for the Church
MIDWESTERN
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

MIDWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Fall 2020 Vol. 19 No. 2

MIDWESTERN
JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

ISBN: 1543-6977

The *Midwestern Journal of Theology* is published biannually by Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO, 64118, and by The Covington Group, Kansas City, MO. Information about the journal is available at the seminary website: WWW.MBTS.EDU.

The Midwestern Journal of Theology is indexed in the *Southern Baptist Periodical Index*, *Christian Periodical Index*, and *Atla Religion database*.

Address all editorial correspondence to: Editor, *Midwestern Journal of Theology*, 5001 N. Oak Trafficway, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO, 64118.

Address books, software, and other media for review to: Book Review Editor, *Midwestern Journal of Theology*, 5001 N. Oak Trafficway, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO, 64118.

All submissions should follow the SBL Handbook of Style in order to be considered for publication.

MIDWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

FALL 2020 (Vol. 19/ No. 2)

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

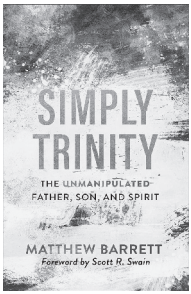
Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of the Midwestern Journal of Theology, and again I am especially grateful to all those who have contributed to make this happen, especially in the light of the current hardships. Special mention goes to Dr. Jason Duesing, Provost and Academic Editor, for all his invaluable assistance; to Dr. Blake Hearson for all the time and energy he invests in each issue; and to Mrs. Lynae Duarte, for all that she so kindly and efficiently does in the background.

We are very pleased to open this issue, with a scholarly, devotional reminder from Ray Van Neste of Union University, to Read, Pray and Sing the Psalms, especially as an entryway to the rest of the Scriptures. We then present a very timely Biblical description and analysis of the nature of true ethnic harmony by Andrew Naselli, of Bethlehem College and Seminary. Our final two pieces come from two accomplished scholar-practitioners at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, with the penultimate contribution contributed by Geoff Chang. Dr. Chang, as both a professor and especially as the Curator of the Spurgeon Library, challenges us to reconsider how Spurgeon's experience through the Downgrade Controversy can speak to the church today. Our final piece from Blake Hearson helps us to see how the authorship and date of Deuteronomy impact the meaning of that book.

Reflecting the increased popularity of the MJT, we again close this issue with a very good number of relevant and thought-provoking book reviews, helpfully secured and edited by our book review editor, Dr. Blake Hearson.

Books in Brief

New and upcoming releases from the Midwestern Seminary community

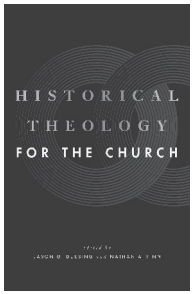


SIMPLY TRINITY: THE UNMANIPULATED FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT

by Matthew Barrett (Baker Books)

March 16, 2021

What if the Trinity we've been taught is not the Trinity of the Bible? In this groundbreaking book, Matthew Barrett reveals a shocking discovery: we have *manipulated* the Trinity, recreating the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in our own image. We have distorted the Trinity to justify our countless social agendas. The result: we have drifted away from the orthodox Trinity of the Bible.

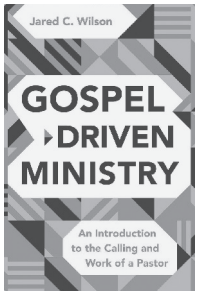


HISTORICAL THEOLOGY FOR THE CHURCH

Edited by Jason Duesing (B&H Academic)

February 15, 2021

In *Historical Theology for the Church*, editors Jason Duesing and Nathan Finn survey key doctrinal developments from four periods of church history: the Patristic (A.D. 100–500), Medieval (A.D. 500–1500), Reformation (A.D. 1500–1700), and Modern (A.D. 1700–2000) eras.

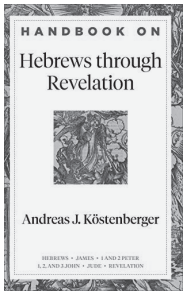


GOSPEL-DRIVEN MINISTRY: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CALLING AND WORK OF A PASTOR

by Jared C. Wilson (Zondervan)

March 2, 2021

In *Gospel-Driven Ministry*, Jared Wilson begins by looking at the qualifications for the pastorate, addressing the notion of a call to ministry and how an individual—and a church community—can best identify the marks of maturity and affirm a call.



HANDBOOK ON HEBREWS THROUGH REVELATION

by Andreas J. Köstenberger (Baker Academic)

Available Now

An easy-to-navigate resource for studying and understanding Hebrews through Revelation. Written with classroom utility and pastoral application in mind, this accessibly written volume summarizes the content of each major section of the biblical text to help students, pastors, and laypeople quickly grasp the sense of particular passages.

for the Church
MIDWESTERN
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Midwestern Journal of Theology 19.2 (2020): 1-13

Read, Pray, Sing:
The Psalms as an Entryway to the Scriptures[1]

RAY VAN NESTE
Dean, School of Theology & Missions
Professor of Biblical Studies,
Union University,
Jackson, TN

The Psalms serve the Church as an entryway to the Scriptures. They summarize the whole Bible, helping us to see its major themes and to learn to read it well. This might seem to some to be an overly ambitious claim. Many today have never thought of the Psalms in this way before, but, as I will seek to argue, this is the way the Church has historically understood the Psalms and how they put the Psalms to use. The Psalms recount preceding biblical history, summarizing Scripture's key themes, and point forward to Christ. They are meant to be read, prayed, and sung, thus helping us in a special way to internalize the message of the Scriptures and to be shaped and formed by them.

The Psalms as a Summary of the Bible

Across the history of the church, key leaders have seen the Psalms as a summary of the Bible. Athanasius, the great defender of the deity of Christ from the fourth century, argued that the Psalms summarize the whole of the Scriptures. He described the Scriptures as a garden, and said

[1] This material began as an address at a conference hosted by the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies at Union University in 2013. The material was revised and presented again at the "To Tell the Story" conference hosted by the Warren M. Angell College of Fine Arts at Oklahoma Baptist University, October 1, 2019. I am grateful for feedback and encouragement especially from Dr. Chris Matthews, Mike Garrett, and Dr. Brad Green.

that, while every part of Scripture has its unique fruit, the Psalms contain a portion of the fruit from each one.[2]

More than a thousand years later, Martin Luther made the same point:

> The Psalter ought to be a precious and beloved book, if for no other reason than this: it promises Christ's death and resurrection so clearly – and pictures His kingdom and the condition and nature of all Christendom – that it might well be called a little Bible. In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible. It is really a fine enchiridion or handbook. In fact, I have a notion that the Holy Spirit wanted to take the trouble himself to compile a short Bible and book of examples of all Christendom for all saints, so that anyone who could not read the whole Bible would here have anyway almost an entire summary of it comprised in one little book.[3]

Given his high praise of the Psalter, it should come as no surprise that it is said that Luther carried it with him everywhere he went.[4] The Psalter was particularly dear to him. It gave him a summary of the Scriptures, like he said, and it was his songbook and his prayer book. Similarly, 16th century English theologian Richard Hooker writes, "The choice and flower of all things profitable in other books the Psalms do both more briefly contain, and more movingly also express, by reason of that poetical form wherewith they are written … What is there necessary for

---

[2] "Letter to Marcellinus," included in Athanasius, *On the Incarnation: The Treatise De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 98.

[3] Martin Luther, "Preface to the Psalter," LW, 35, p. 254. Cited in Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998) 35. Rudolf Gwalther (1519-1586), a leader in the Swiss Reformed church, made the same point: "not without reason, some have called the Psalter a brief but complete version and summary of the entire Bible – or even a little Bible" (cited in Herman J. Selderhuis, *Psalms 1-72*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament, 7 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 3.

[4] See Timothy George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 188.

man to know which the Psalms are not able to teach?"[5] These are just a few examples among many throughout the history of the church who understood the Psalms to be a summary of the Bible.

More recently, some biblical scholars have reached the same conclusions through modern academic approaches. For example, Old Testament scholar Gordon Wenham, in his book *Psalms as Torah*, argues that the entire book of Psalms was intended to be memorized and recited corporately by God's people so they would grasp and assimilate the overall message of Scripture. He bases his conclusions on the practice of ancient cultures and the composition of the book of Psalms.[6]

It might seem unlikely that something as long as the book of Psalms was intended to be memorized. But we know that other Ancient Near Eastern cultures memorized and recited their collections of sacred literature, which was as long as or longer than the Psalms. It was common for Greeks to memorize Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which are substantially longer than the Psalms. Ancient cultures recited their sacred stories to shape the character of their people and communicate their culture's virtues. Wenham's demonstrates that the Psalms served a similar function: they were to be remembered and recited together as prayer and song in order to shape the culture.[7] The Psalms distilled all that had been given in divine revelation in order to shape the ethics and the faith of the people.

The Psalms continued to serve this formative role in the Church. Many Christians across history did in fact memorize the Psalter. As William Holladay has stated, "By the fourth century the memorization of the Psalms by many Christians and their habitual use as songs in worship by all Christians about whom we know were matters of long-standing

---

[5] Cited in A. F. Kirkpatrick, The Book of Psalms (Reprint. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), viii.

[6] Gordon Wenham, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 41-56. This chapter is titled, "The Psalter as an Anthology to be Memorized."

[7] "Memorization and recital of these texts thus served to transmit the values of this culture more widely among the people at large and to ensure that future generations followed it" (Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 42-43).

tradition."[8] The second council of Nicaea (AD 787) mandated that a man being considered for the office of bishop must know the Psalter by heart![9]

The Psalms Point to Christ

The Psalter not only summarizes Old Testament salvation history, but also points forward to Christ. Some people today disregard the Psalms for singing because they want something "which talks of Christ." Our forebears would be shocked to hear us say something like this, suggesting the Psalms fail to speak of Christ. In fact, if I may be so bold, I think Jesus would be shocked to hear us say that. After his resurrection, Jesus says to his disciples, " 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45).[10] Jesus makes similar statements elsewhere, but here, he specifically mentions the Psalms, and then opens their minds that they may understand the Scriptures. We need our minds opened that we might read the Scriptures as Jesus taught us.[11]

The rest of the New Testament suggests that the apostles learned this well: the most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament is the Psalms. In his sermon at Pentecost, the first sermon preached in the launching of the Church, Peter has three texts; two of them are Psalms (Psalm 16:8-11; 110:1). The Church was born through the preaching of the resurrection from the Psalms.

Throughout its history, the church has continued to see the Psalms as pointing to Christ. In a letter to a young man encouraging him to consider the Psalms, Athanasius says, "If you want to sing Psalms that speak especially about the Savior, you will find something in almost all of

---

[8] William Holladay, The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 165.

[9] *The Canons of the Holy and Ecumenical Seventh Council* 2 (NPNF 2.14.556). The Second Council of Nicaea was the seventh Ecumenical Council.

[10] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the ESV.

[11] "In this single book of the Old Testament the entire economy of salvation became prayer, and now this love-inspired plan has been fulfilled in Jesus" (Jean Corbon, *The Wellspring of Worship*, trans. Matthew J O'Connell [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005]), 186.

them."[12] Matthew Henry writes, "The Psalms were thus serviceable to the Old Testament church, but to us Christians they may be of more use than they could be to those who lived before the coming of Christ; for, as Moses's sacrifices, so David's songs, are expounded and made more intelligible by the gospel of Christ, which lets us within the veil."[13] As Augustine repeatedly affirmed, in the Psalms we hear the voice of Christ.[14]

Read, Pray, Sing

So, God has given us a summary of the Scriptures which points to their fulfilment in Christ, and he has given us this in the form of prayers and songs. This is the genius of the Psalms. We are given words to speak to God in song and prayer, and these words encapsulate the message of the Bible. Thus we are enabled to learn the message of the Bible in the midst of prayer and worship. Because the Psalms speak to the wide array of human emotions, they are not simply a summary of Scripture; they are summary applied to us in all the varied situations of life. Singing and praying this emotionally rich Scripture-summary then forms our souls in a robust manner.[15] Surely then, this sort of use of the Psalms would be helpful in a time of alarming biblical illiteracy like today. The Psalms are uniquely valuable for times like this.

---

[12] "Letter to Marcellinus," included in Athanasius, *On the Incarnation: The Treatise De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 113.

[13] Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 193. This quote is in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms. While Henry is not the place to go for the latest scholarship, he is very helpful for understanding the essential message of the Scripture.

[14] See for example Augustine's "Exposition 2 of Psalm 30," *Expositions of the Psalms 1-32*, trans. John Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000), 322-325. In note 4 the editor states that Augustine's "most profound conviction on the Psalms" was that "the 'I' who speaks is always Christ." This is discussed further in Michael McCarthy, "An Ecclesiology of Groaning: Augustine, the Psalms, and the Making of Church," *Theological Studies* 66 (2005) :32-34.

[15] Thus Peter Leithart, summarizing and applying Athanasius: "Those who sing and absorb the psalms will have a rich emotional life, but none of their passions will cause them to deviate from following the crucified Messiah" (*Athanasius* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011], 169).

However, while many evangelical Christians today read the Psalms, few pray or sing them. In this, contemporary evangelicalism is out of step with the continuous practice of the church from the time of Christ until now. The church has historically understood the Psalms as songs to sing and prayers to pray. With this regular, often daily, interaction with the Psalms at the deep level that singing and praying reaches, this summary of the Bible seeped deep into their hearts.

Biblical Command and Example

Scripture commands the singing of Psalms in Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one other in all wisdom, singing Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." The word for songs and the word for hymns are both used in the Septuagint to talk about the Psalms.[16] To be clear, I am not arguing that we should sing only the Psalms. But I think the arguments of those who say that we should sing nothing but the Psalms, are better than the argument for our typical practice: singing anything but the Psalms. Singing the Psalms is a command for the church. And it is striking that it is connected to letting "the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Again, in a setting in which the word of Christ too often does not dwell richly within us, can we afford to ignore any means the Lord has given us? Or, even more boldly, can we afford to disregard His command?

Ephesians 5:19 is a parallel text to Colossians 3:16. It says, "[B]e filled with the sprit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart." We can also see some interesting examples of Psalm-singing in Scripture. At the Last Supper, Jesus and the disciples sing the Psalms as they depart: "And when they had sung a Psalm, they went out into the mount of Olives." (Mt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26 Geneva Bible). Most English translations say "a hymn."[17] This is a word that is often used of the Psalms, and we know that the Jews at this time typically sang Psalms 113-118 at the Passover.

---

[16] For a more detailed discussion of the words in view and other NT texts that call for this use of the Psalms, see Ray Van Neste, "Ancient Songs and Apostolic Preaching: How the New Testament Laid Claim to the Psalms," in *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship*, edited by Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste (B&H Academic, 2012), 46-50.

[17] HCSB translated "psalms" but CSB reverted to "hymn."

Typically, either Psalm 118 by itself or a couple of the others were sung at the conclusion. So when the gospel writers say that Jesus and his disciples sang a psalm, they sang at least Psalm 118 in this instance.[18]

Then we find Jesus praying the Psalms on the cross. As he receives the full fury of the Father's wrath for the sins of all those who would believe – in that darkest of hours – he pulls from Psalm 22 the words to cry out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Yet he knows this Psalms closes with these words:

> All the ends of the earth shall remember
> and turn to the Lord,
> and all the families of the nations
> shall worship before you.
> For kingship belongs to the Lord,
> and he rules over the nations.

If, in his darkest hour, our Lord turned to the Psalms for words to pray, we should do the same.

Then once the church explodes after Pentecost and the authorities threaten the Apostles telling them not to speak any more about Jesus, they gather to pray. And they pray Psalm 2. The reference to this Psalm is not an allusion; it is a direct quotation. The first Christians, looking for words to express themselves to God, turn to the Psalms. They recognize in the Psalms God has spoken, so they pray his words back: "Lord, why do the heathen rage?" Why do they conspire against your Messiah?" After they pray the Psalm, the place where they are assembled is shaken, and they are filled with the Holy Spirit, and they begin speaking the word of God with boldness.[19] Thus, Scripture commends the singing and praying of the Psalms by command and example.

---

[18] I find it moving to ponder the words of Psalm 118 being sung by Jesus as he departs the upper room, knowing he is headed for arrest and crucifixion. For a consideration of this see, Van Neste, "Ancient Songs and Apostolic Preaching: How the New Testament Laid Claim to the Psalms," 38-40.

[19] It is interesting that even before that, in Acts 1, when the church has its first business meeting to figure out what to do with position vacated by Judas, a Psalm is cited, and it is the Psalm that decides the first business meeting.

Encouragement across Church History

Someone might still ask what good it is to sing the Psalms. I hope that the biblical examples have spoken to that issue. But our forebears in the faith have given ample testimony here as well. John Chrysostom makes this point in one of his sermons:

> "Do you wish to be happy? Do you want to know how to spend the day truly blessed? I offer you a drink that is spiritual. This is not a drink for drunkenness that would cut off even meaningful speech. This does not cause us to babble. It does not disturb our vision. Here it is. Learn to sing the Psalms! Then you will see pleasure indeed. Those who have learned to sing with the Psalms are easily filled with the Holy Spirit."[20]

Also, Gregory of Nyssa says, "the Psalms have been formed like sculptor's tools for the true overseer who, like a craftsman, is carving our souls to the divine likeness."[21] Martin Luther says,

> Every Christian who would abound in prayer and piety ought, in all reason, make the Psalter his manual; and, moreover, it were well if every Christian so used it and were so expert in it as to have it word for word by heart, and could have it even in his heart as often as he is chanced to be called to speak or act, that he might be able to draw forth or employ some sentence out of it, by way of a Proverb. For indeed the truth is, that everything that a pious heart can desire to ask in prayer, it here finds Psalms and words to match, so aptly and sweetly, that no man – no, nor all men in the world – shall be able to devise forms of words so good and devout.[22]

Moving forward to the twentieth century, Andrew Blackwood, leading Presbyterian pastor and Princeton professor, says, "Perhaps our other denominations would have a greater love for the Bible if we sang from

---

[20] Chrysostom, "Homily on Ephesians 19.5.19-21," cited in M. J. Edwards, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, 8 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 191-192.

[21] *On the Inscriptions II, 137*, cited in Laurence Kriegshauser, *Praying the Psalms in Christ* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 9.

[22] "Preface to the Edition of the Psalter published at Neuberg on the Danube in 1545," in Martin Luther, *Standard Edition of Luther's Works,* ed. John Nicholas Lenker (Sunbury, Pennsylvania: Lutherans in All Lands, 1903), 14.

the Psalms as often as our fathers did after the Reformation. Many of those songs came out of the fiery furnace, and so they brought our fathers a might sense of God's holiness, as well as a keen awareness of His laws."[23] As people who want to hold fast to a right appreciation for the Scriptures, this should speak well to us.

Or we can turn to Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He says, "From ancient times in the Church, a special significance has been attached to the common [in the sense of 'corporate'] use of the psalms. ... The custom has been largely lost and we must find our way back to its prayers." [24]

"It is a dangerous error," he says in another place, "surely very widespread among Christians, to think that the heart can pray by itself. ... Prayer does not mean simply to pour out one's heart."[25] He does not exclude "pouring out one's heart," but his comment implies that prayer is more than this and we need to be taught how to speak to God.[26] He goes on to say: "The more deeply we grow into the Psalms and the more often we pray them as our own, the more simple and rich will our prayer become."[27] He also writes, "If we wish to pray with confidence and gladness, then the words of Holy Scripture will have to be the solid basis of our prayer."[28] These statements are all the more poignant coming from one who was a martyr for the faith.

---

[23] Andrew Blackwood, *The Fine Art of Public Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1939), 110.

[24] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper, 1954), 44.

[25] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 9.

[26] Bonhoeffer himself expounds this point: "It does not depend, therefore, on whether the Psalms express adequately that which we feel at a given moment in our heart. If we are to pray aright, perhaps it is quite necessary that we pray contrary to our own heart. Not what we want to pray is important, but what God wants us to pray. If we were dependent entirely on ourselves, we would probably pray only the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer. But God wants it otherwise. The richness of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart." (*Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible,* 14-15)

[27] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 50.

[28] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 11-12.

Baptist Roots

Someone might say, "Okay, it's in the Bible, it's supposed to be good for me, but is singing the Psalms a Baptist practice?" Well, Baptists should want to adhere to the Bible, but it is fair enough to ask if Baptists of the past have understood the Scriptures in this way. Charles Spurgeon, the great British Baptist preacher, says,

> Time was when the Psalms were not only rehearsed in all the churches from day to day, but they were so universally sung that the common people knew them, even if they did not know they letters in which they were written. Time was when bishops would ordain no man to the ministry unless he knew 'David' from end to end and could repeat each Psalm correctly; even Councils of the Church have decreed that none should hold ecclesiastical office unless they knew the whole psalter by heart. Other practices of those ages had better be forgotten, but to this memory accords an honorable record. Then, as Jerome tells us, the labourer, while he held the plow, sang Hallelujah; the tired reaper refreshed himself with the psalms, and the vinedresser, while trimming the vines with his curved hook, sang something of David.[29]

The Baptist Church Hymnal, printed in London in 1900, has a setting of all 150 Psalms, as well as instructions on how to chant them.[30] The first Southern Baptist hymnbook, *The Baptist Psalmody* compiled by Basil Manly and Basil Manly, Jr. in 1870 included many metered psalms.[31] Just over 50 years ago, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary hosted a

---

[29] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, vol. VI (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1882), viii. See note 6 for the church council to which Spurgeon alludes.

[30] *The Baptist Church Hymnal* (London: The Psalms and Hymns Trust, 1900). This tradition continued in subsequent editions including *The Baptist Hymn Book* (The Psalms and Hymns Trust, 1962).

[31] Basil Manly and Basil Manly, Jr., ed. *The Baptist Psalmody: A Selection of Hymns for the Worship of God* (Atlanta: Sheldon & Connor, 1870). In the denominational debate about appropriate song books, it appears that the inclusion of psalms is simply assumed. See Nathan Harold Platt, "The hymnological contributions of Basil Manly, Jr. to the congregational song of Southern Baptists," DMA diss. Submitted to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, December 2004. Platt does not make this argument. It is my observation from his reporting of the discussion.

conference on the singing of Psalms in the Baptist churches.[32] So, this is a part of our tradition. Even more recently, you can find renditions of the Psalms by Baptists in various sources including *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship* and *Lost in Wonder, Love, and Praise: Hymns & Poems.*[33] Singing the Psalms is part of the Baptist tradition. It may be less common around us, but that is because we have lost something that we need to regain.

And yet the testimony of the Church does not stop here. The Psalms feature especially prominently in so many of the chapters of church history in which believers were pressured, harassed, and persecuted. It seems the Psalms shine brightest in the dark times. This is what first caught my attention about this use of the Psalms as I read about the Scottish Covenanters, in the second wave of the Reformation, who sought to hold to the faith and were persecuted and died. A number of them were imprisoned in Dunnottar Castle, just south of Aberdeen. Men and women were shut up in the dark, dank dungeon of Dunnottar with no way to leave even for personal needs, and there they suffered and died. They could have gained release simply by denying the faith, but they refused to do so. Stories abound of them holding fast and gathering together to sing the Psalms and draw strength from them.[34]

Similar stories are told about the French Huguenots in roughly the same time period. The story is told of a crowd pelting some Huguenots, and them huddling together, and an old man in their midst standing up amidst the mud, excrement, and stones being thrown. As the others huddled around, he began to sing one of the Psalms, and the others huddled around him began to sing as they held firm to the faith, in spite of what went on around them. Many Huguenots were burned for their faith, and here is one account of their suffering and perseverance:

---

[32] "The Use of the Psalmody in the Baptist Church," Church Music Institute. Heck Chapel, SBTS, October 24, 1967. https://digital.library.sbts.edu/handle/10392/4213

[33] *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship*, ed. C. Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012); Justin Wainscott, *Lost in Wonder, Love, and Praise: Hymns & Poems* (Eugene. OR: Resource Publications, 2019).

[34] There is a plaque at Dunnottar Castle today in honor of the brave people who suffered there for their faith, and there is a rendition of that plaque at the University of Aberdeen.

> And all over France, whenever Huguenots of the first generation were confined, often sometimes by the score, guards and jailers became familiar with the Psalms, … [many martyrs died with the psalms on their lips] The courage and joy of these martyrs, who like ancient Christians, could have had release for a word, won converts among the onlookers. The authorities tried gags, but the cord would burn, and from the smoke, the Psalm would again begin. The bishops then ordered that the tongues of the Huguenots should be cut out before they were burned. This became the general practice.[35]

There are also more recent examples of psalm-singing inspiring perseverance. Dutch Christians under Nazi rule found refuge in the Psalms. The Psalms became some of the tones of resistance for these Christians, and the Nazis did not know what they were doing. The Nazis thought they were just singing church songs, but the psalms solidified them and gave them strength under that oppression.[36] Similar stories are told about the Hungarians under communist tyranny. In fact, someone recently wrote of them, "It can be justly argued that Psalm singing carried them through four decades of communist tyranny."[37]

It was stories like these that first sparked my interest in the singing of the Psalms. When I see the mighty oaks that have sprung from the soil of the Psalms, it makes me want to use the same fertilizer. How can we neglect so great a treasure? Do we not see the clouds gathering in our own time? Shall we not then prepare our souls, and the souls of our children and our churches, to hold fast, to know God deeply? Do we not desperately need renewal in the church today?[38] Our forebears found in

---

[35] Rich Lusk, "Psalms," in *Omnibus IV: The Ancient World*, ed. Gene Edward Veith, Douglas Wilson, G. Tyler Fischer (Lancaster, PA: Veritas Press, 2009), 86.

[36] Petra Verwijs, "Lessons I Learned from Singing the Psalms: Growing Up with the Genevan Psalter," https://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-2010/lessons-i-learned-singing-psalms (accessed July 1, 2020).

[37] David T. Koyzis, "Singing the Psalms Through Adversity: Hungary," First Things blog, Feb 20, 2013, https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2013/02/singing-the-psalms-through-adversity-hungary (accessed July 1, 2020).

[38] "at times of reformation and renewal the church has turned to the Psalms again and again" (Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998], 24).

the psalter a singular, powerful aid for growing in the knowledge of God, for grasping the full range of his word, and for taking it deep into their souls. Can we then afford to neglect it? I think Dietrich Bonhoeffer once more is correct when he says, "Whenever the Psalter is abandoned, an incomparable treasure vanishes from the Christian church. With its recovery will come unsuspected power."[39] I think, in fact, that this incomparable treasure has vanished, and we could use a recovery with unsuspected power in these days. Jesus died with the Psalms on his lips, the church was launched at Pentecost with a sermon on the Psalms, and in the first recorded prayer meeting after Pentecost they prayed a Psalm. Let us go and do likewise.

[39] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 26.

Midwestern Journal of Theology 19.2 (2020): 14-57

What the Bible Teaches about Ethnic Harmony[1]

ANDREW DAVID NASELLI
Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and New Testament,
Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis,
A Pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church

When John Piper introduced an ethnic harmony seminar to Bethlehem Baptist Church in November 2000, he shared, "This issue is an emotionally no-win issue, which is one of the reasons (of dozens) that people don't want to touch it. You just get beat up so much. … It's a hard issue to deal with. But it's worth it."[2] This is a challenging topic not just intellectually but experientially for a wide range of people.

Ethnic harmony is a controversial issue in our culture, and the Bible says a lot about it. This article updates a seminar I presented to my church in January 2020. I focus on understanding and applying what the Bible says about ethnicity. I organize what the Bible says about ethnicity under eight propositions. These headings are in my own words, but I am adapting them from the seven synthesizing conclusions by Danny Hays in his thoughtful volume in D. A. Carson's New Studies in Biblical Theology series.[3] Here are my eight propositions:

1. God created every human being in his image with equal dignity and worth, so ethnic partiality is sinful.
2. Humans in the Bible's storyline are multiethnic.
3. God's global plan to save sinners includes people from every ethnic group.

---

[1] Thanks to friends who examined a draft of this article and shared helpful feedback, especially Thomas Barclay, Anthony Bushnell, Sarah Bushnell, Kevin DeYoung, Abigail Dodds, Caleb Figgers, Lewis Guest IV, David Howard, Trent Hunter, Lance Kramer, Steven Lee, Jason Meyer, Charles Naselli, Jenni Naselli, Addalai Nowlin, Jonathan Parnell, Joe Rigney, Kenny Stokes, and Rod Takata.

[2] John Piper, "Why Deal with Racial Issues? Racial Harmony Session 1," *Desiring God*, 29 November 2000, https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/why-deal-with-racial-issues-session-1.

[3] J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 201–6.

4. God approves of interethnic marriage.
5. God's people must love their neighbors across ethnic lines.
6. The church—both Jewish and Gentile Christians—must maintain the unity (including ethnic harmony) that Christ powerfully created.
7. The church should welcome ethnic diversity.
8. The church should love justice, which entails treating all ethnicities justly and encouraging its members to pursue justice in society.

1. God created every human in his image with equal dignity and worth, so ethnic partiality is sinful.

What is the image of God? Four texts are foundational:[4]

> I. Then God said, "Let us make man *in our image, after our likeness*. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man *in his own image, in the image of God* he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:26–27)
>
> II. This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him *in the likeness of God.* Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. (Gen 5:1–2)
>
> III. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man *in his own image.* (Gen 9:6)
>
> IV. With it [i.e., the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made *in the likeness of God.* (James 3:9)

We could go into much more detail and explore several related issues: (1) *Image* and *likeness* are interchangeable.[5] (2) Christ is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; cf. John 14:9; Heb 1:3). (3) Paul says that our union with Christ restores, renews, and transforms our image, which will be glorified when God glorifies our bodies (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:22–24; Col 3:10). (4) Because God created humans in his

[4] Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the ESV.

[5] For more nuance, see Peter J. Gentry, "Humanity as the Divine Image in Genesis 1:26–28," *Eikon: A Journal for Biblical Anthropology* 2.1 (2020): 56–69.

image, every human belongs to God: "Jesus said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?' They said, 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them, 'Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and *to God the things that are God's*'" (Matt 22:20–21).

In the past two thousand years, Christian theologians have held to one of four basic views of the image of God: (1) It is what humans are—a capacity or characteristic that makes humans like God, such as reason or will or conscience. (2) It is what humans do—namely, exercising dominion over creation (cf. Ps 8:3–8). (3) It is how humans relate to God and to others. (4) It is some combination of the previous three views. A broader definition seems most persuasive to me: *The image of God in humans is that humans resemble and represent God, which entails what they should do and how they should relate to others.* In other words, humans are like God in various ways (nature) and represent God (status and purpose), so humans have the capacity to manifest that image by how they exercise dominion over creation and by how they relate to God and others.[6]

For our purposes with reference to ethnicity, we do not need to precisely define the image of God. But Christians should affirm the following four statements:

i. *Humans are the only earthly creatures whom God created in his image* (Gen 1:26–27). Not plants, not animals—only humans. This makes humans special. Humans uniquely image or represent God on earth—like how a child represents his or her biological parents or like how a picture of a person represents the actual person.[7]

---

[6] I say "capacity" in order not to exclude unborn babies or mentally disabled people. Elsewhere I describe the conscience as a human capacity and explain, "Like other human capacities such as speech and reason, it's possible for a person never to actualize or achieve the capacity of conscience. A child dies in infancy, having never spoken a single word or felt a single pang of conscience. Another child is born without the mental capacity to make moral judgments. Others, through stroke, accident, or dementia, lose the moral judgment they once had and the conscience that went with it. Still, to be human is to have the *capacity* for conscience, whether or not one is able to exercise that capacity." Andrew David Naselli and J. D. Crowley, *Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 22.

[7] I say "earthly" and "on earth" because I am not certain that angels are not created in the image of God. My leaning at this point is that God created only

ii. *All humans are created in God's image* (Gen 9:6; James 3:9). The image—or how humans express the image—is damaged in fallen humans since God restores it in believers (see Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:22–24; Col 3:10),[8] but all humans are still made in God's image.

iii. *God's creating humans in his image is the basis for the sanctity of human life* (Gen 9:6). Contrast Genesis 9:3—"Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you." God permits humans to kill animals for food; he forbids humans to murder fellow humans.

iv. *God's creating humans in his image is the basis for human dignity* (Gen 9:6; James 3:9). Every single human—from embryo to elderly, of every skin color, of every ethnicity—is worthy of respect. Your ethnicity is relatively unimportant compared to your identity as a person in God's image. Here is how John Piper puts it:

> In determining the significance of who you are, being a person in the image of God compares to ethnic distinctives the way the noonday sun compares to a candlestick. In other words, finding your main identity in whiteness or blackness or any other ethnic color or trait is like boasting that you carry a candle to light the cloudless noonday sky. Candles have their place. But not to light the day. So color and ethnicity have their place, but not as the main glory and wonder of our identity as human beings. The primary glory of who we are is what unites us in our God-like humanity, not what differentiates us in our ethnicity.[9]

---

humans (not angels) in his image. For example, Bavinck argues, "The incarnation of God is proof that human beings and not angels are created in the image of God, and that the human body is an essential component of that image." Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 2: God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 560.

[8] The Bible does not explicitly say that God's image is damaged or marred. Some theologians infer that God's image is damaged since Paul says that God restores or renews or transforms the image. Other theologians insist that it's better to say that people—not the image—are damaged. E.g., see John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015). For a summary of Kilner's book, see https://www.booksataglance.com/book-reviews/dignity-and-destiny-humanity-in-the-image-of-god-by-john-kilner/.

[9] https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/racial-reconciliation.

This is the most fundamental reason why programs of "diversity training" usually backfire in their attempt to foster mutual respect among ethnic groups. They focus major attention on what is comparatively minor, and virtually no attention on what is infinitely, gloriously major—our common, unique standing among all creation as persons created in the image of God. If our sons and our daughters have a hundred eggs, let us teach them to put ninety-nine eggs in the basket called personhood in the image of God and one egg in the basket called ethnic distinction.[10]

How should God's creating every human in his image affect how we view fellow humans? When we view a fellow human, we might be inclined to focus on differences: skin color (white, black, brown, etc.), facial features (eyes, nose, ears, hair, etc.), sex (male or female), age (young, old), height (short, tall), build (thin, thick, muscular, etc.), attractiveness (ugly, beautiful, dirty, clean, etc.), socio-economic status (rich, poor), speech (language, dialect), behavior (concerning, noble, etc.).

We inevitably notice differences. But when we view a fellow human, what is the *main* feature we should see? *A fellow image-bearer*. God creates every human in his image, so every human shares the same dignity and value that results from the image of God. No ethnic group is inherently superior to another. So it is sinful to view your own ethnic group as inherently better than another. In other words, ethnic partiality or *racism* is sinful. Here is a typical definition of *racism*:

> • prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized ….
> • the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another[11]

God does not show partiality or favoritism (Deut 10:17; 2 Chr 19:7; Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; Gal 2:6; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; 1 Pet 1:17), nor should we (Prov 18:5; 24:23; 28:21; James 2:1–13; cf. Jude 16). Specifically, we

[10] John Piper, "Racial Reconciliation: Unfolding Bethlehem's Fresh Initiative #3," *Desiring God*, 14 January 1996, https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/racial-reconciliation.

[11] *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

should not base how we treat fellow image-bearers on their ethnicity. Ethnic partiality is sinful because God created every human being in his image.

