present than they were fifteen or twenty years ago.

I count Wesley Hill among them; his 2015 book *Paul and the Trinity* not only made bold to use the T-word in its very title, but did so in

support of the claim that categories like "person" and "relation" are, even today, apt tools for actual exegetical work. Of course, the proof of such a claim rests almost entirely in the details. In his book, Hill demonstrated his trinitarian hypothesis by close investigation of Pauline texts about God, Christ, and the Spirit. In carefully chosen texts, he showed that in order for us to make sense of the things Paul said, an alert reader would find it very helpful to appeal to categories like person and relation. These trinitarian ways of thinking, he argued, are not to be carried back from the fourth century and projected onto the Pauline text; nor are they to be built up on top of the Pauline text as a permissible superstructure that rises from the textual bedrock. Trinitarian categories like person and relation are instead ways of naming what is going on in, with, or under the words of Paul. As Hill says in his response to The Triune God, discerning these theological realities is not so much building up a new superstructure as indicating an existing substructure, one "embedded and submerged within the Bible." Such a substructure is not explicitly stated in scripture (that is the force of the prefix sub-), but its presence, so the argument goes, is presupposed in what is said. To say more explicitly trinitarian things than the Bible says is to say what must be true if what the Bible says is to hold together.

We might say that what Hill recommends methodologically for biblical trinitarianism is a shift from architectural metaphors to archeological metaphors. We do not build something up synthetically on top of the biblical foundation; we dig down analytically into the buried presuppositions under the biblical surface. Notice that Hill does not actually use the terms architectural or archeological in his argument; my use of them is itself an attempt to employ the method in question, by naming what Hill was presupposing when he spoke of superstructure and substructure. At any rate, I am entirely in favor of this shift. With regard to my own work, as I look through *The Triune God* I see both metaphors at work here and there, and I wonder if the constructivist idiom is something I picked up from contemporary theological culture. There is, after all, such a thing as a thoroughly constructivist methodology in modern systematic theology, as is signaled by the Workgroup on Constructive Theology, or the recent book that doubles down on the

metaphor: *Constructing Constructive Theology*.[23] Some people, myself included, use the word constructive not to indicate that new theology is being produced, but rather to indicate that substantive rather than merely descriptive claims are being made.

When I invoke B. B. Warfield's argument that the Trinity is revealed between the testaments, not in verbal arguments but in the personal, historical presence of the Son and the Holy Spirit, my goal is to evoke the already-accomplished character of the realities confessed by trinitarian theology. Given the incarnation and Pentecost, New Testament authors can be read as themselves identifying what must be true if all God's ways have been manifested in the missions of these two persons. The mode of argument used by Paul, John, and Hebrews when they are speaking of God, Christ, and the Spirit is very often the mode of biblical interpretation; that is, reading the Old Testament and naming the ways in which Christ and the Spirit must be present in these texts since the incarnation and Pentecost have happened. When they engage in prosoponic exegesis of the Old Testament, they are discerning the substructure of prior biblical revelation. When the church fathers, or contemporary theologians, follow their lead in prosoponic exegesis and other forms of retrospective reading, they are doing likewise. And when we read the New Testament in order to articulate trinitarian theology, we are once again seeking insight into the substructure that must be there in order to support the things said in the New Testament.

One of the questions Hill is well positioned to ask is whether I present too optimistic a view of the things that are novel in contemporary trinitarian Bible interpretation. When I offer a representative survey of some recent exegetical arguments that reach trinitarian conclusions, I admit that I tend to count them all as contributing to the cause of confessing a biblical trinitarianism. Early high Christology, for example, comes in a number of varieties, but in my reportage they all seem to harmonize, and furthermore to converge on supporting the doctrine of the Trinity. Hill is right to point out that some of these arguments presuppose a different metaphysical framework than the actual pro-Nicene culture of classical trinitarianism. Some of them are in fact intentionally revisionist in their metaphysic, or antimetaphysically

[23] Jason A. Wyman, *Constructing Constructive Theology: An Introductory Sketch* (Augsburg Fortress, 2017).

historicist. These important differences become most evident when the kind of trinitarianism they yield is a strong social trinitarianism, or some other form of trinitarian confession that confesses a very different notion of the Trinity than the classical one. Readers of Steve Holmes' *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God's Life* will recognize here the gap between the classic doctrine of the Trinity and the modern doctrine. In terms of our exegetical investigation, we could ask whether the new methods I am so eager to welcome may after all produce a new doctrine of the Trinity rather than a reaffirmation of the classic one. It is an excellent question, deserving further study. I confess to being harmonistic in my reading of recent exegetical work that is in any way favorable to trinitarian doctrine. And I am grateful for Hill's warning that the tools and aims of modern exegesis need to be handled with due vigilance and with wide-awake critical scrutiny. Prosoponic exegesis, to cite again only the most prominent example, is a technique which, when handled by the apostles and the pro-Nicenes, may have indicated the triunity of persons within the one God. But when isolated and abstracted from its original theological framework and presuppositions, it could produce a social trinitarianism so drastic as to be indistinguishable from tritheism. On reflection, the tool itself almost seems to have that bias built in: philosophical interpreters of Homer used this technique to identify the presence of multiple gods in texts.[24] We do well to be alert to the differences between ancient theological cultures and our own. All the tools and techniques that I celebrate in my survey of recent trinitarian interpretation are subject to misuse.[25]

There are numerous places where Wesley Hill remarks that he looks forward to reading further reflections from me on the exegetical dimensions of trinitarian theology. I, too, want to read further reflections on these matters, but I am especially eager to read them from

[24]Matthew Bates' celebrated book *The Birth of the Trinity* shows how prosoponic exegesis was employed in the New Testament and in early Christian thought, but he had already traced some of the pagan background of the technique in his earlier book *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul's Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012).

[25] Hill himself contends that the fundamental categories of the early high Christology movement are in important ways discordant with the New Testament's underlying categories for speech about Jesus and God; that is one of his key motivations for offering instead the categories of person and relation.

Wesley Hill and from a host of other biblical scholars who are conversant with classic Christian doctrine. While I have more to say about the Trinity in the Bible, I hope my work stirs up colleagues in biblical studies to do the detailed and rigorous work for which only they are qualified.

In Response to Stephen R. Holmes

That Stephen Holmes raises a similar issue, from his own perspective as a systematic theologian with well-developed historical judgment, is a fact that definitely puts me on the alert. Something about my description of the relation of trinitarian theology to the Bible seems to invite further specification, or more careful reckoning. Nor is this merely an instance of academics doing their predictably academic thing, suggesting nuance and insisting on comprehensiveness. No: although Holmes is generously appreciative and commendatory about much of the book (whew!), where he begs to differ has something to do with the whole direction of the argument. *The Triune God* suggests a deductive method precisely where an inductive method is demanded.

The deductive method is the one commended by the Westminster Confession, according to which the full counsel of God consists not only of what is explicitly set down in scripture, but also those things which may "by good and necessary consequence… be deduced from Scripture." I believe there are such truths, and I suppose Holmes does as well. Anywhere scripture provides propositions which can be used syllogistically in valid reasoning to produce true conclusions, we have the sort of things envisaged by Westminster. But just here Holmes presses a distinction. There are propositions that we can find in scripture. Then there are deductions we can draw from them. But then there are still other things, and these turn out to be some of the most important elements of what we usually think of when we think of trinitarianism. Some of them we might call presuppositions or metaphysical frameworks. Some are networks of apologetic or philosophical argumentation in support of the explicit claims of scripture. Some are accounts of "a conceptuality under which apparently contradictory exegetical claims could be shown to cohere." The question Holmes presses is whether all these sorts of things count as the doctrine of the Trinity, or whether what we mean by the doctrine of the Trinity is the bare claims without any of the conceptual matrix developed in support and explication of them.

It seems that in at least some cases we need to admit that the conceptual matrix is also what we mean by the doctrine of the Trinity. It is not enough to say that the Father is God and the Son is God and yet there is only one God, and then act as if we have stated the doctrine of the Trinity and can leave it up to various believers and theologians to work out for themselves, with fear and trembling, how these things can be reconciled to each other. Some account of how these claims are connected must also belong to the essence of trinitarianism. And here is the point: if we say the Trinity is in the Bible, we must mean that the most important of those connections are also, somehow, in the Bible. Yet by common consent those things are not verbatim in the Bible, so anybody who wants to make good on the claim that the Trinity is in the Bible must, once again, speak in terms of discerning an underlying substructure that supports the explicit claims.

But instead of repeating our previous language about how the doctrine of the Trinity is in the Bible, Holmes offers another, more methodological description. Perhaps any element of developed trinitarian theology ought to be thought of as a hermeneutical hypothesis suggesting a concept that would make it easier to understand what the Bible is saying. On these lines, any bits of trinitarian theology "are offered as interpretative schemes that will claim some justification if they are found to help us to read the text better." Doctrinal proposals of this nature could relate to all sorts of things: the claim that persons are distinguished by relations of origin; the claim that the basic metaphysical divide is between God and everything else, with nothing in the middle; the claim that all the myriad names of the Spirit point to one person rather than many; and so on. The test of their quality would be exegesis: Good doctrinal ideas improve our reading of the Bible, yielding a clearer, more cohesive and compelling understanding of what scripture says and why it says it. Bad doctrinal ideas may have some plausibility when looking at a few texts but will fail to pay off by producing a richer reading of the full range of scripture. It is these doctrinal hypotheses that Holmes identifies as more inductive than deductive. And it is these that Holmes says are devised by the church in the course of theological history. Indeed, the chief objection he wants to register against my formulations is that in seeking to safeguard the revealed character of trinitarianism, I come too close to denying the creative activity of churchly theologians of later ages; in some sense the doctrine of the

Trinity is more a "work of churchly creativity" than I want to admit. Yet Holmes also insists that these things are "not imposed on the Bible."

What I think Holmes is getting at is, to put it somewhat abstractly, a tension in theological method between poeisis and mimesis; when we speak the Trinity, are we crafting a doctrine or imitating what the Bible says? Considering trinitarian doctrine as an exegetical hypothesis may permit us to recognize elements of both. Based on an initial reading of scripture, we assemble a conceptual proposal that seems promising for enabling a deeper reading; we then re-read scripture through that proposal to see if it lights up or picks out more than we would have seen in the text without the aid of the proposal. This is neither pure poeisis nor simple mimesis. It involves both the crafting of concepts and the reception of something given; the former for the purpose of the latter. An interpretive undertaking of this subtlety and complexity was evoked by Hans Georg-Gadamer when he began his monumental *book Truth and Method* with a short poem by Rainer Marie Rilke. The poem contrasts the empty sport of catching a ball you toss to yourself with a vision of becoming "suddenly the catcher of a ball thrown by an eternal partner" who throws something to you "with accurate and measured swing" so that it flies to you "in an arch from the great bridge-building of God." Catching is a receptive activity, but the kind of interpretive catching called for in so earnest a sport is nevertheless really an activity rather than a passivity; it is a power that requires us to summon all that is in us in order to receive what is given. Trinitarian theology committed to its exegetical task may well be that kind of active receptivity, as we catch the doctrine of the Trinity from the Bible.

In Response to Paul T. Nimmo:

Paul Nimmo expresses substantial agreement with *The Triune God*, and in those places where he registers some differences of opinion, I am inclined to capitulate altogether, or at least to admit that his suggestions would probably all lead to substantial improvements in the book. Where I describe trinitarian theology as operating according to the same logic of praise, Nimmo helpfully distinguishes between four levels of theological discourse. At the very top, highly exalted indeed, is the conversation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Second-order discourse is divine speech to humanity; third-order the return speech from humanity to God; and fourth-order speech is theology. This is a lovely account of the levels of

theological discourse, recapitulating among other things the Protestant scholastic distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology, and I intend to simply adopt it. I think, however, that I can continue with my claim that trinitarian theology follows the logic of praise if I simply distinguish clearly between the addressee in mind. The response of praise is directed toward God, while theology is directed to our peers. But they can have the same essential content and, more to the point, the same form: gratitude to God for the work of salvation. In writing theology, the theologian speaks not to God but about God, which does introduce another step of distance into the articulation of the praise. But in defense of my inclination to continue to identify praise as the dynamic of even this fourth-order discourse, I could call a few witnesses. Augustine and Anselm, in the *Confessions* and *Monologion* respectively, demonstrate that theology can be taught in the form of sentences that are all directed to God with the intention of being overheard by fellow worshipers. Second, I would point to the Protestant distinction between the confessing church and the teaching church: one emphasizes the responsibility of the church toward God, the other emphasizes the responsibility of the church to its members. But the content of the message is not different in the two contexts: what the church is summoned to say to God in response to his word cannot differ from what it teaches its members. Finally, biblical praise frequently takes the form not of praising God directly, but of telling others to praise God. It is more often "praise the Lord" in the imperative than “I praise you, Lord.” Enjoining praise is praise. Although I mean to make a large claim about the Bible when I say that trinitarian theology is a conceptually extended *Gloria Patri*, I should also admit that the main impetus for my theological work is Ephesians 1:3-14. This passage runs through everything I have written on the Trinity, and it is an extended blessing of God. That it is also theologically informative, doctrinally rich, and spiritually nourishing may go a long way toward explaining the doxological contours of my trinitarian teaching.

Nimmo is also right to point out the way *The Triune God* tells the history of the doctrine of the Trinity in too smooth and serene a way. Nobody could tell, from my narration of the history of theology, that there was ever much of a fight involved in establishing trinitarian theology. Not only are the conflicts under-narrated in my version of the story, but the sheer contingency and unpredictability is also somewhat

suppressed. Who would have imagined in advance that Proverbs 8 would become a central text in the development of the doctrine? And yet it did. As for the major turning point from pre-Nicene to Nicene theological cultures, I freely admit that even the best church fathers spoke inconsistently and sometimes ill-advisedly before the great clarification and consolidation of Nicaea. I do not think this counts against the claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is older than Nicaea. The fourth-century situation is complicated, and nearly every century includes some confusing bits of evidence. In my defense I would only point out that there are a lot of fine books available that tend the other direction, over-narrating the conflict and suggesting that continuity is an illusion. The Triune God is partly intended as a counterweight to that tendency, so prominent in historical accounts of the Trinity. There is continuity and discontinuity aplenty; I've highlighted the continuity partly because my emphasis on the revealedness of the doctrine of the Trinity produces some foreshortening of the historical development. Something recognizably Trinitarian was there from the very beginning.

Finally, there is the matter of failing to mention certain important doctrines. One of the minor arguments of *The Triune God* is that we need not be overly anxious about introducing the Holy Spirit into all of our formulations; after all, the Bible doesn't. Paul, and John, and the Lord himself all seem equally likely to mention two terms (Father and Son) as they are to mention three (adding the Spirit, as they do often enough). Nimmo accepts, and even celebrates, this sort of argument for when it may be appropriate to leave out a reference to the Holy Spirit. But he also calls attention to what I can only confess is an embarrassing omission in the book: there is almost no mention of the cross. One might imagine all sorts of reasons a book on the Trinity might not have much to say about the cross, but this book is intentionally centered on the accomplished realities of salvation, and there is considerably less warrant for a book on salvation that omits the cross. So, let me say simply that I wish I had devoted more time to discussing the cross, and the atonement in the narrower sense. But then, I do have two defenses to offer that I think are not merely reflexive jerks of self-defense. First, I use the term incarnation through *The Triune God*, usually in the pair "incarnation and Pentecost," to indicate the mission of the Son of God for our salvation. What I hope that term invokes is not simply the beginning of Christ's mission, but the entirety of it. That is to say, for the argument of this

book, incarnation functions in the wider sense that includes the death and resurrection of Christ. It is not just a Christmas word but also a triduum word covering Good Friday and Easter. Second, I may have kept the cross a bit too deep in the background partly out reaction against a pronounced over-foregrounding of the cross in modern trinitarian theology. Moltmann is only the most prominent and articulate advocate of what we might call ontic staurocentrism, which identifies the being of God with his suffering on the cross. In the doctrine of the Trinity, it is not uncommon to hear that Father and Son distinguish themselves from each other, even for each other, at the cross of Christ. By theological temperament I would be naturally inclined to say that it is not possible to over-emphasize the cross, but modern theology includes some prominent examples of theologians who have managed to do so. The story of why this was the case in recent trinitarianism is a long one, and it involves an overall turn away from the classical doctrine of God in favor of a confession of a suffering God, one who feels pain properly and in his very divinity. In my opinion this trend was animated primarily by certain convictions about the necessary relation of God to historical process, and the doctrine of the Trinity was an innocent bystander pressed into the service of that larger vision. I have no desire to underemphasize the cross of Christ as the center of the work of salvation. But I do want to contextualize it properly, in order to encourage contemporary theology to turn away from the error of imagining a passible God. What I want to turn toward is the theology of the blessed Trinity. It may be difficult to do justice to the cross while focusing on the blessedness of God; at least the leading themes and ideas do not automatically come together in a self-evident way, and Nimmo is right that (even with my two decent excuses registered here) *The Triune God* suffers from a little bit of imbalance at least in its attentiveness to the cross. I am committed to bringing out both themes together in future work, and I am confident that the right way forward is to insist on the blessedness of the triune God both in the happy land of the Trinity above all worlds, and in the very depths of the costly undertaking of salvation history.

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William Wilberforce: 'Agent of Usefulness'
The Fall 2019 Faculty Address
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

MICHAEL D. McMULLEN
Professor of Church History,
Managing Editor, *MJT*,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Born in Hull, England; a little over 5ft tall; an evangelical; and an incredible orator. It is hard to tell whether I'm reading my CV or introducing William Wilberforce! Sadly, I only share the first three traits with him – I wish I shared the fourth! My plan is to share a very brief overview of Wilberforce's life, followed by three main points, which all orbit around the theme: who exactly was Wilberforce and why does it matter?

William Wilberforce was the only son of four children, born into a wealthy family in Hull, Yorkshire in 1759. He lost his father at the age of nine and is shipped off to stay two hundred miles away in London with his evangelical aunt and uncle, friends of John Newton and George Whitefield.

By inheriting fortunes, Wilberforce becomes one of the wealthiest men in Britain. He attends Cambridge University but isn't a serious student, "My tutor never urged me to attend lectures and so I never did,"[1] but he does become close friends with William Pitt the Younger and both enter politics as young men.

Wilberforce was incredibly gifted both as a singer and as an orator/debater, but throughout his life he suffered from several serious disabilities and faced incredible opposition. He invited the brilliant Isaac Milner to accompany him on a grand tour of Europe. Wilberforce knew Milner was brilliant intellectually, but what he didn't know, was that Milner was also an evangelical, and on the tour Milner introduced

[1] Peter Linehan ed., *St. John's College Cambridge A History* (Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2011), 208.

Wilberforce to three things: The writings of the godly Philip Doddridge, the Greek New Testament, and to Christ as his Saviour!.

Wilberforce became an active evangelical – mentored by the likes of John Newton and John Wesley. He spearheaded the parliamentary campaign for abolition and impacted society in an incredible way with the Gospel. He saw the slave trade abolished at age 47, and slavery itself at age 73, dying only three days after it was achieved. Hopefully that very brief biographical introduction will at least help some who may not be overly familiar with Wilberforce's life and achievements.

My first main point is a brief one. I have located two places where Wilberforce viewed himself, "It is of God's unmerited goodness that I am selected as the agent of usefulness."[2] Later he also reflects, "…if to be feelingly alive to the sufferings of my fellow-creatures and to be warmed with the desire of relieving their distresses, is to be a fanatic, I am one of the most incurable fanatics ever permitted to be at large."[3] This self-portrait we have of Wilberforce is I believe, very honest and accurate – that William Wilberforce was very much a fanatical agent of usefulness!

My second point involves considering how others then, including those who knew Wilberforce personally, viewed him? To that end, what could be more appropriate being here at Midwestern, than sharing that even Spurgeon wasn't born until the year after Wilberforce died. Spurgeon preached at least seven sermons about his fellow Brit., and what God achieved through him. In one he preached for example, "Brethren, we become zealous when we hear the cries and tears of the oppressed. I think I see a senator standing on the floor of the House of Commons, pleading, in years gone by, the cause of Africa's down-trodden sons. I do not wonder at the zeal of Wilberforce, or the marvelous eloquence of Fox. What a cause they had!"[4] Then on the fiftieth anniversary of Wilberforce's death, Spurgeon preached these incredible words:

> A healthy church kills error and tears in pieces evil. Not so very long ago our nation tolerated slavery in our colonies. Philanthropists endeavoured to destroy slavery; but when was

[2] R.I. and S. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* Vol. 5 (London, 1838), 129.

[3] Ibid., Vol. 4, 290.

[4] Charles H. Spurgeon, 'The Zeal of the Lord,' in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* Vol. 60 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1914), 545.

> it utterly abolished? It was when Wilberforce roused the church of God, and when the church of God addressed herself to the conflict, then she tore the evil thing to pieces. I have been amused with what Wilberforce said the day after they passed the Act of Emancipation. He merrily said to a friend when it was all done, "Is there not something else we can abolish?" That was said playfully, but it shows the spirit of the church of God. She lives in conflict and victory; her mission is to destroy everything that is bad in the land.[5]

And the truth is, that if anyone really was for the Church, it was William Wilberforce.

Twenty-five years prior to Spurgeon's accolade, Abraham Lincoln would make the very perceptive comment, that whilst every schoolboy knew the name of Wilberforce, how many could remember even one single name of those who fought so vehemently against him![6] Then, one hundred and fifty years after Lincoln, another American politician – Mike Pence – gave a speech in Congress in 2001, calling them to remember the Christian example of Wilberforce in impacting his country and the world![7]

But what of Wilberforce's close friends and colleagues, how did they remember him? Robert Southey, the British Poet Laureate, wrote, "I never saw any other man who seemed to enjoy such a perpetual serenity and sunshine of spirit. In conversing with him, you feel assured that there is no guile in him; that if ever there was a good man and happy man on earth, he was one. He frisks about as if every vein in his body were filled with quicksilver!"[8]

Joseph John Gurney, a leading banker and house-guest of Wilberforce's recorded that, "As [Wilberforce] walked about his house he

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[5] Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons,* Parts 333-344, (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883), 140.

[6] Roy P. Basler ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* Vol. 2 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 126.

[7] www.govinfo.gov/metadata/granule/CRECB-2001-pt11/CRECB-2001-pt11-Pg14956-2/mods.xml.

[8] 'The Oberlin Evangelist,' Vol. 6 (Oberlin, OH, 1844), 24.

was generally humming the tune of a hymn or Psalm as if he could not contain his pleasurable feelings of thankfulness and devotion."[9]

James Stephen MP testified, "Being himself amused and interested by everything, whatever he said became amusing or interesting. . . . His presence was as fatal to dullness as to immorality. His mirth was as irresistible as the first laughter of childhood."[10]

William Pitt the Younger, the Prime Minister and himself an incredible orator stated, "[Wilberforce] had the greatest natural eloquence of any man I ever knew."[11] Charles John Shore, 2nd Baron Teignmouth and MP left a very intimate portrait,

> In person Wilberforce was slightly deformed. [He] usually carried an inkstand in his coat pocket. He invariably wore black clothes, sometimes till they became quite dingy for he ignored the outer man. He was quite unconscious of the notice which his personal appearance attracted. Few men have been so little influenced by the distracting passions of ambition, avarice, vanity and resentment.[12]

Even the Rev. Joseph Brown, in a sermon preached in London on the occasion of Wilberforce's death, eulogized that, "[Wilberforce] was also a most cheerful Christian. His harp appeared to be always in tune; no 'gloomy atmosphere of a melancholy moroseness' surrounded him; his sun appeared to be always shining; hence he was remarkably fond of singing hymns, both in family prayer and when alone."[13]

JI Packer has given a much more recent appraisal, "William Wilberforce was a great man who impacted the Western world as few others have done. Blessed with brains, charm, influence and initiative,

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[9] Joseph John Gurney, *Reminiscences of Chalmers, Simeon, Wilberforce, etc.* (n.p., 1834), 154.

[10] Richard Symonds, *Alternative Saints: The Post-Reformation British People Commemorated by the Church of England* (London, Macmillan, 1988), 170.

[11] RI and S Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* Vol. 5 (London, 1838), 241.

[12] Lord Teignmouth, *Reminiscences of Many Years* Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878), 244-7, 253-5.

[13] 'The Christian Observer,' London, January 1834, 63.

much wealth…he put evangelism on Britain's map as a power for social change. To forget such men is foolish."[14]

We may not have forgotten him – not entirely anyway, but I will argue that we haven't known the real Wilberforce much at all, and I will posit why I believe that's been quite deliberate!

In Wilberforce's as yet published autobiography, which is also scheduled to appear in my first volume of previously unpublished writings of Wilberforce, he begins with the very simple words, "I was Born Augt. 24, 1759 at Hull."[15] In his diaries he will add later, "How blessed by the kind providence of God that I was born an Englishman – an Englishman, too, in this period of our existence."[16]

What became the city of Hull (Kingston-upon-Hull), was founded nine hundred years ago by monks. William Wilberforce was born there in 1759, and exactly two hundred years after his birth, I too was born there. I too believe, that like Wilberforce, I have been incredibly blessed by God: by similarly being born an Englishman, though with the added blessing of having a Scottish father; and a Yorkshireman (as was both Wilberforce and John Wycliffe before him); and especially a Hullensian, just like Wilberforce!

In the nineteenth century, when Hudson Taylor was preparing to go to China as a pioneer missionary, he asked to be sent to the hardest and poorest place in England, that he might be prepared as possible, for the hard life he was certain he would face in China. In fulfilling his request, Hudson Taylor was sent to Hull. Things haven't changed there a great deal it seems, based on the somewhat dubious honor Hull received in 2016, that of being named the most economically deprived city in England. Though it must also be said that Hull saw a degree of improvement once it was declared to be the 2017 UK City of Culture.

Wilberforce must surely be Hull's most famous son, but the tragedy is that in all my numerous visits to his house in the High Street in Hull, there is relatively little promotion of Wilberforce even being a Christian, much less an evangelical Christian, or of the fact that Wilberforce did all

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[14] Murray Andrew Pura, *Vital Christianity: The Life and Spirituality of William Wilberforce* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2003), 9.

[15] William Wilberforce Unpublished Autobiography, Bodleian Library Special Collections and Archives.

[16] RI and S Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* Vol. 5 (London, 1838), 509.

that he did – because he was an evangelical! There is so little presented about his friendships and correspondence with the Christian giants of his day: John Newton, the Wesleys, Andrew Fuller, Charles Simeon, Robert Hall and Anne Judson. It's this truth, that Wilberforce's direct descendants, (including his great-great-great grandson Richard Wilberforce, whom I have met and regularly correspond with, and who bears a striking resemblance to his great-great-great grandfather), want me above everything else, to make sure the world appreciates, that it was Wilberforce's evangelical convictions that drove him to pursue and achieve all he did!

As part of that, my initial personal work on Wilberforce will consist of a volume consisting of c.65,000 previously unpublished words from his spiritual journals, together with his autobiography. I am now also part of a much larger academic project, working with several University Professors in England, intending to produce a multi-volume critical edition of all of Wilberforce Diaries, with over one million words to be published by Oxford University Press.

The question one must ask is why hasn't this already been done? Why have his diaries never yet been published? Because clearly William Wilberforce was and is a major figure: An MP for 45 years, even holding the important seat of Yorkshire; he met and corresponded with important individuals, including Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, John Jay, Marie Antoinette, and Lafayette; He was the Parliamentary spokesman for British Abolitionism, with a circle of powerful friends, supporters and influencers; he becomes a profoundly influential Christian leader –- a major figure in the evangelical revival, and one of THE Fathers of the Victorians! Even with just those few facts to ponder, it seems remarkable that the diaries have languished for two hundred years, waiting for the likes of someone like me to work on them!

I have several brief reasons why I think it's occurred! I believe, firstly, that Wilberforce has fallen afoul of what we might refer to as "academic fashion." Yes, Wilberforce may well be iconic, and maybe for that very reason, he actually became unfashionable within academia. I believe he became labelled and promoted by some as the "great white man" who stole the credit for abolition! I believe too, that some in academia see him as the figure used to whitewash Britain's moral reputation with regards to its involvement in slavery. I suspect he has also been avoided, because some have seen him not just as a social and political conservative

reformer, but as a painfully pious, evangelical do-gooder! I believe one evidence of this is the fact that the last scholarly biography of Wilberforce was written by Coupland almost one hundred years ago. So, whilst numerous biographies by evangelicals and British politicians have appeared in the meantime, especially in the period since the renaissance of interest created in Wilberforce by the bicentenary celebration of the Abolition Act in 2007, not one was published by a recognized scholar.

The second reason Wilberforce has been neglected, has been the accessibility of his manuscripts, for until the 1980's, almost all of his diaries were still in the hands of family members. One then has the legibility of the manuscripts as another reason for the neglect. Wilberforce's handwriting consists of a variety of writing styles including words that are incredibly jammed together, overwritten, abbreviated with all manner of symbols, written with faded ink and on torn pages. The sheer scale of such a project has, I suspect, constituted a further reason for delay. His diaries and journals consist of almost one million words. One million words that are jammed together, overwritten, abbreviated with all manner of symbols, written in faded ink and on torn pages.

The penultimate reason I would give, is that one also faces the monumental task of recreating the original diaries. The five- volume *Life of Wilberforce* compiled by his sons, incorporates numerous extracts from their father's diaries, only what is published is often different from what was originally penned by him – creating a painstaking effort of comparing and editing. Lastly, I would argue his documents have been neglected because some very misleading statements were made, implying that no real further scholarly work on the manuscripts was needed.

Almost one hundred years ago, Coupland confidently stated, "Virtually nothing of interest or importance was left unquoted."[17] I am convinced he wasn't being untruthful, though it was massively misleading. I believe the real issue lay in the fact that all Coupland had access to was a very limited diary covering only three years! My argument therefore is pretty simple. If we base our understanding and appreciation of Wilberforce and the incredible achievements that he and others won at great personal cost–mainly as most have done, or even solely as some seem to have–on the published life by his sons, then we are making a very

[17] Reginald Coupland, *Wilberforce A Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923).

big mistake. Because even if we agree the sons didn't actually create material, what they did do was to make many embarrassing or awkward details simply disappear! They consistently doctored extracts where Wilberforce shares intimate details about, for example, his use of opiates, the sexual temptations he faced, his honest appraisals of certain church officials, and the size of the footprint of Thomas Clarkson in abolitionism (which the sons deliberately and tragically diminish).

Even with all their shenanigans and misuse of the mss, it still means only 10%-15% of Wilberforce's diaries have ever been published, and it is certain that the remaining 85-90% is not devoid of anything of interest or importance. In other words, a full edition of the diaries and journals is well past-due. It will restore well over three quarters of a million words of Wilberforce's diaries and give us a much more accurate and honest picture of the real William Wilberforce!

That portrait I will now attempt to portray somewhat briefly but based upon over a decade's immersion in his unpublished spiritual journals and autobiography. We learn from them firstly, just how important the spiritual discipline of journaling was to him. It became a vital means to his self-reflection and self-examination. His practice confirms the scholarly idea that journaling did for evangelicals what the confessional had done for the Medieval Church, because that's precisely how Wilberforce approached his entries.

He also reveals he is amazed, and constantly, that God could use him. He is so worried that his sinful lifestyle will thwart God's use of him, together with any hope of success in the mission God had called him to do. He believes he never gets up early enough; that he eats too much, drinks too much; that he's not enough concerned for the spiritual good of others – for his family, servants, friends, and colleagues. As he records, "How little have I observed my peculiar Character. How vain glorious in truth. How little Solicitous for friends' Spirit[l.] Good. How secretly malicious, Oimoi!"[18] That Greek word Oimoi!, the word used of the cry of a woman's lament at classical Greek funerals (similar to woe is me!), becomes Wilberforce's favorite word to use of himself when he senses how spiritually bad he has been.

We also discover how driven Wilberforce was to win people to Christ. He used an evangelistic tactic with his friends that he referred to as

[18] Reginald Coupland, *Wilberforce A Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923) v.

'Launchers' – notes and helps which he spent a long time preparing, as ways to 'launch' the talk more towards Christ. Now the truth is, that though many knew this was Wilberforce's plan, it did not make him any the less attractive as a guest, for as one contemporary wrote, "…when the little man came in late to a dinner party, bristling, maybe, with 'launchers', every face lighted up with pleasure at his entry."[19] For me, that is the real Wilberforce, a winsome, humble, determined, fanatical (in the best sense of the word), evangelistic agent of usefulness!

It was this desire to win souls that also drove him to spend four years writing and praying for his book, *A Practical View*.[20] He wrote it to explain his conversion, to confront his own upper class peers with the Gospel, and so to do for them what the evangelical revival had done for the lower class in England. God blessed his book in an incredible way. It's worth noting for example, that when the printer was approached initially, he was pretty dubious, believing there to be little real demand for religious books, with therefore little hope of a good return. However, once he learned it would at least carry the name of Wilberforce, he did agree to a run of five hundred copies. His concern was groundless, for they were sold out in just days. Within just six months, a further five reprints had also completely sold out. His book became a best-seller, going to thirteen editions in England and twenty-six in America, with translations in six languages.

I have come to love Wilberforce for so many reasons. But I love him especially for how he fought for Baptists and Baptist missions, and for the intense criticism he would face for doing so. As he recorded, "…they think I cannot be loyal to the Established Church because I love Dissenters."[21] He also stated that the same critics referred to his collaboration with them, as "akin to treason."[22]

I believe he did it because he knew Baptists loved and preached the same Gospel that he did, "I do not know a finer instance of the moral

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[19] Ibid., 237.

[20] William Wilberforce, Unpublished Spiritual Journal, Sunday September 23, 1798.

[21] William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity* (London: T. Cadell, 1797).

[22] Walter H. Burgess, 'Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society,' Vol. 24, Issue 3 (London: Lindsey Press, 2009) 130.

sublime, than that a poor cobbler working in his stall should conceive the idea of converting the Hindoos to Christianity; yet such was [William] Carey."[23] He also met with Andrew Fuller on several occasions, and was massively influential in making it possible and legal for missionaries like Carey and others to serve across the British Empire!

We learn, too, of the incredible struggles and opposition he faced. Wilberforce probably suffered from ulcerative colitis, incredibly painful and debilitating inflammation and sores in the intestines. The only relief he experienced was achieved through the use of a new drug, opium, but its dosages and side effects were then still unknown, with the tragic consequence that Wilberforce became addicted fairly quickly, suffering horrific hallucinations and terrible depressions as a result. He also secretly wore a metal frame under his clothing in an attempt to correct the painful skeletal issues he suffered from. He had also inherited a severe eye disorder, which at times caused him to be almost blind. Added to all this, it is certain that the many years of exhausting conflict he endured in Parliament must have taken an incalculable toll on his health!

It was therefore so very sad for me to discover that Wilberforce ended up dying in a house that was not his own, being forced to sell what he had owned to pay debts that were not his – but incurred by his son, and further that he also physically died alone, at least humanly speaking, for no other person was there at the time he did pass away. But oh! What a reception in heaven!

To work for the end of slavery was both unpopular as well as potentially dangerous. With the consequence that Wilberforce quickly became the target of several tirades and actual physical assaults, even surviving two serious assassination attempts. Even the great British hero Admiral Nelson, wrote that as long as he could speak and fight, he would resist, "…the damnable doctrines of Wilberforce,"[24] believing him to be traitor to England's national interest. An angry sea-captain physically assaulted Wilberforce on the street, requiring Wilberforce to travel from then on with an armed bodyguard. It was scandalously and maliciously rumoured that Wilberforce had secretly taken a black wife whom he beat regularly, and that many of his friends were French spies. The opposition

[23] RI and S Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce by his Sons* A new edition, abridged. (London, 1843), 419.

[24] Garth Lean, *God's Politician: William Wilberforce's Struggle* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1987) 81.

became so fierce, one friend feared he would one day read Wilberforce had been, "broiled by Indian planters, barbecued by African merchants, and eaten by Guinea captains."[25]

Wilberforce's chief opponent in Parliament was Banastre Tarlton, "Bloody Tarleton" as Americans knew him, the man whose life became the basis for the evil Colonel Tavington, as portrayed in Mel Gibson's 2000 movie, 'The Patriot.' But though Tavington ends up skewered on an American flag at the film's close, the real Tarleton lived to become an MP representing the port of Liverpool, much of whose wealth came from slavery, with the result that Tarleton was a major opponent in Parliament of Wilberforce's call for abolition.

The journals also reveal how much Wilberforce loved God's Word, especially the Psalms, which I have determined is the most quoted Bible book in his journals, and he was drawn to memorize and pray them often, "Walked from Hyde Park Corner, repeating the 119th Psalm, in great comfort,"[26] and "Got 2 or 3 St. Paul's Epistles by Heart, when otherwise quite idle, & had rather resolv'd to get by Heart much of Scripture in this way."[27]

It is very clear too, how much Wilberforce loved his wife and family. The same year he published his book, 1787, he also married Barbara Spooner. He was 37, and she was 26. He proposed only eight days after he met her, married her just a few weeks after that, and so began in his own words, "Thirty-five years of undiluted happiness!"[28] Within ten years they had four sons and two daughters and Wilberforce was devoted to all seven of them. Once, when his children were playing upstairs, he was very frustrated at having misplaced a very important letter, and with time being most urgent, all that one could hear were his children shouting and playing. His guest thought that surely even Wilberforce would show his annoyance, instead he turned to his houseguest, smiled and said, "What a blessing to have these dear children! Only think what

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[25] Paul Coughlin, *Unleashing Courageous Faith: The Hidden Power of a Man's Soul* (Minneapolis, MI: Bethany House, 2009) 74-75.

[26] R.I. and S. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* Vol. 5 (London, 1838), 45.

[27] William Wilberforce, Unpublished Spiritual Journal, Sunday March 26, 1797.

[28] See the 'about us' page of Pocklington School's website, the school Wilberforce attended as a teenager, https://www.wilberforceschool.org/about-us/william-wilberforce.

a relief, amidst other hurries, to hear their voices and know they are well."[29]

He really was a very unusual father for his day, for most fathers with the wealth and position he enjoyed, rarely saw their children – farming them out to nannies and governesses. But for Wilberforce, even with the life of busyness that was his, he insisted on eating as many meals as possible with his children, as well actively joining in many of their games – playing marbles, Blindman's Buff and running races with them. Guests would be amazed as the children treated him like one of them. But he also regularly wrote detailed letters to them – reminding them of his and God's unconditional love, and always encouraging them to stay close to Christ. So touching and unique are these letters, that they were recently republished as *Amazing Dad: Letters from William Wilberforce to his Children*.[30]

The journals and other manuscripts let us see something of how he genuinely loved and intervened for the poor and vulnerable. How Wilberforce did all he did I have absolutely no idea, for along with all the time and energy invested in his abolition work, Wilberforce was an active creator, member, leader or supporter of at least 69 very active societies. He campaigned for the poor, for chimney sweeps, the uneducated, and for children in mines and factories. He helped found the Church Missionary Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the London Missionary Society (which would send Eric Liddle to China and Livingstone to Africa). He sacrificially supported dozens of evangelical and humanitarian institutions including fever hospitals, asylums, infirmaries, and prisons. He founded schools for the deaf and the blind, lending libraries and schools for the poor. He helped found the School for the Blind in York, the National Gallery, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution – all four of which are still flourishing.

He financially supported the artist William Blake; Patrick Bronte through school; and the widow of Charles Wesley by giving her a pension for many years. He also gave to projects to help improve people's lives, including Michael Flaherty's research into electro-magnetism; Sir

[29] "The Christian Examiner and General Review,' Vol. XXVI, third series, Vol. VIII, London, 1839, 210.

[30] Stephanie Byrd, ed., *Amazing Dad: Letters from William Wilberforce to his Children* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2010).

Humphrey Davy's research into the safety lamp; and Edward Jenner's research into smallpox vaccinations.

Lastly, we learn that Wilberforce loved to read the Puritans and other similar writers. He loved reading Richard Baxter, John Owen, Philip Doddridge and Jonathan Edwards, with many of his own personal volumes having annotations still being on display in Wilberforce's library in Hull.

I have not preached a sermon, except to me – Wilberforce himself is the sermon. His life as an imperfect, godly, Bible-loving, evangelistic, winsome agent of usefulness is the challenge, especially when today the fight is all the greater – with the present-day horrors of slavery, human trafficking and abortion on a scale Wilberforce could never have imagined. Therefore, if ever we are tempted to give up the fight or even to throw away all we have in Christ, Wilberforce's life and words should still challenge:

> Accustom yourself to look first to the dreadful consequences of failure; then fix your eye on the glorious prize which is before you; and when your strength begins to fail, and your spirits are well-nigh exhausted, let the animating view rekindle your resolution, and call forth in renewed vigour the fainting energies of your soul.[31]

In another place, he also adds, "Let [Christians] boldly assert the cause of Christ in an age when so many who bear the name of Christian are ashamed of Him."[32]

> At 4 A.M. on February 24, 1807, England's House of Commons, by an overwhelming majority of 283 to 16, abolished the slave trade. They rose to their feet, turned to fellow legislator William Wilberforce, and began to cheer while Wilberforce bowed his head and wept.[33]

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[31] William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1829) 121.

[32] William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity* (Philadelphia: Key and Biddle, 1835) 314.

[33] Kevin Charles Belmonte, *Hero for Humanity: A Biography of William Wilberforce* (Carol Stream, IL: Navpress, 2002) 148.

Granville the Prime Minister called the victory, "A measure which will diffuse happiness among millions now in existence, and for which his memory will be blessed by millions yet unborn."[34]

[34] 'The Parliamentary Register,' Vol. 1 (London, 1807), 457.

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Charles Spurgeon on the Work of the Father

RYAN RIPPEE
Adjunct Professor,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

In 19th Century Britain, no preacher held a greater reputation than Charles Spurgeon of the Metropolitan Tabernacle pulpit.[1] Because he left behind a legacy of over 3,500 sermons, a pastor's college, an orphanage, and copious devotional material, he is primarily known today as a pastor and teacher rather than a theologian. This assessment is due, in part, to the emphasis Spurgeon placed on practical theology. For example, Peter Morden, in his insightful work on Spurgeon's influences and spirituality writes: "The training [at the Pastor's College] was…practical and applied. The college existed to equip preachers rather than to produce scholars, and it was vital that all the men were useful in the cause of Christ and his kingdom."[2] The perception of Spurgeon also persists because he received no formal theological training. Nevertheless, Tom Nettles argues: "Whatever else he was, Spurgeon was a Christian theologian,"[3] and Christian George agrees:

> In the academic arena, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892) rarely surfaces as a theologian. Most of his biographers position him as a homiletician, an evangelist and pastor, a social worker and abolitionist, a college president, and so forth. Yet his sixty-three volumes of sermons, forty-nine volumes of commentaries,

1 A number of biographies have been written on Charles Spurgeon, including Arnold A. Dallimore, Spurgeon (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), and most recently Tom J. Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2013). Peter Morden recounts a story that when Spurgeon was only twenty-four years old, the North American Review reported that two questions were asked of Americans returning from England: 1) "Did you see the Queen?" and 2) "Did you hear Spurgeon?" in Peter J. Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C.H. Spurgeon* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2010),

2 Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People*, 202.

3 Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 179.

> sayings, illustrations, and devotionals, and a lifetime of personal correspondence reveals the fact that Charles Haddon Spurgeon is actually doing a theology worth investigating.[4]

In fact, in Spurgeon's first published sermon, he begins his discourse by arguing for the study of theology:

> It has been said by someone that "the proper study of mankind is man." I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity.[5]

For Spurgeon, this study was immensely practical in order to console the saints[6] and to manifest God's power among them.[7] Therefore, Spurgeon argues for the prominence of Trinitarian theology in both preaching and ministry: "Remember, you cannot pray without the Trinity. If the full work of salvation requires a Trinity, so does that very breath by which we

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[4] Christian George, 'Incarnating the Incarnation: A Theological Analysis of the Ontological Christology of Charles H. Spurgeon,' Perichoresis 2009 (January 1, 2009), 190. In his dissertation on the Christology of Spurgeon, George says, "While Spurgeon did not desire or receive the theological credentials that might have assisted future theologians and historians in remembering him as a theologian, he nevertheless produced theology in an organic, albeit unorganized, way." Quoted in Christian George, 'Jesus Christ, the "Prince of Pilgrims": A Critical Analysis of the Ontological, Functional, and Exegetical Christologies in the Sermons, Writings, and Lectures of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)' (PhD diss., University of St Andrews, 2012), 41.

[5] C. H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 1 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1855), 1. Hereafter NPSP.

[6] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:1.

[7] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:379.

live. You cannot draw near to the Father except through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit."[8]

Because the doctrine of the Son and the Spirit respectively have been addressed in recent Spurgeon scholarship,[9] the goal of this paper is to examine Spurgeon's Paterology,[10] focusing on the work of the Father[11] in bringing about salvation.[12] To be sure, Spurgeon does not attribute salvation solely to the Father, nor would he advocate any sundering of divine unity. For example, he can speak of the Father, Son and Spirit's

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[8]C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 37 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1891), 374. Hereafter MTP.

[9] For Spurgeon on the Son, see George, 'Jesus Christ.' For Spurgeon on the Spirit, see Zachery W. Eswine, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Preaching Theory and Practice of Charles Haddon Spurgeon' (PhD diss., Regent University, 2003), and more briefly Michael A. G. Haykin, 'Where the Spirit of God Is, There Is Power: An Introduction to Spurgeon's Teaching on the Holy Spirit,' *Churchman* (1992), 197–208.

[10] The study of the person and work of the Father. This theology has been largely assumed under the discipline of Theology Proper, but rarely given specific attention. For current studies, see Tom Smail, *The Forgotten Father: Rediscovering the Heart of the Christian Gospel*, (London: Paternoster Press, 1996, chapter 2 in Ben Witherington and Laura Michaels Ice, *The Shadow of the Almighty: Father, Son and Spirit in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), chapter 3 of Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), John Koessler, *God Our Father* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999, and most recently Gerald Bray, *God Has Spoken*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2014), 99–210.

[11] I am not so much concerned with the metaphor of Father, as I am with the work of the first person of the Godhead.

[12] Due to the voluminous nature of Spurgeon's literature, space does not allow for a study of the Father's works in creation and providence. Spangenberg gives attention to this in an excursus, after discussing the nature, attributes and names of God. Peter Spangenberg, *Theologie und Glaube bei Spurgeon* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1969), 76–106. For Spurgeon on the Father in Creation, see C. H. Spurgeon, *A Catechism, With Proofs* (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 5; *NPSP*, 1:229–230. For Spurgeon on the Father in Providence, see Spurgeon, *A Catechism, With Proofs*, 6; *NPSP*, 2:185, 189; *MTP*, 12:26–27, C. H. Spurgeon, *Farm Sermons* (New York: Passmore and Alabaster, 1882), 51–52, 60–61, 220–221, 248–249, and C. H. Spurgeon and Sir George Williams, *A Good Start: A Book for Young Men and Women* (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 295–296.

cooperation in salvation,[13] including sanctification[14] and redemption,[15] which all flow from Triune grace,[16] peace[17] and love.[18] And yet, he could also attribute particular actions to each member of the Godhead.[19]

Thus, in focusing on the Father's work, I will first demonstrate why the subject was important to Spurgeon and then systematize his thought into four stages of redemptive history: 1) the Father planning salvation from eternity past, 2) the Father providing salvation through the sending of his Son to be the Messiah, 3) the Father producing salvation in his elect through the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and 4) the Father perfecting salvation in the consummation of his kingdom.

The Importance of Paterology to Spurgeon

Spurgeon identified a number of heresies related to the doctrine of the Father. Foremost in his mind was the doctrine of the "universal fatherhood of God." Addressing it from the pulpit no less than on ten

[13] See 'Comfort and Constancy' in Spurgeon, *MTP*, 40:257, 'The Holy Spirit Glorifying Christ' in C. H. Spurgeon, *Messages to the Multitude: Being Ten Representative Sermons* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1892), 281–285, 'The Personality of the Holy Ghost' in Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:29–30, 'Why Are Men Saved?' in *NPSP*, 3:66, 'Things that Accompany Salvation' in *NPSP*, 3:357, and 'Salvation Altogether by Grace' in *MTP*, 12:423–424.

[14] 'Threefold Sanctification' in Spurgeon, *MTP*, 8:85–88, and Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), July 12 entry.

[15] 'The Oil of Gladness' in Spurgeon, *MTP*, 22:25–26.

[16] Commenting on Isaiah 61:3 in C. H. Spurgeon, *The Interpreter: Spurgeon's Devotional Bible* (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 415, and 'Prospect – "He Will Keep"' in Spurgeon, *MTP*, 32:69.

[17] 'The God of Peace' in Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:371–372.

[18] 'The Condescension of Christ' in Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 3:350, and 'Grieving the Holy Spirit' in Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 5:426.

[19] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 19:67. Also, Spurgeon's hymnbook begins by being arranged about a Trinitarian scheme and the subject headings under the Father include: "Adoration of God," "Attributes of God," "Acts of God," including "Creation and providence," "Predestination in connection with grace," and "The covenant." C. H. Spurgeon, *Our Own Hymn Book: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social and Private Worship* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883).

occasions,[20] Spurgeon repeatedly condemned it as a "new heresy"[21] that undermines the Gospel:

> We have lived to see a certain sort of men…who seek to teach now-a-days, that God is a universal Father, and that our ideas of his dealing with the impenitent as a Judge, and not as a Father, are remnants of antiquated error. Sin, according to these men, is a disorder rather than an offence, an error rather than a crime. Love is the only attribute they can discern, and the full-orbed Deity they have not known. Some of these men push their way very far into the bogs and mire of falsehood, until they inform us that eternal punishment is ridiculed as a dream. In fact, books now appear, which teach us that there is no such thing as the Vicarious Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.[22]

Spurgeon is aware of their argument from Acts 17:28, where Paul quotes a Greek poet saying, "We are indeed his offspring;"[23] nevertheless, Spurgeon distinguishes the regenerate from the rest of mankind in that they alone through adoption can call God "Father," and appeals to the word of Jesus as the final authority on the matter:

> I want you, dear friends, to look at the text, and to notice two or three things that come out, as it were, incidentally. The first is, that *the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God is a lie*. That is clear enough from this passage: "I speak that which I have seen with *my* Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with *your* father." Then, there are two fathers, and there are two sets of children; there is a Father whom Christ calls, "My Father;" and there is another father whom he calls, in speaking to the Jews who hated him, "your father." The prayer beginning, "Our Father, which art in heaven," was never meant to be used by everybody; in the mouth of the ungodly, it is altogether out of place, for God is not their Father. "Ye must be born again" before ye can be the children of God.[24]

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[20] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 2:316–317, 6:190, 6:421; *MTP*, 12:170, 16:413, 21:30, 21:121–122, 21:558–559, 23:568, and 44:122–123.
[21] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6:421.
[22] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6:190.
[23] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 2:316–317.
[24] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 44:122–123.

Spurgeon was Augustinian in his Trinitarianism,[25] and so decried two other heresies regarding the Father: the ancient heresy of modalism[26] and the more recent heresy of Unitarianism.[27] "We cannot explain how the Father, Son, and Spirit can be each one distinct and perfect in himself, and yet that these three are one, so that there is but one God; yet we do verily believe it, and mean to preach it, notwithstanding Unitarian, Socinian, Sabellian, or any other error. We shall hold fast evermore the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity."[28]

And although he was loathe to pry into the mystery of "eternal generation" or the "filiation" of the Son,[29] nonetheless, Spurgeon

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[25] George argues, "Spurgeon was no Sabellian. At the heart of his theology is a robust Augustinian Trinitarianism that preserved not only the Father's distinction from the Son, but also the Father's wrath upon his Son for the sins of his people." George, 'Incarnating the Incarnation: A Theological Analysis of the Ontological Christology of Charles H. Spurgeon' *Perichoresis, 2009* (2009), 199. See also Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 4:289–290; *MTP*, 8:530, 30:640, and 35:695.

[26] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 24:529.

[27] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 7:153.

[28] C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle*. vol. 2 (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1889), 72. Interestingly, Spurgeon believed that the unity of the Godhead meant that all three members owned the divine name and would often structure his Old Testament preaching on Yahweh in a Trinitarian fashion. For example, preaching on the word "Jehovah" in Isaiah 41:14 says, "'I will help thee, saith Jehovah.' That means Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 'Ah! but,' said God, 'my people will forget that, unless I amplify the thought; so I will even break it up; I will remind them of my Trinity. They understand my Unity; I will bid them recollect that there are Three in the One, though these Three be One;' and he adds, 'thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.' Jehovah—Redeemer—Holy One of Israel—three persons, all included, indeed, in the word Jehovah, but very likely to be forgotten unless they had been distinctly enumerated." Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 3:399–400. See also *MTP*, 46:414 and 47:614.

[29] When Spurgeon brought this point up in a sermon, he would often use humor or wit to plead ignorance on the matter. For example, "We cannot pry into the wondrous mystery of the eternal filiation of the Son of God lest we be blinded by excess of light," Spurgeon, *MTP*, 24:688. See also C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 1-26*, vol. 1 (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 12; *MTP*, 9:234; 38:352.

strongly affirmed that the Father was the eternal Father and the Son was the Eternal Son yet without any "second position in order of time."[30] The doctrine of "filiation" is to be "meekly and reverently received"[31] because the "Father's eternal delight" is in his Son.[32] Thus, for Spurgeon, the most appropriate language is that of the Nicene Creed: Christ is "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God."[33]

Though Spurgeon never uses the term "Paterology," he demonstrates its importance when addressing the first person of the Godhead:

> If there be any one Person in the Trinity whom we are more apt to forget than another in our praises, it is God the Father. In fact there are some who even get a wrong idea of Him, a slanderous idea of that God whose name is LOVE. They imagine that love dwelt in Christ, rather than in the Father; and that our salvation is rather due to the Son and the Holy Spirit, than to our Father God. Let us not be of the number of the ignorant, but let us receive this truth. We are as much indebted to the Father as to any other Person of the Sacred Three. He as much and as truly loves us as any of the adorable Three Persons. He is as truly worthy of our highest praise as either the Son or the Holy Spirit.[34]

Spurgeon also reflects that Christ-centeredness does not mean Christ-exclusiveness:

> It is possible also to rob the divine Father. In preaching the sacrifice of Christ it is possible to extol the Son at the expense of the Father. It will never do to make it appear that Jesus died to make the Father merciful. God the ever-blessed, the first person of the sacred Trinity, is love, and therefore he gave his Son to die for men. We are to worship the Son even as we worship the Father; but to magnify the love of the Son above the love of the Father would be to rob God.[35]

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[30] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 41:182–183, 44:121, and 50:494.
[31] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 9:234.
[32] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 44:121.
[33] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 40:488, 45:386–387.
[34] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6:261.
[35] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 36:415.

This is because in Spurgeon's mind, "It would be traitorous to Christ's inmost wish if we were to glorify the Son and fail to reverence and love the Father,"[36] for the Father is the fountainhead of divinity,[37] and the "husbandman" of salvation.[38] Thus, as architect and overseer, all of the Father's works are rooted in his love and are for the purpose of revealing his glory, and ought to be understood by every Christian.

The Father Planned Salvation from Eternity Past

For Spurgeon, the plan of salvation starts with the premise that the Father has always been well-pleased with his Son.[39] Also, in their eternal council, both the Son and Spirit serve the Father as all-wise, kindred counselors.[40] Emerging from this triune council is what Spurgeon calls at various times the "covenant"[41] and the "decree"[42] respectively.[43] Regarding the Father's part of the covenant, Spurgeon teaches that the

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[36] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 25:170.

[37]Spurgeon, *MTP*, 59:440–441.