2. Humans in the Bible's storyline are multiethnic.

Hays explains,

> Adam and Eve are not Hebrews or Egyptians or Canaanites. It is incorrect for the White Church to view them as White or for the Black Church to view them as Black. Their 'race' is not identifiable; they are neither Negroid [i.e., African] nor Caucasian, nor even Semitic. They become the mother and father of all peoples. The division of humankind into peoples and races is not even mentioned until Genesis 10. Adam and Eve, as well as Noah, are non-ethnic and non-national. They represent all people, not some people.[12]

For the rest of the Bible's story, humans are multiethnic—that is, humanity has many ethnicities. Sometimes Bible storybooks for children present Bible characters as if they all looked like White Anglo-Americans. That is not the case. Humans in the Bible's storyline are multiethnic, and the vast majority did not look like White Anglo-Americans. Various ethnicities—including Black Africans—have been part of the Bible's storyline from the beginning.

Hays spends most of his book *From Every People and Nation* demonstrating not just that the humans in the Bible's storyline are multiethnic but that Black Africans from Cush/Ethiopia play an important role in the Bible. He describes four main ethnic groups:[13] (1) *Asiastics or Semites in the northeast—including the Israelites*. (2) *Indo-Europeans in the west—Hittites and Philistines*. They were probably the OT people closest-looking in appearance to Caucasians, though they "probably resembled the people of modern Greece or Turkey more than they may have resembled the people of modern England or mid-western America."[14] (3) *Egyptians in the south*. Egyptian art portrays Egyptians with light brown skin—a mixture of both Black African and Asiatic elements. (4) *Cushites further south*. Ancient Egyptian art and later art by

[12] Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 47–48.
[13] Ibid., 28–45.
[14] Ibid., 44.

Greek and Romans depict Cushites as Black Africans "with classic 'Negroid' [i.e., central and southern African] features," and "numerous ancient literary texts refer, directly or indirectly, to the black skin colour and other 'Negroid' [i.e., African] features of the Cushites."[15] Hays summarizes,

> Black Cushites were active players in the geopolitics and economics of the Ancient Near East. The Cushites controlled Egypt for a short while, and allied themselves with Judah against the Assyrians. The Black African Ebed-Melech played a crucial role in Judah's theological history, saving the prophet Jeremiah and symbolizing the inclusion of future Gentiles who come to God by faith. Likewise, the first non-Jewish believer in the New Testament was a Black African [the Ethiopian eunuch—Acts 8:26–40], and a leader of the early Church in Antioch was likewise probably Black [Simon who was called Niger—Acts 13:1].[16]

The so-called "curse of Ham" in Gen 9:18–27 is a sham. Some White Christians have misused that passage to defend enslaving Blacks. Noah curses not Ham but Canaan, Ham's youngest son (Gen 9:25). There is no basis for extending that curse to all of Ham's descendants. The people Noah curses are the Canaanites, who are ethnically more like the Israelites than Black Africans. "The curse on Canaan has absolutely nothing to do with Black Africa."[17]

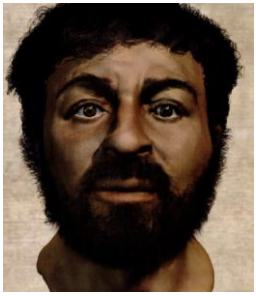
What was the ethnic world of the New Testament like? Hays summarizes,

> The story of the New Testament took place in a world with a wide range of ethnic diversity. Although the educated population of the Roman Empire tended to refer to themselves as 'Greeks', in reality they were made up of dozens of different Indo-European, Asian, and African ethnic groups. And while many people in the urban areas were assimilated into the Greco-Roman culture, the countryside tended to remain more diverse, reflecting the ethnic composition that pre-dated the Romans. Jews were present in large numbers in most cities and,

[15] Ibid., 33.
[16] Ibid., 201.
[17] Ibid., 55. Cf. appendix four: "What Are the Implications of Noah's Curse," in John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 263–67.

> by and large, retained their ethnic identity. Likewise, Black Africans from Meroe (in Greek, *Ethiopians*) and Berbers from North Africa also interacted frequently with the first century Mediterranean world.[18]

What did Jesus look like? We obviously do not know for certain. We know that his beard was long enough for people to pluck out with their hands. We know that he was a Jew from Galilee, so his skin was probably a dark olive (i.e., yellowish brown). In December 2002, *Popular Mechanic* published a story on "The Real Face of Jesus." Scientists and archeologists concluded that an average first-century Galilean Jewish man was 5 feet, 1 inch tall and 110 pounds with a face something like this:[19]



John Piper argues, "Jesus was born a Jew to devastate every boast in ethnic superiority, and to create one new, joyful, mercy-loving race."[20] Humans in the Bible's storyline—including God the Son incarnate—are multiethnic.

I have intentionally been using the term *ethnicity* instead of *race* because I think it is more helpful. Here are typical ways to define *race* and *ethnicity*:[21]

---

[18] Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 156.

[19] See Justin Taylor, "What Did Jesus Look Like?," *The Gospel Coalition*, 9 July 2010, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/what-did-jesus-look-like/.

[20] John Piper, "Why Was Jesus Born a Jew? The Devastating Mercy of His Ethnicity," *Desiring God*, 11 December 2019, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/why-was-jesus-born-a-jew.

[21] *The New Oxford American Dictionary*.

- *race:* each of the major groupings into which humankind is considered (in various theories or contexts) to be divided on the basis of physical characteristics or shared ancestry
- *ethnicity:* the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition

In other words, race is primarily *physical* or *biological*, and ethnicity is primarily *cultural*. Race focuses on physical characteristics such as skin color and hair texture; ethnicity includes such physical characteristics but focuses on cultural characteristics such as language and geopolitics.[22]

Thabiti Anyabwile has compellingly argued that there is no biological basis for *race* and that forcing humans into racial categories is harmful.[23] Voddie Baucham asserts,

> Race is arbitrary. Racial classifications are not real classifications. There is but one race. There is virtually no genetic difference between a black and a white man…We have the same original parents. We are of multiple ethnicities but one race. The racial distinctions between

[22] Cf. Marc Cortez: "We first need to understand what terms like *race* and *ethnicity* mean in modern discourse. People commonly use those terms to capture aspects of human existence that are more biological (race) or cultural (ethnicity). … When discussing biblical/theological perspectives on race, we need to be careful not to confuse our categories. … Xenophobia is not a new phenomenon, and people in the ancient world had many ways of identifying differences between people groups and using those differences as the basis for hatred and exclusion. However, they generally did not develop prejudices based on skin color or the other phenotypical characteristics we traditionally associate with race today. … Instead, ancient people focused on characteristics like religion, kinship, geography, and language as the primary categories of differentiation. … While the ancient world had certain ways of clearly identifying difference, their categories were not based on permanent, biological/phenotypical characteristics like skin color and facial features." Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 213–14.

[23] Thabiti Anyabwile, "Bearing the Image: Identity, the Work of Christ, and the Church," *Together for the Gospel*, April 2008, https://t4g.org/resources/thabiti-anyabwile/bearing-the-image-identity-the-work-of-christ-and-the-church-session-ii/.

> us are arbitrary distinctions based on certain features we have, but not on real differences.[24]

Similarly, in John Piper's first appendix in his book *Bloodlines*—"Is There Such a Thing as Race? A Word about Terminology"[25]—Piper lists eight reasons that the term *ethnicity* is better than *race:*

1. There are no clear boundary lines. … The term race is imprecise and has very blurry edges. In other words, the dividing lines between the races are not discernible.

2. All races are mixed races. … There are countless degrees of racial traits that can be mixed in any given marriage. This means that there are no pure "races." There are only degrees of mixture.

3. We are all related in Adam. … We are all biologically related to one another and descended from one common ancestor.

4. The historical traits used in classifying races are arbitrary. … The traits historically used in classifying races have been arbitrarily limited [e.g., to color, hair, and facial features].

5. Physical traits are comparatively superficial … when compared to the combination of physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and relational aspects that give us the richness of our personal identity.

6. Science serves "the superior." … Historically, the emergence of the anthropology of races in the modern world has gone hand in hand with assumptions of inferiority and superiority. Thus the science was bent from the beginning to serve "the superior."

7. The category of race is not found in the Bible.

8. Ethnicity is more helpful. … Physical traits that we usually think of in defining race are biblically marginal, biologically ambiguous, superficial in relation to personhood, and not as helpful as the concept of ethnicity in helping us relate to each other with respect and understanding about the more significant differences that we bring to our relationships.

Even though *race* is not a helpful conceptual category, we cannot ignore the word because people have sinfully discriminated between

---

[24] Voddie Baucham, "Racial Reconciliation," in *By What Standard? God's World…God's Rules,* ed. Jared Longshore (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2020), 131.
[25] Piper, *Bloodlines,* 234–40.

individuals and groups based on physical characteristics and shared ancestry.[26] Yet when we use the term *race* according to contemporary usage, we undermine the Bible's teaching that we all share one race—the human race. We humans are all related. We share the same bloodline. All humans have one common ancestor, the first man, Adam: God "made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26a).[27]

3. God's global plan to save sinners includes people from every ethnic group.

This is built in to the Abrahamic covenant:

> Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and *in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*." (Gen 12:1–3)

---

[26] Joe Rigney commented on a draft of this document, "I agree with your preference for ethnicity, but think we also need to find a way to acknowledge that ethnicity frequently tracks with one feature of 'race'—namely, shared ancestry, which accounts for the similar physical characteristics that we associate with race. One way to say it might be that the invention of race (racialization) was owing to the elevation of one aspect of ethnicity (physical characteristics flowing from shared ancestry) over all others (i.e., language, culture, history). The latter are what give ethnicity its fluidity, whereas elevating the former inevitably led to the arbitrariness of racialization. Put simply, I think it's important to acknowledge that ethnicity often has a biological/shared ancestry component, but that this component must not be absolutized."

[27] Cf. Jesse Johnson, "Thabiti on the Myth of Race," *The Cripplegate*, 17 July 2013, https://thecripplegate.com/thabiti-on-the-myth-of-race/; Jesse Johnson, "The Myth of Race," *The Cripplegate*, 22 October 2015, https://thecripplegate.com/the-myth-of-race/; Jesse Johnson, "4 Distinctives of a Christian View of Race," *The Cripplegate*, 6 August 2020, https://thecripplegate.com/4-distinctives-of-a-christian-view-of-race/.

From the beginning, God planned to bless "all the families of the earth." The NT confirms this over and over.[28] Paul describes our mission: "to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his [i.e., Jesus Christ our Lord's] name *among all the nations*" (Rom 1:5).

> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples *of all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:18–20)

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." … In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham [has] come *to the Gentiles*. … Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring … who is Christ. … *There is neither Jew nor Greek*, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Gal 3:8, 14, 16, 28–29; cf. 2:11–16)

Here there is *not Greek and Jew*, circumcised and uncircumcised, *barbarian, Scythian*, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (Col 3:11; cf. Acts 10:9–43)[29]

> "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God *from every tribe and language and people and nation*, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (Rev 5:9; cf. 7:9; 14:6)

---

[28] See Jason S. DeRouchie, "God Always Wanted the Whole World: Global Mission from Genesis to Revelation," *Desiring God*, 5 December 2019, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-always-wanted-the-whole-world.

[29] Piper explains, "The point of Colossians 3:11 is not that cultural, ethnic, and racial differences have no significance; they do. The point is that they are no barrier to profound, personal, intimate fellowship. Singing alto is different from singing bass. It's a significant difference. But that difference is no barrier to being in the choir. It's an asset." Piper, *Bloodlines*, 211.

We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things *for the joy of all peoples* through Jesus Christ.[30]

4. God approves of interethnic marriage.

Hays and Piper (among others) have soundly demonstrated that God approves of interethnic marriage.[31] The clearest example of this in the Bible is when Moses marries a Black African woman—a Cushite (Num 12:1). Miriam and Aaron oppose that marriage, and God shows that he approves of it by striking Miriam with leprosy—a skin disease that made her skin as white as snow (Num 12:10). Piper asks,

Is there more here than mere punishment? Is there symbolism in the punishment? Consider this possibility: in God's anger at Miriam, Moses's sister, God says in effect, "Do you like being light-skinned, Miriam? Do you belittle the Cushite because she is dark-skinned and foreign? All right, I'll make you light-skinned." Verse 10: "Behold, Miriam was leprous, like snow."

God says not a critical word against Moses for marrying a black Cushite woman. But when Miriam criticizes God's chosen leader for this marriage, God strikes her skin with white leprosy. If you ever thought black was a biblical symbol for uncleanness, be careful how you use such an idea; a white uncleanness could come upon you.[32]

The Bible does not forbid inter*ethnic* marriage. It forbids inter*faith* marriage. A believer must not marry an unbeliever (cf. 1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14–7:1).[33] Piper explains, "The issue is not color mixing, or customs mixing, or clan identity. The issue is: *will there be one common allegiance*

---

[30] Cf. John Piper, "I Exist to …." *Desiring God*, 2 March 2012, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/i-exist-to.

[31] J. Daniel Hays, "A Biblical Perspective on Interracial Marriage," *CTR* 6.2 (2009): 5–23; Piper, *Bloodlines*, 203–15.

[32] Piper, *Bloodlines*, 212.

[33] Kathy Keller, "Don't Take It from Me: Reasons You Should Not Marry an Unbeliever," *The Gospel Coalition*, 23 January 2012, http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/01/23/dont-take-it-from-me-reasons-you-should-not-marry-an-unbeliever/; Mike Gilbart-Smith, "Can Christians Marry Non-Christians? A Biblical Theology," *9Marks*, 13 March 2017, https://www.9marks.org/article/can-christians-marry-non-christians-a-biblical-theology/.

to the true God in this marriage or will there be divided affections?"[34] One of the Bible's most celebrated marriages is between a Jew and a Moabite—Boaz married Ruth. Their union led to the birth of King David and eventually to Jesus the Messiah.

Hays summarizes,

> The Scriptures approve of interracial marriages between believers. Moses married a Black woman and God gave his total approval. The text is not ambiguous. Paul's proclamation of organic unity and total equality in the Church likewise destroys the barrier of racial intermarriage prohibition. This truth is important for the Church, because the ban by Whites on interracial marriages—especially those between Blacks and Whites—lies at the very heart of racism. To forbid one's children to marry people of another race, based not on their relationship with Christ, but solely on their skin colour, implies the heresy of racial superiority. When White Christians forbid their children to marry Black believers, they make a mockery of Paul's theology of unity in Christ. Regardless of what White Christians may say about racial equality, the interracial marriage prohibition proclaims by action that their primary identity is not their relationship to Christ, but rather their relationship with their White culture: that is, the world. Likewise, to speak of racial reconciliation while continuing to prohibit racial intermarriage is extremely hypocritical. This issue lies at the crux of racial division.[35]

5. God's people must love their neighbors across ethnic lines.

Any time you have a group of sinful humans, there will be divisions—even if every human has the same skin color. *Sinful people sinfully divide people.* They create a sinful us-versus-them system. This happens on school playgrounds among third-graders. And it has happened over and over in human history between ethnic groups all over the world. Here's how D. A. Carson put it in 2002:

> The phenomenon of racism is disturbingly rampant. Quite apart from the black-and-white variety engendered in the West by the tragic history of slavery, racism surfaces all over the world. Most Chinese parents would not want their daughter, for instance, to marry a

[34] Piper, *Bloodlines*, 210.

[35] Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 203.

> European-American lad; most Japanese think that Koreans are a step down. The list is endless. Add the tribal conflicts in Africa, of which the genocide in Rwanda is merely the most notorious recent example; add the myth of Aryan supremacy that demanded not only *Lebensraum*, precipitating World War II, but issued in the Holocaust; add the slaughter of a million and a half Armenians at the beginning of the twentieth century; add the Russian slaughter of Ukrainians and widespread non-Russian Slavic distrust of Russians; add the horrors of apartheid, now abolished in law but a long way from being totally overcome; add the treatment of Aboriginals by Australian Caucasians; add the treatment of "Indians" in the Americas (North, Central, and South) by Canadians, Americans, Brazilians, and the Hispanic countries. The list is endless.[36]

If you visit Israel, you can feel the tension between Jews and Arabs. Carson is right: the list goes on and on.[37]

Ethnic conflict has marked sinful humans from the beginning. It is not new. It is not just a black-white American issue. It is a sin-issue that sinful humans must address at all times in all cultures. So it should not surprise us that Jesus directly addressed the ethnic-based tension between Jews and Samaritans when he ministered to first-century Jews.

> And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."
>
> But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going

[36] D. A. Carson, *Love in Hard Places* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 88–89.

[37] I drafted this document in January 2020 right before I took a trip to Nairobi, Kenya to preach and teach. When I shared a draft of the document with a missionary friend in Nairobi, he replied, "This is a BIG issue in Kenya between the 40+ Kenyan tribes. 'Tribalism' is alive and well in Kenya—especially at election time."

> down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise." (Luke 10:25–38)

Jews despised Samaritans (cf. John 8:48) because Jews thought Samaritans were defiled with Gentile blood and pagan worship practices. When the Assyrians defeated the northern kingdom of Israel and its capital of Samaria in 722 BC (1 Kgs 16:24), the Assyrians deported many Israelites to Assyria and repopulated Israel with foreigners (2 Kgs 17:24–31) who intermarried with the remaining Israelites. The result was Samaritans, whom Jews regarded as ethnic half-breeds. Samaritans had their own version of the Pentateuch and rejected the rest of the OT. When the Gospel of John tells the story of Jesus meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well, he adds this aside: "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (John 4:9). That is why Jesus's request for a drink surprises the woman at the well. Many Jews viewed all Samaritans as ritually defiled. The Samaritan woman did not expect Jesus to talk to her (cf. 4:27), let alone become ritually defiled by drinking from her water pot. She does not know that Jesus cannot become ritually defiled; he sanctifies what he touches (Matt 8:3).

The Samaritan woman at the well later says to Jesus, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship" (John 4:20). "This mountain" refers to Mount Gerizim. Moses commanded the Israelites to pronounce the law's blessings from Mount Gerizim and its curses from Mount Ebal just across the valley of Shechem to the north (Deut 11:29; 27:12–13; Josh 8:33). The Samaritans had erected a temple on Mount Gerizim; it replaced Jerusalem as their spiritual center. In 128 or 127 BC, John Hyrcanus, the Jewish high priest in Judea, destroyed the Samaritan temple. The

hostility between Jews and Samaritans continued to Jesus's day. The Samaritan woman is changing the subject from her adultery (John 4:18) to the most controversial religious issue between Jews and Samaritans: Should God's people worship in Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim?[38]

That historical context helps shed light on the story of the Good Samaritan. The story Jesus tells would be shocking to a Jew at the time (and to a Samaritan!). God's people must love their neighbors across ethnic lines—even when there is ethnic tension and conflict and even when showing such love is countercultural and costly and inconvenient.

The story of the Good Samaritan is important in Luke-Acts. It connects to Acts 1:8 ("you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and *Samaria*, and to the end of the earth") and to Acts 8 (proclaiming the gospel in Samaria and to the Ethiopian Eunuch).

6. The church—both Jewish and Gentile Christians—must maintain the unity (including ethnic harmony) that Christ powerfully created.[39]

That is the theological message of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. We must be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:1). We do not create this unity; we maintain or preserve it. Christ created it.

These two paragraphs from Ephesians 2 and 3 highlight the remarkable ethnic harmony that Christ created at the cross:

> Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself

[38] This paragraph and the previous one adapt notes on John 4 in D. A. Carson and Andrew David Naselli, "John," in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 1898, 1900.

[39] This section adapts Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 250–54. See also Jarvis Williams, *One New Man: The Cross and Racial Reconciliation in Pauline Theology* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010).

is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

For this reason [i.e., the previous paragraph—Eph 2:11–22] I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery [μυστήριον] was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery [μυστήριον] of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Eph 2:11–3:6)

Compare and contrast 2:12 and 3:6. Paul says in 2:12, "remember that you [Gentiles] were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." In 3:6, Paul lists three labels, and each has a Greek prefix that means "together":

1. συγκληρονόμα, *sugklēronoma*, "fellow heirs" (NIV: "heirs *together* with Israel")
2. σύσσωμα, *sussōma*, "members of the same body" (NIV: "members *together* of one body").
3. συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, *summetocha tēs epangelias*, "partakers of the promise" (NIV: "sharers *together* in the promise")

The mystery is that Gentile Christians are *equal* with Jewish Christians in the church:

a. "Fellow heirs." They equally share the same inheritance as Abraham's offspring (cf. Eph 1:14; Rom 4:16). Formerly, they were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph 2:12). Now they are on equal footing.

b. "Members of the same body." They are equally members of the same body, the church (cf. 2:16, 19–22).

c. "Partakers of the promise." They are equally partakers of the same promises, particularly "the promised Holy Spirit" (1:13). Formerly, they were "strangers to the covenants of promise" (2:12).

We experience these blessings because of our union with Christ: the end of 3:6 says "in Christ Jesus." Our union with Christ reverses our predicament in 2:12. The union of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians is possible because of our union with Christ. So some people describe the mystery as a "double union": (1) our union with each other into one new group and (2) our union with Christ.

How is that a mystery? Is that hidden in the OT? The OT announces that God plans to extend his blessings to the Gentile nations (e.g., Gen 12:3; 22:18). And the OT prophesies that Gentiles will turn to the God of Israel and be saved (e.g., Isa 2:1–4; Jer 3:17; cf. Rom 15:9–12). So how is that a mystery?

- Did anyone expect that Jews and Gentiles would be an organic unity? Did anyone expect that believing Gentiles would be on an equal footing with believing Jews (cf. Eph. 2:14–18)?
- Did anyone expect that we would experience this equal footing because of our union with the Messiah ("in Christ Jesus")?
- Did anyone expect that God would do this by means of setting aside the Mosaic law (Eph 2:14–15)?

Here is how NT scholar Harold Hoehner puts it:

> In the OT Gentiles could be part of the company of God, but they had to become Jews in order to belong to it. In the NT Gentiles do not become Jews nor do Jews become Gentiles. Rather, both believing

> Jews and Gentiles become one new entity, Christians (Eph 2:15–16). That is the mystery.[40]

What is promised and fulfilled? The OT promises that God will extend his blessings to the Gentile nations and that Gentiles will turn to the God of Israel and be saved. That is promise and fulfillment.

What is hidden and revealed? Jews and Gentiles will be an organic unity; believing Gentiles will be on an equal footing with believing Jews. That was hidden, and now it is revealed.

This issue was very controversial in the early church (probably even more controversial than recent black-white tensions in America). Many Jewish Christians had no problem with Gentiles' being included in the people of God *but not as equals*. The Jewish Christians assumed that they were more deserving of God's blessings because they were physically descended from Abraham. But Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians are not only part of the same body; they are *equally* part of the same body. If that is the case for Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, how much more is it the case for various ethnic subsets of Gentile Christians?

The church—both Jewish and Gentile Christians—must maintain the unity (including ethnic harmony) that Christ powerfully created. Our identity in Christ is more significant than every other self-defining characteristic.

7. The church should welcome ethnic diversity.

Our hearts should soar when we read about the multiethnic people of God in Revelation 5 and 7. Since God loves the nations and commissioned his people to make disciples of every people group in the world, it would be wrong for a local church to deliberately adopt a strategy that allows only one people group to be part of their church or that excludes a particular group. It glorified God when first-century churches in the Roman empire included both Jewish and Gentile Christians. And today Churches glorify God when they maintain the ethnic harmony that Christ powerfully created. So churches today should glorify God by maintaining the ethnic harmony that Christ powerfully created. But you cannot have ethnic *harmony* without ethnic *diversity*.

---

[40] Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 434.

The church should welcome ethnic diversity because ethnic harmony can glorify God.

There is a tension between indigenous ministry and diversity. Hays argues, "While there may be practical and sociological reasons for creating and maintaining Churches that are ethnic specific (Black Churches, Hispanic Churches, White Churches, Korean Churches, etc.), this division into ethnically based worshipping communities is contrary to the imperatives of Paul."[41]

There is a difference between what God commands and what may be a wise strategy in a particular situation. For example, the Bible does not command churches to have multiethnic leadership. The qualifications for a pastor are about ability (to teach) and character—not about ethnicity. But it may be a wise strategy for a church to intentionally seek multiethnic leaders to better shepherd a flock. John Piper led Bethlehem Baptist Church to pursue ethnic diversity for at least five biblical reasons:[42]

1. It illustrates more clearly the truth that God created people of all races and ethnicities in his own image (Genesis 1:27).

---

[41] Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 205. Carson comments, "Without for a moment wanting to play down the commonness of white prejudice, we must reflect as well on the many Korean churches here, the many Chinese churches, the many Latino and Vietnamese churches, and so forth. In all of these cases, very often the Christians who are least desirous of integrating with others are from the *minority* side: many Koreans and Chinese and Vietnamese and Latinos want to preserve something of their own culture and race and heritage. Some of the problems come, as we shall see, in the second and third generation. And similarly, it is not too surprising that many African-Americans would prefer to worship in African-American churches, even while they may feel that the point of exclusion is entirely or almost entirely on the European-American side. … Many minority churches argue today that the church is the only social institution that preserves the meeting of minorities as minorities, and it is this social construction that permits a group to raise up leaders to represent it." Carson, *Love in Hard Places*, 92. On some Korean-American churches, see 95.

[42] John Piper, "How and Why Bethlehem Pursues Ethnic Diversity," *Desiring God*, 24 January 2007, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-and-why-bethlehem-pursues-ethnic-diversity. (This article is appendix three—with three pages of additions from March 2009—in Piper, *Bloodlines*, 256–62.) Cf. Ken Davis, "The Biblical Basis for Multiethnic Churches and Ministry," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 14.1 (2010): 55–96.

2. It displays more visibly the truth that Jesus is not a tribal deity but is the Lord of all races, nations, and ethnicities.
3. It demonstrates more clearly the blood-bought destiny of the church to be "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).
4. It exhibits more compellingly the aim and power of the cross of Christ to "reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility" (Ephesians 2:16).
5. It expresses more forcefully the work of the Spirit to unite us in Christ. "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Bethlehem Baptist Church (my church) is following the vision that John Piper cast. In his article "How and Why Bethlehem Pursues Ethnic Diversity," Piper explains how the pastors think about ethnic diversity when we hire paid pastors and choose non-paid pastors:

It seems to us that the *admiration* we feel for this diversity in the New Testament should carry over into the *desires* we have for the visible church today. It seems to us that the local church should *want* these things to be true today at the local level where this diversity and harmony would have the greatest visible and relational impact. For us, this has implied *pursuit*. If we admire it and desire it, then it seems to us we should pursue it.

It is important to qualify such a pursuit. Ethnic diversity is significant, but it is not the only factor nor the most important one. A church should not prize ethnic diversity above everything else. Theology and philosophy of ministry are more important than ethnic diversity; that is, a church should not compromise on sound doctrine for the sake of greater ethnic diversity. A church should not pursue ethnic diversity at any cost. A church must beware of pursuing ethnic diversity in an unhealthy way that could foster a divisive, discontent, and inward-oriented posture instead of a unifying, content, and outward-oriented welcoming posture.

8. The church should love justice, which entails treating all ethnicities justly and encouraging its members to pursue justice in society.[43]

Let's unpack that statement in seven steps.

i. Justice is making righteous judgments.[44]

Justice according to the Bible is *making righteous judgments*. That is, justice is doing what is right according to the standard of God's will and character as he has revealed it in his word. A third of the 125 times the word *justice* appears in the OT, the word *righteousness* is next to it. The standard of justice is not "contemporary community standards"; it is God's righteousness. Justice and righteousness begin with God's own character. What God commands humans to do expresses his will and character. God's righteousness is what makes human rights right. What humans call *rights* are right only if God says they are right.

The word *justice* in the Bible is interchangeable with *judgment*. It's the noun form of the verb *judge*. Justice is fundamentally the activity of judging or making a judgment. So we can define justice according to the Bible as *making a judgment according to God's righteousness*. Or more simply, *making righteous judgments*. This definition has two components: a standard (God's will and nature as Scripture reveals) and an action (applying the standard or making a judgment on the basis of that standard—i.e., doing justice).

King Solomon illustrates what it looks like to wisely make a righteous judgment. After Solomon discerned which prostitute was telling the truth about her baby, all Israel "stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice" (1 Kgs 3:28)—that is, to *apply righteous judgments*. Doing justice is applying a righteous judgment: "By justice [i.e., by applying righteous judgments] a king builds up the land" (Prov 29:4).

---

[43] Thanks to John Piper for suggesting I add this final heading. (I was initially going to attempt to fit all of this section under the seventh heading.)

[44] This section condenses Jonathan Leeman and Andrew David Naselli, "Politics, Conscience, and the Church: Why Christians Passionately Disagree with One Another over Politics, Why They Must Agree to Disagree over Jagged-Line Political Issues, and How," *Them* 45 (2020): 15–16.

ii. Systems (not just individuals) can be unjust.[45]

Governments exist for the purpose of justice. God instituted governments to do justice for everyone created in his image (Gen 9:5–6; Rom 13:1–7; cf. 2 Sam 8:15; 1 Kgs 10:9; Prov 29:4). So when Christians talk about abortion, immigration, poverty, same-sex marriage, or ethnicity, they are fundamentally talking about doing justice and opposing injustice. Subcategories of justice include *procedural* justice (how a society makes fair decisions), *retributive* justice (how to fairly punish criminals), and *distributive* justice (how the government distributes or redistributes its nation's resources). The most controversial subcategory these days is *social* justice, which speaks to societal structures broadly and includes elements of the other subcategories of justice.

Christians might debate how to define and evaluate social justice,[46] but it has provided a category that some modern American Christians may not have had: individuals are not the only ones who can be unjust; systems can be, too.[47] Legal and social structures can be unjust. Sinful people pass sinful laws and support sinful institutions and social practices. Haman convinced King Ahasuerus to enact a genocidal campaign against the Jews (Esth 3:7–14). What started as the sin of two individuals quickly became institutional: it became something bigger than individuals, something institutional, something no individual could stop. Isaiah warned against "iniquitous decrees" and "writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right" (Isa 10:1–2). Jesus condemned the experts in the Mosaic law for loading burdens on people that were too hard for them to bear (Luke 11:46). And the first church unjustly neglected the widows of Greek-speaking Jews (Acts 6:1).

---

[45] This section condenses Leeman and Naselli, "Politics, Conscience, and the Church," 16.

[46] See Ronald H. Nash, *Social Justice and the Christian Church* (Milford, MI: Mott, 1983).

[47] I question the wisdom of using the term *social justice* because for many it is a technical term in contemporary critical theory, which is incompatible with Christianity. See Neil Shenvi, "Christianity and Social Justice," *Neil Shenvi—Apologetics*, 11 April 2018, https://shenviapologetics.com/christianity-and-social-justice/. (More on critical theory below.)

iii. Christians must not show ethnic partiality in attitude or deed, and those who have sinned that way must repent.

Ethnic partiality is sinful (see §1 above).[48] It is sinful to believe that your ethnicity is superior to another. It is sinful to speak or act in a way that implies your ethnicity is superior to another. It is sinful to prejudicially or antagonistically discriminate against another person on the basis of their ethnicity. It is sinful to disapprove of interethnic marriage since God approves of it.[49] Christians must not show ethnic partiality in attitude or deed. And those who have sinned that way must repent. Christians are repenting sinners.

John Piper argues that the main point of James 1:26–2:13 is this: "Don't show partiality because of riches or rank, but live under the law of liberty; that is, love your neighbor as you love yourself."[50] That passage is not explicitly addressing ethnicity, but it certainly applies to ethnicity. We must not show partiality in regard to ethnicity.[51]

iv. Christians who are victims of ethnic partiality must not nurture resentment or show ethnic partiality in return.

This statement might sound insensitive—the opposite of showing compassion. But that is not my intent. My intent is to show compassion by lovingly sharing the truth and by not withholding the truth. The statement is true—just read Romans 12:17–21 or 1 Peter. And this is a truth that can be liberating and life-giving to victims of any sin—including various kinds of ethnic partiality. Here is how Carson frames it:

The fall did not introduce mere sins; it introduced the "fallenness" that is endemic to every human being. God is no longer at the center of

---

[48]See Kevin DeYoung, "10 Reasons Racism Is Offensive to God," *The Gospel Coalition*, 25 June 2015, http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2015/06/25/10-reasons-racism-is-offensive-to-god/.

[49] For surprising statistics on who still disapproves of interethnic marriage, see the beginning of part 6 of this article by Neil Shenvi, "Social Justice, Critical Theory, and Christianity: Are They Compatible?," Neil Shenvi—Apologetics, 14 January 2020, https://shenviapologetics.com/social-justice-critical-theory-and-christianity-are-they-compatible-part-6/.

[50] Piper, *Bloodlines*, 181.

[51] Piper, *Bloodlines*, 181–90.

every one of us; each of us wants to be at the center, to have a domesticated God (in other words, a false god, an idol). Such idolatry means that we seek to control not only our own lives but in some measure the lives of all who touch us. This massive de-godding of God, this odious idolatry, works out in countless sins of every description. It includes oppression on the one hand and nurtured resentments on the other—and both feed into what we call racism. Idolatry means we are so selfish most of the time that most of us do not automatically think in terms of sacrificial service. If idolatry produces tyrants whose chief lust is to control, it also produces populist demagogues whose chief lust is to control—and both of them will entertain mixed motives, confusing their genuine desire to do good among their own people with their transparent lust for power. Because almost all sin has social ramifications, the biases, hatreds, resentments, nurtured feelings of inferiority and superiority, anger, fear, sense of entitlement—all are passed on in corrosive ways to new generations.[52]

I do not intend to downplay or excuse ethnic partiality at all. Ethnic partiality is sinful, and Christians who are guilty of ethnic partiality must repent. But here I am addressing Christians who are at the receiving end of actual or perceived ethnic partiality. With love I want to gently warn against adopting the mindset of a victim that is so common in our culture now. I am warning against empathy blackmail: "You must completely agree with me and share my perspective, or else you don't love me." I am warning against weaponizing empathy and manipulating others with it.[53]

---

[52] Carson, *Love in Hard Places*, 103.

[53] Cf. Abigail Dodds, "From Empathy to Chaos: Considerations for the Church in a Postmodern Age," *Abigail Dodds*, 18 June 2019, https://hopeandstay.com/2019/06/18/from-empathy-to-chaos-considerations-for-the-church-in-a-postmodern-age/; Abigail Dodds, "The Beauty and Abuse of Empathy: How Virtue Becomes a Tyrant," *Desiring God*, 14 April 2020, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-beauty-and-abuse-of-empathy; Joe Rigney, "Killing Them Softly: Compassion That Warms Satan's Heart," *Desiring God*, 24 May 2019, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/killing-them-softly; Joe Rigney, "The Enticing Sin of Empathy: How Satan Corrupts through Compassion," *Desiring God*, 31 May 2019, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-enticing-sin-of-empathy; Joe Rigney, "Dangerous Compassion: How to Make Any Love a Demon," *Desiring God*, 18 January 2020,

I am warning against being oversensitive about what you perceive as micro-aggressions with the result that you are so easily "triggered" that you cannot live out what the NT says about loving your neighbor—for example, "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8). Bitterness is a cancer that will destroy you.[54]

In vi. below, I argue that any person of any ethnicity can be guilty of showing ethnic partiality. That means that any person of any ethnicity may be a victim (or a perceived victim) of experiencing ethnic partiality. Some whites in America right now may be tempted to feel sinfully bitter about how others show a type of ethnic partiality against them—for example, accusing them of "whiteness" and having "white privilege" and being guilty of "white supremacy" and "white fragility."[55] Christians who are victims of ethnic partiality must not nurture resentment or show ethnic partiality in return.

v. Christians should show compassion to people who have experienced ethnic partiality.