[38] C. H. Spurgeon, *Farm Sermons*, pp. 249–252. In this sermon, the Father's oversight as the vinedresser begins in his work of election in eternity past, continues throughout the process of sanctification in fellowship and communion with Christ and will be completed in the future through the preservation and perseverance of the saints in the power of the Spirit.

[39] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 41:182.

[40] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 4:401–402. For all three members as part of the council, see Spurgeon, *NPSP,* 5:42, 5:418–419. For the Father as the architect, see Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12:424.

[41] Spurgeon, *NPSP,* 1:131. When Spurgeon refers to it as a covenant, he demonstrates his indebtedness to John Owen's development of the "covenant of redemption." Owen has an extensive treatment on the *pactum* in Exercitation 28, 'Federal Transactions between the Father and the Son' in his introduction to *Hebrews*, Owen, *Works,* 19:77–97, as well as in chapter 4 in his *Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ* in Owen, *Works,* 1:54–62.

[42] In his catechism, he defines the decree as "[God's] eternal purpose according to the counsel of his own will, whereby for his own glory he has foreordained whatever comes to pass (Eph. 1:11–12)." C. H. Spurgeon, *A Catechism, With Proofs*, 5.

[43] Spurgeon's most extensive treatment of the covenant is found in the following three sermons: 1) 'The Immutability of God,' Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:1–8, 2) 'His Name – The Counsellor,' *NPSP,* 4:401–408, and 3) 'The Blood of the Everlasting Covenant,' *NPSP*, 5:417–424.

Father first pledges himself to the son,[44] then gives his Son a chosen people,[45] and finally makes his Son to be a surety of the covenant[46] by means of his substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of his elect,[47] thereby granting full pardon, acceptance, adoption, and eternal life to his chosen ones.[48]

Spurgeon vividly reenacts the pledge made by the Father when the covenant was formed:

> I, the Most High Jehovah, do hereby give unto my only begotten and well-beloved Son, a people, countless beyond the number of the stars, who shall be by him washed from sin, by him preserved, and kept, and led, and by him, at last, presented before my throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. I covenant by oath, and swear by myself, because I can swear by no greater, that these whom I now give to Christ shall be for ever the objects of my eternal love. Them will I forgive through the merit of the blood. To these will I give a perfect righteousness; these will I adopt and make my sons and daughters, and these shall reign with me through Christ eternally.[49]

In order to bring about the terms of the covenant, the Father decrees all that will come to pass in regard to creation,[50] providence,[51] grace,[52]

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[44] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 5:419.
[45] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 3:358, 4:186; *MTP*, 21:651–652. C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: The Art of Illustration; Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle*, vol. 3 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1905), 99.
[46] Spurgeon, *The Interpreter*, p. 736; *NPSP*, 2:30; and *MTP*, 56:602–603.
[47] C. H. Spurgeon, *Able to the Uttermost: Twenty Gospel Sermons* (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 207–208; *NPSP*, 1:3, 1:70–71, 2:30, 3:279–280, 3:358, 4:403–404, 6:75; *MTP*, 11:89, 15:258, 20:438, 56:602–603.
[48] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21:652, 50:401; *NPSP*, 1:70–71, 5:419–424.
[49] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 5:419–420. For the covenant as a demonstrating of eternal love see Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 184–189.
[50] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 4:402.
[51] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 4:403.
[52] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 4:403–404. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 88-110*, vol. 4 (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 460.

unconditional election,[53] predestination,[54] particular redemption[55] salvation,[56] and eternal peace.[57] Furthermore, the Father's decree will not fail for it is an orderly decree.[58] There will be no change of plans,[59] no change of promises,[60] and no end to its benefits.[61]

Furthermore, in Spurgeon's thinking, this was no ivory tower theology. On the contrary, one of his greatest pastoral concerns was for his people to know and delight in the Father's love:

> He is not become an Almighty tyrant, whereas he was once an Almighty Father; but his strong love stands like a granite rock, unmoved by the hurricanes of our iniquity. And blessed be his dear name, he is unchanged in his *love*. When he first wrote the covenant, how full his heart was with affection to his people…He loves as much now as he did then; and when suns shall cease to

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[53] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 3:358, 6:75; *MTP*, 12:45, 14:459, 16:605, 29:489, 34:429, 48:263, 56:602–603, 62:615–616. C. H. Spurgeon, *Daily Help* (Baltimore: R. H. Woodward & Company, 1892), 196. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: A Commentary on the Book of Matthew* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1893), 82. Spurgeon often calls Christ the "first elect," and a people are chosen in him. See Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:80, 2:268–269, 4:405. Though the Father's sovereign choice is discriminating, for Spurgeon it is not sparing. Spurgeon believed the Father's elect comprised such an "exceeding great company" that he could say, "I believe there will be more in Heaven than in hell." C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife and His Private Secretary, 1834–1854*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati; Chicago; St. Louis: Curts & Jennings, 1898), 174.

[54] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 3:358; *MTP*, 7:61, 16:605. For Spurgeon's controversy with the hyper-Calvinists over limited atonement/particular redemption and the genuine offer of the gospel, see Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon V. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995). For a popular level treatment of Spurgeon on the doctrines of grace and the universal offer of the Gospel see Steven J. Lawson, *The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon* (Orlando: Reformation Trust Pub., 2012).

[55] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 3:358, 5:424; *MTP*, 15:258, 46:307, 56:602–603; *Spurgeon's Autobiography*, 1:172.

[56] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 19:340, 46:307.

[57] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 20:434.

[58] Spurgeon, *Able to the Uttermost*, 62–63; *NPSP*, 1:146.

[59] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 14:232, 19:339; *Spurgeon's Autobiography*, 1:325.

[60] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 5:420, 6:25–26.

[61] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:3, 5:423.

> shine, and moons to show their feeble light, he still shall love on for ever and for ever.[62]

In fact, Spurgeon asks the question, "Why did God hold a council at all?" After eliminating a number of possible reasons ("not because of any deficiency in his knowledge," "not for the increase of his satisfaction," not with "a view of deliberation"), he concludes, "that we might understand how wise God is.…It was, then, for our sakes, not for God's sake, the council was held—that we might know the unanimity of the glorious persons, and the deep wisdom of their devices."[63]

And finally, because the Son is the "angel" and messenger of the covenant,[64] and because in Christ is housed the entire "treasury of grace,"[65] Spurgeon was committed to preaching and proclaiming a Christ-centered message to his people.

> So again, beyond a doubt, our text intends that Christ is Alpha and Omega *in all covenant transactions*…The thoughts of God, the eternal decrees, the inscrutable purposes of Jehovah, these are deep things; but we know this concerning them, that from first to last they all have a relation to Christ…Search for the celestial fountain from which divine streams of grace have flowed to us, and you find Jesus Christ as the well-spring of covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running along the margin of every page, and you shall see that from beginning to end one object was always aimed at—the glory of the Son of God. The Father begins with exalting Jesus, and concludes with glorifying him with the glory which he had with him before the world was…[66]

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[62]Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:3. See also C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife and His Private Secretary, 1854–1860*, vol. 2 (Chicago; New York; Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899), 228; *MTP*, 13:435, 14:582–583, 38:130, and 56:602–603.

[63] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 4:401–402.

[64] Spurgeon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom,* 83; *MTP*, 7:202.

[65] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 50:401.

[66] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 9:715.

The Father Provided Salvation through the Sending of His Son

Contrary to the rising liberalism of his day, Spurgeon would argue that the Father takes a "great personal interest in salvation," and demonstrates it by giving his Son and thus the Father is the "worker of salvation as much as he is the worker of creation."[67] As in the covenant, redemptive history reveals that the Father's motive is his love, which made him resolve to glorify his Son:

> The mysterious volume which has been gradually unfolded before us has only this one design—the Father would make known his love to the Son, and make the Son's glories to appear before the eyes of those whom the Father gave him. This Fall and this Redemption, and the story as a whole, so far as the divine purpose is concerned, are the fruit of the Father's love to the Son, and his delight in glorifying the Son. Those myriads, those white-robed myriads, harping to music infinitely deep, what mean they all? They are the Father's delight in the Son.[68]

For Spurgeon then, his own Christ-centered ministry was simply in line with that of the Father, who along with the Spirit, are the most Christ-centered persons in the universe.[69] Spurgeon even encouraged his people to gratefully receive the Father's grace in Christ because it "pleases the heart of the great God to see Jesus adorned with the fulness of Deity, and every time Jesus gives out grace to believers, the heart of God is thereby gladdened."[70] Furthermore, since the greatest revelation of the Father is Christ,[71] and since by giving his Son, the Father is giving himself,[72] the first work the converted sinner apprehends is the work of the Son:

> Why was not the Father's work put first [in the parable of the lost sheep], as the Trinity is "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost"? Why is it also that, in the Benediction, Paul writes, "The grace of

[67] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6:125–126.
[68] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 32:178–179.
[69] "The great object of God the Father is to glorify his Son. It is his will 'that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father (John 5:23).'" Spurgeon, *MTP*, 17:86.
[70] C. H. Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation: The Foundation of Christianity* (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 135.
[71] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 8:521, and Spurgeon and Williams, *A Good Start*, 297–298.
[72] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 26:424–425.

> the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all"? Why, because the love of Christ is the first thing that the sinner apprehends. Our first Christian experience is not, as a rule, a knowledge of the Holy Spirit or the Father; but, to our consciousness, it is Jesus Christ who is first revealed to us. I think it is for this reason that the work of the Son of God is here first set forth.[73]

Nevertheless, Spurgeon again warns of the mistake of ascribing more honor to the Son in salvation than to the Father:

> We are, alas! too apt to forget, that while there are distinctions as to the persons in the Trinity, there are no distinctions of honor; and we do very frequently ascribe the honor of our salvation, or at least the depths of its mercy and the extremity of its benevolence, more to Jesus Christ than we do to the Father. This is a very great mistake… *The Father* sent him! Contemplate that subject…Let every thought that you have of Jesus be also connected with the eternal, ever-blessed God; for "he," saith Jehovah, "shall come forth unto *me*." Who sent him, then? The answer is, his Father.[74]

Spurgeon loved to say that the Son did not come as an "unauthorized" or "amateur" Savior,[75] and that the Father's work of sending the Son should cheer the believer's heart,[76] for the Father was working to guarantee the success of the Son's mission. The Father sent him to be the second Adam,[77] and so prepared a body for his incarnation,[78] and empowered

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[73] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 49:621. Nettles argues similarly: "Though the covenant of redemption was made before creation within the eternal will of God appropriate to the distinct operations of each person of the Trinity, Spurgeon viewed its effectuality as dependent most significantly on the Son." See Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 189.

[74] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 2:25–26.

[75] Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation,* 77; *NPSP*, 3:121, 4:67, 5:26–27; *MTP*, 7:202, 8:677, 12:296, 16:425–426, 19:341, 20:88, 21:159–160, 30:688–689; and *Morning and Evening*, February 5.

[76] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 20:88.

[77] Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation*, 119–120.

[78] Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation*, 120–121; *NPSP*, 6:41; and *MTP*, 8:677.

him with an anointing by the Holy Spirit.[79] The Father qualified the Son to be the Messiah,[80] and gave him the titles Redeemer, Mediator,[81] Comforter,[82] "Eternal Father,"[83] and most aptly, Jesus:

> JESUS is *the most appropriate name* that our Lord could receive. Of this we are quite certain, for the Father knew all about him, and could name him well…To perfection the Father knew him, and he names him Jesus. We may be sure, then, that our Lord is most of all a Saviour, and is best described by that term; God, the Father, who knows him best, sees this to be his grand characteristic, that he is a Saviour, and is best represented by the name "Jesus [emphasis original]."[84]

Additionally, the Father bore witness to him as prophet, priest and king:

> This [John 12:28] was the third time the heavenly voice had borne witness to him. First, when as our Priest he commenced his life-work at his baptism; a second time upon the mount of transfiguration, when his Father said "Hear ye him," thus marking him out as the prophet long foretold; and now a third time when he had just entered Jerusalem as King. Thus in each of his three offices the Father bare witness concerning him.[85]

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[79] Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation*, 77; *NPSP*, 4:154; *MTP*, 9:344, 13:317, 21:159–160, and 22:161.

[80] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 5:26–27, and *MTP*, 13:341, 377; 16:426–426.

[81] Spurgeon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 188.

[82] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 20:125.

[83] In his sermon entitled, 'His Name – The Everlasting Father,' Spurgeon gives a number of plausible interpretations for how the Son can have the title "Eternal Father" but yet not be confused with God the Father. Spurgeon first argues that his proper name from all eternity is the "Son," and then explains that as "eternal Father" the Messiah will be 1) the "possessor of eternity as an attribute" and 2) the one who fathered the ages. He then asks the question, "In what sense is Jesus a father? His answer is 1) federally, as the second Adam, 2) as the founder of the "great doctrinal system" of Christianity and the "great practical system" of loving our neighbors, 3) as life-giver, 4) as the "Patriarch of an [future] age," and 5) "in the loving tender sense of a Father's office." Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12:682. See also, Spurgeon, *MTP*, 20:530.

[84] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 24:519.

[85] Spurgeon, *The Interpreter*, 581. See also *NPSP*, 2:269; *MTP*, 7:202, 8:677, 9:134–135 and 36:267.

In so doing, the Father was giving a "full channel" for his love,[85] fulfilling his plan and decree by making the Son a penal substitutionary sacrifice,[87] securing a means of justification,[88] forgiveness,[89] and propitiation,[90] and demonstrating the perfect "co-mingling" of mercy and justice. "In the sacred substitution we see declared how God is "righteous" and yet "Father": in the sublime transactions of Calvary he manifests all the love of a tender Father's heart, and all the justice of an impartial Ruler's sword."[91]

Likewise, the Father vindicated the Son's work by raising him up from the dead in the power of the Holy Spirit,[92] exalting him to a place of glory and power at his right hand,[93] and is currently at work making all of the Son's enemies a footstool for his feet. "The work of subduing the nations is now in the hand of the great God, who by his Providence will accomplish it to the glory of his Son; his word is pledged to it, and the session of his Son at his right hand is the guarantee thereof; therefore let us never fear as to the future."[94]

The Father Produces Salvation through the Giving of the Holy Spirit

In a sermon on John 16:7 entitled "The Superlative Excellence of the Holy Spirit," Spurgeon proclaims that the Father has given two great gifts to his people (the Son and the Holy Spirit); nevertheless, he emphasizes,

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[86] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 4:66, 6:77. See also *The Interpreter*, 34 and *MTP,* 11:85, 19:88, 23:574, 29:117, 48:488.

[87] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Sword and Trowel: 1871* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), 40–41; *MTP*, 12:316, 29:117, 38:414–415, 48:488; *Able to the Uttermost*, 26–27; *Advice for Seekers,* 24; *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 250.

[88] Spurgeon, *Able to the Uttermost*, 177–178; *MTP,* 40:184. C. H. Spurgeon, *Faith: What It Is, and What It Leads To* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1903), 10, 15; *A Catechism, With Proofs*, 13–14, *All of Grace*, 22.

[89] C. H. Spurgeon, *All of Grace: An Earnest Word with Those Who Are Seeking Salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ* (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 31; *MTP,* 20:7, 40:184.

[90] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 7:202–203, 29:117, 48:488.

[91] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 23:567. See also *Able to the Uttermost*, 147, 233.

[92] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:231; *MTP*, 27:626–627, 40:184.

[93] Spurgeon, *All of Grace,* 90, 92; *NPSP*, 1:83, 2:299–301; *MTP*, 9:136.

[94] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 88-110*, vol. 4 (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 461. See also *NPSP*, 2:301–302 and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 203–204.

"Christ crucified is of no practical value to us without the work of the Holy Spirit; and the atonement which Jesus wrought can never save a single soul unless the blessed Spirit of God shall apply it to the heart and conscience."[95] Therefore, Spurgeon can argue that "true religion" is a work of God the Father from beginning to end.[96]

> Thou, O Father, art the source of all grace, all love and mercy towards us. Thou, O Son, art the channel of thy Father's mercy, and without thee thy Father's love could never flow to us. And thou, O Spirit—thou art he who enables us to receive that divine virtue which flows from the fountain-head, the Father, through Christ the channel, and by thy means enters into our spirit, and there abides and brings forth its glorious fruit.[97]

To Spurgeon's mind, the Spirit accomplishes the Father's purposes in salvation by glorifying the Son.[98] The Father effectually draws sinners to Jesus by the Spirit.[99] The Father, by the Holy Spirit, unites believers to Christ, giving them a new status (adopted sons)[100] and a new nature

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[95] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 10:329–330. See also *NPSP*, 5:213; *According to Promise*, p. 66; *Farm Sermons*, 150, and Spurgeon and Williams, *A Good Start*, 299. Spurgeon humbly held to the Western tradition of the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. See Spurgeon, *MTP*, 19:530.

[96] Spurgeon, *All of Grace,* 113.

[97] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6:229. Also found in C. H. Spurgeon, *Gleanings Among the Sheaves* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1869), 102.

[98] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 7:105–106, 11:574, 23:575, 50:518, 58:184; *Farm Sermons*, 150; *Faith,* 9–10. Though the Son is the direct object of worship, Spurgeon was always quick to ascribe to all three members of the Trinity equal honor. "See how divinely they work together—how the Father glorifies the Son, how the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus, how both the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus glorify the Father! These Three are One, sweetly uniting in the salvation of the chosen seed." Spurgeon, *MTP*, 50:518.

[99] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 2:371, 4:142; *MTP*, 7:107–108, 9:565–566, 10:638, 12:31–32, 19:537, 26:99, 30:54; *All of Grace*, 42. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Clue of the Maze* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1892), 89–91; *Faith*, 21–22.

[100] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 4:386, 6:195, 242–243, 262–263, 11:86; *MTP*, 7:101–104, 8:521, 10:410, 24:530, 32:675; *Able to the Uttermost,* 145, 175–178; *Faith*, 42–43; *Gleanings Among the Sheaves*, 96–97; *The Interpreter*, 703; *A Catechism, With Proofs*, 14.

(regenerated, sealed and indwelt).[101] The Father sanctifies his children by the Holy Spirit, conforming them into the image of his Son.[102] The Father, by his Spirit, protects and preserves his children until they are reunited with Jesus,[103] and the Father produces fruitfulness in the believer by the Spirit that honors the finished work of Christ.[104] Spurgeon reflects:

> A remarkable fact, which we should always bear in mind, is this:—in the Holy Scriptures most of the operations which are set down as being the works of the Spirit, are in other Scriptures ascribed to God the Father. Do we say it is God the Spirit that quickens the sinner who is dead in sin? it is true; but you will find in another passage it is said, "The Father quickeneth whom he will." Do we say that the Spirit is the sanctifier, and that the sanctification of the soul is wrought by the Holy Ghost? You will find a passage in the opening of the Epistle of St. Jude, in which it is said, "Sanctified by God the Father." Now, how are we to account for this? I think it may be explained thus. God the Spirit cometh from God the Father, and therefore whatever acts are performed by the Spirit are truly done by the Father, because he sendeth forth the Spirit. And again, the Spirit is often the instrument—though I say not this in any way to derogate from his glory—he is often the instrument with which the Father works.[105]

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[101] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:397–398, 5:429, 6:229, 6:262–266; *MTP*, 7:101–104, 11:561–562, 15:195, 24:530, 535, 30:695, 58:134. Spurgeon and Williams, *A Good Start*, 299. Spurgeon, *Able to the Uttermost,* 71. C. H. Spurgeon, *Flashes of Thought* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1874), 27; *Gleanings Among the Sheaves*, 96–97; *According to Promise*, 121–122.

[102] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 5:60, 6:254, 263–264; *MTP*, 13:320, 16:55, 414, 32:152–153, 46:49.

[103] Spurgeon, *MTP,* 7:102, 35:694–695; *Able to the Uttermost*, 62; *All of Grace*, 120–121. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith: Being Precious Promises Arranged for Daily Use with Brief Comments* (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 269.

[104] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 61:574; *Able to the Uttermost*, 96. Spurgeon taught that fruitfulness often came from the pruning work of the Father in discipline. See Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:94; *MTP,* 7:102.

[105] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6:261–262.

Thus, Morden is right in his assertion: "The Christian life was for Spurgeon, the 'progress of the soul in the knowledge of Jesus,'"[106] and, according to Spurgeon, a right knowledge of Jesus leads to a right knowledge of the Father:

> *All good comes to us from God the Father*, through the one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. I love to think of this,—that all the grace, mercy, and peace that come to you, and all the grace, mercy, and peace that come to me, come from the heart of God. How many waggons there are upon the road of grace, and all of them heavily laden! One stops at that brother's door, and another waits at this sister's gate; but they all started from one spot. Look on the side of the waggons, and you will see the name of the same Proprietor on every one [emphasis original].[107]

The Father Will Perfect Sanctification in the Consummation of His Kingdom

Spurgeon ponders this last and "most splendid triumph" of God the Father in his sermon on Psalm 98:1:

> I know that all he undertakes to save he will save, and he will bring the troops off from the battle field, every brow crowned with laurel, not one slain, not one a prisoner…Prince of Hell, bring forth, if you can, one soul that Jesus bought with blood, one soul that the Spirit quickened, one soul that the Eternal Father gave to the hands of the Great Surety to keep for ever—bring him forth. Ah! ye have none…then shall it be said, "His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."[108]

In that day, Spurgeon argues, not only the Son, but also the Spirit, will be able to say, "It is finished."[109] It will be the Father himself who will reward his children,[110] for they are his inheritance.[111] As such, Spurgeon argues

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[106] Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People*, 14. This statement forms the essence of his thesis regarding Spurgeon's own spirituality.
[107] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 41:546–547.
[108] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 9:113.
[109] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:234.
[110] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 2:382; *MTP*, 11:247, 35:401, 56:629; *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 172.
[111] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 9:190.

that "heaven" is shorthand for the presence of the Father,[112] the place where his children will behold his face in righteousness,[113] and the place where the Father will break forth into singing over them.[114] Finally, Spurgeon affirms that the Father, who put everything under the authority of his Son,[115] will receive back the kingdom from Christ at the end of the age,[116] so that the Father "may be had in honour, and may be worshipped in every place [his elaboration on 'all in all' in 1 Cor 15:28]."[117] Spurgeon changed his doctrine on this passage. Early in his ministry Spurgeon teaches that after handing the kingdom to the Father, Christ in his humanity will no longer be mediator or king.[118] Thirty years later, he refutes his earlier position in his sermon "All in All in All."[119] After appealing to Heb 1:8 and Rev 3:21, he explains that the man Christ still remains a king even though he has delivered up the kingdom.[120] For Spurgeon, the Father's eternal decree will be completed when Christ restores everything to its proper order:

> All evil subdued, all the saints having Christ dwelling in them, Christ the Head of all these saints, and then God as God still, all

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[112] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 47:526–527.
[113] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 1:193.
[114] Spurgeon, *Able to the Uttermost*, 97; *MTP*, 37:359–360.
[115] Spurgeon, *The Interpreter*, 622.
[116] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 2:110–111. Exposition of 1 Cor 15 after "The Resurrection of the Dead" sermon on Acts 24:15. Spurgeon is clear that this does not imply any inferiority in the Son, nor does it diminish his deity.
[117] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 32:172.
[118] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 2:110–111. In this commentary after the sermon, he also exhibits some confusion over Trinitarian relations in eternity future, for he argues that Christ in his humanity will be subject to the Trinity. "As the Man-Mediator, he too will be subject unto the great Jehovah, the Three-one… Then Christ will have his kingdom as God, but as Mediator he will have no kingdom. It is a destruction of office, not of person, nor yet of honor." I believe it is due in large part to him taking θεός in 1 Cor 15:28 to be a reference to the Trinity rather than a reference to the Father.
[119] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 43:37–48. Evidently, he was leaning on the consensus of commentaries, for he says, "The common meaning that is given to it, by nearly every interpreter I have ever met with, I do not believe or accept." He declares, "I cannot see that there is to be any end whatever to the mediatorial kingdom of Christ."
[120] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 43:47.

> the more surely and securely supreme over all things, for the Head of Christ is God, and God is all in all.
> All this, while it continues to bring glory to him, has been done in subjection to his great Father's will; he has accomplished it all as the Father's Representative and Messenger, sent by him here to do it; and then, when it is all done, and he shall reign for ever and ever, even then the Son himself shall continue in that position in which he put himself long, long ago, "that God may be all in all." Then will the whole universe, restored, and brought back to its proper place, be ordered according to the eternal covenant arrangement.[121]

Concluding Reflections

As a pastor, the work of the Father could never be discussed without expecting an appropriate response from those in his congregation. For example, in his sermon "The Fatherhood of God,"[122] he says that since God is our Father, we ought to obey him, rejoice in him, fear him, cast ourselves completely on him, and pray to him. Elsewhere he counsels that though we sometimes lose "the light of [our] Father's countenance,"[123] we can be confident that "as [we] increase in the knowledge of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ, through the revelation of the Divine Spirit, [we] will also increase your fellowship with the Father and with his Son."[124]

Spurgeon believed that prayer is the "best used means of drawing near to God [the Father],"[125] and that we should come with boldness through the finished work of Christ[126] and the empowering work of the Holy

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[121] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 9:118, 43:47–48.
[122] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 4:385–392.
[123] Spurgeon, *Faith*, 60.
[124]Spurgeon, *MTP*, 50:496. On communion with the Father, see also Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6:16–19, 309; *MTP*, 7:203, 19:88, 23:573; *The Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith*, 102; *Messages to the Multitude*, 1–3. C. H. Spurgeon, *Flowers from a Puritan's Garden, Distilled and Dispensed* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), 250.
[125] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6:16.
[126] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 4:42–43; *MTP*, 7:102, 10:607–608, 16:414; *Flowers from a Puritan's Garden, Distilled and Dispensed*, 169, 249; *The Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith*, 228; *The Interpreter*, 707. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Pastor in Prayer* (Bellingham:

Spirit.[127] "The Lord loves to have the hearts of his children talk to him; he delights to hear them spread out their wants before him and order their case with arguments and prevail with them. Oh, then, never be slack in your pleadings, which are pleasant to God as fragrant incense."[128]

Likewise, God's fatherhood should motivate our service: "Oh get that thought of God, that while you obey him as Father, yet you love him as Father! Do not go about the service of God as slaves about the taskmaster's toil, but run in the way of his commands because it is your Father's way. Yield yourselves up to be the instruments of righteousness, because righteousness is your father's will, and his will is the will of his child."[129]

Additionally, worship is to God in the "character of a Father." Spurgeon states, "True Christian worship addresses God, not merely as Creator and Preserver, or as the great Lord of the Universe, but as one who is very near of kin to us, our Father, beloved of our souls.[130]

In all of these responses, Spurgeon would appeal to us: "O then, ye saints, love God the Father!"[131]

> It was because of his love that the Father gave his Son; it was not the Son who came to make that love possible. O Christians, love the Father, for he chose you! Or ever the earth was, the Father concentrated his love upon you, and gave you to Christ to be his portion and his reward…inasmuch as he hath chosen you in Christ before the foundation of the world, love him, I pray you. In

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Logos Bible Software, 2009), 115–116. Though Spurgeon's pattern was to pray to the Father through the Son by the Spirit, he sometimes addressed the Son directly and felt he had warrant from 2 Cor 12:8 to do so. "We may legitimately present our petitions, not only to the ever-blessed Father, but also to his Son Jesus Christ. There seems to me to be a peculiar fitness in a prayer to Jesus when the temptation came from a messenger of Satan, because the Lord Jesus has endured the like temptation himself, and knows how to succour them that are tempted. Moreover, he has come to earth to destroy the works of the devil." Spurgeon, *MTP*, 22:193.

[127] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 7:102, 9:265, 10:607–608; *The Interpreter*, 707; *Lectures to My Students*, 2:21; *The Pastor in Prayer*, 115–116.

[128] Spurgeon, *Flashes of Thought*, 323.

[129] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 7:370–371.

[130] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12:326. On the worship of the Father, see also Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 2:355, 6:262, 267–268; *MTP*, 10:634, 12:326–327, 359, 16:70.

[131] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51:506.

> choosing you, the Father adopted you into his family, and gave you a name and a place amongst his sons and daughters. If you are this day children of the great Father, it is because he has taken you out from among the rest of mankind, and has made you "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." It is the Father, too, who has given you the nature as well as the name and the position of children, for he "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," and he "hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." For your election unto everlasting life, for your salvation by Christ Jesus, for your regeneration by the Holy Spirit, for your adoption into the family of God, "O love the Lord, all ye his saints." I know that you do; but I want you to realize it afresh just now. Let your soul swim as in a sea of love, and each one say, "My Father, my God, my own God, I love thee! My soul exults at the very thought of thy great love to me, which has made my love to thee possible!"[132]

[132] Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51:506–507.

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Where the Wild Animals Are: The Inauguration of the Last Days in Mark 1:12–13

JASON KEES
Adjunct Professor,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Among wild beasts: they at his sight grew mild
Nor sleeping him nor waking harm'd; his walk
The fiery serpent fled and noxious worm,
The lion and fierce tiger glar'd roof.[1]

The temptation narrative of Jesus appears in all three Synoptic Gospels, with varying degrees of the events depicted therein. Great attention has been given to the Matthean and Lucan temptation accounts since each Gospel writer changed the ordering of the temptations of Satan. Matthew lists his account of the temptations as: 1) turn the stones to loaves of bread, 2) cast yourself off the temple, and 3) worship me. Although Luke begins his temptation narrative in the same way as Matthew (stones to bread), he inverts the second and third temptation. The reversal by Luke may simply be topographical, and Matthew's order appears to be the original reading.[2]

Mark's account of Jesus's temptation stands in stark contrast to Matthew and Luke's account. Whereas Matthew contains eleven verses and Luke thirteen to describe and explain the temptations, Mark contains only two. The scene is introduced with Καὶ εὐθὺς, a phrase Mark utilizes often in order to quickly progress the narrative forward.[3] He introduces the scene by saying that the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness, and Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days being tempted by Satan. Mark almost omits the entire temptation scene. He includes

[1] John Milton, *Paradise Regained*, 1:310–313.

[2] D.A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 111. See also Darrell Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 364–366.

[3] Of the twenty-nine times Καὶ εὐθὺς occurs in the NT, Mark uses it twenty-five times.

just a few points that agree with Matthew and Luke: The Spirit is the one who led Jesus into the wilderness, he was there forty days and was tempted by Satan, and the angels ministered to him.[4]

Mark, however, notes that Jesus was not alone after his temptation of Satan, and the angels were not the only beings in his presence. Mark also includes that ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων (the wild animals/beasts) were with Jesus in the wilderness, and Mark provides no explanation as to what exactly these τῶν θηρίων are or what purpose they serve with Jesus in the wilderness. The most common interpretations have focused primarily upon three options.[5] First, the inclusion of τῶν θηρίων shows that Jesus left the inhabited world and is now in the wilderness (ὁ ἔρημος; v 12), which is inhabited primarily by τῶν θηρίων. Second, τῶν θηρίων should be understood as a reference to Satan's allies and that they are part of the temptation of Jesus in some way.[6] Thus, "to be 'with the beasts' meant only one thing to a person in Rome––to be executed horribly as a criminal before cheering crowds."[7] Third, Mark includes τῶν θηρίων as an eschatological reference that hints at the new paradise that Jesus will inaugurate, but what that eschatological reference is exactly is debated.

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[4] Mark's language is more forceful in his description of the Spirit's role in this scene. Matthew says Jesus was ἀνήχθη (led up) by the Spirit, and Luke has ἤγετο as his description of what the Spirit did.

[5] A fourth is proposed by Jan Willem van Henten, who believes it is a nod to Mark's first Roman audience and the Neronian persecution they faced. See Jan Willem van Henten, "The First Testing of Jesus: A Rereading of Mark 1.12–13," *NTS* 45 (1999): 349–366.

[6] "The only other figures on the stage are the wild animals, which probably should be reckoned with Satan as part of the 'opposition' rather than, as some of the early fathers proposed, as a symbol of the restoration of Adamic harmony (Gen 2:18–20)." R.T. France, "The Beginning of Mark," *RTR* 49.1 (1990): 15. So also James Edwards, "Likewise, mention of the beasts follows immediately after the mention of Satan, the tempter and adversary, suggesting the beasts' alliance with Satan." James Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 41.

[7] Brian J. Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 222.

Concerning this third suggestion, some argue that the presentation of Jesus as a second Adam here is questionable.[8] Nowhere else in the Gospel of Mark, it is correctly argued, does the author present Jesus as a new Adam.[9] It does not make sense, as argued by A.B. Caneday, for Mark to make this reference and not use it again in his Gospel.[10] Furthermore, as David Garland comments, "this episode does not imply the restoration of paradise. The world is still awry."[11] John Heil believes that if Mark intended for a peaceful subjection, or a restoration of paradise, "we should expect to hear that the wild animals are *with Jesus*; but that Jesus is *with the wild animals* suggests that he is the object of their unfriendly threats just as he is the object of Satan's unfriendly testing."[12] Thus, rather than understanding an Adam-Christ parallel in Mark's temptation narrative, others suggest that it is perhaps best to interpret an Israel-Christ parallel.

Although I am not neglecting an Israel-Christ parallel here in Mark, and in the other temptation narratives, I do believe there is still an Adam-Christ parallel. This paper, then, will argue for an Adam-Christ parallel in Mark 1:12–13 provided by the phrase ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων as the clue for the inauguration of the last days. First, an overview of the Israel-Christ parallel is examined with applicable LXX references. Second, the Adam-Christ parallel will also be examined along with its applicable LXX references. From this point I will, third, propose that the phrase ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων is a clue given by Mark to reference the inauguration of the last days based upon contextual references found within the first section of Mark's Gospel.

Israel-Christ Parallel

Those who propose that Jesus is presented here as a new Israel argue that Mark introduces this theme at the beginning of his gospel in 1:1–3.

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[8] David E. Garland, *A Theology of Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 222–224; John Paul Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals in Mark 1:13," *CBQ* 68 (2006): 63–78, esp. 64–65.

[9] Charles A. Gieschen, "Why Was Jesus with the Wild Beasts (Mark 1:13)?" *CTQ* 73 (2009): 77.

[10] A.B. Caneday, "Mark's Provocative Use of Scripture in Narration," *BBR* 9 (1999): 33.

[11] Garland, *A Theology of Mark's Gospel*, 223.

[12] Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals," 65.

First, Mark introduces his work as a gospel of Jesus Christ, "Son of God."[13] Second, Mark quotes from Is 40:3 and, within this quotation, includes Ex 23:20 and Mal 3:1. Third, in Mk 1:9–11 there are allusions to Is 63:7–64:8, Jer 38:8–9, 19–20, and Is 42:1. Fourth, in Mk 1:12–13 there are allusions to what God does in the wilderness in Dt 8:1–16, ministering angels in Ps 77:19, 24–25 and Ps 90:11–13. For our purposes, we will focus on three of the four arguments previously mentioned.

Mark 1:1–3

Mark 1:1–3 serves as one part of the introduction to his gospel and identifies the main character of his gospel, Jesus Christ the Son of God.[14] Following this brief introduction to his gospel, Mark then provides a quotation from three Old Testament sources: Is 40:3, Ex 23:20, and Mal 3:1.

> Ex 23:20[15] And behold, I will send my messenger before you, to guard (LXX φυλάξῃ) you on the way where I have prepared for you.
> Mal 3:1 Behold I will send my messenger, and he will prepare (LXX ἐπιβλέψεται) the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come into his temple.
> Mk 1:2 Behold I send my messenger before you, who will prepare (κατασκευάσει) your way.

The reference to Ex 23:20 is a reference to the event of God's angel (ἄγγελος) bringing Israel through the wilderness and along the way into

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[13] The designation υἱοῦ θεοῦ does not appear in some of the manuscripts, and the UBS[5] gives it a "C." For reasons to keep this variant, see Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 52; Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 6. Metzger explains, "Since the combination of B D W *al* in support of υἱοῦ θεοῦ is extremely strong, it was not thought advisable to omit the words altogether, yet because of the antiquity of the shorter reading and the possibility of scribal expansion, it was decided to enclose the words within square brackets." Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 2007), 62.

[14] Garland argues that Jesus as the "Son of God" could be set against the Roman Emperor as "a Son of God." Garland, *A Theology of Mark's Gospel*, 197–198.

[15] Chart taken from Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals," 67.

the Promised Land. In Mal. 3:1, the "way" refers to the return of God into the temple in order to purify the priests in Mal. 3:3. Thus, as Heil notes, the insertion of Mark's "your way" in v 2 shows "the dynamic process by which God acts for the salvation of the people Israel. The 'way' of Jesus in Mark 1:2 thus represents both the 'way' of God and the way of God's people, Israel."[16] Furthermore, Gieschen notes that Is 43:19 ("I will make a way in the wilderness") is an allusion to Is 40:3, and in Is 43:19, "YHWH speaks…of a new and greater Exodus when he will make a way in the desert and the wild beasts there will honor him as their creator."[17]

Mark 1:9–11

In this section of Mark's Gospel, Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist (1:4–8) in the Jordan River. His baptism in the Jordan River likely "evoked for Israel associations of hope,"[18] and it identified Jesus with the corporate Son "in the sinful situation and repentance of the people of Israel in the wilderness."[19] After his baptism this claim of Sonship (cf 1) is further expressed by the Spirit descending as a dove to rest upon Jesus and the voice of the Father pronounces, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." The Spirit's descent upon Jesus as a dove recalls the events in Is 63:14 when the "Spirit of the Lord" gave the people of Israel rest and guided (cf. 14) them.[20] Heil also mentions other typological backgrounds for an Israel/Jesus parallel rather than Adam/Jesus parallel. God declares Israel to be his beloved son due to their repentance in Jer 38:19–20 LXX, so does the Father who declares Jesus to be his beloved Son after his baptism along with others from the people of Israel.[21]

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[16] Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals," 67–68. See his discussion for more helpful details. Caneday argues for a "prismatic" usage of Is 40:3 and that "One may reasonably conclude from the early mention of Isaiah and from observable patterns throughout the Gospel that Mark's use of the Hebrew Scriptures is refracted through the prophet Isaiah, and especially through Isa 40:3." Caneday, "Mark's Provocative Use of Scripture in Narration," 21.

[17] Gieschen, "Why Was Jesus with Wild Beasts?" 79.

[18] Garland, *A Theology of Mark's Gospel*, 209.

[19] Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals," 69.

[20] Is 63:14 LXX κατέβη πνεῦμα. See Ibid., 70.

[21] Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals," 71.

Mark 1:12–13

The Spirit that descended upon Jesus now drives (ἐκβάλλει) him into the wilderness where he faces temptation for forty days by Satan. Heil links this event with Dt 8:14–15 where God led Israel out (ἐξαγαγόντος) of slavery in Egypt and through the wilderness (ἐρήμου).[22] William Lane believes that a possible reference to both Moses and Elijah can be found here, since the "reference to the forty days recalls Moses' stay on Mount Sinai and Elijah's wandering through the wilderness to Mount Horeb."[23] Wild animals are with him, and after the forty days of temptation the angels minister to him (cf Mt 4:11). His temptation, or test, is for forty days (τεσσεράκοντα) and the reader of Mark's Gospel would recall the forty years of wandering in the wilderness done by Israel ("πειράζει"; Dt 13:4; LXX) to see if they would keep the commandments given to them by God (Dt 8:2, 16).

The reference to the wild animals, then, may draw the reader of Mark back, once again, to the Israelite wandering narrative. Heil notes that in Dt 8:15 God leads the people of Israel through the wilderness that contains biting serpents and scorpions, and one cannot forget the deadly serpents sent to them by God in Num 21:5–6.[24] Caneday sees a possible allusion to Is 11:6–9 or Is 65:25, but prefers instead to see that "Mark's allusion seems to strike Isa 35:9 and refract, illuminating Ps 91:9–13."[25]

From what has been shown, there is enough textual evidence within the first section of Mark 1 to suggest that Mark emphasizes an Israel-

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[22] Ibid., 73. He also cites Ez 20:10 LXX as another possible connection.

[23] William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 60. Furthermore, "In their case the time of the forty days concentrate into one crucial period the innermost quality of their mission. Moses and Elijah are men of the wilderness, both prior to this period as well. There is evidence that the same perspective is true of Jesus in Mark. The forty days do not describe a period whose significance is exhausted once Jesus begins his public ministry but sound the dominant note of his entire ministry."

[24] Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals," 74. He also connects Ez 34:5 and that God promises to destroy the "wild animals" (LXX θηρία).

[25] Caneday, "Mark's Provocative Use of Scripture in Narration," 34. He later reemphasizes this point. "Among biblical texts, then, it does not appear that the Mark 1:13 allusion terminates Isa 11:6–9 or 65:25. Rather, Ps 91:9–13 seems to be the primary point of Mark's allusion refracted through Isa 35:9. Ps 91:9–13 provides both a conceptual and verbal background for Mark 1:13." Ibid.

Christ parallel, and that Jesus is seen as a new Israel. First, in 1:1–3 Mark quotes from three Old Testament sources, each of which reference the restoration of Israel. Mark specifically applies these verses to Jesus and his mission, suggesting that he understands Jesus as the one who restores Israel. Second, the baptism of Jesus in Mk 1:9–11 likely evoked for the Israelites an association of hope, and it was intended to identify Jesus with the corporate son of Israel. Third, in Mk 1:12–13 Jesus is cast into the wilderness to be tempted for forty days, and the reader of Mark's Gospel would recall the forty years of wandering by Israel in the wilderness, and the mention of the wild animals may remind them of Num 21:5–6, Is 11:6–9, or Is 65:25. Thus, there is enough contextual evidence to argue that Mark intended for an Israel-Christ parallel, and that Christ becomes the New Israel.

Adam-Christ Parallel

An Adam-Christ parallel, or an Adam-Christ typology, is most clearly seen in the writings of Paul; specifically, in Rom 5:12–21 and 1 Cor 15:22, 45–49. There, the apostle argues that as Adam fell and his trespass "led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men" (Rom 5:18), for "in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22). The parallel is seen, then, in the comparison between Adam's sin and Jesus's sacrifice. Furthermore, Brandon Crowe has brought out the Adam-Christ parallel at a greater length and focuses on how the four Gospels specifically address Jesus as the last, or new, Adam.[26]

As I previously mentioned, there is no consensus regarding an Adam-Christ parallel in Mk 1:12–13. Robert Stein argues, "We should not interpret 1:12–13 as an Adam-Christ typology where Jesus is undoing Adam's temptation and fall. Such a typology plays no real part in Mark's Christology elsewhere in his Gospel."[27] Caneday remarks, "If Mark [is] principally working a typological relationship between Adam and Jesus in Mark 1:13b, it is poorly and obscurely done, for while Adam was put to the test in the lush garden of paradise, Jesus was tested in the arid

[26] Brandon D. Crowe, *The Last Adam: A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017).

[27] Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 65. See also R.T. France, *The Gospel according to Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 85–87.

wilderness."[28] Thus, the general consensus that most commentators focus upon is the connection with Elijah in the wilderness in 1 Kgs 19:4–8.

In his article on Mk 1:13, Richard Bauckham notes that this text provides a Christological image that is unique to Mark but has been overlooked in the Christian tradition.[29] After noting that τῶν θηρίων may provide an eschatological reference for a new paradise, Bauckham comments, "By means of this motif Mark represents Jesus as the eschatological Adam who, having resisted Satan, instead of succumbing to temptation as Adam did, then restores paradise: he is at peace with the animals and the angels serve him."[30] In his opinion, this position has been argued convincingly enough and the majority of exegetes agree on this point, but later in the article expresses doubt on the position.[31] Rather, Bauckham argues that "it is not simply a symbol of Jesus' victory over Satan or of his inauguration of the age of eschatological salvation. Peace with wild animals is actually one aspect of eschatological salvation."[32] Again, Bauckham does not rule out the possibility that an Adam-Christ parallel can be viewed here. His suggestion that "peace with wild animals is actually one aspect of eschatological salvation" actually encourages an Adam-Christ parallel here, since an eschatological salvation is what Christ intended to inaugurate with his entrance into the world.

Joel Marcus believes that if an Adam-Christ parallel exists here in Mk 1:13 then it "fits well with the Markan prologue's general emphasis on

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[28] Caneday, "Mark's Provocative Use of Scripture Narration," 33.

[29] Richard Bauckham, "Jesus and the Wild Animals (Mark 1:13): A Christological Image for an Ecological Age," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Greene, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 4.

[30] Ibid., 6.

[31] "Whether, in that case, Mark 1:13 should be said to embody a new Adam Christology is more doubtful. Proponents of the view that Mark 1:13 refers to the paradisal state of peace with the wild animals, eschatologically restored, have usually linked this idea with that of Jesus as the new or eschatological Adam, who resists the devil, whereas Adam and Eve succumbed, and who restores the peaceful relationship with other creatures which Adam and Eve disrupted. *Such an implication cannot be ruled out*, but there seems to be no other trace of a new Adam Christology in Mark." Ibid., 19. Emphasis added.

[32] Ibid., 20.

new creation."[33] He also includes a parallel of Jesus and Elijah in the wilderness, but further suggests that it was not *just* Elijah but also Adam. Marcus argues that just as Adam was tempted by the snake, who, he argues, through later Jewish interpretation became Satan, Jesus is tempted in the wilderness. Adam lived at peace with the wild animals before the Fall. Jesus now dwells with the wild animals in the wilderness.[34]

The Inauguration of the Last Days

In contending for the inauguration of the last days, I believe it is important to remember that 1:1–15 comprises the first overall section of Mark's Gospel. The description of John the Baptist baptizing people and the baptism of Jesus are meant to be compared to one another. John baptizes with water (vv 4, 8); the one after him will baptize with fire (v 8). The people from Judea and Jerusalem are coming to John to be baptized (v 5); Jesus comes for baptism as the perfect son of God who is obedient to his Father (v 9)

In the baptism of Christ, Mark says, that immediately (εὐθὺς) when Jesus rose up from the water the heavens were split (σχιζομένους), the Holy Spirit descends as a dove, and the Father pronounces his approval of his Son. It has long been attested that σχίζω is used in Mark 15:38, and the other three Gospels, to describe the tearing of the temple veil in two. Richard B. Hays notes that the use of this violent participle "offers a strong allusion to the Hebrew text tradition of Isaiah 64:1 (63:19 MT), the only passage in the Old Testament that uses the verb ('tear') in relation to the heavens."[35] I'm not convinced that Isa 64:1 is to be read here as a possible reference; rather, I think the descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove finds its more appropriate reference in Gen 1:2 where the Spirit

[33] Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 169.

[34] Ibid. Marcus also provides an interesting suggestion of διηκόνουν when he notes that catering is another nuance provided by this word. Thus, he remarks that "according to a Jewish legend, his meals were catered by angels—catering being one of the nuances of *diēkonoun* ('were serving') in 1:13.). Ibid. Also, Marcus believes that Adam was raised to an exalted status, and Satan opposed him out of jealousy. Here, Marcus connects this interpretation to why Satan was hostile to Jesus and concludes that jealousy was at its root.

[35] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor Press, 2016), 18.

is said to hover (מרחפת) over the face of the waters.[36] HALOT notes that later Jewish interpretation of this verb is like that of a bird "that moves its wings back and forth."[37] If Mark intends for his reader to be reminded of the Spirit hovering over the waters in connection with the Spirit descending upon the Son as a dove, then a new creation can be read in this temptation scene.

Furthermore, the peaceful cohabitation that Jesus shares with the wild animals likely evoked an eschatological significance for the early readers of his text. Joachim Jeremias argues that Christ "ushers in the paradisal state of the last days when there will be peace between man and beast (Is. 11:6–8; 65:25)."[38] This paradisal state is envisioned in texts like Is 11:6–8, where the ferocious animals (lion, wolf, leopard) are found living peacefully together with peaceful animals (lamb, sheep, calf) and humanity (little child). Even Is 65:25 depicts the wolf and lamb grazing together and is likely a reference to the Garden of Eden. Bauckham notes that an "explicit allusion to Genesis (3:14) has been introduced, presumably implying that although the original harmony of humans and animals will be restored, the serpent which was responsible for first disrupting that harmony will continue to serve its punishment."[39] Crowe further observes, "Isaiah's new-creational imagery therefore recalls Adam's position in God's original created order, and Mark's portrayal of Jesus inaugurating the anticipated latter days seems to portray Jesus as the last Adam who marks the beginning of new creation."[40]

Thus, Mark carefully crafts together a picture of what is to be expected at the end of the days. Drawing on numerous passages from Isaiah, and hinting back to Gn 3:14, Mark encourages his readers to understand that his inclusion of the "wild animals" is a clue to what Jesus will accomplish through his obedient life and ministry upon the earth.[41]

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[36] As Stein notes, "The 'splitting' here and in 15:38 indicates that these are eschatological events." Stein, *Mark*, 57.

[37] רחף, HALOT, 1219.

[38] J. Jeremias, "Ἀδὰμ" in *TDNT*, 1:141.

[39] Bauckham, "Jesus and the Wild Animals," 16. The reference to the serpent made by Bauckham is from the end of Is 65:25.

[40] Crowe, *The Last Adam*, 26. Crowe also helpfully provides literature that reflects Jewish eschatological expectations on pp 26–27.

[41] Another possible clue may be found in the dereliction in Mk 15:33 (*ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι*) which is a transliteration of Ps 22:2 (אֵלִי אֵלִי לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי). In Ps

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the reason Mark includes τῶν θηρίων in his temptation narrative is to indicate that he intends for his reader to understand that the ministry of Jesus was to inaugurate the last days. While several other propositions have been suggested, such as the τῶν θηρίων are allies of Satan or their inclusion is only used to indicate that Jesus left the inhabited world for an uninhabited wilderness, the textual evidence within the narrative suggests that something is more significantly related to τῶν θηρίων. Others have suggested that there is an Israel-Christ parallel, an Elijah-Christ parallel, and an Adam-Christ parallel. Notable arguments have been made by Heil, Garland, Gieschen, and Bauckham for an Israel-Christ parallel, and while Bauckham does not necessarily rule out an Adam-Christ parallel, all tend to default primarily to an Israel-Christ parallel.

I have argued that given the contextual markers, such as the baptism of Jesus, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus, and the casting out done by the Holy Spirit to Jesus in the wilderness, suggest that not only should an Adam-Christ parallel be understood but that it is also an indication of the inauguration of the last days. It seems that the connection between the Spirit descending as a dove upon Jesus is meant to remind us of God's creating work in Gn 1:2. Furthermore, as the Spirit hovered over the waters in the beginning, so the Spirit as a dove descends upon the One who would inaugurate the New Creation through his death, resurrection, and triumphant return. Thus, with the inclusion of τῶν θηρίων in his narrative story, Mark communicates that this One, who was victorious over the temptations of Satan, would be the One to bring the people of God rest.

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22 there are several references to wild animals that seek to surround the psalmist (22:12), they open their mouths against him (22:13), surround him (22:16), and the psalmist asks the Lord to be saved from them (22:19–21). However, the overall theme of dwelling peacefully with the wild animals is absent from this psalm and is an unlikely connection.

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Visions, Dreams, and the Missionary: A Biblical Assessment of God's use of Visions and Dreams

J. TRISTAN HURLEY
Adjunct Professor,
Scarborough College
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Bilquis Sheikh was a prominent Muslim woman living in the small Pakistani village of Wah. Typically, being born into an important Muslim family in an Islamic nation suggests that such an individual will continue through their life adhering to the religious doctrines of Islam. For fifty-four years Bilquis woke up every morning to the sound of Muslim prayer coming from the town's minaret and was comforted by the ancient chant that she heard. Bilquis knew of Christians but she believed that Christians were only slaves, laborers, and uneducated. In fact, Bilquis had two servants who were Christians. News of a young Christian girl being murdered reached Bilquis' village. The young girl was recently converted to Christianity from Islam and was killed by her own brother, who was a staunch Muslim. Such news led Bilquis to question who the Jesus of the Christian faith was, so she acquired a small Bible and began reading it in secret.

Muslims do have a perception of Jesus (Isa), as he is mentioned in the Quran, but there is no similarity between Isa and Jesus Christ, the son of God. Upon reading the Bible, Bilquis instantly recognized a difference between the impersonal god of the Quran and the fascinatingly personal Jesus. The words of Christ burned in Bilquis' heart and stayed on her mind through the night. Bilquis admits that she was hardly ever aware of her dreams, but on the very night in which she read the Bible she had a dream that changed her life forever. In the dream Bilquis found herself having supper with a man that she knew to be Jesus. Immediately the scene of the dream changed to where Bilquis was on a mountaintop with another man who was clothed in a robe and sandals. Bilquis immediately knew the man. He was John the Baptist, and Bilquis had never heard of

such a man before in her life. Bilquis told John the Baptist that she had been dining with Jesus and that she wanted desperately to find him again; she knew that John the Baptist would point the way to Jesus Christ. From such a dream, Bilquis admits that she surrendered her life to Jesus Christ, confessed Jesus to be the actual son of God, believed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and lived the remaining days of her life as a born again Christian.[1]

Bilquis is not the only Muslim to experience such a surreal and personal vision of Jesus Christ. In fact, there are numerous accounts of similar conversions happening among adherents of Islam all over the world. Tom Doyle in *Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World* records several contemporary examples of Muslim men and women coming to faith in Jesus Christ directly through dreams and visions. "The phenomenon is not limited to a few isolated locations.... Dozens of Islamic countries and countless Muslim cultures have been invaded by Jesus' love."[2] Doyle is not the only author to document the occurrence of revelatory dreams of Muslims. Jerry Trousdale in his *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus* affirms that, "Muslims are turning their lives over to the Lordship of Jesus Christ....Many of these Muslim people come to God's Word by dramatic means, through dreams and visions..."[3] Jennifer Arnwine also asserts that Muslim men and women are "dramatically" coming to faith in Christ from dreams and visions. Arnwine even argues that there are "...countless examples of Jesus appearing to a Muslim on a road, in a classroom, even at the *Hajj*, with the sole purpose of sharing His love with them."[4] Muslims are not the only ones experiencing dreams and visions regarding Jesus Christ. Individuals all over the world from numerous cultures are embracing charismatic forms of Christianity that esteem unique revelation. According to Mark Noll, "Africans, for example

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[1] Bilquis Sheikh, *I Dared to Call Him Father: The Miraculous Story of a Muslim Woman's Encounter with God* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2003), 28.

[2] Tom Doyle, *Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), xiii-xiv.

[3] Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 2.

[4] Jennifer Lynne Arnwine,"Into the Light: The Supernatural Work of Dreams, Visions, and the Power Encounter Among Muslims" (Master's thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX, 2004), 92.

are drawn into stories about Jesus and are not surprised when Jesus speaks to them in dreams and visions—as, according to the New Testament, he did to the early apostles."[5]

Noll asserts that the portion of the church presently experiencing the greatest growth worldwide is the "Pentecostal-charismatic" renewal.[6] Pentecostal[7] growth is not happening in small, rural areas. By and large, the growth of Pentecostalism is an urban, majority world phenomenon.[8] David Barrett even goes so far as to stress the reality that if the Pentecostal renewal continues at its present growth rate, then by 2025 there will be over one billion worldwide adherents of charismatic Christianity.[9] According to a 2009 study, at least a quarter of the world's two billion Christians are thought to be a part of the charismatic branch and strongly emphasize the gift of tongues and prophesy. Gary Tyra affirms this saying, "…Even more than other Christians, Pentecostals and other renewalists believe that God, acting through the Holy Spirit, continues to play a direct, active role in the everyday life."[10] Pentecostal Christians are arguing that the Holy Spirit, through revelation is leading individuals to salvation in Jesus Christ. The purpose of this research is to assess the biblical data regarding revelation and its effect on evangelism—can unique revelation directly cause an individual to accept

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[5] Mark Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 23-4.