Listen. Sympathize. Lament. "Weep with those who weep" (Rom 12:15b). Carson explains,

Because of the many legal sanctions now in place, some forget the bitter degradation of the Jim Crow culture. The *attitudes* wedded to the Jim Crow culture have not everywhere been expunged. I suspect that most European-Americans have very little understanding of the cumulative destructive power of the little degradations that almost all

---

https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/dangerous-compassion; Joe Rigney, "Do You Feel My Pain? Empathy, Sympathy, and Dangerous Virtues," *Desiring God*, 2 May 2020, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/do-you-feel-my-pain; Kevin DeYoung, "Sympathy Is Not the Point," *The Gospel Coalition*, 10 March 2020, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/sympathy-is-not-the-point/.

[54] Cf. Keith Ferdinando, "The Ethnic Enemy—No Greek or Jew … Barbarian, Scythian: The Gospel and Ethnic Difference," *Them* 33.2 (2008): 48–63.

[55] On defining and evaluating these terms, see Neil Shenvi's "Antiracism Glossary": https://shenviapologetics.com/an-antiracism-glossary-whiteness/, https://shenviapologetics.com/an-antiracism-glossary-white-privilege/, https://shenviapologetics.com/an-antiracism-glossary-white-supremacy/, https://shenviapologetics.com/an-antiracism-glossary-white-fragility/.

African-Americans, especially older African-Americans, have experienced—to say nothing of the less common but still too frequent threats, racial profiling, and frankly illegal (to say nothing of immoral) injustices they have suffered.[56]

vi. Any person of any ethnicity can be guilty of showing ethnic partiality; it is not only those with more power who can be guilty of showing ethnic partiality.

Any person of any socio-economic status can be guilty of showing partiality (see the previous point regarding James 1:26–2:13). That is, it is not just rich people who can be greedy; poor people can be greedy, too. Similarly, any person of any ethnicity can be guilty of showing ethnic partiality. Showing ethnic partiality is the opposite of treating all ethnicities justly or impartially. Racism, explains D. A. Carson, refers to "*all* patterns of exclusion of others grounded *in race or ethnicity*."[57] Some people reject that definition. Carson explains why:

Many African-Americans do not accept this [and many Whites and others agree with them]. They think that racism is the sin of the powerful, the sin of the overlord; they think of racism as the sum of racial prejudice plus power. By definition, then, they cannot be racists since they do not have the power. I do not see how thoughtful Christians, black or white, can accept such a definition.[58]

From the point of view of many Blacks [and many others], if Whites prefer their own company and entertain stereotypes of Blacks, it's racism; if Blacks prefer their own company and entertain stereotypes of Whites, it's both understandable and deserved.[59]

A common way of viewing all relationships today is through the lens of power. In other words, there are two basic groups: those with more power (the oppressors) and those with less power (the oppressed). The

---

[56] Carson, *Love in Hard Places*, 94. See also Denny Burk, "Can We Weep with Those Who Weep?," *Denny Burk*, 8 June 2020, https://www.dennyburk.com/can-we-weep-with-those-who-weep/.

[57] Carson, *Love in Hard Places*, 88.

[58] Ibid., 93.

[59] D. A. Carson, "The SBJT Forum: In Your Book *Love in Hard Places* You Gave Us Some Reflections on Racism. Summarize Some of the More Uncomfortable Thoughts That Spring to Your Mind When You Think about This Subject," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 8.2 (2004): 75.

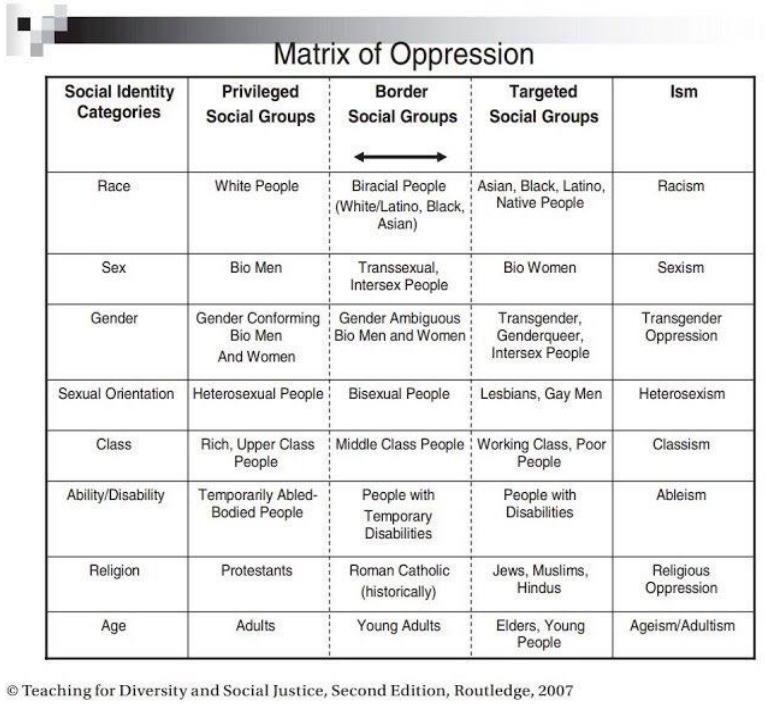
label that best describes this way of thinking is *critical theory*. The most helpful analyses of critical theory that I have encountered are by Neil Shenvi.[60] Critical theory separates people into two basic categories—the oppressors and the oppressed—and insists that the oppressed (e.g., ethnicities with less power economically or socially) cannot be guilty of oppression; that means that by definition ethnic minorities cannot be guilty of racism.[61] Below are two charts published in books that present critical theory as the truth:

---

[60] See https://shenviapologetics.com/critical-theory-all-content/. I suggest starting with Neil Shenvi, "Intro to Critical Theory," *Neil Shenvi—Apologetics*, 20 March 2019, https://shenviapologetics.com/intro-to-critical-theory/. The following talk is especially helpful: Neil Shenvi, "Social Justice, Critical Theory, and Christianity: Are They Compatible?," *Neil Shenvi—Apologetics*, 5 January 2020, https://shenviapologetics.com/social-justice-critical-theory-and-christianity-are-they-compatible-part-1-2/, https://shenviapologetics.com/social-justice-critical-theory-and-christianity-are-they-compatible-part-2-2/, https://shenviapologetics.com/social-justice-critical-theory-and-christianity-are-they-compatible-part-3-2/, https://shenviapologetics.com/social-justice-critical-theory-and-christianity-are-they-compatible-part-4-2/, https://shenviapologetics.com/social-justice-critical-theory-and-christianity-are-they-compatible-part-5/, https://shenviapologetics.com/social-justice-critical-theory-and-christianity-are-they-compatible-part-6/. See also Robert S. Smith, "Cultural Marxism: Imaginary Conspiracy or Revolutionary Reality?," *Them* 44 (2019): 436–65.

[61] See Rosaria Butterfield, "Intersectionality and the Church," *Tabletalk*, 1 March 2020, https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/intersectionality-and-the-church-2020-02/. Neil Shenvi summarizes four central premises of contemporary critical theory: (1) *Social binary*. "Society can be divided into dominant, oppressor groups and subordinate, oppressed groups along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, and a host of other factors." (2) *Oppression through ideology*. "Traditionally, 'oppression' is understood to refer to acts of cruelty, injustice, violence, and coercion. But critical theorists expand this definition to include ways in which the dominant social group, imposes its norms, values, and ideas on society to justify its own interests." (3) *Lived experience*. "'Lived experience' gives oppressed people special access to truths about their oppression. … Privileged groups tend to be blinded by their privilege." (4) *Social justice*. Critical theory defines social justice "as 'the elimination of all forms of social oppression' whether it's based on 'gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation,

Figure 1. Matrix of Oppression[62]



Matrix of Oppression

Social Identity Categories	Privileged Social Groups	Border Social Groups ⟷	Targeted Social Groups	Ism
Race	White People	Biracial People (White/Latino, Black, Asian)	Asian, Black, Latino, Native People	Racism
Sex	Bio Men	Transsexual, Intersex People	Bio Women	Sexism
Gender	Gender Conforming Bio Men And Women	Gender Ambiguous Bio Men and Women	Transgender, Genderqueer, Intersex People	Transgender Oppression
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual People	Bisexual People	Lesbians, Gay Men	Heterosexism
Class	Rich, Upper Class People	Middle Class People	Working Class, Poor People	Classism
Ability/Disability	Temporarily Abled-Bodied People	People with Temporary Disabilities	People with Disabilities	Ableism
Religion	Protestants	Roman Catholic (historically)	Jews, Muslims, Hindus	Religious Oppression
Age	Adults	Young Adults	Elders, Young People	Ageism/Adultism

© Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, Second Edition, Routledge, 2007

physical or mental ability, or economic class.'" Shenvi, "Social Justice, Critical Theory, and Christianity."

[62] See Neil Shenvi, "Short Review of Adams' *Teachings for Diversity and Social Justice*," *Neil Shenvi—Apologetics*, 17 January 2020, https://shenviapologetics.com/short-review-of-adams-teachings-for-diversity-and-social-justice/.

Minority/Target Group	Oppression	Dominant/Agent Group
Peoples of Color	Racism	White
Poor; Working Class; Middle Class	Classism	Owning Class
Women; Transgender; Genderqueer	Sexism	(cis)Men [i.e., biological males who identify as men]
Gays; Lesbians; Bisexuals; Two Spirit	Heterosexism	Heterosexuals
Muslims; Buddhists; Jews; Hindus; and other non-Christian groups	Religions Oppression; Anti-Semitism	Christians
People with Disabilities	Ableism	Able-bodied
Immigrants (perceived)	Nationalism	Citizens (perceived)
Indigenous Peoples	Colonialism	White Settlers

Figure 2. Group Identities Across Relations of Power[63]

[63] Özlem Sensoy and Robin J. DiAngelo, *Is Everyone Really Equal? An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education*, 2nd ed., Multicultural Education Series (New York: Teachers College, 2017), 64.

According to critical theory, ethnic minorities are the oppressed and therefore cannot be guilty of racism. But according to the Bible, any person of any ethnicity can be guilty of showing ethnic partiality.

vii. When pursuing justice in society, Christians must distinguish between straight-line and jagged-line political issues.[64]

For a straight-line issue, there is a straight line between a biblical text and its policy application. For instance, the Bible explicitly teaches that murder is sinful; abortion is a form of murder, so we should oppose abortion. That is a straight line. Accordingly, our church would initiate the church-discipline process with a member who is advocating for abortion—such as encouraging a single pregnant woman to get an abortion or supporting Planned Parenthood.

For a straight-line issue, there is a straight line from a biblical or theological principle to a political position. But for a jagged-line issue, there is a multistep process from a biblical or theological principle to a political position. Fellow church members should agree on straight-line political issues, and they should recognize Christian freedom on jagged-line political issues.

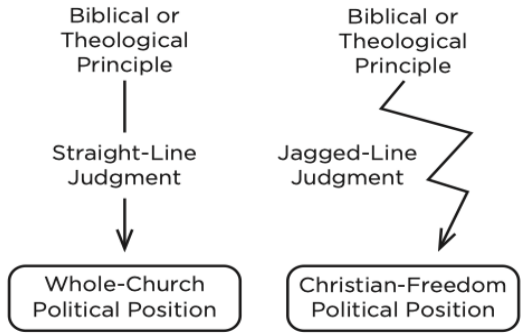


Figure 3. Straight-Line vs. Jagged-Line Political Issue[65]

[64] The first part of this section condenses Leeman and Naselli, "Politics, Conscience, and the Church," 20–22.

[65] This figure is from Jonathan Leeman and Andrew David Naselli, *How Can I Love Church Members with Different Politics?*, 9Marks: Church Questions (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 41.

Most political issues are not straight-line issues. Most are jagged-line issues and thus belong to the domain of Christian freedom.

This distinction between straight-line and jagged-line issues comes from Robert Benne, a conservative Lutheran scholar who specializes in how Christianity relates to culture. In his book *Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics*, he argues that treating most issues as straight-line harmfully fuses what is central and essential to Christianity with particular political policies.[66] The problem with saying there is a straight line from the Bible to specific policies is that while the goal (pursued by the policies) may be a straight line, the policies may not.

In short, it is critical to distinguish between straight-line issues (which can lead to what we might call *the* Christian position) and jagged-line issues (whose policy judgments belong to the domain of Christian freedom). It is right for churches to take institutional stands on straight-line issues through preaching and membership decisions, but church leaders risk being sinfully divisive by taking those institutional stands on jagged-line issues.

The above directly applies to how we pursue justice for those who experience ethnic partiality. More and more people in our culture are imbibing and embracing the worldview of critical theory,[67] which at its heart opposes and mocks historic Christianity. Even atheist scholars are alarmed at how widespread and destructive critical theory is![68] The worldview of critical theory is seeping into the church, and one of my burdens as a pastor is that we not let a "woke" Social Justice Movement take the church off mission *by treating jagged-line issues like straight-line issues*. Christians care about ethnic harmony because God cares about it.

---

[66] Robert Benne, *Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 31–38.

[67] Cf. Alex Tabarrok, "A Visual Demonstration of How Fast the NYT Got Woke," *Foundation for Economic Education*, 10 June 2019, https://fee.org/articles/a-visual-demonstration-of-how-fast-the-nyt-got-woke/. That article graphs trends for terms such as social justice, diversity and inclusion, whiteness, white privilege, systemic racism, white supremacy, and micro-aggressions. Since about 2010, the *New York Times* has used those terms in off-the-chart numbers.

[68] See Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity—and Why This Harms Everybody* (Durham, NC: Pitchstone, 2020).

The Bible must drive us—not our culture, which is increasingly viewing ethnicity through the lens of critical theory.

Fellow Christians will inevitably disagree over what it means to make a righteous judgment for specific issues regarding ethnicity in our society. And that is OK. What is not OK is to fail to acknowledge leeway on jagged-line issues. This is why a 2018 article by Kevin DeYoung is so helpful. With DeYoung's permission, I have adapted his article below in the format of this table without changing his wording.

Table 1. Kevin DeYoung's Analysis of What We (Mostly, Almost) All Agree On regarding Ethnicity and What We (Likely) Still Don't Agree On[69]

Topic	Agree	Disagree
1. Racism	All people are made in the image of God and deserving of honor, respect, and protection. Every notion of racial superiority is a blasphemous denial of the *imago dei* (Gen. 1:27). There is no place for racial prejudice and ethnic favoritism in the church (Gal. 3:28; James 2:1). Where bigotry based on skin color exists, it should be denounced and repented of (Eph. 2:14; 1 John 3:15).	What else counts as racism or the degree to which our cultural, civic, and ecclesiastical institutions are basically race-blind, racialized, or outright racist.
2. Racial Disparities	There are deep and disturbing differences between Blacks and Whites when it comes to a variety of statistical measurements, including: education, employment,	The reasons for these disparities, whether they are owing to personal choices, cultural values, families of origin, educational opportunities, structural

[69] Kevin DeYoung, "Racial Reconciliation: What We (Mostly, Almost) All Agree On, and What We (Likely) Still Don't Agree On," *The Gospel Coalition*, 17 April 2018,https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/racial-reconciliation-mostly-almost-agree-likely-still-dont-agree/.

	income, incarceration, home ownership, standardized test scores, single-parent households, and participation at the highest levels of leadership in business, academics, athletics, and politics.	racism, legacy of oppression, or a combination of these and other factors. Likewise, we do not agree on the best approach to closing these gaps. Some favor political measures, others focus on educational reform, others emphasize church planting and discipleship, while others work for cultural renewal and community development. Many Christians see the need for all of the above, but even here there is disagreement about what the church's focus should be.
3. Martin Luther King Jr.	MLK was a courageous civil-rights activist worth remembering and celebrating. MLK was used by God to help expose racial bigotry and overturn a corrupt system of Jim Crow segregation. King's clear-sighted moral convictions about racism, his brilliant rhetoric, and his example of non-violence in the face of intense hatred make him a heroic figure in American history.	How gospel Christians should celebrate this legacy. While most people acknowledge that King held unorthodox theological positions and was guilty of marital infidelity, we are not of one mind on how these matters should be discussed or how they relate to his overall contribution to American and ecclesiastical life. In a similar vein, we do not agree on how to evaluate the legacy of clay-footed theologians like Jonathan Edwards or Robert Lewis Dabney.[70]

[70] See John Piper, "Should We Stop Reading Dead White Guys?," *Desiring God*, 28 October 2019, https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/should-we-stop-reading-dead-white-guys; Kevin DeYoung, "Can We Give Thanks for Flawed Heroes?," *The Gospel Coalition*, 16 November 2019,

4. American History	Our history has much to celebrate: far-sighted leaders, Judeo-Christian ideals, commendable heroes, technological innovation, and military sacrifices. There are many reasons we can be proud to be Americans.	Whether our history should be remembered chiefly as one of liberty and virtue (spotted with tragic failures and blind spots) or whether our national story (despite many noble exceptions) is more fundamentally one of hypocrisy, prejudice, and oppression.
5. Current State of Affairs	Race relations have come a long way in the past 50 years. Things are better than they used to be. We also agree that racism still exists and that even if we play by the rules and pursue the American Dream with the same effort, we do not all begin at the same starting line or experience the same success.	Whether our cultural, political, and academic institutions are basically fair (with exceptions) or basically rigged and in need of structural change (with repentance for the majority's part in perpetuating systemic bias). For example, in just the last year I read a thoughtful book by a white man arguing that the deck is stacked (by Whites), and has always been stacked (by Whites), against African Americans. I also read a thoughtful book by a black man arguing that racism is largely a thing of the past and that focusing on Black victimhood is self-defeating. (I realize, of course, that neither book is representative of the way most Whites and Blacks think, respectively, of the issue.)

https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/can-give-thanks-flawed-heroes/.

6. Corporate Respon-sibility	It is appropriate, in some situations, for Christians, for Christian institutions, and for churches to be rebuked for corporate sins and to repent of corporate failures. The Old Testament prophets often denounced the nation of Israel, even though individuals within the nation were certainly living in holiness and integrity. Likewise, we see that Daniel offered a prayer of confession for his people, even though he likely was not personally guilty of all the sins he confessed (Dan. 9:1-19). In the New Testament, we see that the Jews were held responsible for Christ's death, even though some Jews followed Jesus and lamented his death.	When and how—and in many situations whether—this corporate accountability and repentance should take place. We do not agree on how (or if) the passage of time, racial identity, and ecclesiastical affiliation should shape these matters. Similarly, we do not agree what should be done, if anything, beyond repenting for corporate sin.
7. Politics and the Church	The church of Jesus Christ must not be beholden to any political party. We agree that the church is neither competent nor called to offer opinion on the specifics of every political debate or policy discussion. Preachers should, as a general rule, preach verse by verse through the Bible, letting God's word set the agenda, rather than riding hobby horses or trying to respond to the latest controversy. At the same time, we agree that	How the "spirituality of the church" applies in every situation (or if it is a biblical idea in the first place). At its best, the "spirituality of the church" roots us in the explicit teaching of Scripture and helps us keep the main thing the main thing. At its worst, the "spirituality of the church" has been used to ignore evil in our midst and sidestep issues of biblical obedience. While we recognize that the gospel is of first importance and that the

	Christians, churches, and pastors should not be silent on matters of justice about which the Bible clearly speaks.	gospel has public ramifications, we do not always agree on how these two convictions play out side-by-side in real time. There is little agreement on which issues are "moral" and "biblical" and which are merely "political."
8. Systemic Injustice	Sin is not just a matter of individual responsibility. It is possible for systems and structures to be unjust even when the people inhabiting those systems and structures may not have personal animus in their hearts.	Whether disparities themselves indicate systemic and structural injustice (see above). Likewise, we do not agree on the best remedies for institutional racism where it exists.
9. Police and Judicial System	Our country imprisons far more of its citizens than any other nation does. We also recognize that minorities are imprisoned at rates disproportionate to their population as [a] whole. The presence of mass incarceration has a deleterious effect on many minority communities and families, as well as in the lives of those who are imprisoned.	The reasons for mass incarceration or whether the disproportionate imprisonment of minorities is a sign of entrenched bias. We do not agree on the nature of policing nor on the state of our judicial system, whether both are (largely) fair and colorblind or whether both are prejudiced (intentionally or unintentionally) against persons of color. By the same token, we often respond differently to stories involving the police and African Americans, either siding instinctively with law enforcement officers or assuming that each questionable encounter is

		another example of pervasive police brutality.
10. Sunday Morning	The biblical vision of heaven is a glorious picture of a multi-ethnic throng gathered in worship of our Triune God. We would rejoice to see our churches reflect this biblical vision more and more. To that end, we lament our cultural blind spots (and don't know we have [them]!), which make it more difficult for people unlike us to feel at home and be in positions of leadership and influence in our churches.	To what degree this "segregation" on Sunday morning is the result of present sin, historical sin, personal preference, unfortunate cultural ignorance, or understandable and acceptable differences in worship and tradition. We do not agree on whether all churches must be multi-ethnic, should at least strive to be multi-ethnic (as their location allows), or whether there are ever justifiable reasons (and if so, what those reasons are) for a church to be entirely (or nearly) mono-cultural. And if the pursuit of racial diversity is desirable, we do not agree on whether this multi-ethnic vision is just for predominately White congregations, conferences, and communities or if it also applies to historically Black churches, conferences, and communities.
11. The Church and the World	The Bible calls the church to be honest about its own sins (1 Peter 4:17) and to keep itself unstained from the world (James 1:27). As salt and light, we should be distinct from the world, while at the same time having a salutary effect on the world.	Which is the more urgent need of the hour, to repent of our sin and renew our witness in the world, or to spotlight sin in the world and keep ourselves free from its corrupting influence. We know both are necessary, but our personal and corporate

		inclinations often lean in one direction more than the other. Likewise, we often disagree on what urgency looks like in racial reconciliation and whether this conversation should or shouldn't take precedence over other moral issues like protecting the unborn and defending biblical marriage and sexuality.

DeYoung concludes,

> Maybe a list like this can help us put our arguments in the appropriate categories. Let me be clear: all of the disagreements above are important, and Christians should be engaged in all of these debates. By laying out these disagreements, I'm not suggesting we now ignore them or act as if no answer is better than another. And yet, we ought to recognize that some of these disagreements are biblical and theological (e.g., the nature of corporate repentance, the entailments of the gospel, the dignity of all image bearers), while others are matters of history or policy, while still others require a good deal of expertise on sociology, law, economics, and criminology. By more carefully isolating our real disagreements we will be better equipped to talk responsibly, listen respectfully, find common ground, and move in the direction of possible solutions.
>
> The ethnicity issue is so challenging because it involves many questions that we cannot easily answer from our theological doctrinal statements and traditions. We joyfully affirm that God created us in his image, that we must bear with one another and forgive one another, and that a multiethnic heaven will be glorious. The disagreement arises when we try to apply our shared theology to American history, economic disparity, police shootings, critical

theory, and so much more.[71] That is why a figure like this "White supremacy iceberg" is unhelpful:[72]

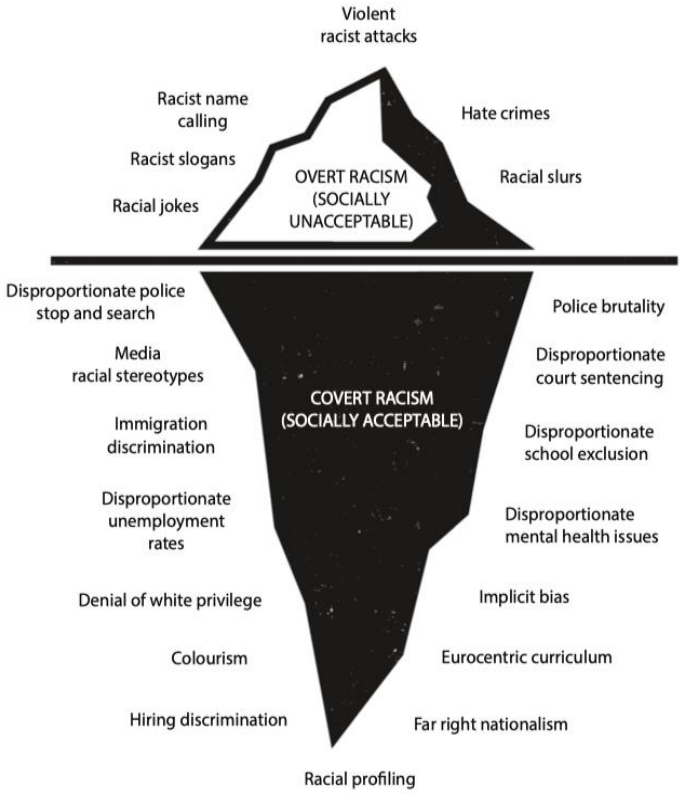


Figure 1 **White supremacy iceberg**

[71] See Kevin DeYoung, *Faith Seeking Understanding: Thinking Theologically about Racial Tensions* (Matthews, NC: The Gospel Coalition, 2020), https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/thinking-theologically-about-racial-tensions-series/. This 21-page PDF compiles five of DeYoung's 2020 articles.

[72] Ben Lindsay, *We Need to Talk about Race: Understanding the Black Experience in White Majority Churches* (London: SPCK, 2019), 12. Lindsay's book focuses on the Black experience in the UK.

In the above figure, Christians should agree that the examples of "overt racism" are sinful. But Christians reasonably disagree on the examples of "covert racism" because ethnic partiality may not be the only factor, the main factor, or even a factor at all that accounts for some of those disparities.[73] If that is the case, then the figure is reductionistic, misleading, and divisive.[74]

I have convictions and opinions about such controversial issues (e.g., in the figure above and in DeYoung's article).[75] And I must distinguish between straight-line issues and jagged-line issues. As a pastor, I must not bind your conscience on a jagged-line issue. I may try to *persuade* you on a jagged-line issue, but I must not say that a particular view is *the* Christian position for a jagged-line issue.

It is OK if a church has pastors and members who do not agree across the board on jagged-line issues regarding ethnicity. The more important issue is how Christians respond to that disagreement. Are you going to let it sinfully divide your church? Are you going to vilify anyone who disagrees with you? Are you going to schismatically crusade for your views on jagged-line issues in your various relationships and on social

---

[73] See Greg Morse, "Seeing the World in Black and White: How Much Do Assumptions Divide Us?," *Desiring God*, 8 July 2020, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/seeing-the-world-in-black-and-white.

[74] When Anthony Bushnell (a civil trial attorney) shared feedback on a draft of this document, he commented here, "For instance, it ignores questions of cause and effect and questions of motives and intentions. It also generalizes to the point that it's easy for reasonable people to read the categories and think of very different experiences, and thus get into disagreements in which they are talking past each other." Theologian and ethicist John Frame argues that the term *racism* can be a wax nose: John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 662–67.

[75] E.g., see Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer, "Do Whites Need Corporate Repentance for Historical Racial Sins?," *Neil Shenvi—Apologetics*, 5 August 2020, https://shenviapologetics.com/do-whites-need-corporate-repentance-for-historical-sins/; Neil Shenvi, "Does 'Systemic Racism' Exist?," *Neil Shenvi—Apologetics*, 17 June 2020, https://shenviapologetics.com/does-systemic-racism-exist/; R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Systemic Racism, God's Grace, and the Human Heart: What the Bible Teaches about Structural Sin," *Public Discourse*, 25 June 2020, https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2020/06/65536/; R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Black Lives Matter: Affirm the Sentence, Not the Movement," *Public Discourse*, 18 June 2020, https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2020/06/65132.

media? Or are you going to prioritize loving others over convincing them that your convictions about jagged-line ethnic issues are right?[76]

Leeman and I conclude our article on politics, conscience, and the church by suggesting six specific ways to love another.[77] This applies to how we can love fellow church members who disagree about jagged-line issues regarding ethnicity:

1. Welcome those who disagree with you as Christ has welcomed you (Rom 14:1; 15:7).
2. "Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19). Why? "Because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires" (James 1:20 NIV).
3. Pray with affection for those who disagree with you.
4. Respectfully think about those who disagree with you.
5. Do not use the label *gospel issue* for a jagged-line political judgment that you think is an implication of the gospel.
6. Exult with one another that we can trust our sovereign God when politics tempt us to be sinfully anxious.

Concluding Prayer

Merciful God, thank you for creating every human in your image with equal dignity and worth. Please forgive those of us who are guilty of showing ethnic partiality. Thank you that Jesus died in our place to pay the penalty for our sins. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Please help us love the nations like you do. Our hearts soar when we think about worshiping you with fellow image-bearers whom the

[76] When Anthony Bushnell shared feedback on a draft of this document, he commented here, "This doesn't mean we give up on trying to persuade each other or understand each other's concerns and positions. It means we prioritize continuing to love and welcome each other even when we still disagree. I think it's easy for people to get the impression that applying the lessons here means we just 'agree to disagree' and resign ourselves to being divided on these issues." Cf. Jared C. Wilson, "5 Better Ways to 'Argue' about Social Justice … or Anything Else Online," *For the Church*, 17 September 2018, https://ftc.co//resource-library/1/3956.

[77] Leeman and Naselli, "Politics, Conscience, and the Church," 29–31.

Lamb ransomed for you from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Please help us love our neighbors across ethnic lines—even when that love is costly and sacrificial and inconvenient. Please help us maintain the unity in the church that Christ powerfully created. Please help us welcome ethnic diversity in a way that pleases you and that loves our neighbors. And please help us to love justice and to respond to ethnic partiality in Christ-like ways.
We ask for the fame of Jesus's name. Amen.

Midwestern Journal of Theology 19.2 (2020): 58-77

C. H. Spurgeon, the Downgrade Controversy, and the Militant Church

GEOFF CHANG
Curator, Spurgeon Library,
Assistant Professor of Historical Theology
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

According to Gregory Wills, Spurgeon "depreciated the importance of the local church and denominational ecclesiology… Spurgeon sought first to promote evangelical unity, and his ecclesiology aided him."[1] From the founding of various Baptist associations to working for charitable causes across denominational lines, Spurgeon did not hesitate to prioritize his partnerships with other evangelical ministers for the cause of the gospel. However, this commitment would be tested in his battle against liberal theology in the Downgrade Controversy. Even as Spurgeon sounded the alarm in the Downgrade Controversy, the Baptist Union refused to form a sufficient doctrinal basis for their association. Many evangelicals in other denominations also declined to come to his aid.[2] As a result, Spurgeon withdrew from all unions that united him with those who held to theologically liberal views.[3]

Yet throughout this conflict, Spurgeon found unwavering support from his local church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle. This paper will argue that Spurgeon's sermons during the heart of the Downgrade Controversy (August 1887 to April 1888) reveal an emphasis on the church's militant role. While this is not a new theme in his preaching, it marks his

[1] Gregory A. Wills, "The Ecclesiology of Charles H. Spurgeon: Unity, Orthodoxy, and Denominational Identity," *Midwestern Journal of Theology*: 14.2 (2015): 45.

[2] For a study of how evangelical Arminians opposed Spurgeon's cause in the Downgrade Controversy, see Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 167-190.

[3] This would include non-religious associations, like the Liberation Society, which worked for the liberalization of English Politics. See Tom Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2015), 564.

ecclesiology during this period in response to the ongoing battle for orthodoxy.

The Downgrade Controversy

The nineteenth-century marked the rise of historical criticism, which aimed to look "behind the text" to determine the historical circumstances out of which the text arose.[4] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Protestants increasingly turned to a historical approach in their hermeneutic as part of their battle against Rome, to settle internal doctrinal disputes, and to respond to the subjectivism of pietism. In many ways, this approach coincided with the rationalist demands of the Enlightenment. As society secularized, there was also a rise in skepticism about the historicity of the biblical narratives. Over time, due to the growth in historical scholarship and an ever-increasing abundance of information about the past, scholars grew confident in their ability to figure out the historical circumstances of a text. Over time, this academic discipline of looking "behind the text" took priority over the text itself. Rather than discerning the meaning of the biblical text, scholars reduced the meaning of the text to the socio-historical context or the psychological state of the authors.

Spurgeon believed that at the root of historical criticism was a disregard for the Bible as the infallible Word of God, which led to every facet of orthodox theology being challenged.[5] Spurgeon understood this to be a new religion, distinct from historic Christianity.[6] There could be no fundamental union between evangelicals and theological liberals. Yet, these modernists understood themselves as belonging to the Christian faith. Many were active in charitable causes and churches, supported mission work at home and abroad, and continued to participate in denominational causes.

---

[4] Also known as higher criticism. See I. H. Marshall, *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. H. Marshall (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 126; Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell, eds., *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 13-16; Richard E. Burnett, "Historical Criticism," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 291.

[5] *S&T* 1887:170.

[6] Ibid., 397.

The teaching of historical criticism had influenced almost all denominations, including Baptists, in Spurgeon's day.[7] In 1884, the London Baptist Association sent four ministers to examine a pastor's Universalist teaching and cleared him of any wrong. In 1885, the Baptist Missionary Society invited James Thew to preach at their meetings, where Thew dismissed the doctrine of eternal punishment.[8] Spurgeon even found the influence of historical criticism within his own Pastors' College Conference, which forced him to dissolve the conference and reestablish it in April 1888 on an evangelical basis.[9] However, in the Downgrade Controversy, his sharpest conflict would be with the Baptist Union. One of the earliest conflicts came in 1883 when Spurgeon expressed his disapproval of the attendance of a Unitarian minister at a Baptist meeting in Leicester. In his correspondence with the Baptist Union secretary in 1885, Spurgeon expressed his concern, "The Baptist Union means, I suppose, to drive out the orthodox. What is to be done I know not, I would enter my earnest protest against the dubious notes which are continually put forth at its gatherings."[10]

Given his convictions and their refusal to act, from 1883 to 1887, there was an uneasy relationship between Spurgeon and the Baptist Union. He did not attend any association meetings, although he remained involved in the activities of the Union. During those years, the leadership tried to accommodate Spurgeon by not selecting any controversial topics for papers read at Baptist Union meetings, but this proved insufficient.[11]

Early in 1887, two articles on "The Down Grade," or infiltration of liberal theology, were published in *The Sword and the Trowel*. Then, between August and October, these were followed by three more articles

---

[7] For a brief catalog of the denominations influenced by higher criticism, see Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 140-142.

[8] Ernest A. Payne, "The Down Grade Controversy: A Postscript," *Baptist Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (April 1979): 149-150.

[9] "The evil leaven has affected some few of the men who were educated in our College; and in our attempting to remove them from our Association, they have naturally found sympathizers, and this has been the sorest wound of all." *S&T* 1888:148.

[10] Ibid., 151.

[11] Mark T. E. Hopkins, "Spurgeon's Opponents in the Downgrade Controversy," *Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 6 (April 1988): 275.

from Spurgeon himself, condemning the new theology and lamenting the decline of Baptist and other Dissenting churches. Spurgeon had hoped that these articles would spark a conversation at the October meeting of the Baptist Union, but to his disappointment, the leadership refused to address the issue. This culminated in Spurgeon's withdrawal from the Union on October 28, 1887.[12] The secretary of the Union, who was a friend of Spurgeon's, responded to his withdrawal with surprise and disappointment.[13] Given Spurgeon's prominence and the scathing language of his articles, this set off a massive press debate. Throughout this period, Spurgeon saw many of his former evangelical allies turn on him and attack him for his inflammatory comments regarding the state of the church.

Following Spurgeon's withdrawal, the Baptist Union formed a Council to address the situation. They first attempted to appease Spurgeon by sending him a delegation of four officials. This meeting only demonstrated the theological gulf between Spurgeon and the Union, however. Given the impasse, the Council passed a "vote of censure" against Spurgeon in January 1888, and Spurgeon published another inflammatory response in February 1888. Some in the Council wanted to censure Spurgeon further, but their motion was voted down. His church stood by his side, however, and in January of 1888, passed the following resolution:

> That the church worshipping at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in annual meeting assembled, desires to express its hearty sympathy with its beloved pastor, C. H. Spurgeon in the testimony for truth he has recently borne by his articles upon "The Down Grade," endorses his action in withdrawing from the Baptist Union, follows him in the course he has taken, and pledges itself to support him by believing prayer and devoted service in his earnest contention for the faith once for all delivered to the saints—enthusiastically carried unanimously.[14]

---

[12] Hopkins, "Spurgeon's Opponents in the Downgrade Controversy," 282.

[13] Spurgeon claimed that he had corresponded frequently with Booth, the secretary, regarding these issues in the months prior, but those letters have never been produced. See Ernest A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1959), 143.

[14] "Annual Church Meeting January 31st, 1888," *Minute Books* 1887-1894, Metropolitan Tabernacle Archives. The minutes show that the phrase "follows

Spurgeon was not alone, but his church, the largest in the Baptist Union, unanimously expressed their support and resigned their membership in the Union along with him.

From late February to April 1888, the Baptist Union sought to vindicate its evangelical character by establishing a theological declaration. However, this declaration was viewed as historical, rather than legislative or creedal, and did not provide a clear theological statement. Various articles on the Fall and Eternal Punishment were challenged and softened, much to the disappointment of Spurgeon's supporters, including his brother. James Spurgeon sought to amend the declaration in a way that would make it much more conservative theologically, but his motion was tabled. This was his main concern going into the April meeting of the Baptist Union. There, the Union assembly passed a motion, seconded by James Spurgeon,[15] approving the declaration, and supposedly vindicating the Union from Spurgeon's charges and affirming its evangelical character. In a personal letter to a friend, Spurgeon wrote, "My brother thinks he has gained a great victory, but I believe we are hopelessly sold. I feel heartbroken. Certainly he has done the very opposite of what I should have done. Yet he is not to be blamed, for he followed his best judgment. Pray for me, that my faith will fail not."[16] While the Union celebrated their achievement, Spurgeon was solidified in his conviction that he had made the right decision.[17] Though many hoped that the declaration would pave the way for Spurgeon's

---

him in the course he has taken" was originally omitted but written in later, perhaps by the person who verified the minutes. It appears that the original motion from J. A. Spurgeon and B. W. Carr did not include the church's resignation from the Baptist Union, but the congregation called for it and it was included.

[15] It is not entirely clear why J. A. Spurgeon seconded this motion. It is possible that he was so preoccupied with the amendment to the declaration that he did not fully realize the implications in doing so. See Hopkins, "Spurgeon's Opponents," 289. It should also be noted that as a graduate of Stepney College, James' connection with Joseph Angus, who was the head of the college and helped draft the declaration, might have influenced him.

[16] W. Y. Fullerton, *Charles Spurgeon: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920), 236.

[17] *S&T* 1888:339.

return, this would never happen. The wounds incurred on both sides during the controversy were too deep for quick reconciliation.

The Local Church as the Army of God

Theologians have long distinguished between the church triumphant and the church militant. The church triumphant is composed of those who have fought the good fight and are now at rest with Christ.[18] The day will come when the entire church will be shown to the watching universe to be victorious. In the meantime, however, the church on earth is militant, composed of those who are still battling sin and falsehood, and engaging in the mission of the gospel. They do not use the weapons of this world. Instead, they put on the armor of God, take up the sword of the Word of God, and boldly preach the gospel wherever they are.

During the Downgrade Controversy from August 1887 to April 1888, Spurgeon continued to preach regularly from the pulpit at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. While the gospel remained his central message, a prominent theme throughout these sermons was the militant role of the church. This was not a new idea for Spurgeon. Throughout his preaching ministry, he regularly applied the biblical imagery of the church as an army. But during the Downgrade Controversy, this image now took on new significance, as Spurgeon called his church to join him in the fight for biblical orthodoxy. Though former allies and students turned away from him, Spurgeon knew that he was not alone. The church was yet filled with those who would battle with him.

Perhaps his most stirring use of this image was in his sermon, *The Greatest Fight in the World*, given to the pastors at the newly formed Pastors' College Conference in 1891. This would be his last time addressing the conference. While calling pastors to wield the armory of the Holy Scriptures and draw on the strength of the Holy Spirit, he also reminded them to mobilize the army of the church in the fight for the truth.

---

[18] One of the earliest instances of the distinction between the church militant and church triumphant can be found in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which was written around the first half of the second century. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 43.

> What can individual men do in a great crusade? We are associated with all the people of the Lord. We need for comrades the members of our churches; these must go out and win souls for Christ. We need the co-operation of the entire brotherhood and sisterhood. What is to be accomplished unless the saved ones go forth, all of them, for the salvation of others?[19]

To have a real army, pastors should have a distinct church made up of actual members who held on to the truth and could give a credible profession of faith. Rather than following the latest fads about the church and focusing on meaningless statistics, pastors should give careful attention to the membership of their churches. Churches ought to be filled with soldiers who are praying, devoted to God, holy, well-taught in the truth, and proclaiming the gospel. [20] These are the ecclesiological themes that are found in Spurgeon's sermons during the time of the Downgrade Controversy.

The Army's Mission: Proclaiming the Cross

For Spurgeon, the mission of the church was to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This was what characterized his ministry, and this was no different during the Downgrade Controversy. From August to October of 1887, when Spurgeon was publishing scathing articles on the controversy, he preached sermons like "The Blind Beggar of the Temple and His Wonderful Cure," "Love at its Utmost," and "How Hearts are Softened," all of which focused on the Gospel message of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. At the height of the controversy in October, Spurgeon finally referred more explicitly to the dispute in his sermon "Behold the Lamb of God," but only to point to his distaste for controversy and his relief to be able to declare the gospel clearly and plainly.

> There is more joy in one sermon than in years of disputation. Oh, that every one in this congregation might believe in Jesus and live! What a refreshment it is to the preacher's mind to get to his message at last, to get away from the bamboozlement of those who confound plain

[19] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Greatest Fight in the World: The Final Manifesto* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2014), 89.
[20] Ibid., 89-104.

> truth, and to come to matter-of-fact dealing with eternal salvation. There, let them question and quibble—the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin.[21]

While Spurgeon did not shrink from defending the gospel, his preference by far was to declare it. In a sermon towards the end of 1887, he confessed, "I regret that I have been forced into controversy for which I have no taste, and in which I have no pleasure... To spread the Gospel I should choose the gentler method: it is only to defend it that I have to draw the sword."[22] Even while his opponents accused Spurgeon of inciting trouble and relishing the conflict, he made it clear that he took no joy in it, and this was proved by how the gospel remained at the center of his preaching throughout the controversy. He understood this to be the mission of the church and, therefore, his responsibility as the pastor.

This was to be true not only in the Metropolitan Tabernacle but in every church. While many of the larger churches of his day were characterized by all kinds of charitable activities and societies,[23] Spurgeon understood that the central task of the church was to proclaim the gospel. Therefore, it was especially important for churches to have pastors who faithfully held to and preached God's Word. In his sermon on the seven stars representing the ministers of the churches, Spurgeon claimed,

> The church will never make any great advance until once more God sends here and there, and in fifty places, men with burning hearts and with trumpet voices to proclaim the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We need men that will not yield to the current of the times, nor care one jot about it; but will hold their own and hold their Master's Word against all comers, because the Lord of hosts is with them, and the Spirit of God resteth upon them.[24]

While pastors were the instruments of God, their power was to be found not in them but the word of Christ. Therefore, preachers had to be careful

---

[21] Charles H. Spurgeon, "Behold the Lamb of God," *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached and Revised by C. H. Spurgeon,* vol. 33 (Pasadena: Pilgrim Publications, 1970-2006), 1987:575. Hereafter, this will be referred to as *MTP*.
[22] *MTP* 33:699.
[23] Payne, The Baptist Union, 76.
[24] *MTP* 33:439.

not to compromise the word of God in their preaching. To do so would be to compromise the church's power for her mission. "Take care, O preacher, that you do not blunt the word, or try to cover over its edge; for that would be treason to the Lord who made it to be sharp and cutting."[25] Undoubtedly, this is what Spurgeon observed was happening throughout the association during the controversy.

While pastors needed to be faithful in preaching, the church members were to be just as engaged in this mission to spread the gospel. Spurgeon recognized the distraction that this new liberal theology could be from the church's task of evangelism.

> Let us come down from those high matters to common-place affairs. Let us quit clouds and skies, and condescend to men of low estate. Let us come down from communing with the philosophers of culture, and the apostles of a new theology, to the ordinary people who live around us, and cannot comprehend these fine fictions. Let us come down to the streets and lanes, and do what we can for the poor, the fallen, the ignorant.[26]

While the main players of the Downgrade Controversy were church leaders, Spurgeon understood its effects would ripple out to congregations and to the world. This battle for the gospel affected not only pulpits but also pews. If Christians did not hold fast to the true gospel, then the lost around them would not have a chance to hear about Christ.

> God grant us faithfulness, for the sake of the souls around us! How is the world to be saved if the church is false to her Lord? How are we to lift the masses if our fulcrum is removed? If our gospel is uncertain, what remains but increasing misery and despair? Stand fast, my beloved, in the name of God! I, your brother in Christ, entreat you to abide in the truth. Quit yourselves like men, be strong.[27]

Spurgeon understood the church to be in a fight. From the pastor to the people, the church's mission was to contend for the message of the gospel

---

[25] *MTP* 33:441.
[26] Ibid., 708.
[27] *MTP* 34:84.

and proclaim it to a dying world. Despite opposition or distractions, the church was to stand fast and remain strong in the truth.

The Army's Conflict: Suffering for Christ

In Spurgeon's view, the Downgrade Controversy marked a time of decline for evangelical churches in Britain. In his first sermon after his withdrawal from the Union, Spurgeon opened with a survey of the churches of his day. Though he pastored the largest Baptist church his day, Spurgeon saw that churches throughout England were in a low spiritual condition. Though they continued to be well-attended and active, Spurgeon knew that appearances could be deceiving. He compared the churches of his day to the church of Laodicea, which gloried in her wealth, and yet had closed the door to her Lord.[28]

Spurgeon lamented the lifelessness of these churches, "when the vitality of religion is despised, and gatherings for prayer are neglected." And he grieved the worldliness of the churches, "so that the vain amusements of the world are shared in by the saints." And yet these two marks were symptoms of a deeper problem:

> It is a sad affliction when in our solemn assemblies the brilliance of the Gospel light is dimmed by error. The clearness of the testimony is spoiled when doubtful voices are scattered among the people, and those who ought to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, are telling out for doctrines the imaginations of men, and the inventions of the age. Instead of revelation, we have philosophy, falsely so-called; instead of divine infallibility, we have surmises and larger hopes. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the same yesterday, today, and for ever is taught as the production of progress, a growth, a thing to be amended and corrected year by year. It is an ill day, both for the church and the world, when the trumpet does not give a certain sound; for who shall prepare himself for the battle?[29]

Spurgeon was not interested in nuancing the errors of liberal theology. He had heard enough of such talk within the Baptist Union. Instead, he understood the dangerous effects of liberal theology in the church. Such

---

[28] *MTP* 33:602.
[29] Ibid.

theology muted the trumpet of the gospel and caused the army of the church to grow lazy and unprepared for battle. Spurgeon understood that the church's spiritual health was a kind of barometer to the accuracy of the theology that was being preached, and in his day, the church was in poor health.

Though Spurgeon's ministry was successful, he did not have a triumphalist view of the church. Rather he understood his own ministry to exist in a militant context, surrounded by unfaithfulness and opposition. Christians were those who grieved over this sad state and were willing to bear reproach for Christ. Just as the Downgrade Controversy proved to be the most painful episode of his life, Spurgeon called his people to take up their cross. To join Christ's army is to experience the opposition of the world. This was important because Spurgeon saw many of his colleagues embrace the new theology in a desire to be approved by the world. Even more, he experienced the betrayal of those who once praised him.[30] Preaching on Christ's promise in John 16:33, Spurgeon warned, "When the world pretends to love, understand that it now hates you more cordially than ever, and is carefully baiting its trap to catch you and ruin you. Beware of the Judas kiss with which the Christ was betrayed, and with which you will be betrayed unless you are well upon your guard."[31]

> Rather than seeking this world's approval, Christians understand themselves to be aliens and pilgrims, rejected by the world. Christ's army is to be made up of cross bearers. The Christian is not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world…He is an alien. He is a pilgrim. Can he expect the comforts of home while he tarries here? … This world is a foe to grace, and not a friend to it; and hence the gracious man must have tribulation. If he is to be like his Lord he certainly will have it; and if he is to be like the Lord's people, he will have it, for they are a line of crossbearers.[32]

---

[30] One example is William Landels, pastor at Regent's Park Chapel and a close friend of Spurgeon, who moved the resolution on the vote of censure. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 137.

[31] *MTP* 33:656.

[32] Ibid., 657.

Yet, the church has hope. Church history has repeatedly proven that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church.[33] Spurgeon understood that this was no different in his day. While Christ's church suffers for the Gospel, God uses that suffering for a higher purpose.

> Probably the church of God has never had better times, certainly she has never had happier times, than during periods of persecution. These were the days of her purity, and consequently her glory. When she has been in the dark, God has been her light; and when she has been driven to and fro by the cruelties of men, then has she most effectually rested under the shadow of the Almighty.[34]

Though the church will always be militant in this world, God uses this conflict to refine the church and cause her to depend more fully on His power. Therefore, Christ's soldiers should not shrink from battle but depend on him more fully during persecution. Those who refuse to suffer will desert Christ's army and prove themselves not to belong to Him. But those who join Christ in the conflict will prove themselves to be faithful soldiers.

The Army's Soldiers: Guarding the Church

Spurgeon's primary goal in the Downgrade Controversy was to establish an evangelical basis for membership in the Baptist Union. In this, he failed. But in the church, things were to be different. As one who held to congregational polity, he rejected those who would identify the church as a denominational structure or with her ministers. Rather, the church was made up of her members.[35] This truth would be given expression in his teaching and practice of regenerate church membership. Throughout his pastorate, Spurgeon and the elders of the Tabernacle were careful to examine membership candidates, attend to their spiritual growth, and practice church discipline. This would take on new importance in light of the controversy.

Spurgeon's goal was not merely to have churches full of people. Many of those who held to theological errors could boast of that. Rather,

---

[33] This is a common paraphrase of Tertullian's statement: *semen est sanguis Christianorum*. Tertullian, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, *Tertullian*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 55.

[34] *MTP* 33:687-688.

[35] Spurgeon, The Greatest Fight, 90.

Spurgeon believed the church was to be made up only of those who had been converted by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel.

> A church is an assembly called out. An ecclesia is not any and every "assembly": a mixed crowd of unauthorized persons, having no special right to come together would not be an ecclesia, or church. In a real ecclesia the herald summoned the citizens and burgesses by trumpet or by name, and it consisted of certain persons called out from among the common multitude. The true church consists of men who are called, and faithful, and chosen. They are redeemed from among men, and called out from among their fellows by effectual grace. God the Holy Spirit continues to call out, and bring to the Lord Jesus, those who are chosen of God according to the good pleasure of his will. Practically, conversion is the result of the call.[36]

Unlike the "mixed crowd of unauthorized persons,"[37] the church is to be a regenerate assembly, not only of those who have heard the gospel but of those who have been converted by the Holy Spirit. Apart from such a composition, there is no hope for any spiritual vitality within the church. But when such a body exists, the church becomes "the pillar and ground of the truth" and "a home for [the] Gospel."[38]

Although conversion is the invisible work of the Holy Spirit, one of the best evidence of this work is a credible profession of the truth. When crafting a declaration, the Baptist Union's approach was to create a document stating the core tenets of orthodoxy that all parties involved could sign, even if there was a fundamental disagreement on the meaning of the articles.[39] But Spurgeon knew that the church was to be different.

---

[36] *MTP* 34:122.

[37] It is possible that Spurgeon was thinking of the Baptist Union's refusal to regulate its membership, as later in the sermon he imagines Abram's companions tempting him to remain in Haran, "Abram is very sincere, but he must not be bigoted. Surely he will not be so foolish as to believe in verbal inspiration, and insist upon Canaan, when Haran quite meets the spirit of the command. There is no doubt that Haran answers every purpose, and we mean to stay here, and Abram must stay with us." Ibid., 124.

[38] Ibid., 123.

[39] "He is among believers, but he is not truly of them. He talks about atonement; he does not mean substitution. He talks about the divinity of Christ; he does not mean the Godhead of Christ. He talks about justification by faith; but he does

The church was to be made up of those who held fast to the name of Christ and did not deny the faith.[40] Apart from a knowledge of the truth, there could be no fellowship with God and His people. "If men boast of fellowship with God, and do not receive the revelation of his word, they lie, and do not know the truth."[41]

According to Spurgeon, one of the signs of a possession of the truth was a willingness to fight for it. Unlike the evangelicals who were content to remain in the Union and not fight for the truth, the church should be made of those willing to contend for it.

> A good man's hate of falsehood is as intense as his love of truth; it must necessarily be so. He who worships the true God detests and loathes idols. In these days there are many men to whom the truths of Scripture are like a pack of cards, to be shuffled as occasion suits. To them peace and quietness are jewels, and truth is as the mire of the streets…To the man that is loyal to his Lord, and faithful to his convictions, it can never be so; he hates the teaching which belies his God.[42]

One of the most important ways believers were to contend for the faith was by publicly joining churches that preached the truth. Spurgeon emphasized this in April 1888 as the Baptist Union Assembly was getting ready to meet for the first time after Spurgeon's withdrawal. In his sermon on the woman healed of her bleeding, Spurgeon compared her coming forward with the responsibility Christians had to identify with Christ by joining a church. He knew that churchgoers had many objections to joining a church. Yet, clearly, Spurgeon understood this to be a clear command from Christ.

> Many argue, "To confess Christ and join with his people is not necessary to my salvation." Who said it was? Open confession is not necessary, nay, is not permitted, till you are saved. How could this woman have made any confession of a cure till she was cured? But being cured, it then became necessary that she should confess it: not

---

not mean the old-fashioned doctrine. He speaks of regeneration, but means evolution. He girds himself with the garment of philosophy, but he refuses the robe of revelation." *MTP* 34:285.

[40] Ibid., 34:76-78.

[41] *MTP* 33:554.

[42] *MTP* 34:41.

> necessary to the cure, that is clear, but necessary because of the cure. It is always necessary for a disciple to do what his Lord bids him. It is essential for a soldier of the cross to follow his Captain's orders. Jesus bids us let our light shine; dare we hide it away?[43]

To claim to be a soldier of the cross, but refuse to join Christ's army, the church, is to be in direct disobedience to the Captain. But as Christians join the church, their lives give credence to the truth and power of the gospel. Apart from people owning up to the gospel by their membership in the local churches, Gospel ordinances would cease, preachers would languish, and the world would be left without a witness.

> If it is right for one Christian not to confess Christ, and join a church, it must be allowable for other Christians to do the same. Where would be churches, where would be the continuance of Gospel ordinances; and for the matter of that, who would be bound to be a preacher if no one is even bound to make an open profession? ... It will not do, brethren, if we consider what the Lord Jesus Christ deserves of us, and how an open confession tends to certify his mission. The change wrought in the spiritual and moral condition of the saved is God's attestation of the gospel; and if this is not to be spoken of, how is the world to know that God has sent the gospel at all?[44]

In eight days, the assembly would vote 2,000 to 7 to vindicate the Union and clear herself of Spurgeon's charges. Prophetically, Spurgeon would warn his church in this sermon, "The style of man that a crucified Christ delights in is he who follows his Lord in the day of blasphemy and reproach. A true soldier of Jesus can stand up for his Lord alone. He is as true to Jesus when he is the only one as he would be if all the million went after him."[45] Spurgeon modeled for his congregation the goal of faithful church membership, publicly testifying to the truth as a true soldier of Jesus.

---

[43] *MTP* 34:220.
[44] Ibid., 221.
[45] Ibid., 226.

The Army's Power: Praying the Word

Though Spurgeon lamented the state of the church in his day, Christians could be confident that God's Word had not changed. Though churches struggled with coldness, error, hypocrisy, and other evils, the Word remained ever pure and ever true.

> "Oh, but the worker is so feeble!" The word of God is not feeble. "But the worker feels so stupid." But the word of God is not stupid. "But the worker is so unfit." But the word of God is not unfit. You see it all comes to this: the preacher is bound, but the word of God is not bound: the worker is feeble, but the word of God is not feeble. You are nothing and nobody, but the word of God cannot be said to be nothing and nobody: it is everything and everybody: it is girt about with all power. . . . "But they say they have disproved the faith." Yes, they have disproved their own faith, but they have not disproved the word of God for all that. The word of God is not affected by the falsehood of men. "If we believe not, he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself;" and till he denies himself we need not make much account of who else denies him.[46]

At the height of the controversy, Spurgeon called his congregation to have confidence in God and His Word, because He remained ever sovereign and triumphant against all evil.[47] Therefore, even as Spurgeon called his people to depend on God's Word, he made clear that this was to be demonstrated by their faithfulness to prayer. One of the signs that churches had abandoned God's Word was their prayerlessness.[48] Though

---

[46] *MTP* 33:695.

[47] "All his wisdom, all his foresight, all his power, all his immutability—all himself is yours. All for the church of God, when she is in her lowest estate she is still established and endowed in the best possible sense—established by the divine decree, and endowed by the possession of God all-sufficient. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her. . . . Therefore in the name of Jehovah we will set up our banners, and march onward to the battle." *MTP* 33:606.

[48] "At the back of doctrinal falsehood comes a natural decline of spiritual life, evidenced by a taste for questionable amusements, and a weariness of devotional meetings. At a certain meeting of ministers and church-officers, one after another doubted the value of prayer-meetings; all confessed that they had a very small attendance, and several acknowledged without the slightest compunction that they had quite given them up. What means this? Are churches

many challenged Spurgeon's theological arguments, his opponents had little to say about the fact that prayer meetings were declining.[49] A genuine belief in the power of God's Word resulted not only in action but in prayer. In the face of all discouragements, the church remained confident in God's power and turned to him in prayer.

> Let us pray, then, that he will save; that he will save his own church from lukewarmness and from deadly error; that he will save her from her worldliness and formalism; save her from unconverted ministers and ungodly members. Let us lift up our eyes and behold the power which is ready to save; and let us go on to pray that the Lord may save the unconverted by thousands and millions.[50]

Apart from God's power, the army was powerless on its own. Behind all its activity was faithfulness in prayer.

For prayer to be effective, it had to be grounded in the truth of the Word. In "The Secret Power in Prayer," Spurgeon reminded his congregation that the power of prayer did not lie in their merit but in their union with Christ in the gospel.

> Christ is the vine, and the vine includes the branches. The branches are a part of the vine. God, therefore, looks upon us as part of Christ-members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Such is the Father's love to Jesus that he denies him nothing . . . when you and I are in real union to Christ, the Lord God looks upon us in the same way as he looks on Jesus, and says to us, "I will deny you nothing; ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."[51]

Here the church was not only the army of God but also the body of Christ. As those who are united to Christ, they could pray in confidence according to God's will, knowing that He would look upon them as He looked upon His Son. Far from having a spirit of defeat, Spurgeon

---

in a right condition when they have only one meeting for prayer in a week, and that a mere skeleton?" *S&T* 1887:397-398.

[49] Ibid., 513-514.

[50] *MTP* 33:607.

[51] *MTP* 34:23.

reminded the church militant of her riches in Christ.[52] It was in this confidence that he called the church to pray. Spurgeon desired something more than individual prayers or scattered prayer meetings. Instead, he saw something especially powerful when the entire church gathered to lift their prayers to God.

> What a church we should be, if you were all mighty in prayer! Dear children of God, do you want to be half starved? Beloved brethren, do you desire to be poor, little, puny, drivelling children, who will never grow into men? I pray you, aspire to be strong in the Lord, and to enjoy this exceedingly high privilege. What an army would you be if you all had this power with God in prayer![53]

During the darkness of the Downgrade Controversy, faithfulness to God's Word meant faithfulness in prayer, believing God's promises, and trusting Him to bring revival to the church. Behind all the preaching, evangelism, church planting, ministerial training, and all the other ministries of the Tabernacle was an army of prayer warriors, bringing their requests before their God and pleading for His mighty work.

Conclusion

Considering Spurgeon's tremendous influence, some biographies may paint his ministry as one of constant triumph. However, Spurgeon's sermons during the Downgrade Controversy are a reminder that while the church remains in this world, she is still engaged in a fight. Whatever victories and advancements the church experiences, they are never permanent. In this age, God's people are ever surrounded by error and persecution, and they must carry on in the fight for the truth. Spurgeon did not neglect other images of the church, but it was the doctrine of the militant church that helped him and his congregation to make sense of the trial at the end of his life.

---

[52] "When we speak of the privileges of the Church of God on earth it is impossible to exaggerate. 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.' Behold, what blessings, what riches, what royalties the Lord Jesus bestows upon his chosen! How cleansed they are by his blood! How quickened by his life! How honored by his glorious enthronement at the right hand of the Father! You cannot speak of Zion, and her prosperity, in too exulting a style. Happy art thou, O Israel!" Ibid., 157.

[53] *MTP* 34:23.

Spurgeon's emphasis on the militant church during the Downgrade Controversy also adds nuance to Wills' conclusions. While Spurgeon's local church ecclesiology may have been secondary to his goal of evangelical unity, the Downgrade Controversy challenged that priority. Unlike his Baptismal Regeneration Controversy sermons, which addressed the evangelical community, these sermons focused on his own local church.[54] Though he failed to bring a confessional standard to the Baptist Union, he could be confident that his church held to orthodoxy. And though the Baptist Union represented the collected mission efforts of Baptists, at the end of the day, it was the local church that was the army of Christ, not any association or para-church organization. Following the controversy, many pastors were asking him to form a new denomination. But Spurgeon expressed his growing mistrust of any denomination to remain faithful and called churches to work for purity within their congregations.[55]

At the same time, these sermons also reveal that Spurgeon did not abandon his evangelical priorities. Even as he emphasized the role of the local church, he called her to uphold not Baptist distinctives or Calvinistic theology, but evangelical doctrines. Throughout the Downgrade Controversy, Spurgeon's sermons reflect his unwavering belief in the authority of Scripture, the centrality of the cross, the priority of conversion, and the call to Christian obedience.[56] Even as Spurgeon was rejected by his former evangelical allies, he did not abandon his

---

[54] For Spurgeon's sermons during the Baptismal Regeneration Controversy, see, "Baptismal Regeneration" (*MTP* 10:313), "Let Us Go Forth" (*MTP* 10:365), "Children Brought to Christ, and Not to the Font" (*MTP* 10:413), and "'Thus Saith the Lord:' Or, the Book of Common Prayer Weighed in the Balances of the Sanctuary" (*MTP* 10:533).

[55] Fullerton, *Charles Spurgeon*, 240-241.

[56] While Spurgeon would not have had David Bebbington's quadrilateral in mind, he nonetheless reflected Bebbington's four essential evangelical convictions of biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism, and activism. See D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2-17. For a treatment on Spurgeon's evangelical convictions through the lens of Bebbington's quadrilateral, see Phillip Ort, Timothy Gatewood, and Ed Romine, "Charles Spurgeon: The Quintessential Evangelical," *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 104-125.

evangelical convictions but led his church in upholding them amid the opposition.

Despite his defeat, Spurgeon knew that victory was secured because of Christ's triumph. Although the church may experience bitter loss in this life, Christ's soldiers do not lose heart. Spurgeon's call to the church in his day remains every bit as relevant as in ours.

> Come, my brethren, let us cast aside all doubts about what the future is to be. The battle rages, the foe is as furious as he is subtle, while we are weak as water and can do nothing by ourselves; but let us not despond; for, if the Gospel be God's Gospel, he will take care of it; if the church be Christ's Church, the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. The battle is not ours, but the Lord's: in his name let us set up our banners and cry with full confidence of victory, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."[57]

[57] Spurgeon, "As We Have Heard, So We Have Seen," *MTP 34*, 2014:168.

Midwestern Journal of Theology 19.2 (2020): 78-91

Deuteronomy 12: Authorship and Date and Their Impact on Meaning.

N. BLAKE HEARSON
Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary,
Book Review Editor, MJT

Most students of the academic study of the Old Testament are familiar with the source critical theory that is often referred to as JEDP. This theory postulates that the Pentateuch consists of four relatively late sources that were spliced together, often with a lack of skill, to form the Pentateuch as we now have it. Based on this supposition, the theory eliminates the possibility of Mosaic authorship and relegates the Pentateuch to a late apologetic for the failures and ultimate exile of Israel and Judah. Thus, Source Criticism of the Pentateuch denies the truth claims of those five books. This is reason enough for many conservative Evangelicals to reject the assumptions of JEDP. Yet the impact of these assumptions goes even deeper and is sometimes missed by conservative Christians when they read the Bible and consult commentaries. In fact, many Evangelical scholars and commentators will unwittingly adopt the views inspired by Source Criticism without even realizing it. In order to illustrate this impact on interpretation and meaning, this essay will examine Deuteronomy chapter 12 in dialogue with scholars who hold various positions about the date and authorship of the book of Deuteronomy.

To begin, it is important to note that the book of Deuteronomy is the fundamental document for the theoretical historian whom Julius Wellhausen postulated was behind the redaction of much of the material in the books of Deuteronomy through 2 Kings. Wellhausen was very much a product of his age in that he theorized that the biblical text had undergone a kind of Hegelian, evolutionary, development. Within this tripartite dialectic, Deuteronomy represented the second stage of an ethical and abstract monotheism that served as a correction to the earlier

simple, natural, and spontaneous view of the "J" and "E" sources. Thus, for Wellhausen, Deuteronomy effected a shift in Israelite religion as a whole.[1]

Building on this theory, Martin Noth subsequently shaped the Deuteronomistic hypothesis into the form that characterizes it in more recent scholarship. In actuality, the seeds of the Deuteronomistic theory go back to DeWette but Noth produced the form of the theory that is the basis for most current scholarship.[2] The focus of the work of Noth, and of the scholars who have developed his theory further, was on both the evolutionary development of Israelite religion and the centralization of the cult.[3] More recently, there has been an effort to question and rework the original hypothesis of Wellhausen and Noth. Anchoring this revision, John Van Seters has recently postulated that Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history represent the earliest of three primary sources and that the books of Genesis through Numbers function as additions and expansions to the earlier Deuteronomistic perspective.[4]

One focus of discussion has been on Deuteronomy's call for a central place of worship, and this has often been viewed as reason enough to assign the book's authorship to the period of king Josiah's reform. This dating is based largely on a theoretical political reconstruction of a religious reform that was seeking justification. This reconstruction

---

[1] For a much fuller synopsis of the Wellhausian ideas of the evolutionary place of Deuteronomy and its subsequent dating see Sandra Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002).

[2] See Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*. In actuality the seeds of the Deuteronomistic theory go back to De Wette but Noth produced the form of the theory that is the basis for most current scholarship. See also Sandra Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology*, for a current analysis of the various directions the students of Noth have taken his theory.

[3] Frank Moore Cross further refined the ideas of Noth while Cross's students, Jon Levenson, and Bruce Halpern have subsequently modified the theory further, taking it in several directions. See Bruce Halpern, *The First Historians: the Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies*.

[4] John Van Seters "The Pentateuch," in *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues* (S. L. McKenzie and M. P. Graham eds.; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

posits that those behind the reform created or edited the book of Deuteronomy in order to create support that was bolstered with the authority of history and revelation. Along these same lines of reasoning, Ernest Nicholson postulated that the call for a central shrine was "a largely political move," but that the reform movement behind it was that of Hezekiah rather than Josiah.[5] However, the evolutionary constructs that are the foundation of these theories have been widely called into question and the weight of scholarship towards any theoretical scenario should not preclude the consideration of other possibilities. Sandra Richter states that "the majority of modern biblical scholarship currently regards Wellhausen's developmental framework as passé."[6]

J. Gordon McConville has argued convincingly for the possibility that the bulk of Deuteronomy need not be assigned to the reformation period of Josiah's reign. He notes that while the book of the law discovered by Josiah is, without question, some form of the book of Deuteronomy, Josiah's reform was likely underway several years prior to this discovery.[7] Therefore, Deuteronomy cannot be understood as the initial blueprint for Josiah's reform. McConville goes on to note, "The close connection between the reform and Deuteronomy's altar-law depends on the view that Deuteronomy's demand is for a sole sanctuary also."[8] Yet closer examination of the altar-law reveals a picture that seems to call for a pre-eminent central sanctuary that operates alongside lesser cult sites.[9]

---

[5] Ernest Nicholson, "The Centralisation of the Cult in Deuteronomy," *Vetus Testamentum* 13 (1963), 380-389.

[6] Sandra Richter states that "the majority of modern biblical scholarship currently regards Wellhausen's developmental framework as passé." *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology*, 22. See also Douglas Knight's forward to *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* by J. Wellhausen, (Harry W. Gilmer et. al. eds., Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994 [1883]), xvi.

[7] J. Gordon McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, JSOTS 33, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), p. 22. McConville is here referring to the ideas first put forth by T. Oestreicher, *Das deuteronomische Grundgesetz* (Gütersloh, 1923), 36.

[8] *Ibid.* p. 28. This view is corroborated by Gordon J. Wenham in his article, "Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary," *Tyndale Bulletin* 22 (1971), 103-118.

[9] The closest ancient near eastern parallel for a pre-eminent cult site with lesser cult sites in operation as well would be the Temple EKUR, dedicated to the god Enlil in the city of Nippur. However, this was a polytheistic system with no effort being made toward eliminating competing gods. See A. Leo Oppenheim,

Gerhard von Rad notes that the idea of a centralized cult is far from normative in the book of Deuteronomy. He states, "Scholars must set themselves the task of explaining the fact that, running parallel to a comparatively small number of 'centralizing laws', there are, after all, a large number of ordinances which neither mention the demand for centralization nor even seem to be at all aware of it."[10] Two examples are relevant here. Deuteronomy 16:21 states, "You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the LORD your God, which you shall make for yourself."