[6] The term "Pentecostal-charismatic" is defined as, "Christian adherents belonging to identifiably Pentecostal churches and baptized members affiliated with non-Pentecostal denominations who have entered into the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit; the second wave of the Pentecostal/Charismatic/Neo-charismatic Renewal." Ibid, 22.

[7] The term Pentecostalism here is used in an umbrella manner, meaning that the term refers not only to Classical Pentecostals but to charismatic, neo-Pentecostals and neo-charismatic believers as well." Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford University, 2004), 14.

[8] "As of the year 2000, the three areas most highly implicated by the proliferation of this (Pentecostal) movement were Latin America, 141 million, Africa, 126 million, and Asia, 135 million, as compared to North America, 80 million, and Europe, 38 million." Gary Tyra, *The Holy Spirit in Mission: Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 103.

[9] David Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (New York: Oxford University, 2001), 3-4.

[10] Tyra, *Holy Spirit in Mission*, 103.

Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior according to the Scriptures without the aid of a human agent? Revelation and evangelism is a significant study because as the Christian population begins to trend toward charismatic forms, missionaries, theologians and pastors need to be prepared to biblically assess cases of revelation, new divine messages, and personal/private salvation. F.W. Dillistone says, "Nowhere is this close relation between Revelation and Evangelism more clearly seen than in what is usually known as the missionary work of the church."[11] Perhaps Christians in the Global North, who are not familiar with charismatic forms of Christianity, can begin to recognize that God does and can utilize special spiritual encounters to meet with individuals.

The conclusion of this research is not to equate contemporary dreams and visions to Special Revelation in the proper theological sense. However, God has, does, and can present Himself to individuals in a special encounter, but the content of such is not extra-biblical and is in alignment with that which God has presented in His son Jesus Christ and in His word.

Defining Revelation

It is difficult to systematize and define the visions and dreams that the Christians of the Global South are experiencing. Should such visions fit within a systematic study of General verses Special Revelation? Perhaps the most suitable way to understand such visions and dreams is as Wayne Grudem refers to "Spontaneous Revelation," which is correlated to prophesy and is defined as, "…something that God may suddenly bring to mind…in such a way that the person has a sense that it is from God….(this is) a valuable function in the church…"[12] Based on Grudem's definition, then, it would be possible for an individual to give a message to a congregation that is, in a sense, inspired by God. The question is however, does this type of revelation carry the same weight as Scripture? Grudem argues clearly that the sufficiency of Scripture strongly limits spontaneous revelation in several ways: (1) that nothing is to be added to Scripture, (2) God does not require Christians to believe in anything about Himself that is not found in Scripture, (3) that no modern revelations are to be placed on an equal level to Scripture, (4)

[11] F.W. Dillistone, *Revelation and Evangelism* (London: Lutterworth, 1948), 7.
[12] Ibid., 1056.

that nothing is required of Christians that is not described by Scripture, and (6) that Christians should seek to be content with what God has revealed in Scripture.[13]

James Leo Garrett Jr. asserts that the concept of revelation has been of great importance in contemporary Christian theology.[14] Special Revelation, according to Garrett, is the "…historical disclosure of God to the people of Israel and in Jesus Christ. The distinctly Christian revelation of God is, therefore special or historical revelation."[15] Garret primarily views special revelation as historical or biblical revelation and suggests that there are two phases of such a revelation: the Old Testament revelation which came to and through the people of Israel, and the New Testament revelation which came in and through Jesus Christ. Garrett also brings to the forefront the issue of whether or not revelation is propositional or relational. On the one hand, "Propositionalism" regards the reality that the proposition or the concept is the main characteristic of special revelation. Therefore, revelation is mental, cognitive, meaningful and propositional.[16] On the other hand, "Relationalism" regards the reality that revelation is relational. Therefore, revelation is primarily interpersonal, fiduciary, and encounter-centered.[17] Garrett questions whether or not one must choose to view revelation as either propositional or relational by concluding that there is some truth on both sides.

Propositionalism rightly stresses that God has employed human languages in his self-disclosure through Israel and in Jesus Christ. Relationalism rightly stresses that divine revelation is not dispensed information about God that does not transform the recipients with the result that revelation can never be rightly divorced from transforming effects upon human beings.[18]

Bernard Ramm uniquely describes revelation as the autobiography of

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[13] Ibid., 133-5.

[14] James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (North Richland Hills: BIBAL, 2000), 50.

[15] Ibid., 51-2.

[16] Proponents of Propositional Revelation are Cornelius Van Til, James I. Packer, Carl F. Henry, and Edward J. Carnell. Ibid, 114.

[17] Proponents of Relational Revelation are Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, William Temple, and William Hordern. Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology*, 115.

[18] Ibid.

God, "It is that knowledge about God which is from God."[19] Of course Ramm divides revelation into certain subdivisions; general and special. General revelation is God's witness to himself for all men not based on race and is general. Special revelation by contrast is God's word in an actual form to a specific person or group and is special; "Special revelation is special."[20] Ramm offers three important aspects of special revelation. (1) Special revelation is remedial. Drawing a great deal from John Calvin's *Institutes*, Ramm is in accord with Calvin by suggesting that man needs remedial revelation and Scripture is that revelation. The remedial aspect of Special Revelation is the gift of reconciliation.[21] (2) Special revelation is necessary because God is transcendent and incomprehensible. Revelation is required for man to better know God: "Special revelation is the incomprehensible God making himself known."[22] (3) In special revelation man meets God as a person. Scripture reveals that God is love[23], merciful[24], jealous[25], patient[26], etc; such anthropomorphisms in Scripture are an indirect witness of the personality of God. The one God is revealed to us absolutely in Jesus Christ.[27] Ramm stresses the importance of the "testimonium" regarding revelation; "It (revelation) must be seen as an act which in every way is in keeping with the work of the Holy Spirit.... the *testimonium* is one of his executive acts."[28] Abraham Kuyper also emphasizes the spiritual touch of the Holy Spirit, in which during revelation the Holy Spirit touches man's spirit.[29]

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[19] Bernard Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 17.
[20] Ibid., 19.
[21] Ibid., 20.
[22] Ibid., 24.
[23] Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16, 15:13, 16:27; Romans 8:39; 1 John 4:8, 16.
[24] Deuteronomy 4:31; 2 Samuel 24:14; Psalm 116:5; Luke 6:36; Ephesians 2:4; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3.
[25] Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 4:24, 5:9, 6:15; Joshua 24:19; Nahum 1:2.
[26] Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:15; Nahum 1:3; 2 Peter 3:9.
[27] Ramm, *Special Revelation*, 24.
[28] Bernard Ramm, *The Witness of the Spirit: An Essay on the Contemporary Relevance of the Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 30.
[29] Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Funk and Wagnalls, 1900), 57.

Biblical Examples of Special Revelation

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament have numerous examples of revelation; first the Old Testament will be reviewed.

From first to last in the Old Testament, the writers affirm that God addressed Himself to man within a personal encounter. God spoke to the fathers of Israel through chosen men called prophets. Thus, running through the entire record is a claim that cannot be evaded or ignored. It is the claim that God chose certain individual men, called them into relationship with Himself, and commissioned them to be the agents for the fulfillment of His purpose in the world.[30]

There is much discussion over the modes in which God revealed Himself throughout the Old Testament. Emil Brunner listed the following as the differing modalities of revelation under the old covenant: theophanies, dreams, visions, historical events, prophecy, oracles, locutions, natural phenomena, and angels.[31] Bernard Ramm also lists the modalities of revelation and argues that God's will was revealed through the casting of lots as described in Proverbs 16:33 and Acts 1:20-26, and through oracles such as the Urim and Thummim as described in 1 Samuel 14:41, 28:6. Interestingly Ramm has two separate categories for revelation through dreams. He recognizes a "deep sleep" mode and also a "dream" mode. The deep sleep modality is composed based on Job 4:13 and 33:15 and occurs only with Job. The basic modality of revelatory dreams or visions occurs with several individuals from Pharaoh (Genesis 41) and Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2) to Joseph (Genesis 37) and Daniel (Daniel 7) and to Peter (Acts 10). Ramm also lists other modes of revelation such as visions, theophanies, and angels.[32]

Millard Erickson groups the modalities of revelation into two overarching categories: historical events and divine speech. Regarding historical events, Erickson asserts that "…God has been at work in concrete historical ways within our world, affecting what occurs."[33] Historical events may not seem like a mode of special revelation, but events such as the plagues leading up to the exodus and the exodus itself

[30] Dillistone, *Revelation and Evangelism*, 74.
[31] Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason* (Stevens Publishing, 1984), 20-1.
[32] Ramm, *Special Revelation*, 44-8.
[33] Needs full citation – first referenceErickson, *Christian Theology*, 181.

reveal something particular about God's character and will.[34] Divine speech is the other major mode of special revelation. It is seen especially throughout the Old Testament. Prophets of the Old Testament understood that they received an actual word from God, hence the phrase, "The word of the Lord came to me saying…"[35] Erickson points out that while the Bible is full of references to the reality of God speaking, how exactly does God "speak" since God is spirit.[36] "The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty" (Psalm 29:4). Divine speech, therefore, takes on several differing modes such as an audible speech, inward inaudible speech, dreams, and visions.[37]

Whereas in the Old Testament, there are several modalities of special revelation, both Garrett Jr. and Erickson argue that there is a primary mode of revelation in the New Testament: Jesus Christ. Erickson even asserts that the incarnation is the most complete modality of revelation stating, "Jesus both spoke the Father's word and demonstrated the Father's attributes. He was the most complete revelation of God, because he was God."[38] Jesus Christ is as John describes in John 1:1-3 the "Word" that was from the beginning and the creator. Dockery and Nelson agree that Jesus Christ is the central figure of divine revelation and the primary subject of the Bible.[39]

While Jesus is one modality of revelation, Walter Conner divides the works and actions of Christ into several different modalities each expressing specific characteristics of God. The first is the death and

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[34] Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006), 75.

[35] See Jeremiah 18:1; Ezekiel 12:1, 8, 17, 21, 26; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 3:1; Jonah 1:1.

[36] "Divine speech plays a central role in Scripture, both in the texts themselves and in the history in which they witness. The sheer abundance of the speech of God in the canonical texts may actually help explain the lack of attention that has been paid to this very remarkable fact, which is surely the most evident of all phenomena in the canon.... It is only in the second verse of the Bible that we read "And God said," the phrase that initiates every stage of the creative process. Here is the first instance of revelation, as it is, by speech that the Creator orders his time-space universe...." Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 680-1.

[37] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 187.

[38] Ibid., 191.

[39] Needs full citation – first reference. Akin, *Theology for the Church*, 123.

resurrection of Jesus of which there is no greater mode of revelation.[40] The second and the third relate to the claims that Jesus made concerning His specific relationship to the Father, such as Matthew 11:27 and John 5:30, 6:38, 10:14-15. The final modality of Jesus' revelation is associated with the miracles and character of Christ. Throughout the Gospel of John, the miracles of Jesus are referred to as "signs" that expressed God's will.[41]

Revelation and Dreams/Visions: Specific Examples

Because this particular research is drawing attention to the phenomena of special revelation and evangelism particularly relating to dreams and visions, it would be wise at this point to assess specific examples in the Bible regarding dreams and visions and the outcomes of such. Dreams and visions are a biblical manner in which God reveals Himself; there are numerous examples throughout Scripture of where the divine will is expressed via a vision.[42] The earliest example regarding a divine vision is found in Genesis 15:1 concerning Abram; "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision…" Genesis 15:1 further explains that God describes Himself as both a "shield" and as an "exceedingly great reward."

Jacob is visited by God in dream as described in Genesis 28:10-15. In this particular vision Jacob sees a stairway or a ladder resting on the ground and stretching out to heaven; angels of God were coming down the stairway as well as going up. God speaks in this particular vision and identifies Himself as the LORD, the God of Abraham and of Isaac. The way in which God addresses Himself to Jacob is similar to the way in which God describes Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:4-6—as the "God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses is an interesting figure when it comes to revelatory modalities. Numbers 12:6-8 describes that God actually distinguished Moses from other prophets, "If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with

[40] Walter Conner, *Revelation and God* (Nashville: Broadman, 1937), 115.

[41] See John 2:23, 3:2, 4:48, 6:2, 6:26, 7:31, 9:16, 11:47, 12:37, 20:30. Ibid, 116.

[42] James Orr argues that of all the modes of revelation the dream is the lowest form. However, even if Orr argues such, the biblical evidence is clear that dreams are, in fact, a popular mode that God uses to reveal His will. James Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Scribners, 1910), 79.

my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings…" God Himself asserts that He does, in fact, utilize dreams and visions to make Himself known to the prophets. Based on the three examples of Abraham, Isaac, and Moses, it is clear that God does utilize dreams and/or visions to reveal Himself to individuals. God reveals Himself to the three patriarchs and such seems a common trend in dreams and visions. Visions play an important role throughout the prophetic portion of the Old Testament and are generally deduced to a historical reference, apocalyptic reference or as a divine character reference.[43] The book of Ezekiel is a visionary book in which Ezekiel sees the heavens opened and witnesses visions from God (Ezekiel 1:1). Zechariah also describes that the word of the LORD came to the prophet and that he "saw by night" certain divine visions (Zechariah. 1:7). The book of Daniel also contains several divine visions and dreams.

Visions and dreams in the New Testament are found throughout the book of Revelation and, interestingly, primarily in the writings of Luke although there are other New Testament examples elsewhere such as in Matthew 1:20, 2:12, 13, 19, 22, 27:19.[44] Luke records several instances of special revelation beginning with the appearance of an "angel of the Lord" to Zacharias in Luke 1:10. Luke also records that the specific angel Gabriel was sent by God to go to Mary and to reveal to her that she will give birth to Jesus (Luke 1:26-33).

Several New Testament passages assert that the Holy Spirit is the divine agent of revelation. "…God the Holy Spirit, is, according to the New Testament, actively involved in the reception of divine revelation." John 14:26 clarifies that the Holy Spirit will "teach" and "bring to your remembrance" all the things that Jesus said. Likewise, John 15:26 describes that when the Holy Spirit is sent from God, the Holy Spirit will testify or bear witness of Jesus Christ. Jesus also tells the disciples that the Holy Spirit will "guide" them into all truth and that the Spirit will tell them of things to come. The Holy Spirit also is the one whom will take what belongs to Jesus and make it known to the disciples (John 16:13-14). Paul equally regards the Holy Spirit as holding revelatory work:

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[43] Needs complete citation – first reference. Elwell, *Theological Dictionary*, 802.

[44] Within the six scriptural references, four of the verses are associated to Joseph being guided by God via dreams (1:20, 2:13, 19, 22). One is associated with the wise men being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod (2:12), and the final passage is associated with Pilate's wife having a dream about Jesus (27:19).

> But God has revealed them to us through his Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.... Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.[45]

Luke, among other New Testament writers, places a great deal of importance on the Holy Spirit's role in revelation. The book of Acts records several instances of divine visions. Paul's conversion experience is one of the earliest post-Pentecostal revelatory experiences recorded in Acts and may shed some light on answering the question related to revelation and evangelism. As Paul was near Damascus, suddenly a great light shone around him, he fell to his knees, and then he heard the distinct voice of Jesus asking why Paul was persecuting Christians (Acts 9:3-6). In this distinct moment of revelation, Paul was given a specific task to perform, to go into the city and wait until further instruction (Acts 9:6). Paul's encounter is closely linked to Ananias, who shortly after Paul's encounter had a vision from God telling him to go to a specific place and find Paul (Acts 9:11-12). Ananias' vision reveals that Paul had a second vision, in which God revealed to Paul that a man named Ananias was going to come and restore his sight (Acts 9:12). What is interesting concerning Paul's experience is that there is no evidence pointing to the fact that Paul's initial encounter with Jesus was salvific. Paul did not receive the Holy Spirit until later when Ananias confronted him (Acts 9:17).[46] While the example of Paul may not suggest that revelation is salvific, it does not negate the possibility.

There are four other instances of divine visions in Acts, one of which is quite significant: Peter's vision regarding the Hebrew dietary laws. In Acts 10:9-16, Peter is on a housetop and "fell into a trance." During this trance, Peter saw a divine vision of various kinds of animals and he heard a voice say, "kill and eat" (Acts 10:12-13). While Peter's vision may seem odd, it actually had a double meaning. Not only did the Hebrew/Christian

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[45] 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, NKJV.

[46] Also in Acts 22:6-16, where Paul is giving his testimony in Jerusalem. He does not mention that the initial encounter with Jesus was salvific, but rather it was when Ananias came and restored his sight that he was told to be baptized, washing away his sins by calling on the name of the Lord.

dietary laws change, but God was introducing Gentiles into the church. Acts 12:7-10 also describes a revelation associated with Peter when an angel appeared and led him out of prison. The two remaining visions in Acts are associated with Paul, in 16:9 where Paul sees the vision of a Macedonian man and in 18:9 where the Lord speaks encouragement to Paul regarding persecution. Based on the numerous divine vision and dream occurrences throughout the Bible, it can indeed be argued that God does reveal Himself via dreams. The Bible also makes it clear that Christians should exercise caution when discerning whether or not a vision is from God.

The Reality of False Revelation

Numerous biblical passages make it clear that there will be individuals who claim divine revelation in order to deceive and turn others away from the gospel message of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus warned his disciples that as a sign of the end of this age "many" will come and proclaim that they are the Christ (Matthew 24:4-5). Christians must not be deceived by false prophets who proclaim counterfeit visions. Paul also warned the Corinthians about "false apostles" and "deceitful workers" who transform themselves into apostles of an alternate Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13). The fact that false prophets exist should not be surprising according to Paul because as he describes, Satan himself transforms into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). John gives an acquit description of false prophets,

> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God (1 John 4:1-3).

Moses also gives a very clear way to identify artificial prophets and how to deal with them. If an individual arises among a congregation who proclaims to of been having specific dreams and/or visions and based on such, supports the idea to worship other unknown gods, then that individual should not be listened to; "…you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams…"(Deuteronomy 13:1-3). Interestingly, based on Moses' assertion, God actually uses such false

prophets to "test" His people to see whether or not their devotion is genuine (Deuteronomy 13:3). God desires that His people walk after Him and none other, that they obey His commandments and voice, that they serve Him, and that they "hold fast" to the Lord. Moses calls for drastic action when it comes to deceitful prophets, "But that prophet…shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God…"(Deuteronomy 13:5). Likewise, Moses writes that even if one's own brother comes and in secret tries to justify worshipping other gods, then that man should be immediately put to death (Deuteronomy 13:6-11). While in a contemporary setting, it may be unlawful to exterminate false prophets, any man or woman who enters a Christian congregation and attempts lead the flock to worship or embrace any gospel message other than that of the biblical Jesus Christ, that man or woman should be removed from the church immediately.

Jonathan Edwards, The Distinguishing Marks

Jonathan Edwards wrote on the subject of identifying the true Spirit of God, and how to discern the false spirit in his *The Distinguishing Marks*. "The words of the text are an introduction to this discourse, of the distinguishing signs of the true and false spirit."[47] Edwards was writing in response to the extraordinary events of the historical Great Awakening in which the spirit of God mightily moved throughout the northeastern United States in the late eighteenth century. How can one distinguish whether or not someone has legitimately met with the Holy Spirit? Edwards draws heavily on 1 John 4.

Edwards begins by looking at the negative signs of the spirit's work. (1) If the work that appears is said to have been carried out in a way that is unusual or odd compared to actual divine revelation as recorded in Scripture, then such work may be false. (2) A divine work should not be judged based on any outward emotions shown by the individual; such as "…tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength."[48] (3) Any genuine meeting with the Spirit will not lead the individual to praise "religion" in a general sense—but rather the individual will specifically praise Jesus Christ as is in Scripture. (4) If an

[47] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. C.C Goen, *The Great Awakening* (New Haven: Yale University, 2009), 227.
[48] Ibid., 230.

individual claims some sort of imaginative and ecstasy-laden adventure, then such may be a false meeting with God's Spirit. "I have been acquainted with some such instances; and I see no manner of need of bringing in the help of the Devil into the account that we give of these things…."[49] (5) Edwards warns that if someone claims a spiritual encounter that is only imitating someone else's encounter, then such may be false. (6) If a person who claims to have had a divine meeting with the Spirit, yet continues to conduct himself in an unbiblical manner, such may be false. (7) Edwards argues that with any true movement of God, there will most certainly be demonic illusions involved, but the true Spirit of God will overcome any Satanic delusion. (8) Along with the presence of some sort of demonic opposition, Edwards warns that during a time of revival, there exists counterfeit prophets; actually, there will always be hypocrites, and such a presence can verify a real spiritual encounter. (9) Finally, Edwards asserts that an authentic divine revelation will cause a holy fear of hell and judgment.[50]

After focusing on the signs of a counterfeit spiritual encounter, Edwards describes five positive evidences for an authentic engagement with the Holy Spirit. (1) Any individual who claims divine revelation will confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who came in flesh, was crucified and resurrected; "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15). (2) Any individual who claims an encounter with God's Spirit will genuinely desire to reject a sinful lifestyle and "worldly" living. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world…is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16). (3) Any individual who claims divine revelation will have, "…a greater regard for the Holy Scriptures, and establishes them more in their truth and divinity, is certainly the Spirit of God."[51] (4) Any individual who has an encounter with the Spirit, and from such has a resurgence of appreciation for God's word, will also gain a greater understanding of God's truth rather than walking in stubbornness. (5) The final distinguishing mark given by Edwards concerning authentic divine appointments is that such an individual will have an increased love

[49] Ibid., 237.
[50] Ibid., 226-48.
[51] Ibid., 253.

for God that will outpour into an increased love for mankind. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

Conclusion

What should missionaries, pastors, teachers and theologians do with individuals who claim to have encountered God in a dream or vision? Should the missionary ignore such stories? Should the missionary embrace all individuals who claim to have been "saved" via a dream? The Bible makes it clear that God communicates through revelation, particularly dreams and visions. God reveals unique characteristics about Himself in revelations and must be able to present the gospel message of Jesus Christ to anyone He chooses. However, there are two issues that should be addressed: first, just because God is capable of revealing His redemptive plan to an individual, this in no way negates the need and validity of missionary witness and activity around the world. Second, if God chooses to reveal His redemptive plan to someone, that individual should embrace the biblical teaching of baptism and church discipline.

The Bible also makes it clear that God uses false prophets to test the genuine people of God. So, counterfeit revelations do occur and should be held accountable to Scripture. If an individual claims to have been chosen as a recipient of a new divine message that involves worshipping other gods, accommodating unbiblical lifestyles, doing harm to another individual or merely bringing attention to oneself, a missionary, teacher, or pastor should not recognize such as being from the God of the Christian faith. Yet, if an individual claims to have had a dream or vision concerning the lordship, sonship, crucifixion, resurrection or biblical work of Jesus Christ, and/or proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who was born of a virgin, was crucified, died, was buried, resurrected, ascended into heaven and will come again, then it can be assumed that God did reveal Himself in a vision. No supposed revelation will in any way deny or reject that which has been revealed in God's Holy Word. "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God" (Acts 22:23).

Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth. **By Courtney Finlayson, ed. St. Louis, MO: Elsevier, 2019. 116 pp. $99.99, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0323569637.**

In 1998, Dutch physician Peggy Cohen-Kettenis and psychologist Stephanie H.M. van Goozen published a landmark article in *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* documenting the use of drugs to delay puberty as part of the process for gender transition. These drugs were originally developed to help children who experience precocious puberty – puberty which starts at a very early developmental age – in order for them to start puberty at a developmentally correct time. But today, children demonstrating gender nonconformity are given puberty-blocking drugs to keep them from going through puberty. Transgender advocates insist such medical treatment is compassionate and results in better mental health outcomes for gender-nonconforming children. *Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth* is a collection of twelve articles which state the case for such uses of puberty-suppressing drugs and, to my knowledge, is the first book length project expressly dedicated to puberty-suppressing drugs as part of gender transition. It is edited by Courtney Finlayson, an endocrinologist at the Ann & Robert Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago who also works with Northwestern University's Gender & Sex Development Program at the Feinberg School of Medicine.

Within *Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth,* five major premises seem to support the argument for using puberty-suppressing drugs. First, all articles assume the basic premise of transgenderism, which is that sex and gender are separate identities: Sex is a matter of biology, while gender is a subjective sense of how one feels. Second, a transgender identity is an innate and immutable characteristic. Third, if a person experiences a disconnect between his or her biology and inner sense of gender, the best treatment option is to adjust the body to fit one's subjective psychological state. The book's fourth premise is the oft-repeated claim that stopping puberty is a completely reversible medical application which allows children time to decide which gender they will embrace without having to deal with the bothersome physical changes associated with puberty. Finally, from the authors' perspective, stopping a child experiencing gender dysphoria from going through puberty is "associated with improved physical and psychological outcomes" (25).

They go so far as to say refusal to give puberty-blocking drugs to a child experiencing gender dysphoria "goes against the principle of nonmaleficence and would, in fact, impose harm" (92).

The authors of *Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth* advocate the treatment guidelines and protocols found in the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's Standards of Care, the Endocrine Society's 2017 clinical practice guidelines, the University of California San Francisco's Primary Care Guidelines, and the so-called "Dutch Protocol" developed by the Amsterdam Gender Clinic in 2006. They argue that gender-nonconforming children should not be given puberty-suppressing drugs until they reach Tanner Stage 2 of pubertal development, meaning children between ages 11 and 13 can start getting the drugs. At the same time, they suggest "the indefinite withholding of puberty is not recommended" (79). So, the authors expect children eventually to go through puberty, but for children who are given puberty-suppressing drugs, this means that at some point they will be given the opposite-sex hormones, meaning natal males will experience a feminine puberty and natal females will experience a masculine puberty.

Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth never interacts with any religious objections to transgenderism or puberty suppression. Instead, there are passing references to non-supportive families and their negative impact on mental health outcomes for transgender youth. Norman Spack, who co-founded Boston Children Hospital's Gender Management Service in 2007, complains access to transgender-affirming care is limited because of "insufficient training and knowledge which are sometimes fueled by cultural and religious beliefs," and he notes mapping access to transgender-friendly children's clinics "looks like the red and blue national election map" (4). There are numerous references within the book to the high cost of puberty-suppressing drugs, often joined with not-so-subtle suggestions that socialized medicine would make such treatments more accessible.

This is a dangerous book. The contributors are all leaders in the field of treating childhood gender nonconformity, and many of them work in the major clinics in the United States that are carving out the accepted protocols that will govern how future gender clinics at other hospitals throughout the country will operate. They seem to accept that, after children receive puberty-suppressing drugs, gender reassignment surgery will occur in the future. Chapter 8 is titled "Surgical Side Effects

of GnRHa," and argues genital surgery "can be an important and final step in allowing transgender individuals to become the people they know themselves to be" (53). We must be clear: In such surgeries, perfectly functioning urogenital systems are surgically mangled. The post-operative difficulties with such surgeries are manifold, and the post-surgical results are never as good as the original. Additional surgeries to correct subsequent problems are common. Yet, the authors of the book have the temerity to accuse people opposed to the use of puberty-suppressing drugs and surgical transition of violating the principle of nonmaleficience! In fact, Christians are pleading for no harm to be done to children and that perfectly functioning bodies should be left whole and undamaged. Furthermore, there is data to indicate gender-reassignment surgery does not really lead to a healthy resolution of the co-morbid mental health issues associated with transgenderism.

The fact the authors acknowledge gender reassignment surgery will probably occur is tacit admission that they know suppressing puberty in gender dysphoric children doesn't actually give the children time to decide whether or not to embrace their natal sex but instead reinforces a transgender identity and is actually a first step in gender transition. Preliminary data from Holland shows that gender-nonconforming children who suppress puberty inevitably choose to go forward with gender transition. In fact, puberty suppression is not a neutral treatment allowing time for a child to make decisions about gender, but puberty suppression is the first step in gender transition. What makes *Pubertal Transition in Transgender Youth* even more frustrating is that most cases of childhood gender nonconformity self-resolve, but the new treatment protocol means most gender-nonconforming children will never know if such would have been the case for them; they are sacrificed to the spirit of the age.