This statement is hard to rectify if the author(s) had the Jerusalem temple as the sole sanctuary, already in existence, in mind. However, one of the wicked deeds of Manasseh listed in 2 Kings 21:7 is that he set up the image of the Asherah in the Temple. It is likely that 2 Kings does have Deuteronomy in mind here since the Asherah image was probably made of wood. It is a more difficult to make a case that this Deuteronomic passage has 2 Kings 21:7 in mind since the larger context of Deuteronomy 16 seems to envision an outdoor, countryside, sanctuary. Not only does the text speak of an altar that has yet to be built, but it would have been very difficult to "plant" a tree or even set up a symbolic pole next to the altar that existed in the temple during Josiah's time. A second example is found in Deuteronomy 27:5-8.

Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron tool on them. You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of 1uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God; and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God. You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly." (NASB)

This chapter prescribes sacrifice on Mount Ebal in a manner that is reminiscent of Exodus 20:24-25. Yet it is very unlikely that the altar at Mount Ebal is synonymous with the sanctuary described in Deuteronomy 12. Even if Deuteronomy 27:5-8 is assigned to an earlier

---

Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964, 1977).

[10] Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), 89. For an ancient near eastern parallel to the centralization of worship see Moshe Weinfeld, "Cult Centralization in Israel in the Light of a Neo-Babylonian Analogy," *JNES* 23 (1964), 202-212. Weinfeld focuses on the reform of Nabonidus and its disastrous results.

date than Deut. 12, the passage still was retained in the canonical text we have before us, indicating no tension between the two for the final redactor.[11] McConville summarizes,

This means that, alongside the altar-law, Deuteronomy prescribes sacrifice, albeit on a single occasion only, at another place, and in the manner of Ex. 20:24f. This material would probably have been too embarrassing for an author or compiler who wanted to concentrate worship in Jerusalem to leave it in its present form. . . . If Deuteronomy merely legislates for a central sanctuary, without implying its exclusiveness, then the altar-law itself may be early, and indeed integral to Deuteronomy.[12]

Ultimately, it is not our purpose to prove or disprove the reigning scholarly consensus with regard to the date of Deuteronomy.[13] However, it is our contention that the main theological ideas in Deuteronomy 12, in particular those ideas having to do with God's relationship to sacred space, are better understood apart from the theoretical construct that attaches the work to the reform of Josiah. Our analysis will bear this out.

Turning to the content of chapter 12, we find that the phrase "the place which the LORD will choose to make his name dwell there," is repeated three times with only minor variations (vv. 5, 11, 14). Given the prevalence of the Deuteronomistic ideas in the rest of the biblical corpus, an analysis of this phrase is crucial to any understanding of the biblical ideas regarding God and sacred space. Two elements of the phrase have dominated the scholarly discussion in recent times. These are the centralization of the cult and the so-called name theology of Deuteronomy. We have already noted that, when detached from the theoretical notion of an origin during the time of Josiah, the centralization of the cult becomes of secondary importance in the hierarchy of ideas within the chapter. Additionally, the mandate for a

---

[11] For evidence pointing to this material as original to the larger corpus see Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy,* Eds., R. K. Harrison & Robert L. Hubbard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976). G. J. Wenham has rightly pointed out that a proper understanding of the book must take the final integrated whole as its starting point, "Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary," 105.

[12] J. G. McConville, Law and Theology in Deuteronomy, JSOTS 33, 29.

[13] For a recent summary of such opinions and their development see John Van Seters, "The Pentateuch," in *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues*.

central sanctuary need not be synonymous with a call for a sole sanctuary.[14] However, the ideas implicit in the so-called name theology occupy a more prominent position in the chapter and bear further scrutiny.

It is not in our scope to summarize the various scholarly perspectives on the Deuteronomistic name theology, as such a summary is readily available in Sandra Richter's work on this very topic.[15] Rather, a few examples of recent scholarship will suffice to demonstrate the larger scholarly trend. Many of the theories stem from the Wellhausian evolutionary hypothesis of Israelite religion, in which the Deuteronomistic source is viewed as a corrective to earlier theological concepts. Within this framework, the so-called name theology underwent an evolutionary development from an anthropomorphic and immanent description of the deity to one that viewed the deity as only hypostatically present at a single site. For example, Moshe Weinfeld postulated that the Priestly material, considered the last evolutionary stage or source in the classic Wellhausian model, actually predated the Deuteronomic material. However, Weinfeld maintained the classic evolutionary suppositions, stating that the material in the Priestly narratives renders an anthropomorphic depiction of God whereas the Deuteronomistic material reflects a more abstract conceptualization of the deity.[16] Walter Eichrodt, in his *Old Testament Theology*, treats the name of God as a kind of alter ego of Israel's God that was intended to replace the older idea of Yahweh's physical presence at a given cult site.[17]

---

[14] Yehezkel Kaufmann views Deuteronomy as a call for a single sanctuary for worship and sacrifice. He understands the lack of emphasis on centralization in the prophets to be a witness to the late writing of the book. See *The Religion of Israel from its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (trans. by M. Greenberg; Chicago: University Press, 1960), 161-2.

[15] Sara Richter, The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology.

[16] Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1972), 193.

[17] See Walther Eichrodt, The Theology of the Old Testament, p. 207ff. So also Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology. Sara Japhet, in her work, The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought, understands this abstraction to have been carried over into Chronicles only linguistically. It has lost any distinction it may have had and "the name of the Lord" became equivalent to the Lord Himself (70).

Thus, the name of God represented a new evolutionary stage in Israelite religion, one that replaced a more primitive idea. Similarly, G. Ernest Wright understood the focus on the name of God in Deuteronomy as a polemic against any attempt to localize God's being. He states, "In Israel the transcendent nature of deity made his immanence in an earthly sanctuary a theological problem such as did not exist among polytheists."[18] For Wright, the use of the name of God at the cult site was the Deuteronomistic solution to this conundrum. Yet for Gerhard von Rad, the dwelling of God's name was not a corrective to earlier localized conceptions of God. Rather it was a guarantee of God's will to save, localized at a particular cult site.[19] Therefore, the name of God was synonymous with his salvific self-revelation in history. Thus, von Rad finds that while "the name" is not a corrective to an earlier theological construct, the "name" in Deuteronomy does function as an abstraction of God that veers away from the depiction of God as immanent.

The evolutionary presuppositions of many of the above positions have been recently called into question. Gordon J. Wenham views the dichotomy of immanence and transcendence assumed in the discussion of the name theology and the Wellhausian paradigm as too sharp an antithesis. He bases this on the fact that cultic acts associated with the name formulae in Deuteronomy occur in God's presence.[20] In a similar vein, Sandra Richter has also questioned the value of an evolutionary understanding of the phrase "cause my name to dwell there." Rather than viewing the phrase as a theological corrective to earlier religious ideas about God or even as an ideological move from an immanent God towards a transcendent God, Richter argues that the phrase must be understood as idiomatic language and that each occurrence must be understood within both its biblical and its ancient Near Eastern contexts.[21] She demonstrates that the idiom is actually common to the Akkadian world and has no real associations with a particular theological construct. Rather, the idiom emphasizes the sovereignty of a ruler who

---

[18] G. E. Wright, et. al. "The Book of Deuteronomy," in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), vol. 2, pp. 411-12. For more on Wright's view on the issue see his work, *The Rule of God: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1960), 55-72.

[19] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology,* vol. 1, 184 ff.

[20] Gordon J. Wenham, "Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary."

[21] The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology, 37-39.

is placing his name in a land by right of conquest.[22] Egypt saw a similar use of the idiom; Richard Clifford notes, "One of the pharaohs in the 15th century boasted he had placed his name in Jerusalem. The name represents the person and to put one's name in a place means that people there recognized the authority and presence of the person in that place."[23] Therefore, in Deuteronomy 12, the idiom emphasizes that Yahweh, the sovereign king, has claimed the land as his own. Understanding the phrase in this context fits seamlessly with the larger covenantal format of Deuteronomy.[24]

With the idiomatic nature of the phrase "cause my name to dwell there" in mind, an examination of the ideas found in chapter 12 as relating to God's relationship to sacred space is in order. The instructions in verses 2-4 set the stage for the oft-scrutinized latter verses, and therefore must be understood as the basis for what follows them. They state:

> You must destroy all the sites at which the nations you are to dispossess worshiped their gods, whether on lofty mountains and on hills or under any luxuriant tree. Tear down their altars, smash their pillars, put their sacred posts to the fire, and cut down the images of their gods, obliterating their name from that site. Do not worship the LORD your God in like manner.[25]

The first instruction related to worship and sacred spaces is a command to destroy any cultic objects and places that are sacred to any other deity. Peter Craigie notes, "These objects were to be systematically destroyed so that the places associated with them would be divested of any semblance

---

[22] Ibid., 217

[23] Richard Clifford, *Deuteronomy with an Excursus on Covenant and Law* (Eds., Carroll Stuhlmueller and Martin McNamara; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982), 76.

[24] See Meredith G. Kline, Treaty of the Great King. The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) and Peter C. Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy.

[25] Translation from *JPS Tanakh*, 1985. Verse 5 represents an ideological break in the text as it presents the alternative (adversative relationship) to what verses 2-4 describe. Grammatically the adversative is an opposite but parallel structure so there should be no break here in relation to the overall narrative.

of sanctity."[26] Even as the inhabitants of the land of Canaan were to be destroyed, so too, were their sacred places and style of worship.

The specificity of the list of geographic markers is telling. Those objects or geographic features that indicated to the Canaanites some link with their gods were not to be associated with the God of Israel. God's self-revelation was not tied to any element of the natural world. The Canaanite deities, by contrast, were associated with natural phenomena, so they were identified by or revealed in certain elements of the natural world. These links arose from an association between the purview of particular deities and the powers of nature. For example, Utu, who was represented by a flaming sun disk symbol, was the Mesopotamian sun god. Nanna was the moon god and Ezinu was the god of grain. Gods were associated with and had sovereignty over particular natural phenomena and, as such, spaces sacred to the gods were easily identifiable.[27] Deuteronomy 12:2-4 makes it clear that these associations were not permissible for Israel. The God of Israel could not be viewed as linked with any particular natural phenomena. This prohibition serves, therefore, to assert the theological idea of God's transcendence.

Of course, the Deuteronomic instructions go beyond prohibition of associating Yahweh with natural phenomena. The text calls for an out-and-out destruction of all the Canaanite sacred places and their cultic accoutrements. Craigie maintains that this amounts to a symbolic act of rejection.[28] However, while rejection of the sites as both sacred and legitimate for worship is involved, the ultimate goal is more severe than just a symbolic rejection. The text states that the names of the Canaanite deities are to be obliterated from the cultic sites. A. D. H. Mayes notes that what is not named has no existence.[29] Ultimately, Yahweh is to be the only name that is called upon in the land of the Israelites.

---

[26] Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 216. The connection between destruction and de-sanctification will be explored in a later chapter.

[27] For more on this idea see Thorkild Jacobsen, "Formative Tendencies in Mesopotamian Religion," in *Toward an Image of Tammuz and Other Essays in Mesopotamian History and Culture* (ed., William L. Moran; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970). Jacobsen is heavily influenced by Rudolph Otto and his ideas about the numinous (*The Idea of the Holy*).

[28] Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 216.

[29] Deuteronomy, 223.

While verses 2-4 give explicit instructions on what is to be done with the existing cultic sites that are sacred to the Canaanites, they also set forth an implicit idea as to how Yahweh interacts with the people and the land. The prohibition against worshipping in the places or manner of the Canaanites indicates that Yahweh refuses localization in the Canaanite sense. The Israelites cannot predict or pinpoint the place or places where God will make his presence known. G. J. McConville states, "The paradox is this: Yahweh enters a relationship with a people, Israel, which requires an actual location in space and time; yet Yahweh is not bound by any necessity to that people, nor to any place."[30] Thus, the prohibition against the Canaanite sacred places went beyond removing them as known contact points for the divine realm. It removed the possibility of the Israelites being able to identify sacred space by naturally occurring symbols or geographic features.[31] This may be sufficient reason for viewing intentional ambiguity in the admonition of verse 4 not to worship God "in like manner." Instead of having one specific aspect in view, the "like manner" extended to all elements of Canaanite worship. Intentional or not, the phrasing leaves the emphasis on God's freedom, while the forbidden cultic "manner" is clarified later in the chapter.

In Verse 31 the text states,

> You shall not act thus toward the LORD your God, for they perform for their gods every abhorrent act that the LORD detests; they even offer up their sons and daughters in fire to their gods.[32]

The first phrase of the verse mirrors the wording of verse 4 but then gives further explanation of specific cultic practices. The Canaanite worship is characterized simply as wholly abhorrent to Yahweh. The culmination of such detestable worship is described as the burning of children as a sacrifice to the gods. Such acts of worship are unacceptable in any place, and most likely, would profane any sacred place where they were carried out. R. Clifford notes, "An important de-sacralization takes place in these

---

[30] J. G. McConville and J. G. Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy, JSOTS* 179, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994, 137.

[31] God's self-revelation was not tied to any particular element of the natural world. The Canaanite deities were associated with natural phenomena, however, so they were identified by or revealed in certain elements of the natural world.

[32] Translation from *JPS Tanakh*, 1985.

verses. Not every natural movement or act is automatically sacred, but only those declared so by the Lord."[33] The following verse (32), which concludes the chapter, emphasizes obedience to the command of the Lord.

This idea of God's choice represents the main thrust of verses 5-30. The choice or self-disclosure of Yahweh stands as a stark contrast to the Canaanite sanctuaries and any natural phenomena usually associated with the divine realm. In verses 5, 11, 13-14, 18, 21, and 26, the phrase, "the place which the LORD your God shall choose," is repeated with only slight variation.[34] Verse 5 states,

But you shall seek *the LORD* at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.[35]

It is important to note that the term "place" (מָקוֹם) in this context implies that the place has a sacral nature to it.[36] This "place" which the Lord will choose stands in direct contrast with the "places" of the Canaanites (v.2) that were to be "utterly destroyed."[37] It is the antithesis between the Canaanite places and the place of the Yahweh's choosing that is the focus of the verse, rather than the theoretical number of places allowed for worship. Scholars have put forth cogent arguments both that the "place" in Deuteronomy 12 represents a single central sanctuary and that the "place" is categorical, much like Exodus 20:24,[38] and therefore

---

[33] R. Clifford, Deuteronomy with an Excursus on Covenant and Law, 78.

[34] For discussion of the phrase, "to establish his name there for his dwelling," (also with slight variation) which is coupled with the idea of God's choice in verses 5, 11, and 21, see above.

[35] The use of italics is a convention of the NASB translation to indicate that the words so marked are not actually present in the Hebrew. See also Deuteronomy 16:2, 6-7.

[36] See Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (trans., by John McHugh; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 291. See also the section on Bethel in the next chapter. The word has to be examined in its contextual setting to determine whether it has this specialized meaning or rather is being used in a more general sense.

[37] The destruction of the Canaanite places is emphasized through the use of the Piel infinitive absolute followed by the imperfect form of the same root.

[38] "You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every

refers to a pre-eminent sanctuary among many.[39] Yet Peter C. Craigie notes, "This legislation . . . does not either prohibit or permit other sanctuaries—that question is not directly relevant in the immediate context."[40] The very inconclusiveness of the scholarly discussion leads us to view the question of one central sanctuary as a secondary issue in these verses, and indeed in the whole of chapter 12.

The place "which the LORD your God will choose" remains unnamed and the emphasis therefore remains on God's choice. As G. J. McConville states, "Yahweh's choice of an unnamed place has the effect of asserting his freedom in respect of that place."[41] Yet, A. D. H. Mayes disagrees, understanding the phrase, "from all your tribes," in verse 5 to be a strong indicator that the specific site of Jerusalem is in mind.[42] However, G. von Rad has pointed out that Shechem and then successively Shiloh seem to have been the "choice" prior to Jerusalem.[43] Thus, even with the "one" place of God's choosing, Deuteronomy 12 does not offer any guarantees of that one place remaining the same throughout Israel's history. Only by attaching the chapter's origin to Josiah's reform can the conclusion be reached that Jerusalem, and only Jerusalem, is in view here. However, if the authorship of the text is taken as earlier than Josiah's reform, the very lack of specificity with regard to "the place" has the effect of

---

place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you."

[39] For some of the differing opinions and arguments see A. D. H. Mays, *Deuteronomy* (Greenwood, SC: The Attic Press, 1979), Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*; W. H. Irwin, "Le Sanctuaire Central Israélite Avant L'établissement de la Monarchie," in *Revue Biblique* 72 (1965), 161-84; Gordon J. Wenham, "Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary," 102-18; John Van Seters, "The Pentateuch," in *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues*; Richter, Sandra L. *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology*; Jeffery Niehaus, "The Central Sanctuary: Where and When?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 43, no. 1 (May 1992): 3-30; J. G. McConville and J. G. Millars. *Time and Place in Deuteronomy* and Besters, A. "Le Sanctuaire Central dans Jud. 19-21," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses*. Vol. 41 (1965): 20-41. On a fundamental level, the way one answer the question of Deuteronomy's authorship is determinative in this argument.

[40] Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 217.

[41] Gordon McConville and J. G. Millars, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 122.

[42] A. D. H. Mays, *Deuteronomy*, 224-225.

[43] Gerhard von Rad Deuteronomy, A Commentary, 94.

highlighting God's freedom both to select and to reject a place, as well as the difficulty inherent in associating God with any particular place. This problem can best be explained in terms of the tension between the transcendence and immanence of God. Both are allowed to coexist in the text.[44] G. J. McConville notes, "On the one hand God is not uniquely associated with one place in particular; on the other, his real presence in 'places' is strongly affirmed. . . . In relation to his immanent (covenantal) presence in the world, Yahweh retains his freedom—a function of his transcendence."[45] Thus, Deuteronomy 12 sets forth the idea that Israel is dependent on God's choice, or self-disclosure, for determining the place that is sacred and therefore acceptable, a terrestrial point where the deity can be contacted and worshipped.

In summary, Deuteronomy chapter 12 delineates an important idea about God's relationship to sacred space. Sacred space, or more specifically those places that have a particular connection to God, thereby making them acceptable points in terrestrial space for contact and worship of the deity, must be revealed by God himself. This is presented in the chapter first negatively and then positively. First, the prohibition against the Canaanite sacred places points to the fact that God is not tied to the natural phenomena that led the Canaanites to worship at those locations. Second, the chapter emphasizes that God will choose the space or spaces that are acceptable contact points for worship. This freedom of self-disclosure reserved for God points to a dependence on the deity that blends thematically into the covenantal nature of the entire book of Deuteronomy.

In the end, if one adopts the idea of the source critical theory of Wellhausen and his predecessors, the meaning of Deuteronomy 12 is focused on an apologetic for Jerusalem as the one and only place for the

---

[44] For an example of this tension that co-exists outside of Deuteronomy see Exodus 20:22 and 24:17. Exodus 20:22 belongs to the so-called "Book of the Covenant," but Exodus 24 is widely viewed as a composite text with most scholars assigning verse 17 to E or P. See John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Exodus*, 316-318 for a discussion of the various theories posited as to the sources behind the current form of the chapter. However the tension of transcendence and immanence between the two verses remains in the final form of the text of Exodus as a whole, indicating a normative idea for the biblical writers and editors.

[45] G. J. McConville, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 133, 137.

true worship of Yahweh. By itself, this idea seems harmless enough and is widely adopted in commentaries. But it is important to realize that the declaration by the author of the D source is made after the fact (*ex eventu*) since Jerusalem has been the central sanctuary when the hypothetical source was written. Thus, not only is Deuteronomy misleading in the way it is written, it is about justifying Jerusalem above all else. However, if the book of Deuteronomy is a document substantially written by Moses during his lifetime, then chapter 12 becomes much more about the character of God and his choice with respect to how and where he is worshipped and Jerusalem is not the primary concern of the chapter at all. Clearly, the authorship and date ascribed to the books of the Bible make a large impact on not only the truth claims of the texts but also on the very meaning and emphasis of those texts.

***A Certain Sound: A Primer on Open Air Preaching*. By Ryan Denton and Scott Smith. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2019. 115 pp. $16.00, Paperback. ISBN 9781601786852.**

Denton and Smith offer a challenging call for the church to send evangelists onto the streets to preach to unbelievers. Their brief volume highlights the importance of open-air preaching as a strategy for evangelism: "The church must go to the lost" (13). Their passion for evangelism is matched by their Reformed theological and ministry credentials. Denton and Smith, graduates of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Reformed Theological Seminary, respectively, write to prod Reformed believers to engage in open-air preaching. The book shows how open-air preaching aids ministers in developing a "scheduled discipline" of evangelism (104) and can "help them to mortify their flesh, fear, and pride" (2).

Denton and Smith begin with a valuable history of open-air preaching that affirms the inclusion of public proclamation throughout the history of the church. Quoting Spurgeon, a frequent voice heard in the book, they argue that if any preaching needs a defense, it is preaching within the walls of the church, since preaching in the Bible and early church was outside the church and should be the presumed starting point (1). Their explanation of preaching in public venues challenges the church in our current cultural moment, where church members "have been immersed in a church culture that is seeker-friendly, tolerant of sin, and terrified of offending anyone" (35). Their criticism of the modern church stings when they expose "a church filled with fog machines and carnal music and preaching that deals with social woes" (83). These broad generalizations will likely stir the Reformed reader but may exclude readers who otherwise would benefit from the call to preach in public.

The authors' Reformed understanding of salvation is clear in their chapter on theology. They vividly describe fallen humanity's posture: "Man is born with a homicidal passion to destroy God and his neighbor for the sake of advancing his own kingdom" (23). The authors claim an Arminian "has no business evangelizing" (27). Yet they frequently quote John Wesley and heap praise on him as "a wonderful example of a disciplined open-air preacher" (71). Less a primer on open-air preaching in general, the book is focused on Reformed open-air preaching.

Chapter three profitably roots the preacher in the life of the church. The evangelist must be held accountable by leaders at the local church level. Denton and Smith suggest dangers that can arise between the evangelist and his local church when fellow believers demean his ministry or view his work "as too brash or cutting" (36). Chapter four shows how the public evangelist must expose sin through Calvin's first use of the law. The Bible holds up a mirror to show unbelievers their sin in contrast to God's holiness. The authors press beyond mere admission of sin to a reflection on why sin is so destructive and what it means to respond in repentance. Their guidance is valuable for any evangelist, even one without a public box to stand on.

The Reformed emphasis of the book rises again in chapter five's stress on presuppositional apologetics. They helpfully define their strategy: "The preacher must labor to show that the unbeliever's worldview will always be untenable or inconsistent. He must then turn the tables by pointing out that, by contrast, Christianity is the only worldview that is consistent with what it claims" (53). I align with their strategy as a Reformed preacher with a presuppositional apologetics model, but they admittedly exclude men like R.C. Sproul, with whom they otherwise agree. Evidential and classical apologists may be tempted to dismiss the central call of the book, to publicly preach, because of disagreement with the authors' apologetic strategy.

Chapters six and seven, on the preacher's character and competence, summarize preaching standards for open-air and pulpit preachers alike. Chapter eight finally introduces specific examples of venues for open-air preaching: college campuses, festivals and sporting events, downtown crowds, and abortion clinics. Convinced by their biblical and historical basis for open-air preaching, the reader longs for practical examples and further details in this section. How can open air preachers hook listeners? How long is practical for an open-air sermon? How can the preacher engage with hecklers? How should he respond to the police? They open these issues but offer only passing answers. Readers will benefit from an online search to find Denton's Christ in the Wild Ministries and Smith's Schoolmaster Ministries. Both offer further training along with video samples of open-air preaching, which are welcome supplements to the book.

A Certain Sound is a useful addition to the literature on preaching and public evangelism. It invites church leaders to engage in open-air

preaching and I pray it will encourage evangelists to take the gospel to neighbors in desperate need. Denton and Smith's appreciation for evangelists from outside a presuppositional Reformed approach make the book useful to all Christians even those who do not fit their narrow target audience.

Kevin D. Koslowsky
Faith Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, DE

Accidental Preacher: A Memoir. By Will Willimon, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. 242 pp. $24.99, Hardback. ISBN 9780802876447.

In a 1996 Baylor University survey, Will Willimon was recognized as one of the twelve most effective preachers in the English language. Over the years, the South Carolina native has served as a local Methodist church pastor, as Dean of the Chapel and professor at Duke University, and as Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. A prolific preacher and writer, known for his puckish and sometimes prickly wit, Willimon adds this engaging memoir to the stack of his over eighty published works (including two novels), perhaps the best known of which is Resident Aliens (1989), co-authored with his Duke colleague Stanley Hauerwas. The multi-talented Willimon even drew the simple sketches that illustrate this memoir. In the end, this work is a testimony to and reflection upon the author's call to the ministry from one who embodies what may be a disappearing breed: the charming, sophisticated, avuncular, American, white-male, liberal, mainline Protestant minister.

Willimon offers the story of his life, as if it were an extended illustration in one of his sermons. It keeps the reader's interest, makes ample use of the humorous as well as the serious, and, in the end, offers some profound theological reflections. Willimon begins by describing his youth in Greenville, South Carolina, raised by a single, school-teacher mother and a loving, extended Southern family. He also candidly describes his estranged relationship with his charismatic but morally compromised father, who abandoned the family and eventually went to

prison for financial fraud. Willimon reflects honestly on how these circumstances influenced the development of his uber-driven personality, moving from a merit-badge procuring Eagle Scout to a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Wofford University, and even how it influenced his call to ministry and his course within it. A key point in that call was a serendipitous meeting as a college student with the liberal Baptist icon Carlyle Marney in an art museum in Amsterdam. Marney told the impressionable young man, "I've never known a preacher worth a damn who didn't have a bad mama or daddy problem" (48).

The ministry path took Willimon as a theology student to Yale Divinity School and Emory University, as a local church pastor to Georgia and South Carolina, as a professor and chaplain to Duke University, and, eventually, as a Methodist bishop to North Alabama. There are plenty of engaging anecdotes shared along the way, from a boy scout road trip out West to having future Wheel of Fortune letter-turner Vanna White in his Myrtle Beach church youth group to an awkward dinner with mega-church pastor Robert Schuller and more. Willimon shares plenty of his successes, but he is also generous in relaying a number of his failures, including getting rejected as a doctoral student at Duke, being passed over by the Presidential Search Committee at his alma mater, Wofford, and his sometimes painful tenure as a bishop: "once we left Alabama Methodism, no one ever invited us back" (116).

Reflection on the call to ministry, again, is at the heart of this book. One section any pastor will find poignant is Willimon's description of a phone call he received informing him of his father's death and how he then immediately had to leave to conduct his church's much anticipated Christmas Eve service: "Church does not wait for you to have the proper motivation for worship in order to call you to worship. And there are many times, when you have been called to be a pastor, that you don't feel like being a pastor but still must act the part" (71). Willimon makes clear that by calling himself an "accidental" preacher he does not mean that his calling was random or purposeless. Rather, "What seems to me to be an accident is, through the eyes of faith, Providence" (105).

Willimon teems with contradictions. He is a Wesleyan and a Barthian, a liberal mainline Protestant who mocks political correctness, and a sometimes caustic critic of Methodism who cherishes his divided denomination. Willimon would, no doubt, affirm the most basic tenants of Christian orthodoxy, like the Trinity, but, as with many of his mainline

peers, he takes a far less traditional approach to contemporary political and social issues. For Willimon, there is no nuance in the history of the civil rights controversies of the sixties, President Trump is a charlatan, the only Christian position must be full acceptance of immigration, etc. He is perhaps politician enough to steer clear of sustained engagement with issues that he knows have little biblical support. The subject of homosexual practice and gay marriage, for example, is currently rending his denomination in two. He offers only a handful of sentences on the subject near the end of the memoir, reflecting understated approval of gay marriage based on what seems to this reviewer to be convoluted thinking: "Same sex marriage? Being in the fidelity promoting, promise keeping, forgiveness receiving business, the church, you'd think, would be eager to find one more occasion to make people make promises, welcoming anyone who dared to put his or her life at the mercy of the future with another human being. Go figure" (192). My guess is he does not want to offend the progressive wing of his church, but also realizes the rather obvious problems this view presents with respect to plain-sense biblical fidelity. Accepting and promoting "same sex marriage" in our times hardly means that one is acting as a "resident alien," but it more likely indicates he has wholeheartedly embraced the values of what Paul called "this present evil world" (Gal 1:4).

I noted above that men like Willimon may be a "disappearing breed," as mainline Protestant denominations continue to divide, dwindle, and dissipate. I certainly have profound disagreements with Willimon on essential matters of faith and practice. Nevertheless, I enjoyed and gained from reading this memoir and would suggest that it might hold value for others contemplating their own vocational calling to the ministry and the providential "accidents" of God revealed in the well-told story of another's life.

Jeffrey T. Riddle
Christ Reformed Baptist Church, Louisa, VA

***Analog Church: Why We Need Real People, Places, and Things in the Digital Age*. By Jay Y. Kim. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020. 207 pp. $10.20, Kindle. ISBN: 083084158X.**

This book released at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, when self-isolation and shelter-in-place protocols pushed pastors like me to lean into digital tech more heavily than ever before. During the coronavirus lockdown, streaming services gave churches a semblance of corporate worship that would have disappeared otherwise, while Zoom, WebEx, and other similar video conferencing solutions rescued small group study and prayer through virtual meeting technology. In the wake of this widespread reliance on digital tech, would Jay Kim's message be obsolete? Had Silicon Valley cemented itself as our savior? In a bold move that pushes back against these trends, Kim suggests that the church's future is analog, not digital. "I believe the answer is to go *analog*," he contends, "because people are hungry for human experiences and the church is perfectly positioned to offer exactly that" (Loc. 149). Kim tweets as @jaykimthinks and is the teaching and leadership pastor of Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, CA. He also co-hosts the ReGeneration Podcast and helps guide the ReGeneration Project. *Analog Church* is his first book and it features a forward by Scot McKnight, who concludes that it "is an important read for those struggling with the inadequacies of our digital age" (68). The book enjoys a variety of endorsements, including Brett McCracken (senior editor of The Gospel Coalition) and Tim Mackie of The Bible Project.

In his introduction, Kim contrasts the relevance of techno-savvy church gatherings with the transcendence of traditional practices, which he affectionately dubs "grandma's church" (103). He then devotes the opening chapter to answering the question, "Why go analog?" He claims that digital technologies are "lulling us to sleep" in discipleship (202) and introduces the reader to a trio of values – speed, choices, and individualism – which characterize this digital age and lead to the detrimental effects of impatience, choices, and isolation, respectively (202-18). By embracing mainstream digital values, Kim believes that churches decrease, not increase, their impact because "church was never meant to be a derivative of the cultural moment but, rather, a disruption to it" (332). Kim follows this opening appeal with three sections (two chapters each) that highlight a series of core church values: worship,

community, and Scripture. In each section, he devotes one chapter to explaining the adverse impact the digital age has on each of these values, followed by a second chapter that commends the advantages of a more analog approach. Before his conclusion, he slips in a brief, standalone chapter on the value of observing the Lord's Table (which he calls 'communion'). "In the digital age," he says, "I can't think of a more important thing to do" (2223). The book concludes that though analog realities are "more important than ever," Christ himself is most important (2244). It also offers a series of discussion questions, about five questions per chapter, and a collection of endnotes that includes anecdotal comments, sources and websites cited, and resource recommendations.

Analog Church is enjoyable to read, moving from one idea to the next with an engaging style and perceptive, reflective tone. The author has thought long and hard about his message and his heartfelt seriousness shines through. He makes many astute observations, as when he says this about worship in the digital age: "We must be willing to honestly address the idealized versions of our ideas in our often excessively optimistic minds" (413). Very true. Of community in the digital age, he highlights our sad, fictional belief that "the best sort of communities and connections … are the ones we can customize and craft to our own personal likings" (1081). When diagnosing the problems of our interaction with Scripture (or lack thereof) in the digital age, he makes this incisive observation about our cell phone addiction: "We are all in some ways hypnotized by our digital slot machines" (1677). Probing, discerning observations like these occur throughout the book with regularity and stimulate valuable introspection on the personal and corporate level. This introspective quality may be the book's greatest strength, as it causes the reader to reexamine his or her own personal expectations and perceptions of the appropriate role of digital tech in the church today.

That said, the book feels more like an extended discussion starter than a mature conversation. Though Kim offers many insightful critiques and idealistic concepts, he proposes comparatively few concrete solutions. This is not to say that he offers no solutions at all. He sprinkles miscellaneous suggestions throughout the book, such as lighting the worship stage differently (791), placing more emphasis on the storyline of the entire Bible (1968), and featuring more public reading of Scripture.

Even so, his proposals are scattered rather than systematic and developed. The greatest weakness of the book, though, lies in its disappointing use of Scripture, which is often more creative than exegetical. For instance, Kim suggests that the "Tower of Babel story…takes on an especially sobering and prophetic tone in the digital age" (1010). On this premise, he equates the events of Babel with our modern technological frontier, suggesting a variety of allegorical parallels such as the bricks of Gen 11:3 being analogous to the modern digital revolution and extracting from the text what he calls a "digital cycle" (1028-1045). Such interpretive techniques disregard authorial intent. In another instance, Kim presses a detail too far to make his point. He quotes Luke's description of Pentecost, "They were all together in one place" (Acts 2:1), then claims that this phrase proves the need to be "analog" (1554). He asks, "Would the impact and influence of Pentecost have been the same for those who were simply 'watching online' as it was for those in attendance" (1569)? A discerning reader will sympathize with Kim's point but fail to see how this detail proves what he claims. Thankfully, his use of Scripture is not always so sketchy, as when he makes a biblical case for worship being "whole-body participation" (432) or when he makes a case for corporate church gatherings from a proper understanding of *ekklēsia* (1204). Even so, the reader should read carefully to ensure that whenever Kim makes a biblical point, he is practicing sound exegesis, not creative interpretation. As a final point of critique, the book offers no Scripture or Subject indexes.

As our generation continues to explore the benefits that Silicon Valley offers the church, *Analog Church* provides a timely reminder to proceed with caution. Though digital tech has a place at the table (even Kim's ReGeneration Project relies heavily on digital tech), we must acknowledge that its limitations make a wholesale embrace unwise. This book affirms those who already feel this way and challenges those who do not. As such, it is a useful resource for stimulating strategic discussions among leadership and ministry teams who make critical choices about ministry planning and the role of technology in the church. By contrast, it will not serve well as a small group study tool because it is light on substantive, biblical content.

Thomas Overmiller
Faith Baptist Church, Corona, NY

***The Spirit of the Age: The 19th-Century Debate Over the Holy Spirit and the Westminster Confession.* By J. V. Fesko. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017. 140 pp. $18.00, Paperback. ISBN 9781601785725.**

J. V. Fesko taught at Westminster Seminary California for roughly a decade and now serves as Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi. A voluminous author who has written on a variety of topics, Fesko previously penned *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights* (Crossway, 2014). Whereas *The Theology of the Westminster Standards* contains no extended and standalone treatment of pneumatology, *The Spirit of the Age* focuses on the pneumatology of the Westminster Confession.

The Spirit of the Age intends to achieve one main goal. Fesko aims to address "the [Westminster] confession's alleged deficiencies" in pneumatology (5). In particular, Fesko seeks "to prove the thesis that the confession presents a biblical, Reformed, and catholic doctrine of the Holy Spirit" (7). Fesko accomplishes this defense of the Confession's pneumatology through examining a 19th century debate. In studying the controversy which erupted during the late 1800s, Fesko defends the Confession by showing how the late 19th-century criticisms came not from deficiencies in the Confession but rather from the adoption of unbiblical, post-Enlightenment metaphysics.

The Spirit of the Age can be divided into two major parts. First, Fesko argues that the late 19th century criticism of the Confession's pneumatology, and the ensuing 1903 revision of the Westminster Confession, represents a major change from pre- to post-Enlightenment pneumatology. Second, and related, Fesko contends that the pneumatology of the original Confession shared continuity with historic Christianity, while the revised pneumatology marked a departure from those classical views.

After providing an overview of the issue at hand in chapter one, Fesko, in chapter two, discusses the criticisms of the Confession's pneumatology brought by Charles Briggs and Philip Schaff. Fesko highlights the influence of Hegelianism and Pentecostalism as contributing factors to the concerns of Briggs and Schaff. Fesko finds the

root cause of criticisms about the assembly's pneumatology not in any deficiency in the Confession but rather in the views of Briggs. He writes, "I believe Briggs was infected with a Darwinian notion of evolutionary progress combined with a Hegelian understanding of the development of history" (47). In chapter three, Fesko shows how the Confession's pneumatology did not flow from an abstract scholastic rationalism (as its critics alleged) but rather from a rich catholic tradition that spanned from the second century into the 1640s. In chapter four, Fesko contrasts the pneumatology of Briggs and Schaff with that of the Westminster divines. Fesko shows that Briggs and Schaff imbibed a conception of progress that found its roots in Hegel and the medieval mystic Joachim of Fiore (72). Fesko then contrasts this with the Confession's pneumatology and its underlying assumptions. Fesko demonstrates that the views of history and Christology constituted a major difference between the mid-1640s and the late-1800s. Specifically, the Westminster divines generally held "a devolutionary view of history" while Briggs and Schaff adopted a view that history evolves positively (95). In his conclusion, Fesko offers six points of continued relevance for pastors and theologians today.

Fesko argues his thesis successfully. He shows that simply because the Confession lacks an explicit chapter on pneumatology does not mean that the Confession is not rich in a doctrine of the Spirit. Fesko demonstrates how the divines intertwined pneumatology to other major loci of theology that received dedicated chapters in the Confession. Further, Fesko proves that Briggs' criticisms of the Confession rest on assumptions antithetical with the worldview of both the Confession's authors and Scripture.

At 115 pages, excluding appendices, Fesko's work is short. The book is fascinating, well researched, and immensely relevant for pastor-theologians today as the same issues which animated Charles Briggs and Philip Schaff drive many now (102–14). For example, those who do not know the broader historic Christian tradition and feel the need to pattern doctrine after the fashions of the day easily veer away from historic Christianity. Likewise, the quest for a more mystical faith or the presupposition of continuous progress is as prevalent today as it was a century ago. Similarly, is doctrine most fundamentally a matter of revelation or is it a question of experience and reason? *The Spirit of the Age* does assume a level of knowledge and interest in the Confession and

broader church history. Many church members, especially newer Christians or those not interested in historical theology, will likely find themselves lost at points. Further, Fesko at times uses Latin phrases without any translation (98). On other occasions, Fesko assumes that readers are familiar with movements such as Mercersburg theology (108). However, well-read laymen, pastors, theologians, or seminarians can greatly benefit from Fesko's work. Fesko successfully shows how presuppositions around metaphysics, autonomous reason, and worldview drive doctrine. The assumption that humanity is continually progressing, and doctrine must evolve accordingly drove the convictions of some a century ago just as it does today.

Eric Beach
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Transgender, Intersex, and Biblical Interpretation.* By Teresa J. Hornsby and Deryn Guest. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016, 140 pp. $27.95, Paperback. ISBN 9781628371352.**

Over the last several decades, literary deconstruction has slid into the field of biblical interpretation and an entire generation of scholars has abandoned concern with authorial intent. Instead, liberals insist the Bible must be read through the lens of various oppressed groups to free Scripture from the purportedly patriarchal hegemony of Western capitalism. Thus, we have seen a multitude of feminist, gay, lesbian, and Marxist readings of Scripture. In *Transgender, Intersex, and Biblical Interpretation,* Teresa J. Hornsby and Deryn Guest join this deconstruction of Scripture and give a transgender reading of the Bible. Hornsby is a Professor of Religious Studies at Drury University in Springfield, MO where she has taught since 2000. She earned a PhD in New Testament and gender studies from Vanderbilt. Deryn Guest is a Senior Lecturer in Biblical Hermeneutics at the University of Birmingham, where she earned her PhD. Originally a part of the Salvation Army, she now identifies as transgender and has embraced Wiccan spirituality.

Transgender, Intersex, and Biblical Interpretation is rather short, consisting of an introduction and five chapters. In the introduction, Hornsby presents the dominant theme of the book: The great evil in the world and the field of biblical interpretation is heteronormativity, the dominant system which affirms gender binary and heterosexuality as the moral norm for sexual relationships. According to Hornsby, this system produces the even greater evil of heterosexism, defined as a "systematic social bias that stems from heteronormativity in which society rewards heterosexuals (in the form of economic benefits and civil rights) and punishes all other sexualities" (2). The rest of the book is an attempt to deconstruct heteronormativity.

Hornsby authors Chapter 1, titled "Gender Dualism, or the Big Lie," and she asserts people are "neither one gender nor another but maybe one of thousands on a scale" (14). In Chapter 2, Guest gives a transgender reading of Genesis 1, and then, in chapter 3, she gives an example of how a transgender person might deconstruct Scripture using as an example the story of Jehu and Jezebel from 2 Kings 9 – 10. In chapter 4, Hornsby brings up a tired view of the New Testament which sees Jesus as the hero and Paul as the heterosexist villain forcing the gender binary on the church. Finally, in chapter 5, Hornsby uses the internet phenomenon of the "Slender Man" as a way of addressing what she calls the "fiction of a gender binary," (95) and closes with an attack on capitalism.

The book has strong overtones of Marxist theory regarding class warfare. Heteronormative conservative Christians are the bourgeoisie exploiting the transgender proletariat. Guest even admits what is really at stake is *power* (42). The gender binary supposedly "creates cheap labor, which produces profit" (102). In a book purportedly about biblical interpretation, Hornsby concludes with a plea for Marxist redistribution of wealth, or something similar, saying that a trans-hermeneutic is the key to opposing the real threat to peace in the world – "a neoliberal capitalism born of greed" (103). One can almost hear the call, "Liberal deconstructing theologians, unite! All you have to lose is your chains!"

Guest's handling of Genesis 1 is mind-numbingly painful to read. Borrowing from well-worn liberal theories long ago answered by robust scholarship, she insists the word *tehom* is a reference to the pagan goddess Tiamat. For Guest, Tiamat/*tehom* is *transgender,* and should be properly addressed by the gender-bending title "Mixter Tehom" (25). But, as Kenneth Matthews has noted, the idea that the Hebrew word

tehom is borrowed from Tiamat has been shown to be wrong.[1] We now know that both the Babylonian and Hebrew words for "ocean" are related to a common Semitic word, and therefore the Hebrew word is not a derivative of Tiamat linguistically. Guest's interpretation tells us less about the Bible and more about her own pagan worldview.

In one of the more revealingly honest statements, Hornsby says, "On a fundamental level, the trans person's battle is about personal autonomy" (8). Conservative Christians and Hornsby agree here: The central issue is radical moral autonomy. The idolatry of radical moral autonomy is in the crosshairs of Paul's critique of human sinfulness in Romans 1:18 – 32. Yet, neither Hornsby nor Guest wrestle with what is lost in a society if their moral vision becomes triumphant in the church and culture. For all of Hornsby and Guest's concern about violence, cultures based on their worldview soon devolve into enraged shouting matches between identity-groups, asserting rights and using violence to secure their own power over opponents.

Transgender, Intersex, and Biblical Interpretation would be laughable except that it was published by the Society for Biblical Literature and is taken seriously by people searching for answers to profoundly complex problems regarding the temptation to be gender-nonconforming. The gender-binary is not forced on the world by evil conservative Christians; the gender-binary occurs naturally as part of God's design. This is why gender-reassignment surgery is so very painful, because it is fighting against the Creator. This is not a book about biblical interpretation; this is a disorganized, rambling screed with Marxist overtones about why people should not believe the Bible.

J. Alan Branch
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

[1] Kenneth Matthews, *Genesis 1 – 11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1a (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 133.

***Early Judaism: New Insights and Scholarship*. Jewish Studies in the Twenty-First Century. Edited by Frederick E. Greenspahn. New York: New York University Press, 2018. 272 pp. $28.00, Paperback. ISBN 9781479809905.**

In *Early Judaism: New Insights and Scholarship*, Frederick Greenspahn has assembled an informative collection of essays written by leading scholars in their respective fields. This volume is part of the series Jewish Studies in the Twenty-First Century, produced by New York University Press. The purpose of this series is to communicate the latest research on Jewish studies "to a wider public of students and educated readers outside of the academy." As the title suggests, *Early Judaism: New Insights and Scholarship* is not a standard introductory textbook to early Judaism. Rather, this collection of essays provides a survey of the current state of scholarship on several areas within the study of early Judaism.

The book consists of nine chapters plus a brief introduction and conclusion. The chapters are divided into two sections: Part I: Early Diversity (chapters 1–5) and Part II: Emerging Normativity (chapters 6–9). In chapter 1, "The Dead Sea Scrolls," James VanderKam examines three broad topics which have been prominent in recent research on the scrolls: the archaeology of Khirbet Qumran, the identity of the community associated with the scrolls, and questions related to the biblical scrolls discovered at Qumran. Chapter 2 is an essay by Martha Himmelfarb entitled, "Second Temple Literature outside the Canon." Himmelfarb discusses two main issues: new developments in the study of apocalyptic literature and the role and significance of pseudepigraphic texts in early Christianity. Erich S. Gruen's essay in chapter 3, entitled "Diaspora and the 'Assimilated' Jew," discusses Jewish identity and acculturation in the late Second Temple period. Gruen argues that most Jews lived in a complex and dynamic reciprocal relationship with their surroundings, neither retreating into cultural isolation nor fully assimilating to their cultural context. In chapter 4, Seth Schwartz poses the question, "Were the Ancient Jews a Nation?" Schwartz examines how ancient Jews conceptualized their collective identity and how modern Zionist and liberal/diaspora historians have shaped the scholarly discussion of ancient Jewish identity. In chapter 5, "How Christianity Parted from Judaism," Adele Reinhartz addresses the question: Why,

how, and when did early Christians differentiate themselves from other Jewish groups, thus becoming independent from Judaism?

The second part of *Early Judaism: New Insights and Scholarship* begins in chapter 6 with Steven Fine's essay, "The Emergence of the Synagogue." Fine uses two archaeological discoveries, the Theodotus inscription from Jerusalem and the Dura Europos synagogue in Syria, to explore the development of synagogues in the first through third centuries C.E. In chapter 7, "New Directions in Understanding Jewish Liturgy," Ruth Langer examines the current state of research on Jewish liturgical prayer in the late Second Temple period and its relevance for understanding the formation and development of rabbinic liturgical prayer. Elizabeth Shanks Alexander's essay in chapter 8, entitled "Ancient Jewish Gender," focuses on three areas in which the rabbinic literature touches on the lives of Jewish women: commandments related to women, rituals connected with menstruation, and instructions pertaining to domesticity. In chapter 9, "Inventing Rabbis," Christine Hayes looks at the "myth of origins," which the rabbis constructed to legitimate themselves, and she inquires whether it is possible to uncover the reality behind the myth.

There are two main themes which unite the individual essays together as a coherent whole. One of the overarching themes of this book is the diversity and fluidity of early Judaism, both in the late Second Temple and early rabbinic periods. Another relevant theme, highlighted in several of the essays, is how an understanding of early Judaism can shed light on modern Jews and their situation. These two themes are the subject of Robert Goldenberg's concluding essay entitled, "In My Beginning Is My End."

Early Judaism: New Insights and Scholarship is designed to be accessible to students and non-specialist readers who have an interest in early Judaism, the New Testament, or early rabbinic history and literature. For the most part, the book succeeds in this endeavor. The authors avoid unnecessary technical terminology, and when technical terms are used, they are accompanied by a brief explanation. The authors avoid getting bogged down in scholarly minutia and debates, although they do not sacrifice precision in the process. In addition, scholarly references are cited as endnotes to facilitate readability.

The style and scope of each essay differs from chapter to chapter. Some essays are more general and introductory (such as chapter 9), while

others have a narrower focus or are more specialized in nature (such as chapters 7 and 8). A few of the essays are a bit idiosyncratic in that they reflect the particular interests of the author. For example, Steven Fine's enlightening essay focuses heavily on art interpretation and art history as they pertain to the Dura Europos synagogue.

The greatest difficulty with *Early Judaism: New Insights and Scholarship* is its usability. It is hard to know what context this book is most suitable for. It is not an introductory handbook, although it is written to a non-specialist audience. Some of the essays would be appropriate for use in a college or seminary classroom, although the book as a whole would not make a good textbook. It might serve as a companion volume to some of the standard handbooks on early Judaism. In the end, this collection of essays will probably be most useful to scholars who specialize in early Judaism, the New Testament, or rabbinic Judaism as a way of becoming acquainted with the current issues outside their particular areas of interest.

Overall, *Early Judaism: New Insights and Scholarship* is an enjoyable and informative text for those who have an interest in late Second Temple or rabbinic Judaism. Readers will greatly benefit from the wealth of knowledge that the authors bring to their respective fields and the broad range of topics covered in this book.

Eric R. Montgomery
International Graduate School of Leadership, Manila, Philippines

***The Works of William Perkins*: *Volume 5*. By William Perkins. Edited by Ryan Hurd. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017. 509 pp. $50.00, Hardcover. ISBN 1601785682.**

Despite William Perkins being "Elizabethan England's greatest Protestant theologian" (Alec Ryrie, *Unbelievers*, p. 109), and the fact that by the time of Perkins's death in 1602, Perkins's writings in England outsold those of Calvin, Beza, and Bullinger combined, Perkins's legacy languished for centuries. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Perkins amounted to a relatively small blip on the radar of both historians and historically-minded pastors. His works had not been reprinted in their

entirety since the seventeenth century. Those interested in Perkins's corpus had to read the few partial reprints that existed or obtain access to a rare book collection. Reformation Heritage Books filled this lacuna with its 10-volume republication of the entire *Works of William Perkins*, issued from 2014 through 2020.

Ryan Hurd, editor of Volume 5, also co-edited Volume 3 of *The Works of William Perkins*. As the general preface to Volume 5 notes, the modern publication of Perkins's works is newly typeset and contains updated spelling and capitalization. Old form English is updated to contemporary English. However, and crucially, the original words are not updated to modern synonyms nor is the word order altered. These choices achieve an important and felicitous balance between maintaining fidelity to the original words, structures, and thoughts of Perkins, while improving readability by making some updates (e.g., "thou dost" becomes "you do").

The first work in Volume 5, "An Exposition of the Creed," is a four-hundred-page treatise dedicated to explicating the Apostle's Creed. Perkins moves through the pericope in order, spending a particularly significant amount of time discussing questions of God's sovereignty. In most sections, Perkins explains the meaning of a phrase, discusses the benefits of a doctrine, and outlines the duties entailed by the doctrine. He also often raises and answers objections to the views he espouses.

The second work in Volume 5, "An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer," is a short, roughly seventy- page, treatise. Perkins chronologically divides the prayer into three parts: a preface, six petitions, and a testification of faith to conclude. Within each section, Perkins explicates the meaning of the given words, the wants "to be bewailed" and the "graces to be desired." Perkins also dedicates time to the "uses," or applications, of certain phrases in the Lord's Prayer.

The final work in Volume 5, "The Foundation of Christian Religion Gathered into Six *Principles*," is a very short, roughly thirty page, work wherein Perkins uses a catechetical format to elucidate six core doctrines: the Triune God, sin, salvation accomplished, salvation applied, preaching, and final judgment. Perkins explicates these six principles using a number of supporting Scriptures as well as follow-up questions. The editor of Volume 5, Ryan Hurd, has reformatted the work to make reading the catechetical content easier without altering the content.

In all three works of Volume 5, a few themes emerge repeatedly. First, Perkins emphasizes, again and again, the sovereignty of God over

mankind, sin, salvation, and indeed, all of creation. Perkins defends God's sovereignty over sin while vociferously maintaining that God is entirely morally pure in his actions. In addition, Perkins explicates the extent of humanity's depravity and the ensuing helplessness of humankind. Further, Perkins touches hundreds of times on the conscience, the use of the conscience, the role of the conscience, and the importance of the conscience. Perkins also makes many references or applications to the dangers of the Roman Catholic church. A discussion of Christology can quickly transition to an attack on transubstantiation, and then promptly return to Christology.

Volume 5 of *The Works of William Perkins* could be improved in a few ways, especially for scholars who want to read this text with an eye to the original printings. First, in Hurd's introduction to the volume, Hurd proffers no explanation of why the modern reprint is based upon one particular original printing of Perkins's treatise and not another. For example, why did Volume 5 rely upon the 1635 edition of Perkins's *Exposition of the Symbol* instead of the 1595, 1596, 1597, 1611, 1616, or 1631 printing of the work? Richard Muller, in his recent magisterial treatment of Perkins (Oxford University Press, 2020), uses pre-1600 printings of the *Exposition of the Symbol*. Second, as scholars, most notably Donald McKim, pointed out, Ramism, with its method of detailed divisions, influenced Perkins. Given this, it is surprising and unhelpful that the table of contents does not contain a more detailed outline of the reprinted treatises. Further, the 1635 printing of the *Exposition of the Symbol* has a table of contents with about forty entries. Third, the topic index, while helpful, is too sparse. For example, Perkins discusses the topic of unbelief at length yet the entries for "atheists" and "unbelief" contain a meager three entries each. Fourth, a handful of transcription errors litter the text. For example, the word "hades" or "hell" is written as "a@dhj" (232).

In the last decade, *The Works of William Perkins*—coupled with new books on Perkins by W. B. Patterson, Richard Muller, and Andrew Ballitch, and major articles or chapters on Perkins by Leif Dixon, Joel Beeke, and others—has substantially expanded Perkins scholarship and made Perkins accessible to the masses. *The Works of William Perkins* is affordable, accessible (hardcover and e-book), readable (a nice typeset), and easily understandable to those lacking experience reading early modern books. Nonetheless, these reprints do not compromise fidelity

to the original text. Scholars, pastors, theologians, and laity can benefit from *The Works of William Perkins*.

Eric Beach
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*. By John S. Hammett. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2019. 400 pp. $25.99, Paperback. ISBN 9780825445118.**

Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches first appeared in 2005. John Hammett, who is the John Leadley Dagg Chair of Systematic Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, says that since the publication of the first edition, "There has been a welcome renaissance in writings on ecclesiology, especially from a Baptist perspective" (7). Because of these new additions to the field, such as the numerous volumes produced by Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, as well as Gregg Allison's *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church,* Hammett saw the need to update his work. While the overall shape of *Biblical Foundations* remains intact from the original edition, he notes that he reworked multiple chapters and incorporated research he has done since the original publication.

Hammett divides the book into five sections that each address a vital question regarding the church. The first section discusses the question, "What is the church?" Hammett begins by laying out a biblical overview of the doctrine of the church, touching on the far-reaching topic of the continuity and discontinuity between the people of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Besides looking at the usage of *ekklesia* in the New Testament, Hammett shows how New Testament writers pick up images from the Old Testament, such as temple or family, and apply it to the church. Next, he turns to the historical marks of the church, starting with the marks listed in the Nicene Creed: oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity (57). While these four marks play an important role in describing the universal church, Hammett argues that they should not be seen as "comprehensive or definitive in outlining

what the church is" (68). He moves on to discuss the marks of a true church as described in the Reformation: the right preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments. Hammett closes out the first section with a chapter of practical application stemming from the biblical and historical territory just covered.

In Part Two, Hammett answers the question, "Who is the church?" As one would imagine in a book on Baptist ecclesiology, Hammett spends significant time unpacking regenerate church membership, or what he calls the "Baptist mark of the church" (91). After giving a biblical rationale for the doctrine, he turns to examine the historical development of the church as a mixed body versus the development of the Baptist tradition. Hammett goes on to show how regenerate church membership lies at the heart of Baptist ecclesiology, demonstrating how it results in believer's baptism, congregational church government, and practicing church discipline. In chapter five, Hammett shows his pastoral heart as he examines the decline of regenerate church membership in modern times before suggesting a path forward that includes the renewed importance of church covenants, more thoughtful membership and baptismal processes, and a recovery of redemptive church discipline.

Having laid the foundation of regenerate church membership, Hammett turns in the third section to the question, "How is the church governed?" He makes a convincing argument for the biblical case for congregationalism before he moves to discuss meaningful church membership, which is a new chapter added to this second edition. Reclaiming meaningful membership is vital, as "it is impossible to have a healthy church without healthy church members" (174). Following the discussion of membership, Hammett turns to the two offices of the church: elders and deacons. Chapter eight's treatment of elders is a particularly balanced and helpful chapter, as he biblically and wisely makes the case for a plurality of godly pastors in each congregation while acknowledging that there is no binding command in Scripture that churches be led by a plurality. It is not uncommon for Southern Baptist churches to have deacons functioning as quasi-elders, but Hammett shows that the office of deacon is fundamentally about "caring for material needs and general serving" (222).

The fourth section answers the question, "What does the church do?" Chapters 10 and 11 survey the ministries of the church, as well as the ordinances. Using Acts 2:42–47 as a paradigm, Hammett makes the case

for a fivefold division of ministry: teaching, fellowship, worship, service, and evangelism. The presence of these "five ministries of the church serve as a helpful mark to distinguish churches from parachurch groups today" (253–254). Following Hammett's treatment of church ministries, he moves on to the two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Though his explanation of believer's baptism by immersion will likely not convince the committed paedobaptist, Hammett gives a clear biblical rationale for the baptistic understanding of baptism, and he even wades into the discussion of the timing of baptism, urging churches to exercise patience in evaluating credible professions of faith before pursuing baptism, especially in the case of younger children. He then moves to discuss the Lord's Supper, which he describes as "similar to an anniversary celebration in which the wedding vows are renewed" (318). Of particular interest to many readers familiar with debates within baptistic circles is Hammett's discussion of open versus closed communion. Hammett gives a fair treatment of the opposing positions, acknowledging that open communion is currently the prominent practice in Baptist churches, but he ultimately argues for closed communion.

In the final section, Hammett seeks to answer, "Where is the church going?" Chapter twelve, which was completely reworked from the book's first edition, surveys the areas where the religious and cultural landscape has changed—such as sexual identity and the decline in religious involvement—and critically evaluates evangelicals' responses to these trends. For instance, though the seeker movement and missional church movement have produced some unhealthy fruit, Hammett points out that they have also been useful in helping Christians see the importance of contextualization and engaging culture. He also sees the growth of multisite models as a result of the shifting landscape. Though Hammett is sympathetic to many of the views of those in the 9Marks stream, he writes, "I have not found any arguments against multisite churches that have convinced me that all forms of multisites are biblically or theologically invalid" (360). Moving from trends in North America, Hammett closes out the book by reflecting on global trends, such as the continued growth of charismatic churches and the growth of Christianity in the Global South, as well as advances in global theological education. These trends, both domestic and global, are issues that Baptists will need to wrestle with as they entrust the faith to the next generation.

John Hammett has written a comprehensive Baptist ecclesiology that is accessible beyond the classroom. In addition, readers of *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches* will benefit not only from the book's thoroughly biblical argumentation but also from its tone and balance. Hammett demonstrates humility as he critically interacts with various debates, willingly acknowledging strengths of opposing viewpoints, while also freely admitting weaknesses in some of his own positions. Thus, Hammett gives readers a charitable Baptist ecclesiology, showing how to hold fast to baptistic convictions and to do so in humility and grace.

Cody A. Cunningham
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Faithful Spy: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Plot to Kill Hitler*. By John Hendrix. New York: Amulet Books, 2018. 175 pp. $24.99, Hardcover. ISBN 9781419728389.**

Author and illustrator John Hendrix has presented a clever and compelling historical narrative about one of the most disturbing periods of human history. *The Faithful Spy* tells the story of how the devout and faithful theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer sought to reconcile the "aroma of death surrounding Hitler in his treatment of Jewish people" (Introduction) with his biblical belief to defend the cause of righteousness against seditious evil behavior opposed to the things of God. Hendrix states, "This book follows the life of the man Dietrich Bonhoeffer. But it is equally a story of the German resistance. It is a story that often goes untold" (Introduction).

At first glance, this work appears in the form of a graphic novel. Each page is filled with creative illustrative work that lends a visual adaptation to the narrative presented. The reader will quickly identify that *Faithful Spy* is not organized in the traditional form as the typical, historical non-fiction publication. There is neither a Table of Contents nor titled introduction and preface pages. The copyright, publisher information, and Author's Note are located at end of the book. The biographical and historical information Hendrix offers, alongside the illustrations, clearly

reveals his scholastic understanding of Bonhoeffer's life and relationship to the evil intent of Hitler.

Regardless of the illustrative presentation, the compilation of biographical information and the character development of Bonhoeffer as a Christian during the rise of Hitler are richly scholastic. The opening portion of the book provides familial history of Bonhoeffer's ancestry and his early days in the Lutheran church. Hendrix does a wonderful job drawing the reader into the suffering of young Bonhoeffer that led him to the mature decision of choosing a life of theology rather than following in the family tradition of "lawyers and scientists" (12). Born in 1906, Dietrich witnessed the horrors of the Great War, which had taken the life of his brother Walter in 1918. In 1920, at the age of fourteen and to the chagrin of his siblings, Bonhoeffer declared to his family he was a theologian (12).

The opening sections of the book are more than just a biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Hendrix shows his historical prowess by taking the reader on a cultural, political, and economic journey of how the Great War was the foundational catalyst for the rise of an evil tyrant. Hendrix revealed that after the War, "Millions of people in Germany were out of work…poor, hungry and ashamed of being a defeated people" (16). The War had bankrupted Germany and the whole of society had lost confidence in themselves and their government. Then, in the 1920s, Adolf Hitler began his intentional rise to take the mantel of the country and lead the people out of their shameful past.

Along with the biography of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiastical choice, this work weaves the biography of how Hitler came to power. Hendrix offers the reader explanations on terms familiar to many, but their definitions are often historically unknown terms like *gestapo*, *Heil Hitler*, and *Third Reich*. One of the most staggering realities that Hendrix brings to light was how Hitler had swayed the Generals of the Army to change the oath they swore from an oath to Germany to an oath of allegiance to himself. Thus, making Hitler an "omnipresent dictator" (61). Hendrix expressed, "The Christian faith had been shipwrecked on the rocks of Hitler's Reich" (51). Bonhoeffer was witness to pastors changing their loyalties from Christ to Hitler by the wearing of the symbol of the Nazi party on their lapels and ending their worship services with the official Hitler salute rather than the traditional Christian doxology.

The middle portion of the book walks through how Bonhoeffer became more than a theological teacher and minister. At the dawn of the second World War, Bonhoeffer became the righteous rebel against evil leadership by taking charge of an "illegal" seminary in an attempt to help young theologians remain faithful to the cause of Christ. Through words and illustrations, the reader's emotions are drawn to each page as "Dietrich's resolve to resist Hitler had swelled into a holy anger" (78).

The final portion of the book, and its main thesis, reveals Bonhoeffer's moral decision to be part of a plot to assassinate Hitler. The strength of this narrative is how Hendrix unravels the history of how Bonhoeffer, a devout follower of Christ and a biblical theologian, came to the decision to be part of a plot to kill an evil man. Hendrix did not declare one way or the other if he agreed or disagreed with Dietrich's moral choice. The decision to defend the actions of Bonhoeffer is left to the reader by allowing the historical narrative to speak for itself.

The Faithful Spy is a fast and entertaining read that challenges the Christian reader to self-examine their imbedded, biblical moral compass by stepping into the life and times of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his response to evil. Hendrix said it well in his Author's Note at the conclusion of the book, "If we look for a motivation for [Bonhoeffer's] decisions outside his furious belief in God's certainty, we will miss the very lesson he offers" (169). For Bonhoeffer, his response was less a conspiracy to kill evil than it was an "unswerving belief in sacrifice" based on his faith and love for Christ. "Faith, without action, is no faith at all. Love, without sacrifice, is no love at all" (169).

R. M. Skip Ferris
California Baptist University

***Darkness Falls on the Land of Light: Experiencing Religious Awakenings in Eighteenth-Century New England*. By Douglas L. Winiarski. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017. xxii+ 607 pp. $49.95, Hardback. ISBN 9781469628264.**

Douglas L. Winiarski, Professor of Religious Studies and American Studies and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Richmond, has produced a number of scholarly articles and books, including his most recent tome, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light: Experiencing Religious Awakenings in Eighteenth-Century New England*, published by the University of North Carolina Press. In this book, Winiarski displays his skills as a historian and his ability to navigate archives with ease and precision. In it, he "examines the breakdown of New England Congregationalism and the rise of American evangelicalism during the eighteenth century" (8). This work proves to be the most robust assessment of the Awakenings of the eighteenth century.

In Part One, Winiarski describes "Godly Walkers" as individuals who shared a common vocabulary in their religious beliefs as they pursued a godly lifestyle. The community emphasized holy living – godly walking – to avoid judgment from God. Winiarski argues that a godly walk secured peace and prosperity in the minds of the congregants; it offered assurance of salvation. Church membership proved to be concerned more with life development than with theological convictions and authentic conversions. It indicated more than personal experience; it revealed social progression and family conservation. At the same time, many like Hannah Duston gave thanks for being "born in the Land of Light" (87). Godly walking required adherence to biblical instructions, and it extended to ethical living in society. Individuals established clear devotional practices to ensure proper living in the "Land of Light."

In Part Two, Winiarski transitions to examine the rise of George Whitefield and his response to godly walkers. He argues, "Whitefield directly repudiated the ideal of the godly walk" (135). Whitefield and his itinerants challenged godly walkers and their sense of security by questioning church membership, family history, and devotional practices. Whitefield's modified preaching style that combined warm and theatrical techniques emphasized authentic conversions. As Whitefield and others preached around the colonies, regional responses to the

gospel led to "a Revival of Religion" (159). Whitefield and others began to change the language for many of the godly walkers. Regeneration, previously thought to take place over an extended period of time, was now viewed as instantaneous. While the language and experience changed, the challenges did as well.

As Whitefield and others promoted this fresh experience of revival, many found the responses to go beyond the biblical norms. Part Three explores the "enthusiasm" that emerged among New Englanders. Many struggled to distinguish between authentic expressions of awakening and the enthusiasm of religious fanatics. Winiarski observes "the three most controversial innovations of the revivals: exercised bodies, biblical impulses, and revelatory visions of the Book of Life" (213). The doctrine of the Holy Spirit proved significant in the evaluation. Whitefield, Edwards, and others sought to help people understand if a person had experienced the regenerating work of the Spirit of God. For individuals like Joseph Pitkin, bodily responses, biblical language and expressions, and visions alluded to and appeared to confirm a person's spiritual position.

In Part Four, Winiarski describes the response of religious radicals toward their objectors. In the eyes of the "people called *New Lights*," those who objected to the revivals were unconverted (327). Through examining the New London bonfires of 1743 and James Davenport's response, Winiarski illustrates the effects of the revivals on the community as a whole. Even those in support of the revivals experienced disagreement. The combination of religious revival and social unrest proved complex; religious and civil disputes often came hand-in-hand. Many rallied against those who opposed the revivals, judged others' religious experiences, and commissioned themselves to preach without ecclesiastical endorsement (318).

In Part Five, Winiarski continues exploring the development of early evangelicalism in the colonies. The religious culture in the years leading up to the 1740s was changing, but it developed rapidly in the decades that followed. Congregational ministers sought to control the religious culture. But just as the political and economic situations changed, so the landscape of the church changed. As Winiarski explains, "churches of the standing order fell into steep decline, as the land of light devolved into a competitive marketplace of denominations and sects" (373). Individuals like Sarah Osborn pushed the limits of traditional roles and many learned

to see conversion in new ways. While many resisted, clergy began to experience increased "reconciliation, toleration, and ecumenism" after the revivals (497). With increased options for church tradition, the laity found greater empowerment in the later part of the eighteenth century (501).

The power and authority of Winiarski's *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light* comes in various ways. While the argument can be difficult to trace, and the content at times overwhelming in size, Winiarski masterfully tells the story of religious experience in the lives of well-known and seemingly unknown persons. His diligent archival work proves to be rich and robust. He describes the influence of figures such as William Tennent, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield, but he also gives significant attention to the less-known voices of the time, including John Brown (53) and Peter Thacher (187). He focuses on individuals and their accounts, allowing their voices to be heard in the present. Winiarski challenges the traditional views of the Awakenings and expands the reader's understanding of the complexity of religious experience in the eighteenth century. The diversity of religious experience emerges without question, but the necessity of understanding these experiences remains clear. Those in the eighteenth century relied on God's Spirit and his Word to know, love, and follow him.

Aaron L. Lumpkin
Missouri Baptist University, St. Louis, MO

***The Whole Counsel of God: Why and How to Preach the Entire Bible.* By Tim Patrick and Andrew Reid. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020. 256 pp. $17.99, Paperback. ISBN 9781433560071.**

The Apostle Paul famously said, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1 ESV). One way some pastors try to imitate Paul is through seeking to declare to their congregations the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27 ESV). A common manner of pursuing that desire is to preach through books of the Bible. Some (e.g., many Calvary Chapel pastors) approach this endeavor by progressing straight through the Scriptures, Genesis to Revelation. Others strive to preach through all the Bible's

books, though not consecutively in the order in which they appear in the Bible. Either way, the thought is that, by preaching through every biblical book, one preaches the whole counsel of God. Authors Tim Patrick and Andrew Reid agree with that thought but believe there is a better way to accomplish the goal than simply by preaching through books. In their book, *The Whole Counsel of God,* they explain that better way.

Both authors have experience serving "as preachers in churches for years" (82). Additionally, the book's back cover lists Tim Patrick as "principal of the Bible College of South Australia," where he "lectures in theology and practical ministry." It lists Andrew Reid as "principal of the Evangelical Theological College of Asia in Singapore," having previously lectured "in Old Testament, hermeneutics, and Hebrew at Ridley College, Melbourne." Such experience in both pastoral ministry and theological education qualifies these men to write on this subject.

The book's heartbeat sounds forth early in the Introduction: "[T]he people of God need to know God and his ways, but they cannot know God and his ways without knowing his word" (19). That being so, there is a call that runs throughout this book for pastors to preach the Word. Most pastors may think they are already doing that, but Patrick and Reid contend that what a lot of churches offer is "a light, thin, hotchpotch diet of Scripture" (22). This, they declare, "is not what God wants for his people," even when the Scripture is well taught (22). Hence, the authors encourage preachers "to make it their goal to preach the *entire* Bible," for "*all of it* is the word of God for us" (22). They hope this book will help "preachers to have a really decent shot at preaching through the entire Bible over long-term ministries to their congregation" (23).

That concept of long-term ministry in one place is key to achieving, in the purest sense, the direct challenge the authors lay down, which is that "all vocational preachers should set themselves the goal of preaching through the entire Bible over a thirty-five-year period" (81). It makes sense that this goal should require such a length of time, for this is a call to preach the whole counsel of God—not surveys of books or summaries of chapters, but "every chapter of every book, and every verse of every chapter" (81). The authors realize that this challenge might sound "outrageous," but they point out that "it is really little more than calling preachers to convert their basic beliefs about the Bible into a practical commitment" (81).