One of the most deeply concerning aspects of *Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth* is that even though the authors discuss their lack of understanding regarding the long-term effects of puberty-suppressing drugs, they forcefully insist puberty should be suppressed in gender dysphoric children. One article flatly admits, "It is unknown whether and in what way GnRHas [puberty-suppressors] may affect brain development" (30). Another article notes how the drugs impair bone mineralization, compromise fertility, and have "unclear effects on brain development, body mass index, and body composition" (49). The authors

are clearly aware that puberty is a vital period of brain development but seem to favor an expansive view of gender over concerns about physical health. At one point, the authors say puberty-suppressing drugs likely have "effects on the child-to-adult developmental process that knowledge based on their use in adults cannot anticipate." (89) In other words, they do not know how these drugs will alter children over the long run, but they insist on using them anyway.

The tone of the volume seems to admit the experimental nature of puberty-suppressing treatments. But these are experiments on children who are barely capable of understanding what puberty is – much less what it means – to forego puberty. There is a brief discussion of autonomy and informed consent in children, but the entire volume gives a truncated and inadequate discussion of the developmental limitations of a twelve-year-old. It is quite one thing to talk about a twelve-year-old's autonomous decision to have his or her tonsils removed, as such a surgery does not fundamentally alter who the child is; asking a twelve-year-old, however, to make an informed decision about delaying puberty, a decision that will affect the child for a lifetime, and a decision based on expansive adult categories of sexuality and gender expression, is more akin to manipulation than good patient care. A more reasoned approach would certainly acknowledge that if a child is struggling with gender-identity issues, giving the child drugs with uncertain effects on brain development will likely complicate the process of maturation.

Pubertal Suppression in Transgender Youth is a compendium of arguments in favor of using gender-suppressing drugs as part of our culture's new adventure into gender exploration. The authors are all leaders in their respective fields. As such, their assertions will certainly be repeated in debates on this topic. The book is a disturbing foretaste of arguments we will hear for years to come. Puberty is a part of the growth process that God has designed for humans and suppressing puberty in gender-nonconforming youth is a fundamental rejection of God's design.

J. Alan Branch
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO

***A Theology of the New Testament*. By Craig L. Blomberg. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018. 769 pp. $49.95, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1-4813-0226-5.**

What unifies the diverse New Testament texts? For Craig L. Blomberg, the theme of fulfillment synthesizes the earliest Jesus tradition to the Johannine literature that concludes the Christian canon. Blomberg notes that his work enjoys points of contact with recent New Testament theologies but remains distinct both in organization and methodology. While Greg Beale's proposal that the theme of new creation (*A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011]) and Tom Schreiner's theme of magnifying God in Christ in the already/not-yet kingdom (*New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008]) each sympathize with Blomberg's understanding of fulfillment, Blomberg's arrangement of material distinguishes it from Beale's and Schreiner's approaches. Blomberg surveys the twenty-seven books of the New Testament but does so not so much with a view to how each expresses established categories constituent to systematics but with a view to themes consistent in that text and to that author. In this way, Blomberg's work is also similar to but different from I. Howard Marshall's *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), where Marshall surveys New Testament literature one book at a time, analyzing its theological themes consistent with systematics. Blomberg admits that at times he traces categories of systematics in the New Testament literature, "but before falling back on that tradition, I try to understand the logic of the book or author itself, especially by following its sequence of unfolding thoughts, particularly in the opening portions of a document" (10). Blomberg states that his volume most closely reflects the structure followed by Udo Schnelle in his *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009) but differs in its conclusions about the various stages of development in the early church and its writings.

Blomberg arranges his theology in eleven chapters and a conclusion. The first two chapters, "Jesus" (pp. 17-100) and "The Early Church" (pp. 101-136), could be grouped together. Here Blomberg's volume resembles Schnelle, attempting to articulate the historical reliability of Jesus tradition and the early church. Blomberg applies historical-critical reliability standards of double attestation, similarity, and dissimilarity to

the Gospels and Acts. To establish the events surrounding Jesus, Blomberg uses the Gospel of Mark along with the material traditionally ascribed to Q (material common to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke not found in Mark). Blomberg does not re-state material from his *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues & Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), noting only briefly places where the Fourth Gospel corroborates Jesus tradition also in Mark and Q. Blomberg asserts that material unique to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke supports his presentation of Mark and Q and can be set aside for the purposes of a historical-critical portrayal of Jesus tradition. While I appreciate Blomberg's careful analysis of the sources of New Testament theology, and his attempt to advance the conversation with historical-critical scholars, a broader readership might be distracted by the more technical approach in the first two chapters. Better to move the first two chapters to the end as an example of how to employ historical-critical methodology in doing New Testament theology.

Chapters three-eleven present the New Testament texts in a clustered chronology of authorial composition. In chapter three, Blomberg analyzes James and Jude as the earliest New Testament letters. While most New Testament surveys and commentaries analyze Jude along with 2 Peter, Blomberg notes that the connections between 1 and 2 Peter have been diminished. He analyzes the Peterine texts together in chapter ten. Blomberg observes the theme of fulfillment in James' argument that the law of love fulfills the law of the Old Testament (161-62). Jude expresses fulfillment through typology, including the exodus, Sodom and Gomorrah, et al. Blomberg identifies James' and Jude's perspectives on systematic categories like eschatology and Christology.

In chapter 4, Blomberg turns to the Pauline letters save the Pastorals. Noting common language in the Pastorals and Luke-Acts, Blomberg analyzes 1-2 Timothy and Titus in chapter 8 following his presentation of Luke's writings in chapter 7. Blomberg briefly notes the motif of fulfillment in each of these texts (184-194) and then provides a thematic analysis of these Pauline texts (194-306). Here Blomberg traces systematic categories like Christology (195-225), Soteriology (232-75), and Ecclesiology (275-304). Blomberg's synthesis of Pauline systematic themes resembles Schreiner and Beale at points. But Blomberg forays new ground for a theology by emphasizing the social dynamics of Christian theology. By this point in *A New Testament Theology*, readers

will notice what will become a unique feature of Blomberg's work: fulfillment in Christ is to be lived by the people of Christ. "Love is central to all we should be about, and only within the fellowship, nurture, and accountability of healthy, local Christian communities can we hope to grow to the extent that we can and should in the present age" (305), he writes.

In chapters five and six, Blomberg presents theology in the Gospels of Mark (307-340) and Matthew (341-382). Blomberg notes the theme of fulfillment in Mark's and Matthew's Christology and eschatology, but also Mark's unique emphasis on discipleship and Mathew's emphasis on Jesus' conflicts with the Jewish leadership. In chapter seven (383-454), Blomberg notes that Luke expresses the idea of fulfillment in terms of Christology, the Holy Spirit, ecclesiology, and eschatology in both his Gospel and Acts. But these texts emphasize more than just the systematic categories noted here. Luke presents fulfillment as a reality for social relationships as outsiders become insiders and the wealthy are challenged to share with the poor.

Blomberg advocates the possibility that Luke was Paul's amanuensis for the Pastorals, analyzed in chapter eight (455-96), thus the common language with Luke-Acts. Blomberg offers that Paul's framework of fulfillment expressed in Romans-2 Thessalonians is expressed to Timothy and Titus in a uniquely personal genre that fits the circumstances of the day. Blomberg notes the theme of fulfillment in the Christology, eschatology, and ecclesiology of the Pastorals. Nearly one-fourth of chapter eight is an analysis of women (474-81) in the Pastorals (eschatology is covered in three pages). Blomberg is keen to argue that the Pastorals do not prohibit women from holding the office of pastor (not defined in terms of gender in Eph 4:11), though perhaps the role of senior pastor should be restricted to qualified males (481). I appreciate Blomberg's emphasis on the social implications of fulfillment and agree that these social dimensions must be considered as a part of New Testament theology, but Blomberg's treatment here is excessive.

Of all New Testament books, Hebrews' use of fulfillment language carries throughout. In chapter nine (497-536), Blomberg identifies the role of warning passages and covenants in Hebrews' soteriology, noting also common systematic categories of Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. In chapter ten, Blomberg identifies how Peter understands fulfillment of prophecy and promise in 1-2 Peter. Blomberg's most

extensive presentation of Christology as fulfillment is found in his analysis of the Johannine literature in chapter eleven (579-690). Here Blomberg also traces the characteristics of the Christian life and the relational dynamics of Christian unity as they would be expressed in the church. And this final motif represents what is a unique contribution of *A New Testament Theology*. Blomberg's final word is hortatory: "'It is fulfilled.' Go out and live like it!" (704).

Todd R. Chipman
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO

***The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire*. By Kyle Harper. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017. 297 pp. $26.01, Hardcover. ISBN-13: 978-0691166834.**

Kyle Harper, professor of classics and letters and senior vice president and provost at the University of Oklahoma, writes a lively history of Rome suggesting that climate change and disease—linked to human activity—contributed to the fall of the empire. Harper surveys historical texts and papyri gathering data on climate and disease, noting the way these influenced politics, the economy, and daily life in the centuries we know as the Roman period of history (200 BC-AD 700). Harper identifies three climatological phases in Rome's history: Roman Climate Optimum (200 BC- AD 150), Late Roman Transitional Period (AD 150-450), and Late Antique Little Ice Age (AD 450-700). The latter two phases witnessed the Antonine Plague (AD 165), the Plague of Cyprian (AD 249-62), and the Justinianic Plague (AD 541-43). *The Fate of Rome* is sprinkled with tables and graphs describing disease patterns, moisture levels, and economic impact of nature's bounty and scarcity.

In sum, Harper suggests that the earth itself played a role in the fall of Rome. The Roman ideals of conquest and progress, Harper argues, not only coincided with moments of natural catastrophe but exacerbated patterns of drought and disease resulting in economic and political upheaval. "The Romans built an interconnected, urbanized empire on the fringes of the tropics, with tendrils creeping across the known world. In an unintended conspiracy with nature, the Romans created a disease

ecology that unleashed the latent power of pathogen evolution. The Romans were soon engulfed by the overwhelming force of what we would today call emerging infectious disease. The end of Rome's empire, then, is a story in which humanity and the environment cannot be separated" (5).

Harper thus offers an almost formulaic relationship in the fall of Rome. (A) Roman expansion—characterized by military conquest, the establishment of commerce infrastructure, and increased transportation of people and goods—led to (B) neglect of the natural environment, and (C) the spread of pathogens, with the result that (D) the robust economic and political structures established in the Roman Climate Optimum (200 BC- AD 150) slowly eroded to the point of decay.

Having surveyed the general scope of *The Fate of Rome*, I wish here to explore Harper's reflections on the spiritual climate of the mid-third century. Harper's narrative offers a framework for understanding the growth of the church in the age before Constantine. Since recent volumes by such divergent voices as Bart D. Ehrman (*The Triumph of Christianity*, Simon & Shuster, 2018) and Larry W. Hurtado (*Destroyer of the Gods*, Baylor University Press, 2016) also analyze the rapid growth of Christianity in the third century, I was intrigued by the way Harper's portrayal of climate and disease might have propelled the Christian movement. Harper cites Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, as well as papyri from Oxyrhynchus as sources of information about ecology and theology in the first half of the third century. Cyprian writes (*Ad Demetrianum*, 3) that the earth seemed old—dry in winter and cool in summer (130). In the midst of this arid season generally, the Nile did not offer its usual, life-giving floods. Without the annual flood, wheat from Egypt was sparse. Harper notes that in the spring of AD 246, officials in Oxyrhynchus purchased privately-owned grain surpluses at twice what would be a normal price (134).

During this season of drought, an Ebola-like plague ravaged the empire from North Africa to Bithynia. Harper writes that, "The global climate turbulence of the AD 240's, which clearly affected the monsoon systems, stirred ecological changes that may have led to the eruption of the Plague of Cyprian. For over a decade, it wound its way through the empire, diffusing swiftly but burning slowly. The pandemic struck soldiers and civilians, city dwellers and villagers alike" (145). Because of

Cyprian's detailed description of this disease, historians refer to it as the Plague of Cyprian.

Drought and disease, according to Harper, were not the only factors leading to instability in the empire in the mid-third century. Between AD 248 and 268, rebellion in the army led to political turbulence at the highest level of Roman government. A fiscal crisis ensued in which the soldiers were not paid. "The relationship between pestilence and frontier insecurity was obvious to contemporaries," Harper writes (146). Foreign leaders attacked Rome on the fringes of the empire, since, in those locations, soldiers were in demand. Harper observes that this period of drought, disease, and political upheaval saw a marked increase in the number of Christians in Rome. On the surface, this phenomenon is more than a little ironic. Pagans blamed Christians for the climatological problems: since Christians would not worship the gods or sacrifice to the emperor, the problems of climate and chaos were their fault (154-55). Cyprian, in *Ad Demetrianum*, argues conversely stating that climate failure resulted from pagans not worshipping the true God.

Indeed, Harper notes, the calamity of climate and politics propelled Christianity even though Christians were blamed for fractures in the empire (155). "The mass mortality painfully showed up the inefficacy of the ancestral gods and put on exhibit the virtues of the Christian faith," Harper writes (156). These virtues were appended to the theological emphases of God's transcendence, providing Christianity with both vertical and horizontal capacities for addressing the crises of the mid-third century. "Christianity's sharpest advantage was its inexhaustible ability to forge kinship-like networks among perfect strangers based on an ethic of sacrificial love. The church boasted of being a 'new *ethnos*,' a new nation, with all the implications of shared heritage and mutual obligation. Christian ethics turned the chaos of pestilence into a mission field. The vivid promise of the resurrection encouraged the faithful against the fear of death. Cyprian, in the heat of persecution and plague, pleaded with his flock to show love to the enemy. The compassion was conspicuous and consequential," writes Harper (156).

And while Christianity waxed in the face of these threats, paganism waned. Harper suggests that because paganism (variegated though it was) was expressed in the social and mystical hierarchies of class and cosmos, when the climate changed and the coin collapsed, so did the basic structures of paganism (158). "When the loftier expressions of public

religious life faltered, the Christians seized the moment. The church inserted its voice obtrusively into the public conversation" (158).

In *The Fate of Rome*, Harper investigates how climate and disease affected the economic and political landscape of the empire in nearly 900 years of history. Reviewers will thus have to choose which of Harper's ideas to engage and which to forgo. Modern concerns regarding climate change flow just beneath the surface throughout Harper's narrative. I am not entirely convinced that Rome's conquests had as large of an impact on climate change as Harper suggests, but he makes a valid case for how climate change can result in the spread of disease and affect economics and politics. The degree to which human activity in the empire affected the climate is likely much less than the degree to which changes in the climate affected Rome's economic and political norms. Nonetheless, Harper's investigation of a novel theme is to be commended. For Christians, *The Fate of Rome* offers a window into understanding the power of resurrection hope and Christian virtue in the face of peril.

Todd R. Chipman
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO

***Chasing Infinity: Discipleship as the Pursuit of Infinite Treasure*. By Mark D. Liederbach. Orlando: Cru Press, 2017. 194 pp. $11.04, Paperback. ISBN 1-57334-111-8.**

"Discipleship" is a hot topic among evangelical churches, and Mark Liederbach invites his readers into a thrilling adventure in his latest and arguably most compelling book, *Chasing Infinity*. While Christian bookstores currently contain numerous discipleship books with various strategies and methodologies, few Christians actually understand how to make disciples, and even fewer have a godly passion to make disciples. Liederbach clearly states that he is not interested in criticizing those strategies and methods but is after something else. "My hope is that as this picture [God's design for the universe] unfolds from the pages of Scripture, the reader's understanding of, and motivation for, discipleship will deepen, resulting in greater, more fervent application of discipleship methods…" (16).

This book is a quick read, containing 194 pages comprised of a ten-page introduction and six chapters, which are each twenty to thirty pages in length. The thesis of the book is clearly stated: "My desire is to provide a clear and concise depiction of the biblical and theological foundations of discipleship so that these other greathearted efforts to develop and impart strategies of discipleship might be understood with more depth and richness, employed with great staying power, and owned as a lifestyle by all who claim to be followers of Christ" (15). The first three pages of the introduction are compelling and whet the appetite of the reader. Liederbach outlines the six chapters of the book and uses a four-step paradigm to explain the grand narrative of Scripture: 1. Creation, 2. The Fall, 3. Redemption, 4. Restoration.

In chapter one, "The Thrill of the Chase," Liederbach begins with the true story of a three-million-dollar treasure hidden somewhere in the Rocky Mountains, which still has yet to be found. Using Matthew 13, Liederbach suggests that the ultimate treasure for the Christian is infinitely more valuable than the treasure in the Rockies. The Bible is the treasure map that contains clues leading us to the infinite Treasure. He then provides an explanation of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and defines the words disciple, discipleship, and disciple-making. Chapter two is critically important as Liederbach explains creation in Genesis 1-2 and discipleship in the Garden of Eden. A proper understanding of the creation and purpose for mankind is crucial to understanding the grand narrative of Scripture and God's mission for His people. Chapter three begins with step-two of the grand narrative: mankind chose to rebel against God. Because mankind was created to worship, we are now inclined to worship and chase after sin rather than God. In chapter four, Liederbach explains the story of "the pearl of great price" (Matthew 13). As stated previously, the next stage of the grand narrative is "redemption." This chapter explains the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who came so that mankind might be redeemed and have a proper relationship with God. Yet, many who claim to trust Christ have missed the point of the story. God's "beauty and worth and mercy and grace and wondrous glory are so infinitely valuable, surrendering everything to know and love and to chase Him forever into infinity is a small price to pay" (121). Do not miss the point: it is God who is the pearl of great price!

Chapter five, "Reengaging the Chase," is about being reconciled to God and living a life of obedience. Like the Yates family, who lived in

relative obscurity while owning property with millions of gallons of oil (unbeknownst to them), "too many of us live like paupers when we have, in fact, become partakers in the greatest Treasure there is" (125). In chapter six, Liederbach provides a desire for the beatific vision (seeing God), and the joy of heaven. He argues for discipleship in heaven because "as finite creatures who are chasing an infinite being, we will always need to have insight on …how to best bring to Him all the worship and glory He is due" (184).

Let it be clearly stated the strengths of this book are too numerous to list in this brief review. With distinct clarity, Liederbach defines a biblical theology for discipleship and God's purposes for mankind from the beginning (Genesis 1) and into eternity. One of the greatest strengths to note is how Liederbach clearly explains his process in the introduction, and then methodically walks through that outline during the course of the book. The entirety of this book is marked with clarity and precision. Additionally, each chapter begins with a true story of adventure, intrigue, and treasure. Liederbach then relates that story to the adventure and treasure described in the Scriptures. He describes God's epic plan in such a way that the reader cannot wait to join the chase.

The weaknesses of this book pale in comparison to the strengths. In fact, it seems hypercritical to point out some of these details. First, while the author clearly accomplished his purposes, there were some editing errors that detracted from the presentation. For example, numerous citations failed to italicize book titles. A story about Abraham Lincoln has no citation at all (95). Additionally, Liederbach is writing to the typical church member. Understandably, he uses Hebrew and Greek words to explain the biblical text and does a fine job of explaining these complex terms. However, on occasion, he uses a rather obscure word(s) that may be arduous for his audience (i.e. "propitiation" p. 106, "synergistically" p. 48). Again, these issues are editorial and not qualitative criticisms.

In conclusion, *Chasing Infinity* is a good contribution to the subject of discipleship and should be considered required reading for anyone interested in this discussion. It will undoubtedly be assigned in Christian college and seminary courses. It is warmly recommended to all pastors who oversee discipleship in the local church. That being said, each Christian should read it while looking forward to heaven. As Liederbach concluded, "Throughout all eternity future, we will have the unspeakable

privilege of forever accelerating in a joy-filled, never-ending pursuit after Him who is the infinite Treasure: Jesus Christ" (193).

Drew Ham
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC

***Reading Proverbs Intertextually*. By Katharine J. Dell and Will Kynes, eds. The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 629. London: T & T Clark, 2019, xiii + 253 pp. $114.00, Hardcover. ISBN-13: 978-0567667373.**

Scholars familiar with previous additions to this series, *Reading Job Intertextually* or *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually*, will find this a consistent and equally helpful addition. Intertextual analysis combats scholarships' use of historical setting and literary forms in exegeting the book of Proverbs, which has threatened accuracy in interpretation (2). The book has two parts: 1. *Proverbs in Dialogue with the Hebrew Bible*, 2. *Proverbs in Dialogue with Texts Throughout History*. The volume does not provide a consistent or well-defined methodology, yet some chapters provide clarity to the methodology for intertextual analysis (6). The purpose is to provide a snapshot of the benefits of intertextual analysis, which spurns interest and further study in the reader (6).

Section one examines Proverbs with OT texts derived from the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. For the Torah: "Wisdom is the Tree of Life: A Study of Proverbs 3:13-20 and Genesis 2–3," by Christine Yoder provides fresh insight about the tree of wisdom in Proverbs by comparing the tree of wisdom with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from Genesis. Proverbs blends the two trees from Genesis and proposes that eating from the tree of wisdom will guide one back to the tree of life (17). Chapter 2, "'Teach them diligently to your son!': The Book of Proverbs and Deuteronomy," by Bernd Schipper presents the complex relationship between Proverbs and Deuteronomy, and it presents a possible solution that wisdom at times influenced Torah and at other times Torah influenced wisdom in the books of Proverbs and Deuteronomy (33).

For the Prophets, author and editor Will Kynes contributes chapter 3, "Wisdom Defined through Narrative and Intertextual Network: 1 Kings 1-11 and Proverbs," an intertextual analysis of 1 Kings and Proverbs which demonstrates the value and necessity of allowing Proverbs to shine light into other texts, such as prophetic works, and those texts to shine light into the book of Proverbs (44). Chapter 4, John Goldingay's, "Proverbs and Isaiah 1–39," differs stylistically and pedagogically from the other essays in this volume. The essay presents his understanding of intertextuality through a fictional dialogue which incorporates text from Proverbs and Isaiah 1-39 to demonstrate how the texts dialogue with one another.

For the Writings, chapter 5, "Rebuke, Complaint, Lament, and Praise: Reading Proverbs and Psalms Together" by William Brown highlights editorial similarities between each book's use of rebuke, lament, and praise, and demonstrates how the books dialogue about what constitutes the true vision of life (75). In chapter 6, "The Proverbial Rhetoric of Job 28," Scott Jones compares the quest for wisdom, praising wisdom, and wisdom's role in creation in Proverbs 3:14-15 and Job 28:15-19. Jones finds that the disputed section of Job 28:15-19, 28 rhetorically and metaphorically fits with Proverbs (86). Mark Sneed in chapter 7, "Twice-Told Proverbs as Inner-Biblical Exegesis," takes a new look into repeated proverbial sayings within Proverbs to consider why such repetitions exist. Sneed finds duplicate proverbs to model how to interpret a proverb and supplement the clustering of related proverbs as an added layer of inner-exegesis (100-101). Chapter 8, "Didactic Intertextuality: Proverbial Wisdom as Illustrated in Ruth," Katharine Dell looks at the literary interplay, as opposed to literary dependence, between Prov 10-31 and the book of Ruth (105). She concludes that Ruth exemplifies the woman of Prov 31, which has long been claimed, and the general principles and maxims of Prov 10-30 (113). In chapter 9, "Erotic Wisdom for a More Independent Youth: Is There a Debate between Song of Songs and Proverbs?" Anselm Hagedorn writes to persuade readers that Song of Songs is written to propagate proper characteristics of loving relationships and not as a wisdom book, nor is it redacted by wisdom circles (123). Markus Sauer, in chapter 10, "Qohelet as a Reader of Proverbs," concludes that Qohelet's wisdom thinking is based on the forms and contents of wisdom in Proverbs (136).

Section two examines intertextual links between Proverbs and texts ranging from the NT to extra-biblical texts. Chapter 11, "Intertextuality between the Book of Ben Sira and the Book of Proverbs," by Pancratius Beentjes concludes that "establishing intertextual relations between the book of Ben Sira and the book of Proverbs appears not to be such an easy task (152)." In Chapter 12, "Aphorisms and Admonitions: The Reuse of Proverbs in 4QWiles of the Wicked Woman," William Tooman compares and contrasts poetic and rhetorical attributes, absent elements of Prov 7, and 4QWiles adaptation of Prov 7 material to shed light on the interpretation of 4Q184 (156). In chapter 13, "Proverbs in Dialogue with the New Testament," Knut Heim provides analysis of the five NT quotes of Proverbs, an exploration of allusions to Proverbs in the NT, and an intertextual dialogue between Proverbs and Rom 13:1-7 about the care of the vulnerable (167). Chapter 14, "Proverbs 8:22 and the Arian Controversy," Susannah Ticciati compares Gregory of Nyssa's reading of Proverbs against modern readers to conclude that intertextual reading of Scripture is proper, but that the individual context should not be overcast by intertextual readings (189). Chapter 15, "'Better X Than Y': Context and Meaning in Proverbs, Qohelet, and Midrashic Collections" by Susan Niditch determines that, although similar in form, "better x than y" sayings are dependent upon their context for interpretation (200). In Chapter 16, "Proverbs and the Confucian Classics," Christopher Hancock writes to persuade the reader that by reading Confucian Classics intertextually with Proverbs, each book will be semantically refined, mutually illuminated, provide cultural exposition, and provide interpretative enrichment (205). Last, "Sex and Power(lessness) in Selected Northern Sotho and Yorùbá Proverbs: An Intertextual Reading of Proverbs 5-7," Madipoane Masenya and Funlola Olojede compare the book of Proverbs with African proverbs based on the books' shared simple optimistic worldviews, and on the African people's regard toward Proverbs as a religious text. The authors seek to compare the theme of sex and power to examine cultural prejudices based on gender (217-218).

The intertextual comparison between the OT, NT, and intertestamental texts is most insightful. Of particular note was Beentis' intertextual analysis of Ben Sira. The chapter provides a method to the ill-defined nature of intertextual studies and has an unexpected conclusion (141-142). In a book which boasts intertextual usefulness, the natural tendency is to expect conclusions which demonstrate

intertextual harmony. However, Beentis concludes that Ben Sira and Proverbs are not correlated as some scholars find (141).

Perhaps the unique intertextual comparisons were Goldingay's, Hancock's, and Masenya and Olojede's chapters. These chapters move well outside the traditional use of intertextual comparisons found through inner-biblical analysis. Chapters 4, 16, and 17 will likely spark questions of the appropriate use of intertextual comparison.

In conclusion, *Reading Proverbs Intertextually* achieves the goal of providing insights gained through intertextual analysis and provokes thoughts for further study. The book also showcases the varied methodologies which can be viewed as both a strength and a weakness. This book is a welcomed addition to the series.

Ross D. Harmon
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO

Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?: A Surgeon-Scientist Examines the Evidence. **By Thomas A. Miller. Crossway: Wheaton, Illinois, 2013. 1,172 pp. $16.99, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1433533075.**

Despite centuries of intense scholarly debate, the resurrection of Jesus Christ has continued to inspire the admiration and ire of those who have investigated his life. Christ's death and resurrection altered the course of human history and began one of the world's largest religions. For generations, scholars of various backgrounds have meticulously investigated, dissected, and debated the trustworthiness, historicity, and reliability of the gospels and their accounts of Christ's resurrection. However, all the various lines of investigation boil down to a single question: Did Jesus really rise from the dead? In recent years, there has been a renaissance of scholarly literature re-examining the historical Jesus and the lives of the apostles. As Gary Habermas explains, "During the last thirty years, perhaps the most captivating theological topic, at least in North America, is the historical Jesus. Dozens of publications by major scholars have appeared since the mid-1970s, bringing Jesus and his culture to the forefront of contemporary discussions… Since 1975, more than 1400 scholarly publications on the death, burial, and

resurrection of Jesus have appeared" (1). In this light, Thomas Miller's book summarizes this massive body concerning Christ's resurrection and argues for its historicity through the perspective of a practicing physician, scientist, and Christian.

The first two chapters of Miller's book lay the philosophical and scientific foundations for approaching Christ's death and resurrection. Miller particularly draws from his experience as a physician and his encounters with death to guide his exploration into the historicity and significance of Christ's death and resurrection. As Miller writes, "Although I have not taken care of trauma victims in any regular way for the past fifteen years, I still have to deal with death much more frequently than I would prefer…So what does this have to do with a resurrection? Actually, everything. The fact that death is the great leveler and will ultimately lay claim to each of us, despite the impressive strides that have occurred in medicine and surgery during the past fifty years, makes the possibility of life beyond the grave not just some interesting topic for academic debate, but exceedingly relevant and important for every human being. It is in this context that a man named Jesus cannot be ignored" (2).

Therefore, Miller's book is as much an argument for Christ's resurrection as a documentation of his own journey applying the truth of Christ's resurrection to the human experience. Miller then describes the compatibility of science with Christian belief, the methodology of scientific and historical investigations toward truth claims, and the reliability of the New Testament. Miller's purpose is to answer objections concerning the apparent tension between his scientific and medical training with his belief in the resurrection and deity of Jesus Christ. As Miller described, "People like me who claim to be considerable scientists but yet give credence to such a far-fetched idea as the resurrection are clearly in the minority among our fellow scientists. After all, in this enlightened age, everyone knows that the 'miraculous' simply does not occur. But is that really true? And on what basis?" (2). Overall, the first two chapters establish the reliability of the New Testament to further investigate Christ's death and resurrection given the accounts of the apostles and extra-biblical sources of the first century.

Chapter 3 focuses on the details surrounding Christ's crucifixion and the manner by which he died. Miller's medical expertise comes across strongly with several pictures, descriptions, and references documenting

the excruciating pain and suffering Christ experienced in his last moments. As a physician in training, this portion of Miller's book engaged my medical training and experiences toward a greater appreciation of Christ's character and love for his friends and enemies. As Christians, popular culture, media, and our churches fail to portray the graphic nature, humiliation, and suffering Christ experienced in his last hours. In this regard, Miller's description of Christ's crucifixion serves to remind Christians of their savior's love and dispel doubts whether Christ survived the crucifixion or faked his death.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 argue for Christ's resurrection by establishing the empty tomb, the reliability of biblical witnesses to Christ's post-crucifixion appearances, and its essential importance to the Christian faith. Miller's discussion on the empty tomb and resurrection reviews many of the current arguments exposed by apologists and theologians, such as N.T. Wright. However, Miller argues his overview of the empty tomb and resurrection serves three purposes. First, to explain the radical transformation Christ's disciples had in their attitude and thinking towards their willingness to suffer and die in Christ's name. Second, to establish that Jesus's resurrection established his divine nature. Third, to verify the adequacy of Christ's death for the forgiveness of sins and supremacy over death. As Miller summarized, "there are no risks in entrusting our lives to the saving power of Jesus. He has already accomplished everything that needs to be done, when he died on our behalf on the cross. Everything that could keep us separated from God has been forever dealt with forever…unlike a surgical procedure, in which things are sometimes overlooked that may be needed to fully correct a problem, nothing was overlooked on the cross" (2).

Miller's book summarizes many of the writings and arguments written by other apologists and theologians concerning Christ's death and resurrection. However, his background as a surgeon and scientist provides a unique perspective to examine Christ's death in meticulous medical detail. Miller's personal accounts with the death of patients, friends, and family bring the resurrection into perspective with our own experiences in a fallen world. Miller's book provides readers unfamiliar with the resurrection literature a clear argument for Christ's death and resurrection.

Jonathan Kopel
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

***The Ark of Safety: Is There Salvation Outside of the Church?* By Ryan M. McGraw. Explorations in Reformed Confessional Theology. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018. 144 pp. $10.00, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1601785268.**

Ryan M. McGraw, the author of *The Ark of Safety*, has served as the Morton H. Smith Professor of Systematic Theology at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary since 2013. McGraw received his M.Div. and Th.M. from the aforementioned institution and his Ph.D. from the University of the Free State in South Africa. He is the author and editor of several books, including *By Good and Necessary Consequence* (Reformation Heritage, 2012) and *John Owen: Trajectories in Reformed Orthodox Theology* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). In addition to his work in the academy, McGraw has also served in various local churches, both as a pastor and youth minister. He remains an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The aim of this series is to eliminate the confusion, misunderstanding, and perceived irrelevance of the "creeds of the ancient church and the doctrinal standards of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed churches" (ix). McGraw accomplishes this by writing with four "vantage points": textual, historical, theological, and pastoral (ix-x). One of the "rich theological documents" the series concerns itself with is the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). McGraw notes that the aim of this book is to "explain, examine, and apply the assertion in the [WCF] that… 'out of [the visible church] there is no ordinary possibility of salvation'" (2). This aim is summarily noted in the book's subtitled question as well: "Is there salvation outside of the church?" By "church," McGraw most often means the *visible* church, though he often writes of the *invisible* church. The question is one of two parts: McGraw concerns himself, first, with what the WCF actually teaches and, *second*, with whether the WCF's teaching is actually *biblical*. His answer—and thesis—is stated and repeated thus: "I argue ultimately that the visible church is ordinarily necessary for salvation because Christ is [absolutely] necessary for salvation, and Christ chose to call His people to Himself [ordinarily] through the church" (5; cf. 32, 39, 46, 47, 82, 103, 112). Echoing the Reformers, McGraw does not doubt the *absolute* necessity of the invisible church for salvation; nonetheless, his almost singular focus becomes helping prove the WCF's claim as to "why

salvation is *ordinarily* impossible apart from the *visible* church, with some important exceptions" (47, emphases mine).

The Ark of Safety is divided into three sections, which can all be summarized in question form. First, what does the expression of the WCF mean? Second, is the expression biblical? Third, why is the expression important? McGraw answers the first question with a historical defense and explanation, though he almost entirely leaves out 1,200 years of church history concerning the phrase at hand. He acknowledges that "this phrase originated in the early church and continued in the medieval church," and that he cannot deal with this history in detail (3). As a matter of fact, the Latin phrase—*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*—is still referenced to this day in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992), likely because of its origination with Cyprian (11). So, by no means do Reformed folks have the monopoly on this phrase; however, McGraw's exclusion is warranted since he aims to explain what it means *in the WCF*. He synthesizes the beliefs of men like Heinrich Bullinger, John Calvin, William Ames, Zacharias Ursinus, Herman Witsius, John Owen, Francis Turretin, and Wilhelmus á Brakel. Though these men had some differences, all of them basically agreed that the visible church is *ordinarily necessary* for salvation. Moreover, they ultimately believed that "membership in the church visible admits exceptions occasionally." This notation helps McGraw's dealing with what the expression means *as it appears in the WCF*.

In the second part, McGraw begins his biblical defense of the WCF's claim. In chapter three, he writes of the "church" in the Old Testament, primarily by working through the covenant of works (51ff) and the covenant of grace (54ff). His major conclusion is that the "Old Testament church" was a mixed body (67). In many ways, this mixed body's natural inheritor is the visible church of the New Testament, which also includes both those circumcised of the flesh (i.e., through baptism) and those circumcised of the heart (i.e., through election and faith in God). Though many were *in* Israel, not all were of *true* Israel. The bulk of chapter four is devoted to McGraw's "tracing the expansion of the church in Acts and the function of baptism as entrance into this visible body" (69-70). He notes that, in the New Testament, circumcision passed away with the coming of Christ. He then seeks to answer: *what replaced it*? He answers "baptism," for it, "like circumcision, established the ordinary pattern of the necessity of adding to the visible church those who should be saved"

(82). As McGraw is a Presbyterian, the reader can expect an unapologetic defense of paedobaptism in this section. In chapter five, he summarily recommends that *true* believers "must be partakers of the whole Christ and, if… possible, be so in the context of the whole church" (99).

The last chapter is practical and pastoral. Though it is the shortest, McGraw notes its content to be the "conclusion and primary aim of this book" (103). He shows why it is important for Christians and church leaders to see the vital nature of the visible church, even though it is not absolutely necessary for salvation.

As for the primary purpose of *The Ark of Safety*, McGraw certainly accomplished his goal, though some readers will likely wonder if its purpose was ambitious enough to warrant publication. There is no critique of the WCF's statement on the visible church. To borrow biographical terminology, McGraw's book is more a *hagiography* of the WCF than anything else. Ultimately, he (1) tells the reader what the WCF says (i.e., concerning the *ordinary* necessity of the visible church for salvation) and (2) presents a thesis and conclusion that is almost precisely what the WCF says.

As a Baptist, I obviously had many disagreements with McGraw's theological formulations and conclusions. In noting the shortcomings of his book, I will not deal with these specifically. Being a Presbyterian; therefore, the reader should not be surprised that McGraw writes with Presbyterian convictions. Aside from shortcomings of this kind, three most stand out. First, McGraw is not clear enough as to what he means by "the ministry of the word" that is ordinarily performed in the visible church, leading to man's salvation. He says that men are ordinarily called to salvation "through the church," but it is not obvious whether he means by this the corporate *gathering* of the church, the individual *sending* of the church, or *both* (5; cf14, 18, 21, 25, 27, 31). *When* and *when not* is the visible church no longer involved? Can the "ministry of the word" or "preaching" that leads to man's salvation take place outside the context of a church gathering or outside of church-given authority? I assume the best of McGraw here, but he could have been clearer.

Second, there was a *consistent inconsistency* in McGraw's take on what constitutes as viable entry into the visible church. As a Presbyterian, McGraw believes infants can—through "household baptism"—enter into the membership of the visible church, though those infants have made no credible profession of faith (80ff). This willful entry of known,

unregenerate infants into the visible church is warranted, McGraw believes, because through circumcision of the flesh in the Old Testament, those who were not of *true* Israel (i.e., having not received circumcision of the *heart*) were still admitted into Israel. McGraw also notes—and *often*—that members of the visible church enter *only* by way of their credible professions of faith, *but with no mention of the infant's entry* (21, 79, 80, 85). In various terms, he often concludes that the visible church "encompasses people who profess… [and] possess faith in Christ," yet unsaved children cannot do either (85). Moreover, nothing is said of the baptized infants who belong to unregenerate members of the visible church, thus showing they do not belong to a *truly* saved household. Is this not an anomaly to be addressed? He also says nothing of the destiny of those infants who are not baptized, what to make of adopted children, or why both male and female infants are baptized in the visible church, though circumcision was reserved for solely for males in the Old Testament. A like-minded Baptist unfamiliar with Presbyterian theology might find himself lost in this maze of a doctrine.

Third, I was surprised to find that he did not state, in clearest terms, the destiny of those who *willfully* reject membership and participation in the visible church. McGraw often says that, *extraordinarily*, some are saved outside of the visible church because of their "providential exclusion" (37). That is, they have no opportunity to join a visible body, so they cannot be held responsible (112). However, he says of the *willful rejectors* that they should only "deeply worry us… [and] deeply worry about themselves" (112-113). McGraw plays it safe here, and that is probably best. However, more certain terms could have been used—and are somewhat even *expected*—in a publication of this kind.

The Ark of Safety turns out to be a short, though sufficient, commentary on one clause in a section of the WCF; for that reason, I recommend its reading. Due to McGraw's personal theological leanings, those of a Presbyterian background will most benefit, though I assume covenant theologians of other confessional heritages will appreciate his emphasis on the creeds, covenants, and the continuation between the Old and New Testaments, while disregarding his take on baptism. All readers can appreciate the high ecclesiology McGraw presents. The visible church "cannot save us, but salvation lies within her walls," for the church is "the ark of safety in a world that is drowning under God's wrath" (83). As one prone to missiological study, I greatly appreciated

McGraw's work, for it showed how vital the *visible*, *local* church is in the mission of God to save lost people through the mission given to his redeemed people: the church. He shows why the *visible* church—and not just the *invisible* church—is essential for the salvation of lost men.

C.J. Moore
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO

***Watchfulness: Recovering a Lost Spiritual Discipline.* By Brian G. Hedges. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018. 168 pp. $14.00, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1601785947.**

Brian Hedges, the author of *Watchfulness: Recovering a Lost Spiritual Discipline,* currently serves as the lead pastor of Fulkerson Park Baptist Church in Niles, Michigan. He has written a number of other books, including *With Jesus, Christ All Sufficient* and *Christ Formed in You.* His goal in writing *Watchfulness* is to fill a void that is present in current Christian spirituality books and discussions: watchfulness (1). But as Hedges says, "Not everyone who starts well finishes well. Many aspire, but few attain. The dangers of backsliding and the warnings against apostasy are real" (9). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the importance of watchfulness, and how it can be integrated into the Christian life.

In Matthew 26:41, Jesus tells his disciples to "watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." A similar call is given numerous times by the apostle Paul as well as in the rest of the New Testament. Added to this is the truth John Flavel spoke of in his work titled, *A Saint Indeed.* Hedges quotes Flavel as saying, "The greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God and the greatest difficulty after conversion is to keep the heart with God" (5). In other words, as temptation surrounds every believer, the heart must be guarded "with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (4). In addition to the necessity of watchfulness in guarding the heart, "watchfulness is the whetstone of the spiritual disciplines, the one practice that keeps the other habits sharp" (4).

Therefore, to sufficiently cover the topic of watchfulness, Hedges organizes his book around five investigative questions: what, why, how,

when, and who. In addition to answering these five questions, Hedges also concludes each chapter with application in the form of "examine and apply" questions. His hope is that they will "chart a course toward greater watchfulness, increased holiness, and deeper communion with our triune God" (9).

Hedges structures each chapter into small, readable sections that nuance his answers to the five investigative questions. Consider chapter one. He begins by defining watchfulness. Quoting John Owen, Hedges says that watchfulness is, "A universal carefulness and diligence, exercising itself in and by all ways and means prescribed by God, over our hearts and ways, the baits and methods of Satan, the occasions and advantages of sin in the world, that we be not entangled" (11). He then breaks down every word or phrase of this definition to further explain what it means to be watchful. He says that watchfulness involves wakefulness, attentiveness, vigilance, and expectancy (18). In chapter two, Hedges gives seven reasons why watchfulness is necessary. Chapter three is a bit more practical. "It's one thing to know that you have a long journey ahead but quite another to be prepared for the march" (67). Therefore, being the longest section in the book, this chapter details how to be watchful. Following "how" is "when." In chapter four, Hedges gives seven opportunities to know when temptation typically enters a person's life, if watchfulness is not being practiced. Hedges concludes with who needs to be watchful. Here he helpfully says that "watchfulness is a community project" (137). That means not only are pastors and elders supposed to keep watch over the souls of those within the church, but it is the responsibility of every church member as well.

Hedges does a wonderful job presenting the topic of watchfulness to his readers. Not only is he intentional with application in his chapters and with the follow-up questions at the end of each chapter, but he is devotional as well. This is truly a topic that Hedges wants his readers to take to heart, for "If your heart is not watched, then your life will be a mess" (41). In being intentional with application and devotional in nature, Hedges is also necessarily Christ-centered in his approach. Numerous times he reminds his readers that "We must be constantly reminded of both our weakness and God's gracious compassion and His willingness to help us" (53); therefore, "For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ, the one who lived, died and rose for you" (156).

The book has two weaknesses. First, Hedges says in his introduction that, "Some of the most helpful companions in my journey have been John Owen (1616-1683), John Bunyan (1628-1688), and Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843)" (5). To his credit, he does incorporate thoughts from others, too, such as Richard Rogers and John Flavel. Plus, he is upfront in his approach to mostly draw from Puritan authors (8). Even so, a greater variety would be helpful, such as the perspective from the early church fathers, those from the Reformation, or even some from modern times. Secondly, Hedges does not interact with many of the other spiritual disciplines. He interacts with prayer (87) and Scripture (96), and how they support watchfulness, but none of the other spiritual disciplines are mentioned. In a volume that is placing watchfulness as another spiritual discipline, interaction with other spiritual disciplines and how watchfulness supports or is supported by them is necessary.

In agreement with Donald Whitney, *Watchfulness: Recovering a Lost Spiritual Discipline* "fills a space on the subject of the Christian life that has been empty far too long" (vii). Even though, as Martin Luther said, "This world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us," through being watchful with our eyes fixed on Christ, we can withstand the circumstances and temptations that come upon us. Answering "what, why, how, when, and who" when it comes to being watchful will be necessary to endure. Hedges does just that.

Michael Nelson
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO

***Foundations of the Gospel: A Believer's Commentary on Genesis 1-3*. By Kuldip Singh Gangar. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018. 271 pp. $20.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-1601785886.**

This book is the product of the author's burden to combat "eastern philosophic presuppositions" about "creation, creator, and order" (vii). Gangar's conversion to Christ occurred in the context of his family's Sikh and Indian background. He obtained a M.Div. from Westminster Theological Seminary and a Th.M. from Princeton Theological Seminary and served as a pastor, missionary, and church planter. He died of

complications from a stroke amid his work on the final portions of the book. Friends later completed the project, using his notes and sermons. The book lays the groundwork with discussions of hermeneutical principles, the historicity of Genesis, and the relation of Christianity to science. It then moves into detailed consideration of the biblical text, with chapters covering one or two days of creation at a time, a discussion of the nature of the seven days, alleged contradictions in the text, and the major sections of chapters 2 and 3, through 3:15.

Foundations of the Gospel: A Believer's Commentary on Genesis 1-3 exemplifies its title. Gangar regularly shows how the first three chapters of Genesis are essential for understanding the gospel. The author unashamedly affirms faith in the accuracy and trustworthiness of the biblical record of beginnings while answering objections and giving a clear defense for his views. He writes:

> The first eleven chapters of Genesis form the foundation to all that follows in the Bible. If we go wrong here, it will affect the rest of Scripture. These early chapters of Genesis inform us of the origins of the world, time, space, creatures, man, the Sabbath, the covenant with Adam, the Fall, the first gospel promise, the universal flood, the gracious covenant with Noah, and the reason for multiple languages. If at the beginning we cannot take God's Word at face value, then we are left wondering whether other passages should also be read that way or not. (4)

Gangar places great stress on the clarity of Scripture as well as its immediate relevance for its original audience. Holding to Mosaic authorship, he writes, "The context for the book is the exodus from Egypt, which the people of God had experienced. It is a covenant document and therefore was committed to the people of God. It was not given for scholars, but rather for the people of God, to be expounded by the priests in their day" (60). Gangar argues for absolute historicity of the events in Genesis, including an absolute beginning in 1:1 (which he views as the first act of creation on day one); creation in six sequential, natural days; a historical Adam and Eve, as the first parents of all of humanity; and a real transgression in the garden. Gangar explores themes of biblical theology, particularly relating to the gospel. He discusses the concept of a covenant of works, the federal headship of Adam and imputation of sin, human and animal death consequent to sin, and the promise of the Seed of the woman who would crush the head of

the serpent and bring victory to sinners who exercise faith in Him, concluding with an appeal to faith in Christ.

The author heavily relies on Scripture to interpret Scripture but frequently demonstrates that he did not dwell in an echo chamber, and regularly draws from a variety of academic and popular sources and perspectives, including Jewish, Roman Catholic, and critical sources. At times, these serve his purpose to present and engage alternate viewpoints, while sometimes they are cited, along with more sympathetic writers, to show agreement with his point. Block quotes occur with regularity, and some authors, such as U. Cassuto, E.J. Young, and A. Kulikovsky, are quoted at great length. However, these contributions usually fit quite naturally with the flow of Gangar's presentation.

The book argues with vigor and grace for points such as six natural creation days and the historicity of the events in Genesis but offers options where the author concedes that possible solutions to alleged difficulties are less clear. For example, no book of the Bible provides direct statements regarding the time of the creation of the angels. After considering various interpretations, he writes, "We cannot be dogmatic, but it appears likely they were created either on day 1 or 3" (221). For the supposed disagreement between Genesis 1:20-27 and 2:19 concerning the timing of the creation of land animals in relation to the man, Gangar presents three views that are consistent with viewing the text as inerrant and unified, while addressing the question raised by the apparent discrepancy: 1) Leupold's view that 2:19 does not present a chronological sequence of events, as 1:20-27 did; 2) Currid's view that "formed" should be understood as a pluperfect, presenting the animals as those God had already formed prior to Adam; and 3) Cassuto's view that the animals were specially created for the garden (194-196). Gangar opts for the third view but sees the others as reasonable alternatives.

While the book excels as a conservative, informed commentary and theology of Genesis 1-3, a couple of weaknesses bear noting. Gangar avoids the eisegetical pitfalls of some Ancient Near Eastern comparative approaches, which often minimize or ignore the deep contrast between the revealed faith of Israel with the religions of her neighbors and impute a certain mindset to the original audience of Genesis that sometimes contradicts the plain sense of the text. However, he downplays a legitimate use of contemporary ANE history and worldviews, arguing *against* a polemical intent in Genesis 1 while at the same time contending

for certain polemical usages of the text. He writes, "There is no hint whatsoever that Genesis 1 is written as a polemic against Gentile religions" but in the same paragraph argues that Genesis 1:1 denies materialism, polytheism, pantheism, dualism, and atheism (66-67). Is it not possible that Genesis 1 is both a positive statement and a polemic with ancient and modern relevance, as other conservative scholars (e.g., Currid) have argued? While the book uses a variety of sources, some choices could have been more strategic. The discussion of Christianity and science could have been strengthened by interaction with experts in the philosophy of science and its changing paradigms (e.g., Kuhn) or by credentialed research scientists.

Gangar's book should be widely read. Its combination of straightforward writing with clear analysis and synthesis make it suitable for a variety of contexts. Christian high schools, church libraries, and perhaps even some Sunday school classes could make use of it as a resource. Courses in higher education, particularly in Old Testament interpretation or special courses on the book of Genesis, would also be enriched by its use. Finally, it should motivate others to take up the torch to build on or draw from his work and provide similar resources for the church, particularly for the remainder of Genesis 3 through chapter 11, and do so in an informed and winsome manner that ultimately urges readers to trust God's written revelation and understand its contribution to the unfolding message of the gospel in Scripture.

Douglas Smith
Graham Bible College, Bristol, TN

***Teaching the World: Foundations for Online Education*. By John Cartwright, Gabriel Etzel, Christopher Jackson, and Timothy Paul Jones. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017. 188 pp. $24.99. Paperback. ISBN 978-1433691591.**

In *Teaching the World: Foundations for Online Education*, Professor Timothy Paul Jones and his former doctoral students, John Cartwright, Gabriel Etzel, and Christopher Jackson, challenge the idea that the growing attraction to online education stems merely from pragmatic and

financial pressures. The authors, representing perspectives from undergraduate- and graduate-level theological education as well as pastoral ministry, argue that online education can pass the tests of biblical precedent and theological reflection and, when rightly implemented, provide a helpful avenue for training those preparing for ministry.

The book suggests "that the first era of distance education as we know it began with the correspondence courses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (5) and credits William Rainey Harper as the likely pioneer of graduate-level theological distance education, with a correspondence course for Hebrew (6). The book surveys developments in delivery methods and increasing accessibility to instruction that could promote itself "as an accessible and affordable alternative for those who were unable to relocate to a physical campus" (8). Such access raised questions concerning the importance of a shared place, quality faculty, and the student's connection with the local church (12-14).

The apostle Paul could not always share a place with those he needed to instruct, so he used the low-tech media of an ancient letter to accomplish his goals. The book highlights several observations concerning Paul's epistles, including the possibility of a mediated presence, the superiority of a letter to personal presence in certain instances, the mutual reinforcement of epistle and personal presence, cautious optimism of accurate communication of his disposition toward the audience, and a creation of a sense of personal presence through the medium (31-35). The authors define social presence as "the degree to which individuals feel that they are interacting with a real person" (42) and argue that Paul's extensive self-disclosures support the idea that he sought to provide an authentic sense of his presence via distance (43-44). Quality online theological education can accomplish the same goal (47).

A proper view of God's purpose for humanity is essential for quality online education, which must aim at more than the transfer of information (72), rather being grounded in God's plan to restore His image through conformity to His Son (86). Competent faculty are essential to this goal, with a foundational theological competence that informs and directs their pedagogical strategies and utilization of technology (89). Ultimately, the teacher "should be one who can be a spiritual model in the process of student spiritual formation," providing more than either the proverbial "sage on the stage" or "guide on the side"

can do (100). Paul again furnishes an example by his sacrificial living to serve others, modeling for them what it means to follow and proclaim Christ (100-101).

In the practice of online ministry training, schools and teachers provide a model to follow by carefully designing, preparing, and implementing course access and assignments (150). Online programs allow students to apply their learning in real-life ministry scenarios where they live, providing integration with valuable experience, such as that provided in internships (162).

Teaching the World carefully considers the development of online theological education and its drawbacks as well as its benefits. The authors engage with literature from educational theory and practice drawn from both secular and Christian sources, including those who object to distance education for ministerial training. While some have raised "philosophical and theological concerns," they have often been answered with "pragmatic justifications lacking in theological depth" (59). This book's thoughtful but modest appraisal of the relevance and application of Paul's epistolary strategy and personal model effectively meets those concerns.

Perhaps the most compelling point the authors make is this: "All seminary education must overcome some kind of distance" (171). Online students can be at a distance from faculty, but residential students can be at a distance from their local church and ministry, especially in communities saturated with such students already. The book offers a "both/and" scenario which weds local ministry and theological education while prioritizing the face-to-face relationships in the local church, which should benefit from the training being pursued (159). To fully realize such benefits, schools should tailor their programs with this goal in mind and not simply seek to "duplicate the residential approach in an online learning format" (167).

Teaching the World deserves to be read by a variety of groups interested in theological education. It may challenge those who are convinced that online and distance options must necessarily be less than ideal, enlighten those who are weighing whether it is right for them, and provide helpful ideas for theological institutions seeking to begin or improve online programs. The book especially deserves inclusion as a textbook for courses in educational philosophy, administration, and

pedagogy. It includes discussions of the changes in accrediting standards for online education and practical applications for online teaching.

As one who has graduated from a residential college program and earned degrees via online and hybrid programs, this book resonated with me and strengthened my appreciation for the opportunity I have had to remain rooted in my local ministry context, and the debt I owe to those who have carefully considered and implemented theologically-grounded, quality education and training for serving Christ and His church.

Douglas Smith
Graham Bible College, Bristol, TN

***The Task of Dogmatics: Explorations in Theological Method.* By Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 249 pp. $29.99, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0310535492.**

The essays given at the 2017 Los Angeles Theological Conference (LATC) make up *The Task of Dogmatics*. Fred Sanders (known for his work on the Trinity) and Oliver Crisp (prominent analytical theologian) serve as the book's editors. The thesis of *The Task of Dogmatics* is theological method, particularly in light of the work of John Webster. Instead of exploring each contributor of the essays, perhaps it is more beneficial to group them into respective views concerning the proper task the theologian should take. Overwhelmingly, the contributors draw out the implications of a Karl Barth-saturated approach to dogmatics.

The first significant view concentrates on the epistemological barriers of humanity. In this view, Christ must break through humanity's epistemological challenges, which for clarity will be hereafter labeled the "Christological prism view." Christ breaks through one's worldview by His divine presence in the Scriptures; the authoritative text can usurp rational biases. Chapters in *The Task of Dogmatics* that support this view are represented by Scott Swain, "Dogmatics as Systematic Theology" (pp. 49–69), and Katherine Sonderegger, "Holy Scripture as Sacred Ground" (pp. 131–43). According to Swain, all systematic theology can be reduced to dogmatic theology, and the Scripture gives "a view of God from God" (p. 61). Likewise, Sonderegger views the Bible as divine and yet the

earthly representation of God. Other essays that hold the prism view are Darren Sumner, "Christocentrism and the Immanent Trinity" (pp. 144–61) and Brannon Ellis and Josh Malone, "Divine Perfections, Theological Reasoning, and the Shape of Dogmatics" (pp. 178–88). The authors of these essays affirm that Christology is the normative framework for doing theology (Barth's logic is used as a rationale).