Patrick and Reid realize that many pastors do preach through entire books of the Bible and that this approach can eventually lead to preaching the whole counsel of God. However, they propose preaching in a way that gives the congregation a more balanced diet of the Scriptures while not missing any verses of Scripture. The Bible, they explain, is divisible into various sections (e.g., Law, Prophets, Writings, etc.). Additionally, individual books can also have natural divisions within them. As an example, they note Genesis can be divided into six major sections: Genesis 1-3, 4-11, 12-17, 18-25, 26-36, and 37-50 (147). A pastor following their plan might preach a series on the first section of Genesis, chapters 1-3. Then, rather than continuing through Genesis over the next few months or years, he might preach a major section of, say, a Gospel. Having completed that series, he might preach an entire minor prophet (or a section of a minor prophet), and so on, cycling through the major divisions of the Bible. This balanced-diet approach to preaching the whole counsel of God does not linger for long periods of time in any one section of the Bible. The pastor who has preached Genesis 1-3 and then moved on to other sections of the Bible, when he cycles back to the Pentateuch, picks up where he left off and preaches the next major section of Genesis. He then cycles through the Bible's major divisions again, doing this until he has preached everything. Eventually, he preaches every verse of every book but not one entire book at a time (except for shorter books). The congregation gets a balanced diet from the whole of Scripture, with its varied styles, year after year and is helped to see Scripture's parts within the context of its whole.

The book lays all of this out in three parts. Part one sets forth the philosophical and theological foundations for the plan, arguing for the importance of preaching the whole Bible and briefly discussing the nature of preaching and of Scripture, as well as the perils of failing to preach the whole Bible. Part two explains how to preach the whole Bible. It is here that the plan summarized above is laid out in detail, first addressing the importance of "having a conscious theology, or theological framework," to help "bring a common mind to each part of Scripture and to interpret it consistently" (89), and then discussing matters such as big-picture planning, choosing which books to preach, planning preaching series, and establishing a preaching calendar. Charts, sample calendars, and examples of Bible book divisions are provided for clarity and for guidance in utilizing the plan. Part three addresses practical and

pastoral considerations, including facing unexpected and inevitable disruptions to the program. It also touches on the reality that many pastors will not remain with one congregation for the thirty-five years necessary to implement this plan fully with one congregation. Throughout, the authors act more as guides than law makers, offering suggestions and philosophical considerations while leaving it to each pastor to customize his own preaching plan. The detail of part two can seem tedious at times, but those who wish to utilize the plan will likely appreciate the detailed guidance.

If one seeks a book on *how* to preach, this is not that book. *The Whole Counsel of God* "is about *what to preach*, and about *how to plan and manage a long-range, ordered, and deliberate preaching program*" (23). Its high view of Scripture and emphasis on the importance of Scripture's totality to spiritual growth and church health are laudable. It is a well-written, well-argued read that provokes thought regarding the planning of what to preach next and how such plans affect the spiritual diet of a congregation. For the pastor who typically gives cursory thought to such matters, it could be an important book.

Mark Drinnenberg
Living Word Fellowship, Volo, IL

***Visual Outline of the New Testament: Revised and Expanded*. By M. Scott Bashoor. El Cajon, CA: Southern California Seminary Press, 2020. 108 pp. $24.99, Paperback. ISBN 9780986444258.**

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said, "One of the first things a preacher has to learn is to talk to his texts. They talk to you, and you must talk to them."[2] In many ways, Bible study and sermon preparation is a conversation. However, like all conversationalists, the preacher is not infallible. For various reasons he may miss the main point, muddle up the syntax, struggle to find the natural breaks and transitions within the Scriptural text, or fail to see how one pericope relates to the rest of the

[2]D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 215.

author's conversation. When such miscommunications occur, a preacher must enlist his friends for help—his books.

While commentaries and study tools should not be elevated to the same level as Scripture, these resources can often bring much needed clarity. A recently revised "friend of preachers" is M. Scott Bashoor's *Visual Outline Charts of the New Testament* (VOCNT) published by Southern California Seminary Press. M. Scott Bashoor comes from a largely Reformed heritage, serving on the faculty of Master's University and Seminary (Los Angeles, CA) as well as serving as co-pastor of Community Bible Church (Anaheim, CA). His experience as a professor and a pastor brings together an academic precision and a pastoral concern to focus on the main points and literary structure of the New Testament (NT) text.

Bashoor admits that his book of charts is not intended to supplant commentaries and other valuable resources. Instead of dealing with the technical and lexical attributes of NT Scripture, the charts provide a "bird's eye view at various levels of altitude" (3)—and what a visually appealing bird's eye view at that. Visual learners will especially find these charts useful. Bashoor's charts are easy to navigate and outline NT books in a sensible way. Each section comes with a concise introduction that lays out the primary background and literary emphasis of the NT text at hand. Moreover, the charts are color-coded for quick and easy reference—green for the Gospels and Acts, blue for Pauline Epistles, and red for General Epistles and Revelation.

Maintaining the macro-level structure of each NT book, the author limits himself to one chart per page. At the top of the chart, he provides a simple purpose statement (no more than one or two sentences) and essential background information (e.g., date, recipient, and author). The upper-level rows provide sectional-breakups (e.g., "The King Formally Introduced to Israel" – Matthew 3:1-7-29, "The King's Authority Powerfully Displayed" – Matthew 8:1-11:1, "The King's Authority Increasingly Opposed" – Matthew 11:2-13:53). Further down the chart, Bashoor provides pericope-breakups (e.g., "John the Baptist's Preparatory Ministry" – Matthew 3:1-17, "Jesus' Wilderness Testing – Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus' Early Ministry" – 4:12-25).

One would be hard-pressed to find much in the way of critique of VOCNT, though a reader may certainly differ in his own outline of a NT book. In his introduction, Bashoor prepares his audience for such

potential differences by reminding them that his sole purpose is to provide a visual outline, not to chart the various scholarly debates concerning a book's structure. These charts are meant to be a guide and help, not the definitive conclusion to long-standing academic debates.

This consideration is also helpful when it comes to Bashoor's dating of NT books. For example, while most scholarship agrees with Markan priority, Bashoor holds to a Matthean priority and also presents Luke as being written prior to Mark's Gospel (Bashoor's date for Luke is AD 58–60). He does this without giving much of a rationale for his conclusion. While many scholars may respectfully disagree with his dating (including the author of this review), it is essential to keep in mind that historical background is only a small part of VOCNT. Bashoor's primary focus is on the literary structure. If a reader can get past minor differences in dating, the literary structures and purpose statements provided in the charts will prove immensely helpful.

The beneficiaries of Bashoor's recent work are vast. Not only does his book of charts provide help to preachers, but the volume is also accessible to new believers. With introductions that are simple and straightforward and charts that are clear and concise, any believer who is new to Bible-reading would be able to pick up VOCNT and follow the coherent outlines as a reading plan. Without a doubt, this book would make a great addition to any disciple-maker's toolbox.

Ultimately, this author recommends the revised and expanded edition of *Visual Outline Charts of the New Testament* with great confidence. It can easily become a faithful "friend" to preachers and Bible students alike and will be a great help when the conversation between text and reader becomes muddled. The charts throughout will provide either affirmation or a challenge to one's own literary structure and will force Bible readers to listen to the literary voice of Scripture with greater attention. Of course, the goal of this is for students of Scripture to "talk to the text" and let the text "talk back" to them.

Justin W. Jackson
Southern Bible Institute and College

***Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*. Ed. by Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. 372 pp. $27.49, Paperback. ISBN 9780830852574.**

Textual criticism is a technical field of work that has received much attention due to its relevance in debates over the reliability of Scripture. Because of this, most introductory works on Christian apologetics have a portion that dips their fingers into the complex world of textual criticism. I wish it could be said that these works have represented the information well, but alas, there have been numerous errors that are circling about in the popular Christian world. It would also be nice if it were just amateur, misinformed authors making large mistakes; however, sometimes Christian apologists have received their misinformation from some of the best textual critics, such as Bruce Metzger, Daniel Wallace, Kurt Aland, and others. Yet, the problem does not stop in the Christian world. Skeptical scholars, like Bart Ehrman, have won popular attention by packaging information about textual critical matters that skew the reality of the state of the New Testament text. *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* is a recent book in textual criticism edited by two scholars and bloggers at *Evangelical Textual Criticism,* Elijah Hixson (PhD, University of Edinburgh) and Peter Gurry (PhD, University of Cambridge). They have noticed this problem and have gathered a team of textual critics to provide helpful corrections to statistics and statements made by popular Christian and secular authors and scholars. The up-to-date and nuanced information in this book is vital for apologists, teachers who present information about textual criticism, and translation consultants who need to keep up with current advancements in scholarship in order to make wise decisions regarding variants.

The book is well-formatted and organized. Each chapter is authored by a scholar who is an expert on the content, whether through dissertation material or current research, which is often footnoted throughout the chapters. The information is relevant, clear, and concise. The "Key Takeaways" boxes at the end of each chapter are one of the most helpful features, reminding the reader of the most important information. The book begins with an introduction written by Hixson and Gurry, which is perhaps the most useful chapter in the entire book.

It lays out problems to address, gives a few examples of answers to some of the problems, and then summarizes each chapter in the book. They state, "We have organized the book into three broad categories. The first part deals generally with manuscripts, the second with the process of copying, and the third with the translation, citation, and canonization" (22).

Chapters 2 through 6 deal with the category of manuscripts. In chapter 2, Timothy N. Mitchell shows that there were standards in the ancient world that the final, authorized copy from the author would have been respected and not significantly altered. In chapter 3, Jacob W. Peterson shows the difficulty in counting manuscripts and why one should not give an exact number. In chapter 4, James B. Prothro examines the argument that compares the reliability of the Bible to other classical literature, encouraging apologists to use current information and to not devalue the reliability of classical works. In chapter 5, Elijah Hixson provides nuance to dating manuscripts. He specifically criticizes apologists who date P52 to specific early dates by explaining that paleography can only show a possible age range within 50 to 100 years. In chapter 6, Gregory R. Lanier defends utilizing later manuscripts and examining later scribal habits.

The next category of the book deals with the copying process. I found chapter 7 by Zachary J. Cole to be particularly insightful. He examines the scribal habits of several papyri and manuscripts to explain that many early scribes were well-trained and showed great care in their process. In chapter 8, Peter Malik shows evidence that scribes were careful to correct their mistakes and that they sometimes did it during the copying process. In chapter 9, S. Matthew Solomon says he is going to show what a full collation of the text of Philemon reveals, but then he concludes that most of the variants are insignificant. In chapter 10, Peter J. Gurry shows his math work and presents a compelling way to understand our large number of variants, deriving that there is "only one new variant per 434 words" (196). He concludes from this that the textual tradition is stable, but he does address variants which have significant theological implications. In chapter 11, Robert D. Marcello confronts Bart Ehrman and offers a more preferable understanding of orthodox corruption. He admits that some scribes did have a bias, but one should judge the scribal tendency using the entire manuscript rather than only select variants.

The last category contains several different topics. In chapter 12, Andrew Blaski exposes the myth that all but 11 verses of the NT can be reproduced from the early church fathers. Not only is the argument circular, but it is also based on a 19th century story containing much misinformation. In chapter 13, John D. Meade shows (with many helpful charts) that one should understand the canon using the early canon lists and not by the books that are included side-by-side in codices. In chapter 14, Jeremiah Coogan explains the difficulty of using early translations (i.e. Latin, Syriac, and Coptic) to make judgements about variants in the Greek text. In chapter 15, Edgar Battad Ebojo provides a perspective as both a trained textual critic and a translation consultant. He gives advice for ways to make footnotes about textual criticism more helpful by making clear distinctions between "alternative renderings" and "alternative readings" (314).

While most of the book is beneficial, there are a few shortcomings. First, there were times when I was irritated by the tone of the author because I did not feel like the myth being addressed deserved such harsh critique. For example, Peterson critiques the high numbers that are given for the amount of Greek manuscripts that are available. He cites several authors who place the number "a bit north of 5500" (52), yet he himself by the end of the chapter comes to a number around 5300. The difference in these numbers is not as substantial as his tone made it out to be. Second, because each chapter was written by a different author on a different topic, there were differing levels of knowledge required for understanding the chapters. Solomon's work in chapter 9 seemed to be written for someone with little background knowledge about the NA[28] apparatus or about collating manuscripts; but, Lanier, in chapter 6, uses findings from the ECM as evidence, when the audience targeted for the book probably does not understand what the ECM is at all. Third, the authors occasionally used the same verses in their examples. Sometimes, the recurrence was fine, since differing perspectives and repetition help to better grasp the content. However, there were times when one treatment of a passage was substantially better than another's, making for an awkward balance.

Despite these shortcomings, this book is a practical and useful contribution to the Church. I believe that it will become a new staple reference for apologists, pastors, teachers, translators, and even lay readers who cross paths with the work of textual criticism.

Luke T. Kieser
Wheaton College

***Michel Foucault*. Great Thinkers Series. By Christopher Watkin. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2018. 216 pp. $14.99, Paperback. ISBN 9781629953489.**

According to a 2020 statistic, French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault (1926–1984), is the most cited author in the world with a staggering one-million references.[3] One of the major voices of modernism, Foucault's works continue to be dissected, digested, and debated across numerous fields of study, from criminal justice and government to social theory and medicine. Despite the vast quantity of works written on this philosophical behemoth, few have taken the time to bring Foucault into a "faithful and honest dialogue" with the Bible (xxv).

In the latest addition to the Great Thinkers series, Christopher Watkin, a senior lecturer in French studies, does precisely that by bringing "Foucault's thought into conversation with the Bible and Reformed theology" (xxii). Watkin sets out to perform the daunting task of bringing the late, great French philosopher into an honest conversation with Bible passages, interacting with his thoughts on history, power, and identity. Watkin, in an optimistic fashion, states that "Foucault and the Bible are fundamentally at variance in their assumptions, yet have a great deal in common" (xxii). Foucault, known

[3] See "1360 Highly Cited Researchers (h>100) according to their Google Scholar Citations public profile," available at https://www.webometrics.info/en/hlargerthan100. This data was collected during the last week of April 2020.

for his boisterous lifestyle, was considered unique for his ability to deconstruct the power dynamics of institutions and practices. Likewise, Reformed theology seeks to "unearth the conventions and commonplaces of our modern world" (xxii).

In Part 1, Watkin conducts a survey of Foucault's works which deal primarily with the nature of human thought. *History of Madness* (1961) displays the early stages of Foucault's thought: "to encourage an awareness of the nature and origin of the assumptions that stand behind the reasons we offer when forced to justify them" (5). In order to properly understand Foucault's skepticism, Watkin offers a brief survey of the development of his notion of history. Watkin notes three major pillars of Foucault's understanding of history: (1) the major actors in history are not the people, but rather the concepts which motivate them; (2) the direction of history is not towards a fixed end, but rather is the result of cultural influence by a few dominant cultural groups; and (3) history is not meant to convey *all* the information as it occurred but to tell a limited story that conveys cultural concepts.

This groundwork comes to fruition in his ensuing works (*The Birth of the Clinic*, 1963; *The Order of Things*, 1966; *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1969), where Foucault "begins on the ground, scrutinizing particular forms of behavior" (11), in order to uncover the universal concepts that cause people to act in certain ways. Foucault sets out to discover the *episteme*, or the rules which govern a society, to determine how the structures enable the growth of knowledge according to the established cultural norms.

In Part 2, Watkin shifts to reflect on Foucault in dialogue with the Reformed understanding of the Bible. Foucault, through skepticism and search for the concepts which motivate actions in history, falls in line with some aspects of biblical truth. Most important to Watkin is the "great reversal" whereby "God subverts worldly expectations of wisdom and power by choosing the weak, foolish, or powerless to accomplish his purposes" (79). With Foucault's understanding of history in mind, Watkin explores Philippians 2:5–11 as a rebuttal to Foucault's claims that Christianity is a religion marked by self-renunciation. The Christian, according to Foucault, forfeits his own will and subjects himself to a pleasure deprived existence. Foucault views this deprivation as a means of control, whereby the church rules the people through their own self-renunciation. Foucault presents a sullen and somber picture of the

Christian existence, one which serves to warn against "sub-biblical legalism or blindly following religious teachers," but ultimately ignores the biblical pattern that to lose one's life is to gain it; to lose everything for Christ is to gain everything (Mt 16:25; Phil 3:8–9).

Watkin hones in further on Foucault's perception of power, revealing his greatest tie to and subsequent break from the Bible. To Foucault, the removal of a king beckons the installation of a new king with a more sinister grasp of power than the former. In stark contrast, the apostle Paul views power as an abrupt intrusion into the normal pattern of history. In one moment, a great reversal occurs which subverts all of history—the Lord becomes a servant to make his servants his children. By his death and resurrection, "Christ subverts the perennial dichotomy between the lord and the servant, between the humbled and the glorified: the Lord is forever the Servant, and the Servant is forever the Lord" (89).

In conclusion, Watkin asserts that Foucault shares one key similarity with the Bible: "to show that things can be otherwise" (90). This helpful point is adequately argued throughout the text. Despite his many counter-Christian ideals, Foucault's goals often cross paths with Christianity, most prominently in his observation that actions and motives are not often what they seem. However, his conclusions about Christianity display that even the wisest of this world fall far short from the wisdom of the cross. For anyone looking to bring this great thinker into dialogue with the Bible, this resource is highly recommended.

Edward Joseph LaRow III
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Can I Smoke Pot? Marijuana in Light of Scripture.* By Tom Breeden and Mark L. Ward, Jr. Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2016. 106 pp. $8.50, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-941114-20-9.**

Various states have legalized marijuana for both medical and recreational purposes, and since 2018, its use is completely legal in the nation of Canada. With the widespread popularity of marijuana, the question arises, "Is it morally permissible for Christians to smoke marijuana?" This is the question addressed by Tom Breeden and Mark Ward in *Can I Smoke*

Pot? Marijuana in Light of Scripture. Breeden is a graduate of the University of Virginia and Reformed Theological Seminary and is currently one of the pastors at Grace Community Church (PCA) in Charlottesville, VA. Ward earned a PhD in New Testament Interpretation from Bob Jones Seminary and is an academic editor at Lexham Press and a deacon at a Reformed Baptist church. Other works by Ward include *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible* (2018).

Breeden and Ward conclude that Christians should not use marijuana for non-medical reasons, saying, "In light of Scripture, Christians are not at liberty to consume marijuana recreationally" (81). They cautiously grant the possibility that marijuana can be used therapeutically and that there are "beneficial uses for the chemical compounds in marijuana" (80). The book has four chapters addressing the relationship of marijuana to creation, government, medicine, and its comparison to alcohol. The authors end with a brief conclusion summarizing their opposition to the recreational use of marijuana. There is also an appendix by Peter Krol titled "How to Use the Bible to Answer Your Questions."

Central to the argument in *Can I Smoke Pot?* is the analogy the authors draw between alcohol and marijuana. The authors say that one of them drinks alcohol in moderation while the other is a teetotaler (56). They articulate a moderation view of alcohol, saying that in the Old Testament, "alcohol is a good thing that is dangerously subject to abuse" (58), and that this stance is repeated in the New Testament as well. While acknowledging warnings about the dangers of alcohol, they assert, "Yet it is difficult, in light of the positive things the Bible says about alcohol, to conclude *no one* should drink" (65-66).

Breeden and Ward then argue that, while it is possible to drink alcohol in moderation without getting drunk, it is not possible to smoke marijuana without getting high. Based on research from the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, they say, "It takes very little marijuana to get high." They then conclude, "If this is true, then the recreational use of marijuana is sinful because of the Bible's teaching on intoxication" (73). *Can I Smoke Pot?* has several strengths. The authors rightly affirm that marijuana is a part of God's good creation. They make an important moral distinction when they say, "there is a major difference between saying there must be good purposes for marijuana and saying that all purposes of marijuana must be good" (17). Indeed, using marijuana for the purpose of getting stoned is not a good use of

God's creation. Many of the comments about the warnings of drunkenness in Scripture are very helpful and appropriately applied to the intoxicating effects of marijuana.

The book does not address marijuana's pharmacology nor does it substantially address its effects on the human body. No peer-reviewed articles regarding the effects of marijuana are cited. Marijuana's deleterious effects on the human brain are well-documented. For example, a longitudinal study from New Zealand was published in *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in 2012 that strongly associated marijuana use with a decline in IQ. Beyond just getting someone high for a brief period, marijuana use over a long period is associated with impaired cognitive functioning. The popular slang term "pot head" certainly has a basis in reality. Also, Breeden and Ward don't discuss the manner in which selective breeding has greatly increased the potency of the marijuana now being sold.

Discussions of medical marijuana could also use more itemizing of what cannabis-derived drugs the FDA has approved and a corresponding critique of expansive anecdotal claims about marijuana's purported healing properties. Furthermore, in current discussions about using marijuana for pain management, the average person assumes marijuana will be used to ameliorate the unpleasant effects of various cancer treatments, but there is some indication than many people seek medical marijuana privileges in order to cope with the despair of relational pain. In other words, getting a state-sanctioned medical marijuana card may merely be an excuse to smoke pot recreationally or to self-medicate for emotional trauma.

Finally, in the discussions concerning alcohol, a more robust explanation of the abstinence position would strengthen the book. Recognizing that neither author thinks the Bible strictly prohibits all alcohol consumption, a strong clarification of why many Christians abstain from alcohol – a moral stance which also has a long history in church life – could open up other vistas from which to view an abstinence stance regarding marijuana. Christians who abstain from alcohol would see abstaining from marijuana as a logical extension of their moral convictions about not drinking.

Can I Smoke Pot? is written in an accessible style and short length that makes it appealing to the people who most need to read the book – young people who do not often read! It offers cogent reasons for abstaining

from marijuana. The book can be helpful in getting Christians to think critically about marijuana use.

J. Alan Branch
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning.* By Wayne Grudem. Wheaton: Crossway, 2018. 1,296 pp. $59.99, Hardcover. ISBN 9781433549656.**

Wayne Grudem's theological work is well-known to a multitude of pastors and seminary students. Among other writings, Grudem is the author of *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, arguably the most influential single-volume systematic theology of the present day. What might surprise readers, however, is that Grudem's latest tome is not in the narrow field of 'theology'; rather, he has penned a nearly 1,300-page treatise on biblical ethics. Readers familiar with Grudem's work will not be surprised to learn that *Christian Ethics* is a model of clarity in presentation, in ease-of-use as a reference tool (with clear headings and outlines), and in accessibility for readers of all levels.

Grudem's work is divided into seven major sections and forty-two chapters, structured around subjects related to each one of the Ten Commandments. Part One presents an introduction in which the author provides background into the basis, source, and goal of ethics along with principles of interpretation for deriving moral norms from the Bible. Part Two tackles subjects connected to the first through fourth commandments as well as the ninth commandment (according to traditional Protestant enumeration). Parts Three through Six address the fifth through eighth commandments, respectively, and finally, Part Seven focuses on the tenth commandment. Each individual chapter includes study questions, technical terms, cross references to other popular ethics books, a detailed bibliography, a Scripture memory verse, and a corresponding hymn. *Christian Ethics* is vintage Grudem as the author eschews dry philosophical theory for content that is intended to be Bible-saturated, soul-nourishing, and ultimately worship-provoking.

One of this book's most successful elements is Grudem's emphasis on the validity and necessity of engaging in whole-Bible ethics. Christians who affirm the inerrancy (25, 51–2), internal consistency (93–5), and sufficiency of Scripture (97) must grapple with the sum total of all that God has said. Such an approach does not discount the diversity of the biblical witness amid its sixty-six books, multiple-dozen authors, numerous literary genres, and two testaments. However, Grudem also operates with the conviction that in the midst of the Bible's diversity, "[T]he Bible itself claims that *all* the ethical teachings of Scripture are God's authoritative words to human beings, and our task is to understand them rightly and to learn which ones of them apply to us in our specific situations today" (53–54). Taking a systematic approach to ethics means consistently acting upon the belief that behind the human authors of Scripture is one divine Author, the triune God, who speaks a clear word to his people.

Second, Grudem is to be commended for devoting an extensive chapter of his book to questions of hermeneutics and biblical interpretation, particularly the relationship between the Old and New Testament. A clear enunciation of one's interpretive approach is often missing in modern ethics textbooks. In Chapter Eight (209–63), Grudem lays out his case for the position that Christ's finished work has brought an end to the law of Moses and to the Ten Commandments as the reigning legal code for believers, since a better covenant, the New Covenant, has superseded the first (Heb 7:12; 8:6–13; see esp. 213ff.). Grudem goes on to affirm the God-designed, temporary nature of the Mosaic covenant (221–23) coupled with the redemptive-historical understanding that a new age has dawned via the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Grudem rightfully qualifies his remarks, however, by maintaining that even though the law of Moses is not a legally binding code for the present-day believer, the Old Testament Scriptures are still profitable "as a valuable source of ethical wisdom" (234). He then demonstrates that moral norms approximating nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament, with the lone exception being the Sabbath command (238–43). Grudem's careful interaction with differing hermeneutical-ethical perspectives, such as theonomy (225–30) and historic covenant theology (248–51), are especially insightful.

Third, perhaps the strongest characteristic of this book is the sheer breadth of subjects that it covers. Grudem tackles topics that are routinely encountered in pastoral ministry and often asked by seminary students but are seldom addressed in ethics textbooks. Such topics include: cursing and obscene language (293–97), schooling options for children (380–86), cosmetic surgery (622–24), race relations (637–53), vaccinations (662–64), tattoos (665–67), alcohol consumption (675–88), singleness (728–36), the prosperity gospel (908–15), retirement (935–36), gambling (1039–41), and borrowing and lending (1045–57), along with the cutting-edge topics of transgenderism (871–81) and global warming (1134–65). The reader will be hard-pressed to find a moral topic that is not at least tangentially touched upon in this work.

While *Christian Ethics* contains an impressive number of strengths, the present reviewer will also highlight a couple of areas that could be bolstered. First, the author's choice of structure for the book is unexpected since Grudem admittedly does not think that the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1–17; Dt 5:1–21)—as embedded in the legal code given to Moses for the administration of Israel—are binding on Christians today, yet he uses the Decalogue as the organizing structure for his book (40, 255–60). In other words, the author rejects covenant theology's assertion that present-day Christians are bound in part by Mosaic law, yet he uses a portion of Mosaic law as the guiding framework for his entire presentation. Even Grudem seems to perceive this tension at times in his own writing (e.g., 347). Perhaps a more Christ-centered, New Covenant-focused approach would be to group ethical issues under the twin headings of "Loving God" and "Loving Neighbor" according to Jesus's greatest commandments (Mt 22:36–40). "Loving God" could be subdivided into work, rest, service, speech, consumption, money, and time (to give examples), while "Loving Neighbor" could be applied to the home, the church, and society.

Second, it seems that in achieving breadth, the author in certain places has sacrificed a bit of depth. Some chapters show relatively little interaction with scholarly sources, including Chapter Nine's treatment of the first commandment and Chapter Ten's treatment of the second commandment. Each of these chapters interacts with two or fewer sources. Also noticeable throughout the entire volume is a scarcity of reference to historical sources and writings from past centuries. It should be noted that chapters adapted from the author's previous works, such

as those from *Politics–According to the Bible* (Chapters 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, and 41) and from *Systematic Theology* (Chapter 3), are some of the more robustly researched chapters. If the present work is revised in a future edition, perhaps some of the unevenness in presentation from topic to topic could be improved.

Christian Ethics achieves its intended goal of seeking to explain "what the whole Bible teaches" about a vast array of ethical topics (24). It will not be a surprise if Grudem's volume becomes the most widely used introductory ethics textbook in evangelical seminaries. For a single author to pen one of the most influential works of systematic theology and now a comprehensive ethical treatise is a remarkable achievement. Pastor-theologians and seminary students alike would benefit immensely by having this resource close at hand and by consulting it often.

Jeff Moore
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Our Good Crisis: Overcoming Moral Chaos with the Beatitudes.* By Jonathan K. Dodson. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020. 177 pp. $9.99, Kindle. ISBN 9780830846009.**

Rahm Emmanuel, an American politician, famously said, "Never let a serious crisis go to waste." Jonathan Dodson (Th.M. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) shares this mindset but from a spiritual standpoint, suggesting that we view our present cultural crisis not as an evil to endure, but as an opportunity to pursue God's blessing. As the founder and current Lead Pastor of City Life Church in Austin, Texas, Dodson has published multiple books, including *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, his first book, and *The Unbelievable Gospel* among others. In his most recent book, *Our Good Crisis*, he contends that an inner moral crisis lurks behind the external scandals and injustices of our world today (Loc. 99). To overcome the moral chaos and confusion we face, he offers the Sermon on the Mount as our solution. To him, Christ's message is "central to averting catastrophic and moral failure. It's also the key to human flourishing" (310). Dodson identifies his audience as "those who

recognize the moral chaos around them and want to do something about it" (74). As such, this book calls the reader to Christ-centered, spiritual transformation that gives people "a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven" (2318).

Following a brief preface, Dodson announces and explains his central message in the first chapter, "Flourishing in an Age of Crisis" (44), and he packs a lot into this chapter. First, he builds a case for why we need this message. Then, he explains the meaning and value of a crisis and presents Jesus as the "objectively true guide [who] originates beyond us" and who alone can "redefine us" (227). After this, he defines *beatitude* as "blessed, favored, or flourishing" (245) and, in a nod to the debate over the Beatitudes' intent, Dodson proposes a both-and stance, namely that the "Sermon on the Mount provides a guide to the good life in both its everyday ethics and its eschatological promises" (260). He then introduces a key interpretive motif, namely that a "secularizing impulse removes God from his place of power and substitutes the self," placing self at "center stage" (294). Dodson reiterates this "self" motif throughout the book by describing how each Beatitude counteracts or overcomes this misplaced inclination when we choose to live in submission to God.

Dodson devotes the remaining eight chapters to the Beatitudes themselves, one per chapter in the order that Matthew records them (Mt 5:3-12). Though he does exhibit exegetical awareness and theological acumen, he doesn't amplify these skills, so if you're looking for a rigorous exegetical study, then you'll need to consult your lexicons, commentaries, and journals instead. Dodson takes a devotional and thematic approach that offers a well-reasoned blend of basic exegetical nuggets, cultural allusions, personal testimonies, quotations from noteworthy sources, and philosophical concepts. Most importantly, he weaves a steady stream of relevant, supporting cross-references from both the Old and New Testaments, maintaining a biblical, Christ-centered focus from start to finish. For instance, when critiquing *individualism* in the church, he says, "The gospel says, 'Take up your cross and follow me.' But expressive individualism says, 'Take up your cross and follow me'" (Loc. 1562). In another place, when explaining true peace, he says, "We need someone human enough to bear our punishment but infinite enough to endure it. We need a God-man" (1886). Each chapter ends with a set of probing questions entitled

"Overcoming Your Chaos" that aid in personal application and group discussion.

Our Good Crisis exhibits a conversational, pastoral style that avoids academic jargon and apologetic overtones, though these elements are not absent entirely. As a result, the average reader in your church, at any stage of spiritual growth, will feel as though he or she is listening to a well-prepared group leader conduct an informative and engaging small-group study. The author exudes a relatable disposition, making "down to earth" statements like, "The apologetics training I received in seminary is inadequate, given the real questions people wanted answers for today" (21). In another place he says, "I write this book, not as a paragon of morality, or the fountain of ethical wisdom, but as a redeemed sinner who is learning to so cherish the Lord of the Beatitudes," and, "This book is for all who have failed to live up to the Beatitudes but want more" (21). Dodson offers frequent, perceptive insights, as when he says about *mourning*, "We're quick to condemn social evil but slow to recognize personal sin ... we have a much higher tolerance for the rebellion *inside* us" (762). About *meekness* he says, "Humble people don't judge others based on an isolated instance" (936), and about *righteousness* he says, "The modern self prefers values over virtues. Transparency, kindness, and authenticity are preferred over honesty, goodness, and truth" (1053). Stimulating insights like these permeate *Our Good Crisis*, cementing its value as a worthwhile read.

By way of critique, this book offers no closing matter beyond a brief epilogue and some endnotes (an average of 13 per chapter), so both a Scripture index and an index of people and topics would enhance this volume's usefulness as a study guide or resource for research. As a note to the publisher, future printings should correct the capitalization typo in the Table of Contents, decapitalizing the *L* in "FLourishing ..." Dodson's discussion of social justice in the chapter on *righteousness* may raise the ire of some readers, while also inspiring others. For instance, he makes the strong claim that "failure to advocate for social justice is a failure to embrace the character of God" (1194). Regardless of your view on this subject, which admittedly requires a nuanced, multi-layered tact, you will appreciate how he critiques the unfortunate polarization between those who mistakenly pursue justice as a "functional god" on one hand and those "who are indifferent to injustice" on the other, advocating instead for patience and understanding towards one another

as we grow in grace over time (1194). Dodson's opening testimony of a certain past failure will surprise some readers right out of the gate due to its gravity. Though Dodson's transparency here disarms the reader effectively and encourages a humble, transparent response to the rest of the book, other readers may question the tastefulness of an illustration that mentions a man who stripped naked at Planet Fitness; though, it certainly bolsters Dodson's underlying purpose, to reveal the "weakness of tolerance" (1343).

With *Our Good Crisis,* Dodson equips and inspires people to overcome our widespread crisis of morality together by living as humble, God-dependent citizens of Christ's kingdom. If you're preparing to preach or teach through the Sermon on the Mount, this book serves as a valuable, secondary supplement to your exegetical tools and commentaries. It will also serve well as a study guide for individuals and small groups alike. In all of these venues, it will provide both a realistic and optimistic call to embrace Christ in the midst of our societal crisis for the good of God's kingdom.

Thomas Overmiller
Faith Baptist Church, Corona, NY

***Richard Dawkins*. Great Thinkers Series. By Ransom Poythress. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018. 165 pp. $14.99, Paperback. ISBN 9781629952215.**

Carl F.H. Henry said the modern age has abused the use of words to the point where words have lost the ability to convey truth, leaving the "evangelical aim… to restore the wayward vocabulary of modern man to the clarity and vitality of the Word of God."[4] No one person is responsible for this tragedy, but contemporary voices can be identified as proponents of suppressing revelation for supposedly unbiased scientific research. Richard Dawkins in one such voice that has touted naturalism as

[4] Henry, Carl F. H. God, *Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), Kindle Location 573).

supremely instructive for the modern person, and Ransom Poythress, in his book *Richard Dawkins* as part of the Great Thinkers Series, has thoughtfully and clearly unveiled his thought and teaching. Poythress' aim is to help the confessing Christian identify Dawkins' thought, resident in people's worldview, so that the gospel can be clearly and properly presented. Ransom Poythress is well suited to dissect the naturalism of Dawkins. He is a biologist by training, earning a PhD in Biology from Boston University, and upon confessing Christ, earning a Master's in theology from Westminster. Poythress has published in both fields of biology and theology.

The book opens by overviewing the life and implications for Dawkins' New Atheism. The progression of Dawkins is evident in his literary output, showing how he devolves from Atheism to outright evangelistic antitheism. Dawkins' autobiographical works are focused on improving his public appearance, centering around his inability to do wrong and the praise he has received.