A sub-category of the "Christological prism view" is the epistemological reality of perspectival imprisonment—meaning, humanity has no way to judge, with objectivity, which of the numerous worldviews is ultimately true; thus, they have no way out of their perspectival prison. Does this limitation bleed over into the human dimension of the writing of Scripture (i.e., fallibility)? Michael Allen's essay, "Dogmatics as Ascetics" (pp. 189–209) and Brannon Ellis and Josh Malone's essay, "Divine Perfections, Theological Reasoning, and the Shape of Dogmatics" (pp. 178–88) seem to argue for such on the grounds of God's incomprehensibility.

In contrast to the infiltration view, Kevin Vanhoozer's chapter, "Analytics, Poetics, and the Mission of Dogmatic Discourse" (pp. 23–48) and Henri Blocher's "Permanent Validity and Contextual Relativity of Doctrinal Statements" (pp. 107–30) argue that humanity is, in fact, able to use rational analysis to reach clarification concerning theological and dogmatic perspectives. This view will be referred to as the "partial knowledge view"; while complete objectivity concerning divine comprehensibility may be out of the limits of one's understanding, to say that one cannot make rational judgments based on Scripture that lead to a partial knowledge of the realities of the Godhead is out of scope (i.e., language and the rational mind). Vanhoozer argues for this perspective via the human constructs of linguistics ("poetics") that communicate to humanity the realities of God and how humanity should relate to him. In a similar vein, Blocher argues that the true task of dogmatics is to communicate the depths of the Scripture to modernity in a way that brings about clarification and coherence (pp. 126–27).

With the general arguments outlined above, it is now necessary to give a word of criticism. First, the work, especially the prism view, advocates the reality of humanity's limited understanding of God. This view is a bulwark against the dangers found in "scientism," which argues for objectivity and testability when it comes to reading and understanding Scripture.

Second, Vanhooser and Blocher's essays communicate an optimistic view of human language (cf. Charles Taylor's and Paul Ricoeur's view of language) and its function within the realm of dogmatics. Both authors help the reader see that language is a God-given medium, and regardless of original context, language can communicate truth and meaning. Third, several authors encourage a downgrade of the ontology of the Bible. Sameer Yadav's essay, "Christian Doctrine as Ontological Commitment to Narrative" (pp. 70–86), James M. Arcadi's "The Word of God as Truthmaker for Church Proclamation: An Analytic Barthian Approach to the Dogmatic Task" (pp. 162–77), and Chris Tilling's "Knowledge Puffs Up, but Love Builds Up: The Apostle Paul and the Task of Dogmatics" (pp.87–106) all communicate a reality of instability when it comes to doctrinal formulation—meaning, there can be no absolute knowledge or doctrine, for Scripture is both in narrative and theology imprisoned to one specific context, specifically the author of the book in question. Regretfully, the authors that argue for this view blur the authority of Scripture for the modern theologian.

In conclusion, *The Task of Dogmatics* offers a substantial dialogue on the problems of language and theological formulation in light of the work of John Webster. The two most useful chapters for modern evangelicals are the essays of Vanhoozer and Blocher. While this work will most likely not benefit the average pastor because of the academic level required to disambiguate the ideas mentioned above, perhaps it could function in upper-level courses related to Reformed doctrine.

Joshua K. Smith
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO

***The Christian's Creed: Embracing the Apostolic Faith*. By Stanley Gale. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018. 177 pp. $16.00, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1601786173.**

To many, Mere Christianity in the West has become increasingly meagre. Multiple doctrinal fissures have hampered theological discernment: weak theological substance in the pulpit, a lack of self-discipline in the pew, and an evangelistic pragmatism that has emphasized emotional

response disconnected from the deep wells of robust biblical doctrines. Enter Stanley Gale's *The Christian's Creed: Embracing the Apostolic Faith*.

Gale, an ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church of America, holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Covenant Theological Seminary and has spent over thirty years in pastoral ministry. Gale has written several works: *The Prayer of Jehoshaphat: Seeing through Life's Storms* (2007), *The Vine Ripened Life* (2014), and *Warfare Witness: Contending with Spiritual Opposition in Everyday Evangelism* (2005). Gale's work, *The Christian Creed*, is a primer on one of the most well-known and beloved creeds of the church—the Apostle's Creed. Though not exhaustive, Gale's work is a capable manual on the fundamental meaning of the articles of faith expressed within the creed. The purpose of Gale's book is to "familiarize the reader with the Christian faith as it unfolds in the profound simplicity of the Apostle's Creed" (4).

In ten chapters, the author unpacks for the reader each doctrinal component of the Creed. In chapter one, Gale provides a cursory glance at the essence of the Creed: that it focuses on "the founder of the faith and the foundation of that faith, Jesus Christ" (9); that "the Creed draws a line in the sand" between orthodoxy and heresy (11); and that it brings "to bear those essentials for explanation of the Christian faith" (16).

In the second and third chapters, the writer deals specifically with God the Father as spelled out in the Apostle's Creed, tracing the biblical data that informed the Creed's genesis, with particular emphasis upon Paul's encounter with the Athenians at Mars Hill (31). Furthermore, Gale reinforces the character of God's love and justice and how it helps the reader to understand the Gospel; the writer indicates that "God's exercise of love comes to us as sinners. God did not pardon our sins; He paid for them. He met our debt and satisfied His wrath through Jesus Christ… justice is upheld" (37).

Chapters four through six cover the person and work of Jesus Christ. The author expounds upon the significance of the names "The Christ" and "Jesus" and ties it directly to the incarnational nature of redemption. "This Son born of a virgin is God incarnate to save. This Jesus is the Christ" (59). Also, Gale is matter-of-fact about the deity of Christ, succinctly unpacking some relevant biblical passages (cf. Mk. 2:7; Jn. 1:15-17; 5:17-18; 8:53-58), arguing that that the Creed does this to "call us to believe in [Jesus]. He is the Christ. He is God's only Son. And He is Lord" (63). The reader gets the sense that Gale is providing some basic

apologetic argumentation for the historicity of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (90-92).

Chapter seven covers what Gale calls the "job description" of the Holy Spirit, who is "cast not in His eternal being but in His redemptive doing" (107). The action of the Holy Spirit is captured in: the conception of Jesus, the baptism of Jesus, and the leadership of the Spirit (112). The author shares his own encounter with the gospel, and how the Holy Spirit produced God-borne inward change in his life (115).

Chapter eight deals with the catholicism of Christ's church made known through local churches (132). Gale extols the beauty of "the communion of the saints," and how it relates to "our objective bond to Christ by His Spirit" (136). Gale argues that to "believe in the holy, catholic church, the communion of saints, is to belong to Christ and one another and to long for His glory together" (138).

In the ninth chapter, the author provides clarity on the nature of "the forgiveness of sins"; Gale argues that "Forgiveness of sins brings us to the crux of the gospel and the beating heart of the church as the redeemed of the Lord…The church is a community of those forgiven" (140). The author asserts that the church must now practice forgiveness by living out the grace of forgiveness (149). The church has the responsibility of proclaiming the message of forgiveness to the nations in perpetuity (156).

Finally, the author concludes with a careful analysis of "I believe in… the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting" (158). Gale explores the glorification of the body and the state of "life everlasting," setting the reader's attention on the hope of the gospel, articulating that "The greatest glory that awaits us is not a pain-free existence. Rather, our greatest delight will be uninterrupted, unimpeded communion with our Lord" (170).

In general, the author has provided a commendable commentary on one of the most precious creeds of Christendom. Most helpful is Gale's plain language and directness; however, on occasion he does use a forgivable amount of church parlance. Additionally, the author addresses the probing questions that often arise during the reading without evasion; for example, Gale provides a concise but detailed account of why Jesus's humanity was so necessary for the redemption of sinners (75-76). Gale does a fine job of dealing with some of the historical aspects of the

Creed without getting bogged down in the minute details, even briefly exploring the controversial phrase "descended into hell" (86-87).

Gale has provided a worthy companion piece to the Apostle's Creed, but there may be some aspects of his work that mildly agitate the reader. For example, Gale's substance is biblical, but some could argue that his style is too stiff, maybe even blunt—that in some ways it lacks a certain sophistication. If one cannot have style and substance, substance will do.

This useful volume would strengthen churches who do not have a liturgical or confessional practice; additionally, parents of young teenagers could expand their understanding of the Creed, enabling them to teach it within the dynamics of family discipleship.

The Christian's Creed follows in the stream of many contemporary works about the Apostle's Creed, including: R. Albert Mohler's *The Apostle's Creed: Discovering Authentic Christianity in an Age of Counterfeits* (2019), J.I. Packer's *Affirming the Apostle's Creed* (2008), and R.C. Sproul's *What We Believe: Understanding and Confessing the Apostle's Creed* (2015). Having read Packer's work, I am confident that those who use Gale's book will come away with a better understanding of the theological significance of the Creed as well as how to practically incorporate it into daily devotion, corporate worship, and the task of evangelism.

Tobby E. Smith
Memorial Baptist Church, New Castle, IN

***Basic Introduction to the New Testament*. By John Stott. Revised by Stephen Motyer. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2017. 218 pp. $11.70, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8028-7469-6.**

John Stott was an Anglican priest and leader within wider Evangelicalism. His many books include *Basic Christianity, Your Mind Matters: The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life,* and *The Radical Disciple*, as well as a commentary on the Epistles of John and the series *The Bible Speaks Today Expositions*. In 2005 he was named on *Time* magazine's list of the one hundred most influential people in the world. Stephen Motyer serves as lecturer in New Testament and hermeneutics at the London School of Theology and has also authored several books including

Discovering Hebrews, Discovering Ephesians, and *Come Lord Jesus: A Biblical Theology of the 2nd Coming of Christ*.

This edition of the *Basic Introduction* updates the language and content of Stott's original work in order to include "more recent biblical scholarship" (x). In addition, this edition adds chapters on Mark and Matthew which Stott left out of his original volume (x).[1] The structure of the original, containing one chapter on each New Testament author, except for Jude, remains (x-xi).

Each chapter in the book, titled with the New Testament author's name "and His message" introduces first the author himself, then details information unique to that author, followed by a summary of the contents of that author's writings. Only minor variations to this pattern occur. The chapter on Hebrews, for instance, is simply titled "The Letter to the Hebrews" since "God only knows" the author (131). This pattern is also followed in "The Message of Revelation," where an in-depth discussion of the identity of "John" is provided.

As each chapter contains similar structure and information geared toward that chapter's author, an overview of a few selected chapters will be sufficient to be representative. The chapter on Matthew is placed second, after Mark. Motyer clearly associates the book with its traditional author, the apostle Matthew (25-26). He explains that Matthew "experienced a revolutionary conversion" (29) and suggests that it was through his personal conversion experience that Matthew (a) learned about mercy and forgiveness (31-33), (b) developed a new view of what being king meant (33-35) and (c) found he was able to teach (35-38). After Motyer recognizes the importance of Jesus' fulfilling the Old Testament to Matthew (38-40), he predominantly focuses on Matthean titles for Jesus: King (40-45), Son of God (45-47), Teacher and Christ (47-48), and Son of Man (48-49).

The chapter on the Gospel and Epistles of John begins with a substantial discussion of the authorship of those works. Stott sees no reason to reject the traditional authorship of the apostle John (78-85). In discussing the themes of the Gospel, he notes the role of "testimony" and connects it to John's evangelistic purposes as expressed in 20:31 (85). The bulk of the summary of the contents of the Gospel focuses on

[1]For this reason, Motyer will be referred to as the author concerning these chapters, while Stott will be used for the other chapters.

John's use of "signs" in the first major unit of the Gospel (92-96). The summary of the letters details the issues with the Cerinthian heresy: (a) "Christological error" (97), (b) "moral self-deception" (98), and (c) "spiritual self-exaltation" (99).

The chapter on James' writing again begins with a discussion of authorship. Stott calls James, the brother of Jesus, the "best candidate as author" (146) and details his background (146-149). Stott also notes that James probably wrote early, before Paul's mission to the Gentiles, and thus does not represent a critique of Paul's theory of justification (150). Instead, James wrote to early Jewish Christians, taking a "deeply Jewish as well as thoroughly Christian tone" (150). In terms of the content of the letter, Stott points out James' over fifty imperatives (151). He also notes James' many echoes of the Sermon on the Mount, listing twenty (152-154). He finds a summary of James' teaching in James 1:26-27, which he calls "the three pillars of Christian life" – "keeping a tight rein on the tongue," "looking after orphans and widows" and "keeping oneself from being polluted by the world" (156).

The strategy of the book is established in the Editor's Note: "Each of the New Testament writers…were chosen by God, shaped by experience, and empowered by the Spirit, first to understand the revolutionary Good News of Jesus, and then to communicate and apply it in the various situations they faced. But at the same time, they did not proclaim many messages. Amid their variety, they communicate one message of the saving grace of God in Christ" (x-xi). The book certainly does accomplish this strategy. Each New Testament author's individual distinctiveness is able to shine through, and yet the cohesion between the authors is also clearly illuminated. Even more praiseworthy is that this paradox is held in tension in a natural manner and does not seem forced. In this way, the book finds a balance between strong biblical theology and systematizing their works.

This elegant flow appears in another commendable feature of this book. Motyer has done well at keeping a consistent tone between his own writing in the chapters on Mark and Matthew and his editing of Stott's work in the original chapters. With the exception of comments on more recent biblical scholarship, unless the reader had substantial familiarity with John Stott's work, where one author begins, and the other ends is nearly imperceptible. Motyer certainly does "lighten the language" (x),

but this only allows him to present strong scholarship in a way that is not overly technical.

Despite these praises, the book does have a few minor issues that are worth noting. First, the title of this work may mislead some potential readers not familiar with the dichotomy between *Introduction* and *Survey*. Though Stott and Motyer do deal with introductory issues, the book predominantly functions as a survey. Second, since each New Testament author receives a single chapter, the book does not give proportional space to the authors, like Paul and Luke, who wrote more prolifically. This issue, however, is noted in the comments regarding why Jude is left out (xi); that Jude is, in fact, left out is itself problematic. Third, a newcomer to the New Testament might be confused by the structure of this book at points: Mark comes before Matthew, and the letters of John come in their natural place in John's chapter, instead of later in the flow of the book, matching the New Testament itself.

These minor issues, however, do not take away from the book's value. In the Preface, Alistair Begg commends this work to "many members of our congregations" and also notes that the book "will be a terrific help… also for those of us who teach" (viii). Begg is spot on, however, he misses another major group that would benefit from having this book as a resource: students at both the undergraduate and the graduate level will find this work a helpful tool. Thus, this work could easily find a spot on the shelf of laymen, pastors, and students.

Kyle Taft
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO

***Basics of Greek Accents: Eight Lessons with Exercises*. By John A. L. Lee. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 110 pp. $14.98, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0310555643.**

In beginning and intermediate grammars, students of Classical and Koine Greek are usually provided only a few pages with information about accents, and most students learn the rudimentary elements wishing that they had a better grasp on the subject. *Basics of Greek Accents* meets a need for teachers who would like to offer students specific

information on the subject in a teachable format and provides the former student, or person learning at home, an opportunity to gain confidence. (Lee recommends that the student learning alone keep a standard grammar on hand, and at some point, consult someone who knows accents to check exercises, which is especially helpful when learning pronunciation.) This work differs from Carson's (1985) in that Lee does not emphasize a build-up of rules, nor limit the focus to New Testament Greek students. And it is not an exhaustive reference work on accents, nor does Lee claim that students will master the material in eight weeks but working through this practical guide should result in reasonable competence.

The aim of *Basics of Greek Accents* is to teach Greek accentuation to anyone who has learned some Greek—whether Classical or Koine—but who is unsure about the use of Greek accents (5). The material is designed for a one-hour weekly teaching session over eight weeks, and a controlled selection of examples are given in each lesson. The chapters are divided with a pedagogical method in mind: teach the information, rules, and content in the first half of each session, followed by a proctoring of exercises for individuals in the latter half.

In the first part of the book, lessons 1-4 (pp. 1-36), Lee focuses on accent rules for verbs, nouns, adjectives, and "function" words (such as the article, pronouns, prepositions, etc.). In the first lesson, after reviewing vowel length, accent marks, and the writing of accents, Lee explains and illustrates the basic accent rules. Exercises are then listed for student practice (this is true for each chapter). In lesson 2, recessive accents are discussed in relation to verbs. Exceptions to the rules are covered, particularly concerning certain infinitive and imperative forms. Special patterns for verbs compounded with a preposition receive attention as well. In lesson 3, accents for common types of nouns—both regular and irregular declensions—are explained. In lesson 4, Lee guides the student through a list of the common, functional words—such as demonstratives, articles, pronouns, negatives, and interrogatives—so that students improve recognition of these words, not having to check them all of the time.

In the second part of the book, lessons 5-8 (pp. 37-64), Lee focuses on participles, contractions, enclitics, and additional challenging material to help the student add to their knowledge of accents. In lesson 5, more information is given concerning nouns and adjectives, as the accent rules

relate to participles. In lesson 6, the author takes the student through key questions concerning contracted forms and demonstrates the possible alternatives for accenting contracting vowels (such as the circumflex or acute accent on the first, second, or another vowel). In lesson 7, the effect of unemphatic and unaccented enclitics (such as εἰμι and φημι) on adjacent words is reviewed. Combinations of monosyllabic and disyllabic enclitics are listed in a helpful diagram form (53). In the final lesson, other exceptions, peculiarities, and symbols are delineated.

In the last part of the book (pp. 65-110), a variety of helpful resources are provided. Answers are listed for the exercises, additional practice exercises made available, and a practical word index displays correct accents. In a brief section, Lee directs the reader to more comprehensive sources on Greek accents as well as other helpful and specific resources. At the end, several ancient text illustrations are pictured with translation (from Homer, Isaiah, Romans, and Demosthenes).

Students learning Greek can feel overwhelmed and moving quickly through a required grammar which does not cover accents in detail leaves the student feeling insecure about accents. Lee's work improves learning motivation in several ways. First, it presents the information in a simple and direct manner which does not burden the student. Second, the author indicates how accents can affect translation (61). And third, the work is not limited for use along any one grammar. But this latter point can also be a limitation, for incorporating these lessons with a popular beginning grammar in mind would enhance learning. Also, an index of complete paradigms would be beneficial for students needing to see how accent rules vary or remain consistent. Even so, Lee does the hard work for the instructor by preparing information and exercises specific to accents in an eight-week format—a practical and valuable guide that meets a particular need for teacher and student.

David Wallace
Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA

***Determined to Believe?: The Sovereignty of God, Freedom, Faith, and Human Responsibility*. By John C. Lennox. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 368 pp. $19.99, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0310589808.**

John Lennox writes for a Christian audience who may have questions about God's sovereignty and human freedom. He takes an emphatic stand that the Bible teaches God's sovereignty, but he also takes an emphatic stand against the traditional understanding of Calvin's theology concerning election. Lennox corrects misunderstandings concerning each of the five tenets of "TULIP." His stated motivation behind the book is to begin with and rely upon Scripture rather than research the origin of various issues and their proponents, and he aims to engender a respectful dialogue when discussing differing views. Throughout the volume, block quotations from Scripture and from theologians are regularly presented so that the readers can make their own assessment.

The book is divided into five parts: the "Problem Defined," "Theology of Determinism," "Gospel and Determinism," "Israel and Determinism," and "Assurance and Determinism." In Part 1 (pp. 22-91), Lennox distinguishes the nature and limitations of freedom, describes the different kinds of determinism, and gives the historical background of Calvin, Arminius, and the Synod of Dort. He acknowledges the contradiction between the belief that freedom and determinism are compatible ("compatibilism"), and he lays out the fundamental concept of the biblical narrative: moral awareness and freedom to choose. In contrast, physical determinists, and most neuroscientists, understand behavior as bound by physical law, finding no meaning in the concept of free will (humans are no more than machines). Theistic determinists, on the other hand, are naturalists who believe in a Creator who is uninvolved. For Lennox, the issue is specifically what the Bible teaches. Thus, he sets the debate between divine determinism (not the God of the Bible, 53) and a loving Creator who made human beings in his image to choose faith and responsibility in order to bring glory to God.

In Part 2—"Theology of Determinism" (pp. 92-127)—Lennox introduces some of the biblical teaching on the topic of determinism, outlines a spectrum of views, and surveys the range of meaning for the biblical concepts of foreknowledge, predestination, and election.

Specifically, theologians generally refer to the "doctrine of predestination" as a predestination to salvation without human cooperation. The author is careful not to press one side, sovereignty—against another—human responsibility, because the Scripture "does not allow one side to override the other" (102). Some of the moral problems highlighted in this section that are elaborated in the following section concern Calvin's view that not all are created equal, how it is that God is able to save some but does not save all, and the way in which reformed theologians assign this wrong, arbitrary nature of God to "mystery" (123).

In Part 3— "Gospel and Determinism" (pp. 128-233)—the possible nuanced meanings of "faith" and "grace" are delineated with particular attention given to three arguments. First, against "unconditional election" (faith itself is a gift from God), Lennox argues with scriptural support that the act of believing is the opposite of merit ("having to do something to obtain the thing is not the same as meriting something," 132). Second, he explains how the supposition undergirding "total depravity"—that new birth (regeneration) must occur before a person has the ability to respond to the gospel—does not line up with scriptural order (i.e., Jesus is first lifted up and then those who believe have eternal life; John 3:14-15). Third, Lennox believes the Bible teaches original sin but not original guilt (199). These three issues are investigated in light of the biblical doctrine of "justification by faith" ("justify" means "to declare righteous"; 148). Then a detailed exposition of biblical statements concerning theistic determinism and regeneration are discussed with particular focus on chapters 7-10 of John's Gospel.

In Part 4— "Israel and Determinism," (pp. 233-309)—five chapters are devoted to Romans 9-11. This section provides some contextual background by discussing some of the Old Testament passages behind that passage. Lennox challenges the belief that God's dealings with Pharaoh support a deterministic view, and he discusses the theological implications of Israel, the Gentiles, and Israel's future. Lennox focuses on the issue of morality, not power, in God's dealing with Pharaoh, and emphasizes God's mercy. For example, when discussing Paul's use of the "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy" phrases (Rom. 9:22-24), Lennox reasons that "vessels of wrath" can become "vessels of mercy" (273). In the case of Israel, responsibility for the rejection of the Messiah falls on their shoulders, not some deterministic election of God (287), and in the

end, "all Israel" refers to the majority of the nation being saved and not every member (305).

In Part 5—"Assurance and Determinism" (pp. 310-356)—Lennox focuses on two issues. The first issue concerns theological determinism and its paradox of security—the elect not knowing whether they are elect. The second issue concerns whether a believer can lose salvation. Lennox discusses both the warnings and assurances in Hebrews 6 and 10. Assurance is bound up with faith in Christ, not in the sense of quantity but its object—Jesus Christ (318). In essence, Lennox finds that there are two groups of people: those who are genuine believers who prove their genuineness and those who never were believers. Thus, when the author of Hebrews describes those who have been "enlightened" (Heb. 6:4-8), this would not be the same meaning as being saved but would be a prerequisite for salvation (342).

John Lennox presents a cohesive argument for a person's God-given capacity and moral responsibility in responding to God's initiative of salvation. He is to be commended for his directness in challenging certain theological tenets of determinism that result in intellectual fog, such as the position that God directly causes the human evil he expressly forbids (65f). Also, Lennox's commentary, passage comparisons, and reasoning from Scripture engage the reader through a theological sequence in a way that the reader can enter into the argument. At times, however, more specific contextual detail would be appropriate concerning a biblical author's argument. For example, the whole of Romans 9-11 is quoted with some discussion, but little exegetical footing is offered. Indeed, contextual detail is important since Lennox's argument depends on Scripture—while utilizing logic, metaphor, and occasional references to the biblical languages—in defense of a merciful, loving God who draws persons to choose him. Clergy, laity, teachers, and students who are interested in the debate concerning determinism and moral freedom will be stimulated and will benefit from John's Lennox's work.

David Wallace
Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA

***The Christian Doctrine of Humanity: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*. By Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, eds. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018. 250 pp. $34.99, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0310595472.**

Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders have edited the *Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics* since the inception of the series in 2013. Oliver Crisp is the professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, and Fred Sanders is the professor of theology in the Torrey Honors Institute at Biola University. Each book in this series exists as a result of the Los Angeles Theology Conference that takes place annually. Attending scholars write an article coordinating with the conference theme which is then included as a chapter in the book for that year. The topic for the 2018 conference was the doctrine of humanity, thus *The Doctrine of Humanity* was corroborated by twelve scholars who participated in the conference. These authors are doctoral students and professors, hailing from various schools such as Fuller, Durham, University of Birmingham, Talbot, University of Helsinki, and more.

Crisp and Sanders utilize the introduction to summarize and overview each of the chapter topics. They begin by providing a brief description of theological anthropology and then describe the *direct* and *indirect* approaches to the task of constructive dogmatics. Crisp and Sanders subdivide the *direct* approach into four different groups: the structural account, functional account, relational account, and the Christ as archetypal image (15-16). They continue by explaining the *indirect* approach as "tracing the many connections that unite the doctrinal system, ensuring that the resulting doctrine of humanity is explicitly Christian" (16). This *indirect* approach covers a vast landscape of topics since one could take any theology, philosophy, historical figure, or a plethora of alternative ideas and bring them together with the doctrine of humanity. Throughout the introduction, the editors list the chapter authors under their respective approach, though some authors overlap multiple approaches in their writing.

It is interesting to note that each category has a representative author except for one. According to the editors, no one adopts the *direct* functional approach. Whether this approach was left out on purpose or simply not articulated by the authors, the editors do not explain. However, this reviewer perceives this exclusion as one of the negative

critiques regarding the book. It could be that the leaning of the editors or even the conference itself is not as open to including this approach, though this is only an assumption based on the remaining chapter's components.

The book's main body reads almost like a journal with *Doctrine of Humanity* as the publication's theme. In this reviewer's opinion, this is both positive and negative. From a positive perspective, the style gives the reader an opportunity to see what scholars are studying which is important to this field of work. Anyone interested in entering the conversation among Christian scholars on the topic of humanity would benefit from reading the various viewpoints expressed throughout these chapters. Along those lines, the chapter authors come from very diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The authors are men and women from various schools, nationalities, ethnic groups, and denominations. Some authors are longtime professors and scholars, others are students still trying to establish themselves, and the remainder fall in various stages in between. Scholars of all phases who seek to better understand the current field of research will benefit from this book.

While the book's positive aspects are noteworthy for scholars in the field of study, the book's journal-like structure has some negative effects that may tip the balance for some readers whose interests are more generic. Although the authors' various backgrounds can be helpful for scholarly interests, the average Christian student may find the lack of a system confusing. The common thread among the chapter topics is the doctrine of humanity, however, that is as far as the connections go from chapter to chapter. This critique is not necessarily directed at the editors or authors, rather it is for the benefit of the potential reader, who may be more interested in a systematic study of the doctrine of humanity. The final negative critique, and the most important from this reviewer's perspective, is the overwhelming lack of a biblical or exegetical approach. None of the chapters in this book start with the Scriptures and build their understanding of humanity with good hermeneutical principles. Once again, this may not be intentional or perhaps it was not the goal of this work to include such an approach. While Scripture is not ignored, *per se*, it does not seem to hold a high position in the overall scheme of the book. The various viewpoints and approaches are helpful, but the lack of a more conservative biblical viewpoint leaves the reader wanting.

Overall, this book is a fine resource for the student or scholar who is interested in recent scholarship concerning the doctrine of humanity. The writing is clear, and the research is quite impressive. However, caution is advised for one who is seeking a systematic and biblical understanding of the doctrine of humanity.

Mark W. Williams
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO

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If you are interested in reviewing one of the above books or another recent work, please contact:

N. Blake Hearson, Ph.D.
Book Review Editor
Midwestern Journal of Theology
bhearson@mbts.edu
816-414-3741