Chapter 2 deals with Dawkins' view of science and religion as compatible fields of study. For him "scientific and technological advances are dependent on our adherence to a naturalistic worldview" (13). Poythress presents the prime weakness of Dawkins' naturalism – facts – stories are his source of rationality rather than facts. Dawkins uses an image of a slope to describe evolution, which has no factual support, as a simple reality, yet his story of a simple gentle slope places an image where there is a void and nonexistent slope (15-6). Poythress further unearths the weaknesses in Dawkins atheism in that he assumes all religion is the cause of the failures in human history. Noticeable at this point in the book is the respect that Poythress gives Dawkins as he makes contradictory claims that do not shame or destroy the man Dawkins but equip the reader to address the ultimate issues of belief in the false systems of Dawkins' atheism. Poythress strongly encourages readers to see the battle for the hearts of people in critiquing Dawkins and his thought.

Chapters 3-5 step into the consequences Dawkins' thought has had by engendering hatred of religion, which is generalized from Dawkins' presuppositional hatred of Christianity. Poythress takes the various arguments Dawkins has used and applies the rules of logic to reveal numerous logical fallacies. Dawkins frequently claims license to shift focus from his claims, which have no evidentiary basis, to disingenuous

claims that Christianity lacks evidence. Poythress rightly identifies the issue is evidence.

Chapter 6 targets where truth is located, which is based on evidence, contrasting Dawkins who asserts truths without interpreting the evidence. Poythress handles this well with little heady details in epistemology and ontology, further fulfilling the thesis of his work to deliver a simple and actionable understanding of Dawkins. The issue at large is whether naturalism has a supported claim or can be logically reduced to a fallacy. Dawkins uses an impoverished argument against Christian views of creation, dismissing the cosmological argument, which he diminishes with assumptions that religion is simply irrational. Dawkins assumes that naturalism is the only rational means of understanding and proving the world, since the defined laws of nature equate to the supernatural God as the singular source of truth he finds logically inept and faulty in argument (62-3).

Poythress continues in chapter 8 to present Dawkins' interpretation of God as he sees him, if he existed, he would be an exalted human in Dawkins' likeness (88-92). Poythress walks through prevalent criticisms waged against God, showing in each the basis of the argument and Dawkins' common miss-apprehensions of God, skewed by inflated views of man's perceptive abilities. Amid discussion of the pale blue dot and how earth is perfectly situated for life, Poythress draws the reader's attention to the technical name of the argument, the Goldilocks Enigma, as evidence of an Intelligent Designer (95). Poythress further displays his goal here to equip the reader to articulate Christianity in light of skeptical, antitheism.

The last few chapters of the book address Dawkins' misconceptions of miracles, evil, and morality. Poythress presents the argument and simply critiques Dawkins as incorrectly defining what a miracle is, which Poythress properly redefines (101). God's miracles are a violation of man's expectations of the laws of nature not a violation of an irrefutable and absolute law. Poythress clearly paints the picture of the pseudo-certainty with which Dawkins approaches the natural laws, which are absolutes that should be perceived as normative. Nevertheless, God is capable of performing an unexpected miracle while not breaking the natural confines of the world (103).

Dawkins' brand of atheism highlights evil as clear evidence that a benevolent God could not have made the world. Poythress walks through

a variety of questions that center around the supposed impropriety of a good God coexisting with evil in people, showing that religious people are not isolated from evil in the world and do not contradict God's existence.

Poythress ends with Dawkins' direct answers to the question of morality. Dawkins sees morality as a social construct that proceeds from genes that seek to promote heredity through purely selfish endurance. (116). Morality is both an adaptation and individual relativism that is based in the well-being or individual's values that can be expanded to a group and governed by the strongest authority where "might makes right" (121).

Poythress provides a clear and concise treatment of Richard Dawkins that is accessible to the average Christian. Not only does the book equip the reader to address ideas similar to Dawkins' atheism but the way Poythress handles his thought provides an apologetic pattern that Christians can emulate in dealing with contrary belief systems. Poythress unveils the meaning behind the mis-defined and misapplied words Dawkins' uses so the Christian can address his atheism and apply the vitality of God's word as Carl Henry advised.

Matthew Fraser
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Leadership in Christian Perspective: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Practices for Servant Leaders*. By Justin A. Irving and Mark L. Strauss. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019. 218 pp. $22.99, Paperback. ISBN 9781540960337.**

Mark L. Strauss (Ph.D., University of Aberdeen) is a biblical scholar who focuses on New Testament studies and Bible translation. He is passionate about making sound biblical scholarship accessible to his readers. He currently serves as a University Professor of New Testament at Bethel Seminary, San Diego.

On the other hand, Justin A. Irving (Ph.D., Regent University) contributes to the topic of leadership. He serves as the professor of ministry leadership and director of the D.Min. Program at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. He is also a researcher within the

leadership realm and educator, with expertise in servant leadership and its application to the team and organizational effectiveness. It is his passion to bring sound research-based reflections on leadership to leaders in diverse sectors.

This book provides biblical insight, research-based reflection, and practical recommendations for how the readers can grow as empowering leaders. In order to achieve that purpose, Irving and Strauss organize the book into three main parts, where each part contains three core leadership practices.

Practical and empowering leaders set an example for others because the best way to lead is to show them by example, not to tell people what to do. Moreover, leaders must increase the need to nurture self-awareness through effective self-leadership and personal growth practices. Leadership is a relational practice at its core. Therefore, leaders need to consider their personal beliefs and values, their lives, and how they live in light of their convictions and beliefs. The third core leadership practice, fostering collaboration, plays a vital role in building a healthy organizational community where leaders must view followers as genuine partners in the organizational mission.

Building upon the conviction of authentic and purposeful leadership, Irving and Strauss call leaders to prioritize and focus on followers. Understanding the value of people and their contribution is a vital part of leadership because leaders work with people. Moreover, leaders need to see the uniqueness of what followers bring to organizations as essential for increasing the creativity and innovation necessary for a competitive advantage in the knowledge economy. The essence of leadership is about relating well with people inside and outside the organization. Effective relational skill is necessary to foster collaboration, value, and appreciate followers, and create space for follower individuality.

Leaders and followers must work together to accomplish their shared mission effectively. Communication is a top priority for leadership because organizational members need to clearly understand what is essential in the organization and what is expected of them. After communicating goals and missions clearly and nurturing shared ownership, leaders need to provide accountability. The final step in navigating toward effectiveness is for leaders to support and resource

their followers. Leaders need to focus on bringing the right people onto the team and doing everything in their power to help them succeed.

This book is mainly about the nine core leadership practices based on thoughtful research on which leadership behaviors contribute to effective teams and organizations. Irving and Strauss divide the book into three main parts based on the three primary themes of leadership practices.

Moreover, the chapters' organization plays a vital role in delivering the excellent contents of the book. Irving and Strauss provide a summary at the beginning of each part, which helps refocus or remind the readers of the specific topic of the section. In conjunction with the nine core leadership practices, they unpack each of the practices around three primary perspectives: exploring the biblical foundations for the practice, explaining the leadership research and theory behind the practice, and illustrating the practice with leadership examples and practical recommendations. Irving and Strauss consistently follow these guidelines as they present all the core leadership practices throughout the book.

Many Christian leadership authors wrote about leadership from a purely Christian perspective such as *Being Leaders* and *Building Leaders* by Aubrey Malphurs or Jim Herrington's *The Leader's Journey* that has been published for the second time. On the other side of the spectrum, there are some classic leadership works of literature, such as *Developing the Leader Within You* by John C. Maxwell, *The Leadership Challenge* by James Kouzes and Barry Posner, and *Leading Change* by John P. Kotter. Even though the Library of Congress categorized this book under Christian Leadership, this book has a unique place among the leadership books spectrum. Indeed, the title of the book mentions Irving and Strauss' writing perspective explicitly. Nonetheless, those who do not want to deal with any religious aspect of leadership can still have a good measure of engagement with this book by jumping straight to sections two and three of each chapter. Will they get the whole picture that Irving and Strauss draw throughout this book? Probably not. However, these particular readers will not miss the forest either since they will still get most of the arguments that Irving and Strauss try to build throughout the book.

Lastly, the readers must take note that this book is not a commentary. Thus, the readers will be disappointed if they expect to see an exhaustive

biblical exegesis. Rather, this book is written to provide biblical insight, research-based reflection, and practical recommendations for how the readers can grow as empowering leaders, which Irving and Strauss achieve well.

Stephen Enrico
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Marks of Scripture: Rethinking the Nature of the Bible*. By Daniel Castelo and Robert W. Wall. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. xiii + 178 pp. $21.99, Paperback. ISBN 0801049555.**

Daniel Castelo and Robert W. Wall are professors at Seattle Pacific University and write in the Wesleyan Tradition. What makes this work significant is the combination of scholars who represent two disciplines. Castelo writes and teaches primarily in the field of systematic theology, whereas Wall focuses on the field of biblical studies. This work began initially as an article "Scripture and the Church: A Précis for an Alternative Analogy," which served as the premise for the book. Though not technically an academic book (xi), this work is written for the church as a guide on how to read the Bible through the lens of the Christ-Scripture analogy from the Nicene Creed and focusing on Scripture as a "theological category" (13).

Chapter 1 focuses on the situation of Scripture's ontology and teleology and how the canon functions as a theological guide. They rightly argue that regardless of the historical phenomena of how the Scriptures came to be canonized, the canonization process should be understood as "Spirit-led events" that codified the truths about Christ within a work of Scripture (5, 7-8). Thus, Scripture is a means of grace and should be given to the church regularly, for it provides nourishment for the body of Christ (16). This example provides the beginning of the "ecclesial analogy" that is expounded upon for the remainder of the book. Scripture, the focus of Chapter 2, should not be viewed in the incarnation analogy, the authors argue. They believe there are too many problems with this analogy (30-33), but of note is their rejection that "speaking of

Scripture as divine has its limitations, ones that if ignored could lead to idolatrous ends" (31).

From this point, Castelo and Wall propose their four marks, taken from the Nicene Creed, and apply it to Scripture. The words taken from the creed, "one," "holy," "catholic," and "apostolic," are substituted for unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity, respectively. According to the authors, "these attributes are sometimes referred to as 'marks of the church,' and we believe that they could also be thought of as the 'marks of Scripture" (36). Thus, chapters 3-6 focus primarily on discussing their proposed Church-Scripture analogy (i.e., their "ecclesial analogy"). Castelo begins each chapter with a theological view and application, and Wall takes what Castelo presented and applies them to the Church-Scripture analogy.

The Marks of Scripture is a welcome addition to the discussion of canon, Scripture, and the Scripture's function within the community of believers. Their proposed usage of the four marks from the Nicene Creed is both original and helpful, as it uniquely binds together the ancient and modern. Furthermore, the divisions in chapters 3-6 provide a helpful dichotomy that show how Scripture can be used and applied in the sense of its "ontology and teleology" from Chapter 1. The authors clearly have an audience of believers in mind (xi).

Yet, Castelo and Wall's work also presents some problems. First, their work seems to suggest what James Sanders argues about how the Christian community produced the Scripture of the church. "The church is Scripture's legal address, meaning that Scripture both emerges from and is directed back to the community of faith for its own healing" (35). But then, it appears that they contradict themselves in the role of the Holy Spirit in forming and shaping the Christian canon. "Canonization is a process of and for the church in which God's Spirit is present, performing the role for which the Spirit was sent" (6). Traditionally, Protestants have maintained that Scripture produces the church.

Furthermore, the discussion of canon in Chapter 1 presented no interaction with Sanders or Brevard Childs, but it seems that the chapter presupposes the reader is somewhat familiar with a canonical understanding of Scripture. Although this chapter provides a helpful introduction to the overall canonical hermeneutic proposed by Childs, it nonetheless ignores the majority of scholarship that has engaged in this approach. Wall has written extensively on this topic as well, and it is

surprising that his work on "canon" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Theology* is the only work referenced in this chapter.

Castelo and Wall have written a helpful work that encourages the reader to consider the Scriptures within their four marks and to interpret Scripture accordingly. Rejecting the "Christ-Scripture" analogy, they rather encourage the adoption of "Church-Scripture" analogy. Their work is rooted in their Methodist backgrounds, as is seen throughout, and provides a helpful paradigm from which to read the Bible. Yet, their attempts to downplay the divine nature of Scripture and their implication that the Christian community birthed the Scripture will perhaps not persuade many evangelicals to adopt their way to read Scripture. It is likely that many will engage the work for Castelo and Wall's ability to simplify a difficult concept, but many may not be persuaded by their arguments on the nature of Scripture.

Jason P. Kees
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Soul of Theological Anthropology: A Cartesian Evaluation.* By Joshua R. Farris. New York: Routledge, 2017. 198 pp. $135.00, Hardcover. ISBN 9781472436511.**

Joshua Farris's chief goal in The Soul of Theological Anthropology: A Cartesian Evaluation (STA) is rather modest. As a work of theological anthropology, Farris wields the tools of analytic theology to make a plausible case for a nuanced version of substance dualism. What is more, Farris contends that such Cartesian dualism enjoys greater explanatory power over and against alternative options vis-à-vis the Scripture data, experience, and current empirical discoveries. STA offers a modern treatment of a view (substance dualism) that has been the subject of a great deal of misrepresentation by clearly articulating and delineating its philosophical boundaries.

Farris parses out Cartesianism by initially showcasing three species of person-body substance dualism (PBSD), the concept that persons are either identical to their souls or supervene on soul instead of body. He suggests that, while pure substance dualism (PSD) and composite

substance dualism (COSD) as variations of PBSD are better candidates in contrast to other anthropologies (e.g., materialism), compound substance dualism (CSD) is the best option on hand, for it can robustly account for the desiderata of an adequate anthropology (2). CSD is the thesis that humans are a compound of body and soul yet function as a unity.

Part I of the book is divided into two chapters. The first lays out a broadly construed case for the adoption of Cartesianism as a favorable bedrock on which to build a theological anthropology. Given that persons have privileged access to mental events, it follows that persons cannot be simply identified in terms of property-bundles. Personal agents must be metaphysically simple, and, by extension, qualia-type experiences are tied to the soul "in a way that defies analysis and complexity of parts" (28). Chapter 2 contends that the biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and glory is best explained on the basis of PBSD. Farris does not argue definitively for substance dualism, rather, he makes the modest claim that substance dualism has better explanatory power, yielding greater plausibility with respect to the data (32).

Composed of three chapters, part II is the gravitational center of the book. Chapter 3 explores the various philosophical positions concerning the soul's origin. According to Farris, the mind-body relation is intimately tied to a position on origins. The author then evaluates what he calls emergent substance dualism. This relatively new contribution to the discussion about the origin of souls argues that the soul emerges out of the body in accordance with "law-like connections that establish the intimate connection between body/brain and the mind or physical stuff with phenomenal and conscious experience" (67). Farris marshals enough philosophical evidence to conclude that some sort of hybrid between creationism (the preferred view of origins throughout church history) and emergentism may be the preferred model to adequately account for the anthropological desiderata. Chapter 4 presents a detailed account of the novel view: emergent creationism (EC). Succinctly put, this view retains the divine origin of souls associated with creationism, while simultaneously adopting the emergent thesis that links the existence of the soul with the existence of the body. God brings forth the soul directly, but the soul's existence is mediated via biological generation (87). Farris then defends the position that CSD and EC can

best explain the body-soul relationship in consideration of experience and Christian teaching (chapter 5). The Cartesianism advanced by Farris accounts for the soul as independently existing ens per se, and thus potentially existing disembodied (110). Emergent dualism cannot allow for the possibility of disembodied existence, for the soul is necessarily dependent on the body. What is more, emergentism falls outside Christian teaching. With respect to the question of origins, a pure form of substance dualism is also not without its problems. EC, therefore, appears to explain, in a better way, the apparent mystery associated with the mind-body interaction.

Part III focuses on the theological concepts of hamartiology and soteriology. In chapter 6 Farris concludes that EC holds substantial promise in providing an answer to the issue of transmission of sin. As a distinct variation of the views of origin, EC's commitment to the creation of the soul as a divine event allows for the connection of every soul to its original soul (Adam) by virtue of divine causal generation (125–26). Chapter 7 then shifts gears to a more detailed analysis of the interim state. The biblical data, as Farris demonstrates, presents an eschatological anthropology that necessitates the body.

Part IV concludes STA by sharpening the focus on disembodied existence and resurrection. In chapter 8, all models of origin are analyzed and EC, with its emphasis on teleo-functional existence, comes out as the winner. Chapter 9 presents further challenges for emergent and traducian views related to the plausibility of the soul's persistence after somatic death.

STA makes an original contribution to theological anthropology, generally. More specifically, Farris is a modern Cartesian pioneer, and his investment in the field makes STA a tour de force for at least three reasons. First, Farris has salvaged Cartesianism from the grip of materialism, with the latter's ever-increasing number of adherents. By parsing out person-body substance dualism, Farris successfully locates the object of the materialist's attack as a form of pure substance dualism, where the soul-emphasis is particularly prominent. Second, the concept of EC presented in STA is creative and analytically informed. The clarity with which Farris puts forth his evaluation bespeaks a careful work of philosophy. By comparing and contrasting the various positions pertinent to the philosophy of mind, Farris meticulously sifts through

each, discarding the weak elements while adopting the more favorable tenants. Third, STA fills the biblical vacuum that philosophical theology and analytic theology are sometimes prone to create. Farris's use of biblical data buttresses the philosophical intuition of Cartesianism. Doing so stabilizes and strengthens his position and also exemplifies a model work in analytic theology.

By measure of adding momentum to the project, two possible avenues of further research may be immediately discerned. First, exegetes who are well-equipped in biblical languages can add to the project by performing robust word studies of anthropological words found in the Scriptures and the corresponding extra-biblical literature. Anthropological word studies in the last century have been mostly limited to data gathered from the Pauline corpus. Accordingly, an exegetical study of the anthropological terms in the Gospels against the backdrop of the Greco-Roman and Jewish Sitz im Leben along with the anthropological data of the Old Testament would further advance the analytic prowess so characteristic of STA. Second, Farris's EC thesis raises some riveting questions for Christology. Systematic theologians would fare well to evaluate and expand on Farris's conclusions against the backdrop of the conciliar understanding of the hypostatic union. One query to pursue is the application of Farris's model to the incarnation. How does Farris's model account for Christ's human soul in light of his conclusion that the problem of (sin) transmission is explained in generative terms (all souls are connected to Adam as an effect of one divine cause)? Can Farris escape the conclusion that, given his model, Christ appears to have inherited original sin? Third, philosophers should critically appraise the idea of emergent creationism. Is it adequate to label this kind of creationism as emergent? Emergentism details a causal relationship between high-complexity neural states and mental events. In this view, the brain causes the mind to come into existence. In the philosophical literature, emergentism understands the brain to be the formal, efficient, and immediate cause of the mind/soul. But if, as Farris argues, God is the efficient and immediate cause of the soul, qualifying his position as emergent appears to create an oxymoron.

Undoubtedly, Farris has broken ground for future expansion in the area of philosophical anthropology. I eagerly commend STA to theologians of every stripe, particularly those who are seeking to hone

the analytic side of theology. In this way, Farris's analytic approach would serve the biblical theologian well, especially those trained in exegesis. Likewise, his biblical emphasis and Scripture incorporation should serve as a worthwhile welcome to philosophical theologians who are inclined to remain within the contours of the analytic tradition.

Tom Musetti
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views.* Edited by James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019. 272 pp. $24.99, Paperback. ISBN 9781540960306.**

In 2014, *Time* magazine proclaimed that America had reached the "transgender tipping point" (1). In the following year, transgender icons gained increased attention by various media outlets as the average citizen became aware of Caitlyn Jenner, transgender teenager Jazz Jennings, and the importance of bathrooms and pronouns. A moral controversy now swirls around the fourth letter of "LGBTQ," as activists, doctors, psychologists, and ethicists discuss the essence of identity, the experiences of transgender and queer minorities, and the morality of using hormones and surgeries to align sexual anatomy with gender identity.

While the secular world watches online brawls between second-wave feminists and transgender activists, debates also transpire within Christian institutions and denominations over a Christian response to transgenderism. Christians have historically found unity amid controversy through analyzing the application of biblical principles to contemporary issues. Transgenderism's rapid ascent in contemporary culture has forced many Christians to expedite public responses to laypersons and the broader secular community. At the forefront of Christian responses to transgenderism sits a new work edited by James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy titled *Understanding Transgender Identities*. This volume presents a public colloquium in theology and

ethics, inviting five leading thinkers from various traditions to debate different frameworks for understanding transgender identities.

This work follows a standard format within Christian publishing for presenting divergent views on a particular subject. Like InterVarsity Press's "Spectrum Multiview" series or Zondervan's "Counterpoints," each contributor presents an essay on the proposed topic followed by responses from the other participants. Owen Strachan—professor of Christian theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary—offers a theological approach to the transgender experience. He represents theologically conservative perspectives on sexuality and gender roles, such as the official position of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, a well-known defender of gender essentialism and complementarianism, and the landmark Nashville Statement. Mark Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky highlight a Christian psychology approach to transgenderism, as Yarhouse has led research institutions specializing in gender and sexuality at Regent University and Wheaton College. Many readers will be familiar with Yarhouse's empirical and clinical approach to sexual ethics as demonstrated through his previous publications on homosexuality and transgenderism. Megan K. DeFranza's unique approach combines theological research on intersex conditions and biblical reflections on eunuchs as she locates transgender persons as modern-day descendants of eunuchs by paralleling the phenomenon of biological intersex conditions with transgender identities. Last, Justin Sabia-Tanis, writing as a transgender man, brings biography and personal reflection on Scripture to this discussion by correlating gender diversity with natural diversity within God's creation.

This volume contains many praiseworthy features, most noteworthy being the courage of each contributor to wade into this controversial—and at times adversarial—territory. Trailblazers cannot avoid cuts and bruises. Each contributor recognizes the need for Christian engagement in understanding transgender identity at risk of controversy and pushback from Christian and secular sources. These leaders have initiated a necessary conversation within Christian circles which will continue for decades to come.

Almost counterintuitive, the strongest section of this work is the introduction. Eddy and Beilby write the most comprehensive yet accessible introduction to understanding transgenderism currently available to Christians. These editors show great awareness of trends and

developments of ideological transgenderism's development within Western society, serving scholars and laymen seeking quickly to gain familiarity with the terrain of transgender ideology and history.

While serving readers with a superb introduction, the editors also acknowledge the circumstantial limitations within this volume. Most plainly, the editors provide few guardrails for the contributors as they approach this topic. The study of transgenderism is perforated with difficulties, including the novelty of this self-confessed experience and the location of transgender ideology at the crossroads of many increasingly compartmentalized disciplines including philosophy, psychology, sociology, and medicine. The editors acknowledge the dilemma of addressing a discordant subject when they state, "when it comes to the question of transgender experience, there are as yet no clear, widely embraced labels in this debate" (53). As a result, each contributor plays to his or her strengths, resulting in articles with very little conformity to one another with the topics and subjects addressed therein. To the editors' credit, this work was conceived out of a desire to publish a work for Christians who were wondering how to respond to the experiences of their transgender neighbors. Scholars desiring a more focused discussion on facets of transgender ideology must wait for a few more years of maturation from the Christian community.

While acknowledging the difficulties of defining rules for engaging an undefined topic, one grows concerned over the editors' omission of other necessary and easily definable parameters for this discussion. Particularly, although the editors seek to present "Christian" perspectives on transgenderism, one worries about the width of the umbrella cast to house this "Christian" response. Christians have historically united around beliefs and convictions drawn from divine revelation, preserved in confessional statements, and transmitted from one generation to the next. A plain reading of Scripture shows a concern from the original authors for particular beliefs and actions as well as the correlation between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. The contributions within this volume show a wide range of divergent presuppositions and acceptable responses for gender dysphoric individuals. Stated plainly, if a Christian response is comprised of both gender essentialism and gender spectrums, and if it views gender variance as part of creation and a sinful response to gender dysphoria, one does not have one form of Christianity but at least two.

The editors state in their introduction that, for Christians, clear and respectful dialogue "should be nonnegotiable" (53). This concerned observer wonders whether the authors should consider adding any nonnegotiable presuppositions to the term "Christian" or "Christianity" for this "Christian response." Still, this work shows an important engagement from those who bear Christ's name on one of the most pressing moral and ethical issues today. This volume belongs in the library of any pastor or Christian who is burdened with formulating a faithful Christian response to their neighbors and who wonders how Christians from different traditions currently understand transgender identities.

Jared S. Poulton
Harbins Community Baptist Church, Dacula, GA

PhD Graduates (2020)
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

PhD Graduates (2020) from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, with their PhD emphases, dissertation title and supervisory committee members.

May 2020

Michael Atherton, PhD (Ministry),
The Biblical Foundations of Church Revitalizations As Applied in the Ministry of the Apostle Paul in the Church of Corinth.
Dr. Thor Madsen and Dr. Rodney Harrison.

Geoffrey Chang, PhD (Historical Theology),
The Militant Ecclesiology and Church Polity of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Tom Nettles.

Josh Dryer, PhD (Missiology),
An Evaluation of Donald McGavran's "Harvest Strategy" and Various Factors Influencing It.
Dr. Robin Hadaway and Dr. Cory Gonyo.

Mark Fugitt II, PhD (Historical Theology),
The Athletes of Christ: The Crusading Gospel According to Peter of Vaux-De-Cernay.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Thomas Johnston.

Mike Manning, PhD (Theology),
The Influences of Scottish Common Sense Realism on the Hermeneutics of Alexander Campbell and Southern Baptists, With Particular Focus on Their Views of Baptism.
Dr. Thor Madsen and Dr. Michael McMullen.

Joe Nichols PhD (New Testament),
An Holistic Investigation Into a Plausible Historical Context for the Composition of the Epistle of James.
Dr. Radu Gheorghita and Dr. Thor Madsen.

PhD Graduates

Seth Pankratz PhD (Preaching),
Wandering Off Into Myths: The Phenomenological, Hermeneutical, and Homiletical Necessity of Governing Narratives with Propositional Exposition.
Dr. Ben Awbrey and Dr. Rick Holland.

Cody Podor PhD (Theology),
A Biblical-Theological Proposal for the Christian's Participation in the Civil Litigation.
Dr. Thor Madsen and Dr. Matthew Arbo.

Matthew Price PhD (Missiology),
Where Helping Starts: A Study of Poverty Alleviation and the Four-Self Church.
Dr. Robin Hadaway and Dr. Cory Gonyo.

Camden Pulliam PhD (Theology),
Paternal Pastors: An Evangelical Approach.
Dr. Owen Strachan and Dr. Todd Chipman.

Daniel Slavich PhD (Theology),
That the World May Know: A Trinitarian Multiethnic Ecclesiology.
Dr. Matthew Barrett and Dr. John Mark Yeats.

Tyler Smiley PhD (Historical Theology),
"All Hail, Thou Comforter Divine": The Ontological and Functional Pneumatologies of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892).
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Matthew Barrett.

Mark Stone PhD (Ethics),
International Research Collaboration and National Security: A Christian Perspective.
Dr. Thor Madsen and Dr. Randolph Kluver.

Joseph Thrower PhD (Ministry),
In Search of an Exegetical Method in the Sermons of Jan Hus.
Dr. Michael McMullen and Dr. Ryan Redwine.

Charles Yates PhD (Historical Theology),
A Work of the Spirit: A Comparative Analysis Between John Gill and Charles Haddon Spurgeon Focusing on Their Theologies of Conversion.
Dr. Michael McMullen and Dr. Jason Duesing.

December 2020

Jenny Lyn-de Klerk, PhD (Historical Theology),
Love Towards All Mankind in General We Acknowledge to be Required of Us": The Expanding and Elucidating of Loving One's Neighbour in John Owen's and Lucy Hutchinson's Theology, Applied to Their Involvement in Civil War.
Dr. Matthew Barrett and Dr. Michael Haykin.

James Fryer, PhD (Missiology Theology),
Exposure of Large-Scale Devotion to and Missiological Implications of Folk Religion Practices of Marian Veneration (With A Case Study of Nicaragua).
Dr. Robin Hadaway and Dr. Thomas Johnston.

Christopher Hanna, PhD (Historical Theology),
Retrieval for the Sake of Renewal: Timothy George as a Historical Theologian.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Mark DeVine.

Nathan Herrmann, PhD (Historical Theology),
Martyn Lloyd-Jones & Evangelical Ecumenism: A Case for His Evangelical Dissent Against Stott, Packer & Graham.
Dr. John Mark Yeats and Dr. Jason Duesing.

Insung Jeon, PhD (Historical Theology),
Dirk Philips's Doctrine of the Visible Church and Its Influence on His Theological System.
Dr. Michael McMullen and Dr. Jason Duesing.

Chad McCarthy, PhD (Missiology),
Coming to a Better Understanding of the Degree of Continuity and Discontinuity Between Jesus's and His Disciples' Missions.
Dr. Spencer Plumlee and Dr. Randy Bennett.

PhD Graduates

Matthew Perry, PhD (Preaching),
Constructing Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Gospel-Centered Ethic Toward the Vulnerable Through an Analysis of His Preaching.
Dr. Owen Strachan and Dr. Michael McMullen.

Joshua Smith, PhD (Theology),
An Evangelical Critical Assessment of AI-Driven Robotic Persons and the Risks of Dehumanization.
Dr. Matthew Millsap and Dr. Garrett Starr.

Madison Trammel, PhD (Historical Theology),
Making Headlines: Interwar Fundamentalists, Social Engagement, and Newspaper Reporting, 1920-1933.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. John Woodbridge.

Daniel Watson, PhD (Biblical Studies),
(Faith) in 2 Peter: God's Promise of Safe-Conduct.
Dr. Chris Azure and Dr. Thor Madsen.

Matthew Weaver, PhD (Preaching),
Preaching as an Apologetic: A Theology of Preaching That Models Biblical Practice and Shapes Contemporary Proclamation.
Dr. Robert Matz and Dr. Rusty Meek.

Dante Wright, PhD (Preaching),
Cross-Culture Preaching: How Joel Gregory's Homiletical Methodology Provides a Model for Preaching from the Anglo-American Context to the African American Context.
Dr. Robert Matz and Dr. Jason Allen.

Jeongo Yang, PhD Korean Program (Ministry),
A Research on Christian Understanding Regarding Private Property Rights.
Dr. Seongdon Cho and Dr. Sang Jin Kim.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Alexander, Archibald. *God, Creation, and Human Rebellion: Lecture Notes of Archibald Alexander from the Hand of Charles Hodge*. Travis Fentiman, Ed. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020.

Austin, Victor Lee. Friendship: *The Heart of Being Human*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.

Ballitch, Andrew S. *The Gloss and the Text: William Perkins on Interpreting Scripture with Scripture*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020.

Barrett, Mark. *The Wind, the Fountain and the Fire: Scripture and the Renewal of the Christian Imagination. The 2020 Lent Book.* London: Bloomsbury, 2019.

Bauckham, Richard. *Who Is God? Key Moments of Biblical Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020.

Bello, Rafael Nogueira. *Sinless Flesh: A Critique of Karl Barth's Fallen Christ*. Bellingham, WA: 2020.

Betts, T. J. Nehemiah: *A Pastoral and Exegetical Commentary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020.

Blomberg, Craig L. *Can We Still Believe in God? Answering Ten Contemporary Challenges to Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020.

Bower, John R. *The Confession of Faith: Critical Text and Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020.

Brock, Cory C. *Orthodox Yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020.

Buckner, Forrest H. *Uncovering Calvin's God: John Calvin on Predestination and the Love of God*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Cadoré, Bruno. *With Him: Listening to the Underside of the World*. London: Bloomsbury, 2019.

Covington, David A. *A Redemptive Theology of Art: Restoring Godly Aesthetics to Doctrine and Culture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018.

Crotts, John. *Graciousness: Tempering Truth with Love*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018.

Crowe, Brandon D. *The Hope of Israel: The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020.

Cruse, Jonathan Landry. *The Christian's True Identity*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019.

Currid, John D. *The Case for Biblical Archaeology: Uncovering the Historical Record of God's Old Testament People*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020.

David, Mary (Sister). *The Joy of God: Collected Writings*. London: Bloomsbury, 2019.

Farrow, Douglas. *Theological Negotiations: Proposals in Soteriology and Anthropology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018.

Ivill, Sarah. *The Covenantal Life: Appreciating the Beauty of Theology and Community*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018.

Johnson, Jeffery D. *The Pursuit of Glory*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018.

Kennedy, Robert E. *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit: The Place of Zen in Christian Life*. (2nd Edition). London: Bloomsbury, 2020.

Kim, Matthew D. and Daniel L. Wong. *Finding Our Voice: A Vision for Asian North American Preaching*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Klauber, Martin I., Editor. *The Theology of the Huguenot Refuge: From Revocation of the Edict of Nantes to the Edict of Versailles.* Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020.

Krom, Michael P. *Justice and Charity: An Introduction to Aquinas's Moral, Economic, and Political Thought.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.

Lennox, John C. *2084: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

Letham, Robert. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship.* (Revised and Expanded Edition). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019.

MacGregor, Kirk R. *Contemporary Theology: An Introduction. Classical, Evangelical, Philosophical, and Global Perspectives.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. (Book and Video Lectures).

Mayfield, D. L. *The Myth of the American Dream: Reflections on Affluence, Autonomy, Safety, and Power*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020.

McFarlane, Graham. *A Model for Evangelical Theology: Integrating Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience, and Community*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.

McLennan, Bruce. *McCheyne's Dundee.* Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018.

Meilaender, Gilbert, *Thy Will Be Done: The Ten Commandments and the Christian Life.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020.

Morgan, Christopher W. *Biblical Spirituality.* Wheaton: Crossway, 2019.

Najapfour, Brian G., Editor. *The Collected Prayers of John Knox*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Neale, Michael and Vernon M. Whaley. *The Way of Worship: A Guide to Living and Leading Authentic Worship* (Book and Student Workbook). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

Parr, Thomas. *Backdrop for a Glorious Gospel: The Covenant of Works According to William Strong*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020.

Payne, Don J. *Already Sanctified: A Theology of the Christian Life in Light of God's Completed Work*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020.

Rogers, Richard. *Holy Helps for a Godly Life*. Grand Rapids: Reformations Heritage Books, 2018.

Schreiner, Patrick. *The Ascension of Christ: Recovering a Neglected Doctrine*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020.

Smart, Robert David. *Waging War in an Age of Doubt: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Approach to Spiritual Warfare for Today*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020.

Smith, Ian K. *Not Home Yet: How the Renewal of the Earth Fits into God's Plan for the World*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019.

Strahan, Joshua. *The Basics of Christian Belief: Bible, Theology, and Life's Big Questions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020.

Stott, John. *Pages from a Preacher's Book: Wisdom and Prayers from the Pen of John Stott*. Mark Meynell, Ed. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020.

Thompson, James W. *Apostle of Persuasion: Theology and Rhetoric in the Pauline Letters*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.

VanDrunen, David. *Politics after Christendom: Political Theology in a Fractured World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Wilson, Jim L. and Earl Waggoner. *A Guide to Theological Reflection: A Fresh Approach for Practical Ministry Courses and Theological Field Education*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

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

for the Church

MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY