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BOOK REVIEWS

EDITORIAL

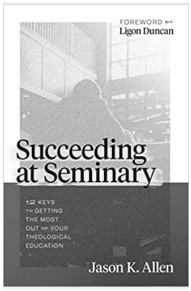
Welcome to the Spring 2021 issue of the Midwestern Journal of Theology, and again I am especially grateful to all those who have contributed to make this happen, especially in the light of the current hardships. Special mention goes to Dr. Jason Duesing, Provost and Academic Editor, for all his invaluable 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 have a rich and varied assortment of articles for this issue and are grateful for the many who submit articles, and are always regretful that we are unable to publish everything we receive. We open this issue with an article from James Hamilton in which he helpfully seeks to define biblical theology, together with its structure and center. For Hamilton biblical theology is the task of understanding the interpretative perspective of the biblical authors. This is followed by Jason DeRouchie's examination of why the Third Day is so significant in the theology of the resurrection of Christ. We are pleased to publish the first published article by Timothy Ingrum, a work in which he analyses the Trinitarian thought of Matthew Henry, a man more usually remembered as a beloved biblical commentator. Baiyu A. Song provides our next article, which consists of a careful study entitled 'Jesus Christ in the "Chinese Enlightenment": A Case Study of Chang Wan-Kai's Christology. ' Our next piece takes us back to England, with Andrew Miller's, 'Sick with Sin, Healed in Christ,' in which he draws out several lessons from the life and work of John Newton. David Roach is the author of our next article, a timely study of the American Baptist Theological Seminary, which he describes as the Southern Baptist Convention's Civil Rights hub. The penultimate article of this issue by Greg Scharf of TEDS, a challenging fresh look at 'the Fear of the Lord,' wherein he asks whether it should be viewed as a missing antidote to homiletical idolatry. Matthew Perry contributed the final article, a study which describes the heart of Charles Spurgeon as probably not surprisingly, a heart committed to rural preachers and ministries.

Reflecting the 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



SUCCEEDING AT SEMINARY: 12 KEYS TO GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

by Jason K. Allen (Moody Publishers)

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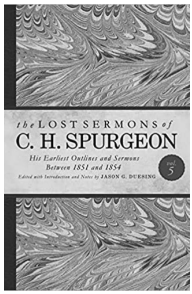
Prepare for your calling and make the most of your theological training with *Succeeding at Seminary*. Seminary president Jason K. Allen provides guidance for incoming and current seminary students on how to maximize their education experience.



THE LOST SERMONS OF C. H. SPURGEON VOLUME V: HIS EARLIEST OUTLINES AND SERMONS BETWEEN 1851 AND 1854

by Jason Duesing, Geoffrey Chang (B&H Academic)

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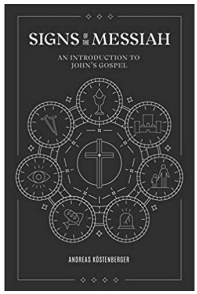
Written for scholars, pastors, and students alike, *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon* will add approximately 10 percent more material to Spurgeon's body of literature.

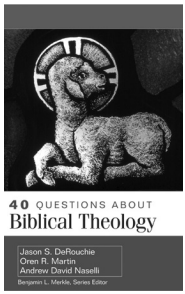


SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH: AN INTRODUCTION TO JOHN'S GOSPEL

by Andreas J. Köstenberger (Lexham Press)

Available Now

In Signs of the Messiah, Andreas J. Köstenberger—veteran New Testament scholar and expert on the Gospel of John—guides readers through John and highlights its plot and message. John's Gospel is written to inspire faith in Jesus. By keeping the Gospel's big picture in view, readers will see Jesus' mighty signs and be compelled to trust more fully in the Messiah.



40 QUESTIONS ABOUT BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

by Jason DeRouchie (Kregel Academic)

Available Now

40 Questions About Biblical Theology provides resources to answer these key questions in order to guide readers in their own study and practice of biblical theology. Other vital topics the authors address include how to understand typology, key themes in biblical theology, and how Christians should relate to Old Testament promises

Midwestern Journal of Theology 20.1 (2021): 1-18

The Definition, Structure, and Center of Biblical Theology

JAMES M. HAMILTON Jr.
Professor of Biblical Theology,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

This essay defines biblical theology as the task of understanding the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors. If we are seeking the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors, the best way to pursue that perspective is to move book by book through the canon of Scripture, and establishing a central idea on which all the biblical authors agree aids us in discerning their perspective.

Introduction[1]

This essay will explore the rationale for my book, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*. The book's introductory chapter addresses choices I made,[2] and this adds to what I say there by discussing the connection between what I understand biblical theology to be, the thesis that biblical theology has a center, and the book by book structure. Andreas J. Köstenberger has recently noted that in the field of biblical theology, "The need remains for definitional clarity and methodological vigilance. . ."[3] In this essay I am pursuing definitional clarity and discussing how our definitions result in our methodologies. The thesis of this essay that elucidating the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors comprises the task of biblical theology, and from this naturally flows the attempt to show the unity of the Bible by demonstrating that the biblical authors are in agreement with each other as to the center of biblical theology. The most straightforward way to get

[1] An earlier version of this essay was presented to the Biblical Theology section at the National Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society on November 15, 2012.

[2] James M. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 37–65.

[3] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Present and Future of Biblical Theology," *Themelios* 37, no. 3 (2012): 462.

at the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors is to move author by author, book by book, corpus by corpus, across the canon. Having considered the definition, structure, and center of biblical theology, I will conclude with some thoughts on what this task requires and what we do with our conclusions.

Definition: What Is Biblical Theology?

In his recent book, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, Graeme Goldsworthy offers several statements under the heading "Tentative steps towards a definition of biblical theology."[4] He writes,

- "let us begin with a broadly consensual definition of biblical theology as the discipline that seeks to understand the theological message, or messages, communicated through the variety of literary phenomena within the various books of the Bible" (39).
- "Biblical theology happens when we engage part or all of the biblical text and endeavor to lay bare the theological content that is there" (39).
- "biblical theology is concerned with the structures of revelation and with the ways in which the unity of the biblical canon can be described" (40).
- "The nature of the gospel is such that it establishes Jesus Christ at the centre of the biblical message. Biblical theology, then, is the study of how every text in the Bible relates to Jesus and his gospel. . . . Biblical theology is Christological, for its subject matter is the whole Bible as God's testimony to Christ. It is therefore, from start to finish, a study of Christ" (40).

Much of Goldsworthy's book then defends a schematic approach to salvation history that divides the epochs of the OT's story from Creation to Abraham, from Abraham to David, then looks at prophetic eschatology before considering NT fulfillment.

With all respect for and appreciation of Goldsworthy, acknowledging that schemas like the one he defends are useful to help us think of the Bible's story in broad terms, the *definition* of biblical theology can be

[4] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 38–42, because the quotations that follow above will refer to this section, I will put the page number on which they appear in parens after each quote.

sharpened significantly. Köstenberger is correct: "the question of definition of biblical theology requires urgent reassessment."[5] My preferred definition of biblical theology is in print in a few places, which I gather together here. This is not every comment I have made on this topic.[6] I quote these because they complement one another, bring out various nuances, and add layers of meaning. Andrew Shead's observation justifies the recitation of these quotations. He writes that there is "a general lack of agreement in the academic community as to how biblical theology ought to be defined."[7]

In *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, I say this:

> We can think of the practice of biblical theology in two ways. On the one hand, we have the practice of the believing community across the ages. On the other hand, we have a label that describes an academic discipline. Regarding the first, I would argue that biblical theology is as old as Moses. That is, Moses presented a biblical-theological interpretation of the traditions he received regarding Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau . . . . The biblical authors use biblical theology to interpret the Scriptures available to them and the events they experienced. For the believing community, the goal of biblical theology is simply to learn this practice of interpretation from the biblical authors so that we can interpret the Bible and life in this world the way they did (41–42).

And later:

> Biblical theology seeks to explain the worldview behind the statements we now find in the Bible. Biblical theology attempts to elucidate the metanarrative embraced by the biblical authors. I am arguing in this book not only that the biblical authors were consistent with one another in terms of their mutual adoption of an overarching explanation of the world, but also that this story of the whole world, which the biblical authors all believed, has a theological center (355).

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[5] Köstenberger, "The Present and Future of Biblical Theology," 459.

[6] See also James M. Hamilton, "A Biblical Theology of Motherhood," *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 2, no. 2 (2012): 6.

[7] Andrew G. Shead, *A Mouth Full of Fire: The Word of God in the Words of Jeremiah*, NSBT (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 23.

In an essay on "Biblical Theology and Preaching," I write:

When we do biblical theology we are trying to lay hold of the perspective from which the biblical authors have interpreted earlier biblical texts and from which they write. We are looking for the matrix of assumptions and conclusions that necessitate the statements made by the biblical authors. We are trying to get at the world view that gives rise to the assertions the biblical authors make. The only access we have to their beliefs and assumptions is what they actually wrote, so biblical theology seeks to understand the literary features that the biblical authors used to: (1) structure their message, (2) connect it to earlier Biblical passages, (3) locate it in the grand story, and thus (4) encourage their audience by showing them God's glory in his displays of justice, all of which highlight his mercy and love for his people. Biblical theology is the attempt to understand the Bible in its own terms.[8]

In a short forthcoming book entitled *What Is Biblical Theology?* I ask,

What is biblical theology?

The phrase biblical theology is used here to refer to the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors.

What is an "interpretive perspective"?

It's the framework of assumptions and presuppositions, associations and identifications, truths and symbols that are taken for granted as an author or speaker describes the world and the events that take place in it.

What do the biblical authors use this perspective to interpret?

First, the biblical authors have interpreted earlier Scripture, or in the case of the very first author on record (Moses), accounts of God's words and deeds that were passed down to him. Second, they interpreted world history from creation to consummation. And third, they interpreted the events and statements that they describe—Moses didn't recount *everything* that Balaam said and did in the instances presented in Numbers 22–24. Moses selected what he wanted, arranged it with care, and presented the true story. The presentation of Balaam's oracles Moses gives us in the book of Numbers is already an interpretation of them, and

[8] James M. Hamilton, "Biblical Theology and Preaching," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2010), 199–200.

because I believe that Moses was inspired by the Holy Spirit, I hold that his interpretation makes his account of the Balaam oracles *more* true, not less. More true because the way Moses selected, arranged, and presented (i.e., interpreted) enables his audience to see more clearly how what Balaam said and did fits into the true story of the world Moses tells in the Pentateuch.

To summarize, by the phrase *biblical theology* I mean to refer to the interpretive perspective reflected in the way the biblical authors have presented their understanding of earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they are describing, recounting, celebrating, or addressing in narratives, poems, proverbs, letters, and apocalypses.[9]

These quotations represent different ways of saying the same thing: that biblical theology is the attempt to trace the contours of the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors.

I am not alone in approaching biblical theology this way. In his classic essay, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?" G. K. Beale speaks of the "unparalleled redemptive-historical perspective on the Old Testament in relation to their own situation" that Jesus and his apostles had. Beale also refers to the "assumptions of the New Testament writers;" and he describes "a framework of five hermeneutical and theological presuppositions."[10] Moreover, in seeking *the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors*, I see myself pursuing the same thing Andreas J. Köstenberger is after when he writes, "the goal of biblical theology, as mentioned, must continue to be accurately perceiving the convictions of the OT and NT writers."[11]

This way of approaching biblical theology necessarily focuses our attention on the human authors of the Bible and what they intended to communicate. It focuses more on what can be seen in the work of individual books or authors and less on a final schematic product of the whole canon, or of the Old or New Testament. It is possible that someone

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[9] James M. Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013).

[10] G. K. Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus' and the Apostles' Exegetical Method," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 391–92.

[11] Köstenberger, "The Present and Future of Biblical Theology," 462.

like Ezra, someone at the end of the progress of OT revelation who was inspired by the Spirit, could have arranged the books of the Old Testament into the canonical shape of the tri-partite Hebrew Bible such that the whole is communicating a unified message,[12] and perhaps something similar happened with the books of the New Testament.[13] Since we cannot, however, be certain that one person was behind the collection and arrangement of the whole of either the OT or the NT into their final canonical form, in considering these possibilities we must recognize that we are taking a step away from what we can be sure that *individual human biblical authors intended to communicate* toward interpreting what we perceive the divine author to have intended through the final form of the OT, the NT, or the whole Bible.

Let the strong connection between authorial intent and this definition of biblical theology be noted. By seeking to understand the interpretive grid that the biblical authors employed, we are seeking to be more precise in our understanding of what they intended to communicate. This way of doing biblical theology hones in on what the biblical authors were trying to get across first, rather than skipping to what the divine author intended to communicate without reference to what the human authors understood.

Claims about what individual biblical authors intended to communicate in their writings are easier to test, evaluate, and verify, as we attend to the literary devices they employed and earlier Scriptures that would have informed their thinking. By contrast, claims about themes that we see across authors in the final form of the canon necessarily move us toward systematic theology (not that this is a bad thing), unless we are able to demonstrate that the themes a later biblical author has picked up and developed are indeed themes he learned from an earlier biblical author, in which case our claims remain rooted in the interpretive perspective of a particular biblical author rather than the final form of the whole canon.

From these statements, it is obvious that there is an intrinsic connection between seeking the perspective of a particular biblical author and the need to study the whole of what that author has written.

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[12] For an argument that something like this happened, see David Noel Freedman, *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

[13] The foundations for such a proposal are laid in David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

More can be said, however, on the relationship between the definition of biblical theology and the choice of how to structure a foray into the realm.

Definition and Structure

Perhaps this is a good time for me to say that my journey in biblical theology has been inescapably personal. I'm into biblical theology because I want to understand the Bible. I want to understand the Bible because I want to know God. I am not out to defend a particular system, such as dispensationalism or covenant theology, nor am I championing a teacher or tribe, such as Calvinism or Barthianism or Carsonism or Schreinerian biblical theology. I want to know God, and I want to understand the Bible.

So the path I'm advocating here is the path that has most appealed to me as I have sought the Lord in the Scriptures. I only say this to acknowledge that my preferences and background have influenced the choices I've made. I am not advocating what I have preferred and found to be exciting because I think that I am any kind of standard or that everyone needs to do this exactly as I have. To be clear, I am not saying that those who prefer doing biblical theology in other ways are wrong, simply that I have chosen what I have preferred, and I have gravitated toward what I have found most stimulating and exciting.

Exegesis of isolated texts cannot arrive at the fullness of meaning a biblical author intends, any more than studying one passage of the Aeneid would lead us to the whole of what Virgil intended to say. Just as Virgil is assuming the Iliad and the Odyssey and a host of related poetry and mythology, just as he is summarizing, interpreting, and developing that tradition, so later biblical authors are assuming what earlier biblical authors have written.

Why have I chosen the book-by-book structure rather than a salvation-historical or thematic structure? I have hinted at how it fits with how I have defined biblical theology and will return to this below, but I feel compelled first to speak to the personal factors in this choice.

I love the Bible and want to understand it. It is far easier for me to track with the interpretive moves a biblical theologian is making if he is moving book-by-book. I find these discussions easier to follow and easier to check against the biblical text. I can read the biblical theological discussion with an open Bible, and I don't have to be constantly moving

from one cross reference to another as might be required in a cross-sectional thematic discussion. In addition, with a book-by-book approach, the interpretive claims being made have the benefit of being set within the context of the argument the biblical author is making, which makes those claims easier to test against the text. I don't have to say to myself, "well, when I have a chance to read the whole context of that proof-text that has just been cited, I'll be able to evaluate that claim." As I describe in the suggested strategy for reading my own book,[14] I have enjoyed taking "guided tours" of the Bible with book-by-book biblical theologies of the Old and New Testaments. My own book was written in the hopes that people would read it that way, reading my discussion of Genesis, for instance, along with their own daily Bible reading of Genesis.

The structure of a book like Scobie's *The Ways of our God*[15] does not permit this kind of side-by-side working straight through the Bible with the help of the book on biblical theology. A major factor in my choice to move book by book was, in fact, my reading of Scobie's massive whole-Bible theology. I found that as I worked carefully through that book, it was difficult to make mental associations between biblical texts and the points Scobie made, to tie the insights I was finding in Scobie's work to particular texts, because he was moving thematically rather than textually. That particular book has almost no index, so if I do happen to remember a point that he made, how do I find it? The index is little help, and because I was not able to tie his points to particular biblical authors or books, I cannot remember, for instance, that he had a really helpful comment on that question in Joshua, nor can I go to the section where he discusses Joshua and quickly find the point I remembered. Because of the structure he chose, a helpful comment he made on something in Romans or Revelation could be *anywhere* in the thousand pages. Good luck finding it.

So in my own reading of biblical theology, I have found it far easier to remember things presented in the book-by-book structure, far easier to find those things I have remembered, and naturally they are then far easier to locate for future citation in my own writing. I almost never quote Scobie, not because I did not learn from reading his book, but

[14] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 29–30.

[15] Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

because what I learned is not associated with particular biblical texts in discussions that are easy to go back to when I want to find that quote.

For these reasons I prefer book-by-book structures to more thematic approaches, and related concerns led me away from salvation-historical and other approaches to structuring biblical theological discussions. I want to understand the whole Bible, every book, not just the chronology of the events, the broad redemptive historical schema, or the backbone of the metanarrative (though I love *Kingdom through Covenant*![16]).

One of the reasons people ask whether a biblical theologian has accounted for the Wisdom Literature is because that material is not event oriented and is easily overlooked when someone is moving chronologically across salvation history. Why should event oriented literature be privileged over wisdom literature that is not narrating events? Why should one vertebra in the backbone be analyzed rather than another? Obviously any approach is going to have to be selective, for no one wants to read a biblical-theology that amounts to a verse-by-verse commentary on the whole Bible. Impractical. So the kind of selectivity that seemed least worst to me was the book-by-book kind.

The reasons I prefer the book-by-book approach to salvation-historical approaches are also connected to the way I have come to understand what biblical theology is, that is, the definition of biblical theology I have come to prefer. Here again, I find this definition—the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors—superior because it is easier to understand, easier to remember, and easier to distinguish from systematic theology.

If we are seeking to understand the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors, the salvation-historical paradigm we are concerned to discuss is the one that they themselves assume as they write, the one we can discern from what they say. This is the meta-narrative I am trying to trace out as I move book-by-book through the canon, trying to follow how their statements reflect this big story. The biblical authors do seem to assume an over-arching story with a beginning, a conflict, rising action toward resolution (the cross), followed by ongoing conflict leading to an end-point or goal. This typologically understood meta-narrative assumed by the biblical authors, however, differs somewhat from both salvation-

[16] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).

historical approaches to biblical theology and the approach to historical writing that characterizes what contemporary historians often do. This is not to say that thematic and chronological approaches have no place, nor is it to say that they are not helpful for establishing the contours of the Bible's big story and the Bible's big ideas. I am simply saying that the concerns I have articulated led me to choose the book-by-book structure in *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*.[17]

A focus on the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors calls us to examine how later authors have developed the statements and perspectives of earlier biblical authors. This leads naturally to a book-by-book progression through the Scriptures, which in turn provides us with a more verifiable way of moving across the unfolding panorama of progressive revelation. As we move we want to see how the biblical authors themselves understood salvation history.

In addition to it being more verifiable, I prefer a book-by-book, corpus-by-corpus structure because it is more practical for both those who write on biblical theology and those who read and seek to learn from the discipline. For writers, it provides a natural structure within which testable, refutable claims can be made, evaluated, accepted, or rejected. For readers, rather than the reader's memory being lost in the maze of a biblical theology structured along the lines of the one written by Scobie, the reader can more naturally hang biblical-theological insights on the hooks of the biblical passages under discussion, and when he wants to find those statements later, the book-by-book structure has organized the hooks.

Perhaps as I age and mature, and as the years afford me opportunity to study more closely all the texts of the Bible, coming to studied positions on interpretive cruxes, I will find it easier both to read and to write more thematic excursions in biblical theology. Perhaps, on the other hand, my memory will be no better in the future than it is now, and I will continue to need the organizational help of the book-by-book structure.

[17] My forthcoming book, *What Is Biblical Theology?* moves more thematically, and the children's book *The Bible's Big Story: Biblical Theology for Kids* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013) moves across the big events of the Bible's story.

Definition and Center

As with the structure of biblical theology, my journey on the center of biblical theology has been inescapably personal. Paul's spirit was provoked within him as he saw Athens full of idols and no one honoring God as God and giving thanks to him (Acts 17:16). As I began to read on biblical theology, I could not understand why discussions of the center of Pauline, OT, or NT Theology lacked what I thought was obvious: the glory of God. Things are not now what they were then, but before Tom Schreiner's Pauline and NT Theologies appeared, the glory of God went un-discussed in summaries of proposed centers of biblical theology.[18] As I looked into the issue, I saw that proposed centers were typically critiqued for being either too broad or too narrow. I didn't think the glory of God would be too narrow, though it could be too broad. Further thought on the issue led to the conclusion that the manifestation of God's glory in everything from creation to redemption to consummation ultimately existed for God to build a great foundation of justice on which he would build a soaring tower of mercy (cf. e.g., Exod 34:6–7; Rom 9:22–23).

Enough personal testimony. What of the connection between the definition of biblical theology, the structure of biblical theology, and the center of biblical theology? How best to determine the contours of the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors? In terms of structure, we can move book-by-book to look carefully at what the authors actually say and how they say it to determine the big story they believe with its matrix of presuppositions and beliefs. How do we begin to trace the contours of this big story with its attendant assumptions? Why not start with what they all agree is ultimate? Why not ask whether there is some dominant idea that explains everything? This is what I am trying to do as I posit that God's glory in salvation through judgment is the center of biblical theology.

For those who have not read my book, and for those who may have been lost in the welter of words across 640 pages, here's the argument:

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[18] See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001); and Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); and for a review of proposed centers, see James M. Hamilton, "The Glory of God in Salvation Through Judgment: The Centre of Biblical Theology?," *Tyndale Bulletin* 57 (2006): 57–84.

God's revelation of himself to Moses in Exodus 34:6–7 shaped how Moses understood God's purposes. In Exodus 34:6–7 Yahweh proclaims his own name, which is to say he declares his own glory and defines himself, and he identifies himself as a God who shows mercy but who does not clear the guilty. In other words, when Yahweh declares his name to Moses, causing his goodness to pass before him, showing him his glory, he points to his ability to forgive sin *and* punish transgression. He points to his justice and his mercy, and the way God accomplishes the display of his justice and mercy is by saving through judgment.

As the first biblical author, Moses's interpretive perspective—with this massive understanding of God's commitment to making known his name, showing his glory, and upholding his goodness in justice and mercy—had a shaping impact on every biblical author who followed Moses. Every biblical author learned from Moses where the world came from, what's wrong with it, who God is, and how God defined himself. Every biblical author also heard significant statements from Moses about how he would save Israel through judgment. In short, God is clearly central to every biblical author, and with the phrase "God's glory in salvation through judgment," I am merely attempting to focus in on the innermost heart of the centrality of God.

Believe it or not, some are not as convinced as I am about the centrality of God's glory in salvation through judgment. I am under no illusions about my ability to convince everyone, nor do I think that what I say here will necessarily change anyone's mind. Nevertheless, I would offer some thoughts in response to a few reviews. I am grateful for each review that has appeared.[19] I don't want to respond tit for tat to

[19] I am presently aware of the following published reviews: Stephen Dempster, "God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology," *9Marks Journal* (February 2011): 42–48; Preston M. Sprinkle, "God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54 (2011): 827–29; Eugene H. Merrill, "God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168 (2011): 478–79; William R. Osborne, "God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology," *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 10 (2011): 211–14; Igal German, "God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology," *Themelios* 36 (2011): 67–68; in addition to these reviews, some comments about my book were made in Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Editorial," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55 (2012): 1–5.

particular statements but in general to several kinds of responses. I am not responding to everything, just those things I want to address.

First, let me say something about the title. The working title that I proposed for this book was *The Center of Biblical Theology: The Glory of God in Salvation through Judgment*. Since this title was not acceptable to the publisher, I now regret the fact that I did not take Justin Taylor's suggestion that we title the book, *A Biblical Theology*. That title would have been easier to remember than the one the book now bears. In addition to one reviewer asking for a title with the virtue of clarity, again and again people have bungled the title, try as they might to get it right. People who have read and enjoyed the book, people who are doing their best to give me a glowing introduction, and people who are identifying me as the guy who wrote that "Glory in salvation and judgment" book. I have heard creative and clever attempts to get the title right, and the successful navigation of the many words of *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* is quite a feat. I apologize for the difficult title. Might I change it in the future? I don't think so. I think that if I persevere and the book continues to be read, the distinctive title will, in the long run, become an advantage rather than a hindrance.

Aside from this, objections tend to gather around two issues. One is the place of the Wisdom literature, a.k.a. the Writings, and the other is the somewhat elastic way that I use the phrase "salvation through judgment."

It seems to me that raising questions about whether the wisdom literature has been adequately incorporated has become somewhat clichéd. It's now a standard question that initiates in the biblical theological discussion bandy about, along the lines of the way baseball talent scouts ask how a young hitter does against the curve-ball: "can he hit a curve?" (If asked whether I can hit a curve, I want to say: put me in the batter's box and let's see. Throw me your best pitch and we'll see if I can hit it—and if I miss it, let's see if you can throw three of them for strikes or will you eventually have to throw me something straight?!).

Now it's one thing if someone hasn't addressed the wisdom literature because they've structured their attempt at biblical theology on thematic or diachronic grounds. In that case, raising the question of the wisdom literature makes a good point. Because I go book-by-book, discussion of

the wisdom literature is included,[20] so the questions raised on this issue are little more than questions until interlocutors actually dispute with the arguments I'm making, which some have taken steps in the direction of doing.[21]

Rather than re-hash what is in my book, let me bring my definition of biblical theology to bear on the question of the relationship between the OT Writings (wisdom literature) and the center of biblical theology. I am after the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors, and one of my presuppositions is that later biblical authors are aware of and shaped by earlier biblical writings. I am convinced that this conclusion is abundantly demonstrable.

This means, for instance, that as Solomon wrote Proverbs, he assumed and everywhere reflected not only texts like Deuteronomy 6, where fathers are called to teach Torah to their sons, and Deuteronomy 17, where the king is to be a man of the Torah,[22] but also Genesis 12:1–3, the paradigmatic blessing of Abraham. Proverbs is pervasively concerned with the land, seed, and blessing promised to Abraham and his seed. Thus "the upright will inhabit the land . . . but the wicked will be cut off from the land" (Prov 2:21–22). Thus, "The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous" (Prov 3:33). And thus, "Her children rise up and call her blessed" (Prov 31:28).[23]

What I am saying here is that a book like Proverbs should be understood as summarizing and interpreting earlier Scripture. This holds also for Psalms, where I would argue the history of Israel is depicted in the implicit story that is told in the arrangement of the Psalter, replete

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[20] I tried to proportion my discussion according to the amount of space given these books in the Bible itself. For the chapter on the Writings, see *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 271–353.

[21] Danny Pierce, "God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: Review, Part 2," *Boston Bible Geeks*, June 14, 2012, https://bostonbiblegeeks.wordpress.com/2012/06/14/gods-glory-in-salvation-through-judgment-review-part-2/.

[22] For the influence of Deuteronomy 6 and 17 on Proverbs, see James M. Hamilton, "That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord," *Journal of Family Ministry* 1 (2010): 10–17.

[23] See esp. Jonathan David Akin, "A Theology of Future Hope in the Book of Proverbs" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012).

with the exile and promised new-exodus and return from exile.[24] Similar things can be said, I think, of the way that Ecclesiastes is presented as teaching from the Son of David with, for instance, its allusions to early narratives in Genesis through the play on Abel's name in the theme word *hevel*, its teaching that all are dust and return to dust (Eccl 3:20; cf. Gen 2–3), and its meditation on how it is not good for man to be alone (Eccl 4:7–16; Gen 2:18).[25] In a forthcoming project on the Song of Solomon, I will argue that Solomon intended his audience to discern a parallel between the impressionistic narrative that unfolds across the Song between the king and the bride in the Song and the history of Israel's relationship with Yahweh.[26]

I am aware that the Song of Songs does not directly say that what is happening in the Song is like what is happening in Hosea, where Hosea represents Yahweh and Gomer represents Israel, but this is, after all, where Solomon's interpretive perspective comes into play. I contend that a biblical-theological reading of the Song interprets the poem in its canonical context, seeking the meaning its author intended. We are, moreover, dealing with poetry, and poetry is by nature evocative. Solomon is assuming what we see elsewhere in the Bible: that Yahweh's covenant with Israel is a marriage and that the king of Israel represents Yahweh in a unique way. I think there are ways that Solomon identifies the king in the Song with Yahweh (see esp., Song 3:6–11), so on biblical theological grounds I am proposing that the Song is a summary and interpretation of the history and future of Israel. In this poetic summary and interpretation, the consummation of the king and his bride in their marriage is described in terms of the king enjoying the glories of the garden of Eden (Song 4:12–5:1). The use of such imagery is neither incidental nor haphazard.

This brings me to the other objection, the one having to do with what I mean by the phrase "salvation through judgment." The complaint is

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[24] See the discussion in *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 276–90.

[25] For Davidic themes, see my discussion in ibid., 313–20; cf. also Nicholas Perrin, "Messianism in the Narrative Frame of Ecclesiastes?," *Revue Biblique* 108 (2001): 37–60; and for the influence of early passages in Genesis, see Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 278–79.

[26] James M. Hamilton, *The Song of Songs*, Focus on the Bible (Fearn: Christian Focus, forthcoming).

raised that I often switch between meanings of these words, so that sometimes "judgment" refers to the defeat of enemies, sometimes to human beings feeling conviction for their sin, and other times to warnings not to live a certain way—judgment pronounced on false thinking/teaching, and so forth. In response to this observation that I do move freely back and forth between these meanings, I would note two things: first, this is the way the Bible itself deals with the concepts of salvation and judgment; and second, I gave fair warning that this kind of thing was coming when I laid out the seven different ways "God's glory in salvation through judgment" will be understood in my first chapter.[27]

The Bible moves freely between different meanings of words like "judgment," "death," and "salvation," so my treatment of these concepts follows the Bible's. God tells Adam he will surely die in the day that he eats the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17), and he surely does die, spiritually first (Gen 3) and then physically (Gen 5). Similarly, Moses says in Leviticus 18:5 that the one who does the commandments will live. I think this statement is to be read in contrast to the statements about what the Israelites are to do "lest they die" in Leviticus (e.g., Lev 15:31), so in the first instance I think it means that Yahweh's holiness will not strike them dead, but the promise of life extends beyond the physical. We could make similar observations on the way that Proverbs says that wisdom will be a "tree of life" (Prov 3:18), as though the man who finds wisdom will attain something of what it would be like to live in God's presence in the garden of Eden. There are clearly implications for what is beyond physical life. Similarly, Psalm 1 says the man who meditates on the Torah will himself be like a tree, planted by streams of water, as were the trees in the garden of Eden (Gen 2:8–10; cf. Isa 58:11; Jer 31:12).

The Bible moves freely between various referents of death and judgment just as it does between the experience of the life that God blesses in the here and now, the life lived by those who know God and trust his promises and obey him because they fear him, and the promise of future salvation. Thus Peter can speak of "a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" that will be enjoyed by those who are "obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet 1:5, 9). Believers are saved and will be saved. There's no doubt that I could have

[27] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 58–59.

been clearer, but in speaking of these realities the way I do, I am following the example set by the biblical authors.

The suggestion that the identification of a center eliminates the need for synthesis[28] or closes down the possibility for exploration fails to register. The identification of the sun as the center of the solar system does not mean that there is nothing left to learn about the thing. Rather, knowing that the sun is at the center of the solar system, that the planets are in orbit around it, held in place by it, illumined by it, guides and governs our exploration and hypothesizing rather than shutting them down.

The Task and Our Conclusions

What is the task? The task of biblical theology is the task of understanding the interpretive perspective reflected in what the biblical authors have written. What does this task require? Most importantly, it requires patient meditation on the Scriptures. It requires close attention to the biblical texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, so that the use and reuse of the actual words and phrases of previous biblical authors can be discerned. But let me also say that biblical theology requires the ability to hold in view the broad contexts of passages. As non-native readers of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, this is often easier for us to do through a skim-glance overview of an English translation that we have worked through in conjunction with our close study of the passage in the original. I am convinced that some of the atomism on display among biblical scholars arises from their refusal to resort to an English text, with the result that they get lost in exegetical detail and lose sight of the context and flow of thought in the passage. Context is king, and it is far easier for our minds to hold broad swaths of our own language on screen.

What do we do with our conclusions? First, we follow Jesus, who learned the interpretive perspective modeled by Moses, the Prophets, and the Sages and Psalmists, and then taught that perspective to his

[28] Against Köstenberger, "Editorial," 3, where he asserts, "If a systematic framework is presupposed at the very outset, and the single center is found in every book of Scripture, there is no synthesis left to be done." I would add that anyone who has read my work will see that describing it as "systematic" would be inaccurate.

disciples.[29] This is a process that will continue for us while we have breath, until we see him as he is (1 John 3:2). Second, we obey the command of Jesus to go and make disciples, teaching them to obey everything he commanded (Matt 28:18–20).

Biblical theology is the attempt to understand and embrace the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors. Biblical theology is for life, as we must believe what the Bible teaches if we are to be saved, and biblical theology is for discipleship, as we must believe what Jesus believed if we are to be his disciples and make disciples of others.

[29] E. Earle Ellis, "Jesus' Use of the Old Testament and the Genesis of New Testament Theology," *Eulletin for Biblical Research* 3 (1993): 59–75.

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Why the Third Day?
The Promise of Resurrection in All of Scripture

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We are two decades into the twenty-first century, and Christians all over the world are still hoping in the resurrection. This hope is not new. God awakened such longing in some of the earliest Old Testament (OT) saints. Equally, rebels who have persisted in unbelief throughout the ages should have dreaded resurrection, for after it comes the judgment.

Next to God's original creation of humanity, Jesus's resurrection unto glory is the most decisive event in the history of mankind, for it brings the dawning of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17) and validates that those in Christ are no longer imprisoned under sin, the payment for which is death (Rom 6:23; 1 Cor 15:17). The OT Scriptures foresaw "that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead" (Luke 24:46; cf. 24:7; John 20:9; Acts 17:2–3; 1 Cor 15:4) and that, "by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light" both to the Jews and the Gentiles (Acts 26:22–23). So, where does the OT anticipate the third-day resurrection? Closely assessing a number of New Testament (NT) texts that cite or allude to specific OT texts gives us an initial clue how those living at the dawn of the new creation were seeing anticipations of the resurrection in their Bible.

New Testament Citations and Allusions of Old Testament Resurrection Texts[1]

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. In contrast, Jesus argued that God "is not God of the dead, but of the living," since that is

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what God implied when he proclaimed to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Mark 12:26–27; cf. Exod 3:6). Similarly, when Jesus asserted his God-given authority to judge, he alluded to Daniel 12:2: "An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28–29). Later, when Paul defended himself before Felix in Caesarea, he alluded to the same OT text when he claimed that those of the Way (i.e., Christians) have "hope in God … that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:14–15).

In Acts, both Peter and Paul identify that Psalm 16:10–11 foretold Christ's resurrection (Acts 2:25–31; 13:34–35). Peter cites Psalm 16:10––"you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption"––and explains that David "foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ" (Acts 2:27, 31). Paul speaks similarly, adding to Psalm 16:10 citations from Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 55:3:

> We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you." And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David." Therefore he says also in another psalm, "You will not let your Holy One see corruption." For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. (Acts 13:32–37)Similarly, 1 Corinthians 15:54–58 recalls both Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14 to argue how God must transform the perishable, mortal bodies of dead and living believers into imperishable, immortal bodies to triumphantly defeat death:
>
> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

Theology of Resurrection?" in *40 Questions about Biblical Theology* by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), 291–300. I thank my research assistant Brian Verrett for his feedback and edits on this essay.

[1] For further development, see Mitchell L. Chase, "The Genesis of Resurrection Hope: Exploring Its Early Presence and Deep Roots," *JETS* 57 (2014): 467–71.

> "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Whereas Isaiah had declared that Yahweh would "swallow up death forever" and thus identify himself as the anticipated Savior (Isa 25:8–9), the immediate context of God's original queries through Hosea offered little hope: "Shall I ransom them [i.e., Ephraim] from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes" (Hos 13:14, ESV footnote). God would not remain distant forever, however, for he tore them that he could ultimately heal them (6:1). He would move them to seek Yahweh their God and David their king (3:5) and would heal their apostasy as they would find shelter under the shadow of their royal representative (14:4–8). Thus, the victory of our Lord Christ would overcome the sting of death, just as Paul declared.

Finally, in Philippians 1:19 Paul appears to allude to the LXX of Job 13:16 with 19:25 in order to stress his confidence that, like Job, he too will experience eternal (even messianic) salvation from his suffering, "whether by life or by death" (1:20). The apostle writes, "Yes, I will rejoice, *for I know* that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ *this will turn out for my deliverance*." In Job 13:15–16 Job declares, "Though [God] slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. Indeed, *this will turn out for my deliverance*" (NIV). The Greek clauses rendered in the italicized portions are found only in these two places in Scripture. Job retained his hope in God, anticipating that after his own death he would plead his cause face-to-face before the Lord and that the result would be his salvation. He, thus, queries, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" He believes that he will, for he adds, "All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come" (14:14). Then in 19:25–26 we find the second potential allusion: "*For I know* that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God." The Greek phrase rendered "for I know" occurs elsewhere only five other places, three of which are in Job (Deut 31:29; Job 9:28; 19:25; 30:23;

Rom 7:18). The likelihood that Paul alludes to Job's resurrection hope in Job 13:16 heightens the probability that he also has 19:25 in mind and melds the two together in his allusion in Phil 1:19.[2]

Potential Third-day Resurrection Typologies in the Old Testament[3]

None of the above OT texts that the NT authors explicitly cite includes any mention of a *third-day* resurrection, yet both Jesus (Luke 24:46) and Paul (1 Cor 15:4) stress that the prediction of Christ's being raised on the third day was "written" and was "in accordance with the Scriptures." It seems likely, therefore, that we should look for typologies that foreshadow a third-day resurrection event, and when we broaden our perspective here, a number of further texts become possible sources for the NT claims. We will look at them by moving from back to front through the canon.

First, Jesus paralleled his own coming resurrection with Jonah's resurrection-like deliverance from the belly of the fish: "Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt 12:40; cf. Jon 1:17–2:10[2:1–11]).[4] Jesus appears to read the Jonah story typologically, seeing it as both pointing to his exaltation through trial and clarifying how his resurrection would signal salvation through judgment.

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[2] I am grateful to my research assistant Brian Verrett for pointing me to this NT use of the OT. Cf. Moisés Silva, who equally affirms that Paul is citing Job 13:16 but gives no thought to 19:25: "Philippians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 836.

[3] See Nicholas P. Lunn, "'Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures': Resurrection Typology in the Genesis Creation Narrative," *JETS* 57 (2014): 523–35; Stephen G. Dempster, "From Slight Peg to Cornerstone to Capstone: The Resurrection of Christ on 'the Third Day' According to the Scriptures," *WTJ* 76 (2014): 371–409; Joel R. White, "'He Was Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:4): A Typological Interpretation Based on the Cultic Calendar in Leviticus 23," *TynBul* 66 (2015): 103–19.

[4] Throughout, Scripture citations in brackets refer to the Hebrew Bible, whose verse numbers sometimes differ from English translations.

Second, building off what was already noted, Hosea declared that the end of Israel's exile would be like a resurrection after three days: "Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth" (Hos 6:1–3). Significantly, the prophets are clear that the Christ would represent Israel, bearing the people's name and saving representatives from both Israel and the other nations (Isa 49:3, 6). At the end of his book, Hosea himself appears to make this connection between the one and the many when he relates a plural people with a singular "Israel," under whose shadow they will find refuge (Hos 14:4–8 in the Hebrew, seen in the ESV footnotes; cf. Zech 3:7–9). Thus, in Christ's resurrection on the third day, the true Israel in him rises to life.[5]

Third, in the NT, Christ portrays his death as a baptism (Luke 12:50), and the NT authors portray the judgments of both the flood (1 Pet 3:20–21) and the Red Sea (1 Cor 10:2) as baptisms. Because the initial Passover sacrifice marks Israel's birth as a nation, and because Moses highlights only three stopping points en route to the parting of the Red Sea (Num 33:3–8; cf. Exod 12:37; 13:20; 14:2), some propose that the Red Sea crossing likely happened three days after this new creation.[6] While the evidence that Israel crossed the Red Sea only three days after the Passover is questionable, the great exodus event still points typologically to Christ's resurrection as a new creation.[7] Indeed, on the mount of

[5] For the significance of this text in the backdrop of the NT's assertion that the third-day resurrection of Jesus was "according to the Scriptures," see esp. Dempster, "From Slight Peg to Cornerstone to Capstone," 404–9.

[6] See Lunn, "Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures," 527–30.

[7] While the exodus clearly anticipates Christ's resurrection, I question that this saving event anticipates his *third-day* resurrection. This is because Moses appears to portray the journey to the Red Sea (= *Yam Suph*) as being much more extensive. First, he actually notes that Israel set out "the day after the Passover" (Num 33:3), which supplies only two more days to get in three camping spots. Second, we know that "God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea [= *Yam Suph*]" (Exod 13:18). "The way of the wilderness" is best identified as the caravan road stretching eastward across the middle of the Sinai Peninsula from the base of the Nile Delta to the Gulf of Aqaba. If this Gulf

Jesus's transfiguration, Moses and Elijah identified Jesus's coming work in Jerusalem as an "exodus" (Luke 9:30–31, ESV = "departure"), thus signaling the fulfillment of the second exodus anticipated throughout the prophets (e.g., Isa 11:10–12:6; Jer 23:7–8; Zeph 3:19–20).[8]

Fourth, it was "on the third day" of his journey to sacrifice his son that Abraham promised his servants, "I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you" (Gen 22:4–5). Reflecting on this story, the writer of Hebrews declares of the patriarch, "He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back" (Heb 11:19). Yahweh had promised, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named" (Gen 21:12), and this offspring, who was distinct from Isaac, would be the one who would multiply like the stars, who would possess his enemies' gate, and who would be the channel of divine blessing to the nations (22:17–18). Thus, the substitutionary sacrifice that saved Isaac's life (22:13) and the youth's own deliverance pointed ahead to the greater offspring who would triumph only through great tribulation.

Fifth, the NT portrays both baptism (e.g., Rom 6:4–5; Col 2:12) and sprouting seeds (e.g., 1 Cor 15:35–38) as images of resurrection. As such, we may see the earliest anticipations of Jesus's third-day resurrection in the fact that the first sprouts came forth out of the watery chaos on the third day following the original creation (Gen 1:11–13).[9] Jesus is the

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is indeed the location of *Yam Suph* and the place of the Sea crossing (which seems likely from texts like Exod 23:21; Deut 21:1; 1 Kgs 9:26; Jer 49:20–21), then the journey was probably closer to two weeks than three days. While a well-known travel route, "the way of the wilderness" was still through the wilderness, and the only specific reason that Moses would need to list specific camping sites was (1) if something important happened there or (2) if the campsite was in close proximity to a known location. In all likelihood, the three camp sites were *not* Israel's only three respite points en route to the Sea. For more on the Gulf of Aqaba as the place of the Red Sea crossing, see Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 104–35.

[8] See, e.g., Jason S. DeRouchie, "How Does Isaiah 12:2 Use Exodus 15:2?" and "How Does Matthew 2:15 use Hosea 11:1" in *40 Questions about Biblical Theology* by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), 303–20.

[9] Cf. Mitchell L. Chase, "'From Dust You Shall Arise': Resurrection Hope in the Old Testament," *SBJT* 18.4 (2014): 11; Lunn, "Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures," 532–34.

"seed" that first dies and then bears much fruit (Gen 3:15; John 12:23–24).

Other Old Testament Resurrection Texts[10]

Other passages in the OT predict both directly and indirectly future resurrection. First, there are three examples of nonpermanent resurrections—that is, types of resuscitations wherein God temporarily revives a person who has recently died. Elijah, for example, brings to life the son of the widow from Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:17–23), and the act validates his prophetic role (17:24). Similarly, God uses Elisha to restore the woman's son in Shunem (2 Kgs 4:18–37), and after Elisha dies, a man's corpse is revived when it touches Elisha's own corpse in a tomb (13:20–21). The author of Hebrews wrote that some prophets were agents of resurrection (Heb 11:35), and by this he identifies how all these OT events foreshadow and give hope for the more ultimate resurrection that will include permanent glorified bodies.

Next, with Israel's exile and following restoration in view, Yahweh declared through Moses, "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut 32:39; cf. 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kgs 5:7). Because "healing" always *follows* "wounding," God's "making alive" *after* "killing" envisions that he would resurrect his people from the curse of death. Kenneth Turner has noted that, by using words like "perish," "destroy," "annihilate," and the like, Moses in Deuteronomy portrays Israel's exile as a "death," by which the nation as Yahweh's elect son and servant "loses her identity, history, and covenant relationship with Yahweh. Restoration from exile, then, is a resurrection from death to life."[11] And because Jesus Christ, as *Israel the person*, represents *Israel the*

[10] See Chase, "From Dust You Shall Arise," 9–29; Chase, "The Genesis of Resurrection Hope," 467–80; Lunn, "Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures," 523–35; Dempster, "From Slight Peg to Cornerstone to Capstone," 371–409.

[11] Kenneth J. Turner, "Deuteronomy's Theology of Exile," in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 190, 194. He further notes, "The people will continue to exist physically in exile; yet, as a single entity, Israel is said to 'perish' or 'be destroyed.' So, it is not Israel as an historical or socio-religious people, but Israel as Yahweh's

people (Isa 49:3, 6), his bodily resurrection following his bearing the curse-judgment (Gal 3:13) inaugurates the fulfilling of this promise.

Living in the midst of exile, Ezekiel envisioned how Yahweh would fulfill the resurrection he predicted through Moses. Whereas covenant obedience could have led to life (Lev 18:5; Ezek 20:11, 13, 21), Israel's covenant rebellion had resulted in the nation's exilic death, so that God portrays them as dried up bones filling a field (Ezek 37:1; cf. Jer 8:1–2).[12] Nevertheless, Yahweh promises, "Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live" (Ezek 37:5). This resulted in his supplying them with human form and breathing into them the breath of life, so that "they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army" (37:10). The vision anticipated how God would "raise you from your graves," putting "my Spirit within you"; they would not only live but be Yahweh's very temple (37:13–14; cf. 36:27). Thus, "My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (37:27; cf. 2 Cor 6:16).

Earlier, building on his claim that Yahweh would "swallow up death forever" (Isa 25:8; cf. 1 Cor 15:54), Isaiah declared, "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!" (Isa 26:19). The Fourth Servant Song unpacks how God awakens those bodies and enables them to exult. Isaiah first highlighted the servant-person's resurrection when he identified his seeing offspring *after* his substitutionary sacrifice: "It was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (53:10). We then hear Yahweh declare, "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous,

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elect son and servant (Deut 1:31, 7:6, 14:1) that is put to death. Exile constitutes the death of Israel as a nation in covenant—a covenant comprised of a dynamic relationship between Yahweh, the nation, and the land. Whatever existence continues, it is discontinuous with the past." Turner, "Deuteronomy's Theology of Exile," 194; cf. Kenneth J. Turner, *The Death of Deaths in the Death of Israel: Deuteronomy's Theology of Exile* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

[12] See Jason S. DeRouchie, "The Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12: A Redemptive-Historical Reassessment," *Them* 45.2 (2020): 251–53; cf. Preston M. Sprinkle, "Law and Life: Leviticus 18:5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel," *JSOT* 31 (2007): 275–93.

and he shall bear their iniquities" (53:11). Because Yahweh declared his servant-person righteous (cf. 50:8), this righteous one would be able to bear the sins of many in death, and through his victorious resurrection all those in him—his spiritual progeny—would be declared righteous. Yahweh's servant person was "Israel" (49:3), and "in the LORD all the offspring of Israel shall be justified and shall glory" (45:25).

Beyond Psalms 2:7 and 16:9–11 noted above (cf. Acts 2:25–31; 13:32–35), the Psalter points to the resurrection a number of times. For example, we learn that "the upright shall behold [Yahweh's] face" (Ps 11:7), and the psalmist declares in hope, "When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness" (17:15). Similarly, the very one forsaken of God and afflicted to the point of death (22:1–21[2–22]) promises to proclaim God's name to his brothers (22:22[23]), which implies resurrection (cf. Matt 28:10; Rom 8:29; Heb 2:12). Furthermore, before Yahweh "shall bow all who go down to the dust," which highlights a future beyond the grave for those who die (Ps 22:29[30]). The sons of Korah end Psalm 48 with the testimony of the faithful that God "will guide us beyond death" (ESV footnote). They then assert in Psalm 49 that the proud "are appointed for Sheol" but that "the upright [ones] shall rule over them in the morning" (49:14[15]). With the voice of the royal representative, they declare, "God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me" (49:15[16]). At the very least, such assertions point to a spiritual resurrection. Similarly, the psalmist points to life after death when he writes, "You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again" (71:20). And Asaph contrasts the terrifying end of the proud (73:17–22) with God's commitment to bring the humble to glory and to be their strength and portion *forever* (73:24–26).

Finally, as already noted by Paul's allusion to Job 13:16 and 19:25 in Philippians 1:19, the wisdom books testify to the hope of resurrection. At the end of Job's trial-filled life, which included the death of his ten children (1:2, 18–19), he had another "seven sons and three daughters" (42:13). But because we are told earlier that "the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before" (42:10), the text may imply the spiritual resurrection of his earlier kids, similar to the way Jesus spoke of Yahweh's declaring, "I am the God of Abraham"—not "of the dead, but of

the living" (Matt 22:32).[13] The preacher known as Qoheleth was convinced that death would come to all, both those who are good and those who are evil (Eccl 9:2–3), and that "there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing" (7:15). Nevertheless, "Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him" (8:12). Qoheleth was certain in a future hope beyond the grave for the righteous (cf. 12:7), just as he and the narrator were certain that for all "God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (12:14; cf. 11:9).

Resurrection in the New Testament[14]

To highlight that Jesus fulfills what the OT anticipates (cf. Luke 24:46–47; Acts 10:43; 26:22–23; Rom 3:21; 1 Cor 15:3–4; 1 Pet 1:10–11), each of the four Gospels concludes with stories of Jesus's bodily resurrection from the dead (Matt 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10), and the rest of the NT portrays this as the watershed event that alters the course of world history. Jesus's resurrection happens on the first day of the week (John 20:1, 19), thus symbolizing the inauguration of the new creation (1 Cor 15:20, 23; 2 Cor 5:17). It establishes Jesus Christ as the Righteous One (1 Tim 3:16; cf. Isa. 50:8; 53:11; 1 John 2:1) and Lord and Judge of the universe (Matt 28:18; Acts 2:36; 17:31; Rom 1:4; 14:9). Jesus's resurrection secures justification for

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[13] On this proposal, see, e.g., Franz Delitzsch, *Job*, trans. Francis Bolton, Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), s.v. Job 42:13; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 542; Robert L. Alden, *Job*, NAC 11 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 413.

[14] See esp. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 3 (London: SPCK, 2003). For a brief synthesis of his view, see N. T. Wright, "Resurrection Narratives," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 675–76; N. T. Wright, "Resurrection of the Dead," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 676–78. For more on the doctrine of resurrection, see the entire issue of *SBJT* 18.4 (2014): https://equip.sbts.edu/category/publications/journals/journal-of-theology/sbjt-184-winter-2014/.

all who believe (Rom 4:25; 6:8–11; 1 Cor 15:17), initiates the spread of the good news (Rom. 1:16–17; Gal. 1:11–12) and a Spirit-empowered global mission of salvation (Matt. 28:19–20; John 20:19–22; Acts 1:8), and supplies the necessary lens for understanding the OT (John 2:20–22; 12:13–16; 20:9).

Jesus's resurrection creates for all in him a living hope for "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1 Pet 1:3–5), and it provides hope for the entire created order that it will be renewed (Rom 8:18–25; cf. Col 1:20)—"Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ" (1 Cor 15:23). In his resurrected body, Jesus retained physical signs of his execution so as to validate his identity (Luke 24:39; John 20:20, 25, 27; Acts 1:3), but he could remain unrecognized until Scripture or other revelation supplied spiritual knowledge of who he was (Luke 24:16, 31; cf. John 20:14, 16; 21:4, 12). He could walk and dialogue with others (Luke 24:15–17; John 20:15), vanish and appear at will (Luke 24:31, 36–37; John 20:19, 26), be touched (Luke 24:39; John 20:17, 27), and eat and drink (Luke 24:30, 42–43; Acts 10:41). He was rightfully worshiped and visibly ascended to heaven (Luke 24:51–52; Acts 1:9).

Jesus compared God's power to raise the dead (e.g., Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kgs 5:7) with his power to overcome spiritual death by presently giving people eternal life (John 3:16; 5:21, 24–26); such initial "resurrection" gives certainty of consummate resurrection following physical death, first spiritually and then bodily (5:28–29; 11:25–26; 14:2–3). Paul, too, notes that, although "we were dead in our trespasses," God has already "made us alive together with Christ … and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:1, 5–7). Believers are, thus, *already* experiencing a spiritual resurrection, and Christians who die before Christ's second appearing enter into a state of conscious rest in the presence of Jesus (Luke 23:43; John 14:2–3; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 1:23). But when Christ does return, those who already experienced initial spiritual resurrection will then be given new supernatural bodies that will never wear out (Rom 8:11; Phil 3:20–21; 1 Thess 4:16–17).

In the pattern of Elijah and Elisha, in the NT God uses prophetic figures to revive individuals who recently died in order to identify Jesus's power over death. But whereas Elijah asked God to act (1 Kgs 17:21–22),

Jesus, acting as God, simply commands, as in his resuscitation of a synagogue ruler's daughter in Galilee (Mark 5:35–43), the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11–17), and Lazarus (John 11:1–53). Working under the power of Christ, Peter, too, re-enlivens a young girl in Joppa (Acts 9:36–43), and in Ephesus Paul revives Eutychus after he fell from a window and died (20:7–12). In each of these examples, God's temporary resurrection of a person who recently died both validated the prophet's authority and foreshadowed the power of Jesus to lastingly raise the dead (John 11:25–26; cf. Luke 7:16–17; John 9:32–33).

As noted above, Scripture anticipates "a resurrection of both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15; cf. Dan 12:2; Matt 25:46; John 5:28–29). This is what Revelation 20:12 refers to when it asserts, "I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done" (cf. Matt 25:31–32; 2 Cor 5:10). Scholars continue to disagree on the meaning and proper temporal referents of Revelation 20:1–6, which mentions "the first resurrection" and "the second death" (20:5–6). While the text is not explicit, the ordinals "first" and "second" imply at least a "second" and "first" for both resurrection and death. Furthermore, "the first resurrection" likely applies only to believers ("Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!" 20:6) and refers to the spiritual life already enjoyed by believers who die (cf. Luke 23:43; Phil 1:23).[15] In contrast, "the second death" will apply only to nonbelievers ("over such [i.e., those who experience the first resurrection] the second death has no power," Rev 20:6) and relates to the eternal state of the unregenerate in the lake of fire (20:14).[16] The note that "the rest of the dead did not come to life" (Rev 20:5) refers to the unbelievers who, after

[15] See Meredith G. Kline, "The First Resurrection," *WTJ* 37 (1975): 366–75; Meredith G. Kline, "The First Resurrection: A Reaffirmation," *WTJ* 39 (1976): 110–19. As noted above, both John and Paul identify that the "first resurrection" is actually inaugurated at conversion (John 5:21, 24; Eph 2:6; Col 3:1) and consummated when, following physical death, persons presently exiled enter their heavenly citizenship, awaiting the reunion with their bodies at the "second resurrection" (John 5:28–29; Phil 3:20– 21).

[16] See G. K. Beale, "The Millennium in Revelation 20:1–10: An Amillennial Perspective," *CTR* 11.1 (2013): 29–62.

physical death, remain "dead in [their] trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1) but who will rise at the final judgment.[17]

Death and Resurrection in Revelation 20		
	Believers	***Non-believers***
First death	Physical	Physical
First resurrection	Spiritual (immediate)	—
Second resurrection	Physical	Physical
Second death	—	Spiritual (immediate)

Christ's resurrection impacts the Christian's present ethics and future hope. As for ethics, Paul says, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col 3:1). Similarly, the apostle notes, "We were buried … with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.… So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ" and must not let "sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Rom 6:4, 11–12; cf. 1 Cor 6:12–20; 2 Cor 5:15). Our identification with Christ in his resurrection demands that we live as part of the new creation.

Related to this, God's reconciling us should move us to help others be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:17–19), for Christ's resurrection now gives our preaching, faith, and labors eternal purpose (1 Cor 15:14, 58). Jesus's resurrection awakens confidence in the life to come (15:23), and what we hope for tomorrow changes who we are today (2 Pet 1:4). We are empowered to radical mission and radical joy amid a world of chaos and suffering because we know that when Christ returns, our new body will be raised in glory and power, bearing the very image of the man of

[17] Both John and Paul identify that physical death is merely the consummation of the "first death" that was already inaugurated at conception through a person's identification with Adam (Rom 5:12, 18–19) and the spiritual death lived out in the land of the living (John 3:18, 36; 5:24–26; Eph 2:1, 5).

heaven, the divine Son (1 Cor 15:43–44, 49; cf. Phil 3:20–21). Come, Lord Jesus!

The Nature of Resurrection Hope

What is resurrection hope? It is not only resurrection itself but the joy that follows it. Recall, for example, what David proclaimed prophetically concerning the resurrection of Christ (so Acts 2:25–32). He begins by asserting, "My heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption" (Ps 16:9–10). He then proclaims: "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (16:11). Christ's joy on the other side of his resurrection included his reigning at the Father's right hand (110:1), which is exactly how Peter interpreted this passage when he celebrated Christ's resurrection from death and ascension to reign over all (Acts 2:25–36). This same pleasure will be equally realized for all who are in Christ when we, upon our future resurrection, see God's face (Matt 25:34; Rev 22:3–5).

Similarly, Isaiah 53:10–11 links Christ's resurrection with satisfaction.

> It was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Through direct prophecy, both verses 10–11 begin by detailing Christ's brutal suffering unto death, and then they highlight his resurrection unto joy. First, the prophet notes that God's delight was to "crush" his servant-person, to "put him to grief," the manner of which would be a penal substitutionary death as "an offering for guilt" that would include the deepest "anguish." In this one act, God's righteous servant would "bear [the people's] iniquities."

But there is more. Three specific, all-motivating elements would rise on the other side of this atoning sacrifice—"he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." Seeing, prolonging, prospering! Over seven hundred years before Jesus's

appearing, Isaiah implies the reality of resurrection because he foresaw that the wrath-bearer, whom God identifies as "the righteous one," would continue to carry out God's will by lastingly saving "many" blood-bought "offspring" from the peoples of the world (cf. 54:3). His atoning work would "sprinkle many nations" (52:15) and "make many to be accounted righteous" (53:11).

Yahweh's words identify what this reality would bring to the servant: "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied" (53:11). The Hebrew in verse 11 actually lacks a conjunction between the verbs, which suggests that God was equating the servant's "seeing" with his "being satisfied." And in verse 10 we already learned what it is that he sees: many "offspring," whom now we are told he accounts righteous and bears their iniquity. Part of "the joy that was set before [Jesus]," by which he "endured the cross" (Heb 12:2), was the "many" whom he set out to redeem (Isa 53:11; Rom 5:19) … "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). These were the "great cloud of witnesses" to his worth (Heb 12:1) that we are in turn called to join as we "consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that we will not grow weary or faint hearted" (12:3).

His mission to save motivated Christ to carry his cross, and it should motivate us as we carry ours (Mark 8:34; Heb 12:2–3). And having already been united with Christ and raised with him in an inaugurated way, we are already tasting the joys of Christian community with every new soul that is saved.

All Will Meet Him

The OT anticipates the (third day) resurrection of God's people following an exilic death (e.g., Deut 32:39; Hos 6:2; Dan 12:2), and it clarifies that the new life of the community will be multiethnic in nature and will result from the representative suffering servant's own triumph over death (Isa. 53:10–11; Ps. 16:10). Jesus Christ's resurrection on the third day fulfills OT predictions (Luke 24:46–47; 1 Cor 15:4), establishes him as the reigning King (Rom 1:4; Matt 28:18), inaugurates the new creation (1 Cor 15:20, 23; 2 Cor 5:17), justifies the many (Rom 4:25), calls believers to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4; Col 3:1), births a global mission (Matt 28:19–20; John 20:19–22; Acts 1:8; Rom 1:16–17; Gal 1:11–12), and supplies hope to all believers of their own resurrection (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:43–44, 49; Phil 3:20–21; Heb 9:27–28). It also

should stress to nonbelievers that they will indeed meet the heavenly Judge face-to-face (Dan 12:2; Matt 25:46; John 5:28–29).

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"Into Whose Name Were You Baptized?" The Trinitarian thought of Matthew Henry

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Ministering from 1687 to 1714, Matthew Henry represents the pivot from the Puritan era into the long eighteenth century.[2] His ordination coincided closely with the 1689 Act of Toleration,[3] and his death preceded by five years the Salters' Hall controversy that plunged his Dissenting community into conflict over subscription to orthodox formulations of the Trinity,[4] and led to a dire theological collapse among his own Presbyterians in a matter of decades.[5] Henry served and wrote in an era when the church's Trinitarian heritage faced Socinian and Arian pressures.[6] At such a critical time, his work displays a robust and conscientiously orthodox trinitarianism, rooted in exegesis by the analogy of faith, and deeply tied to the experience of baptism and ongoing communion with God.

Henry was converted at an early age and received his early education from his father Philip Henry, who had studied under John Owen at

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[2] David Crump, "The Preaching of George Whitefield and His Use of Matthew Henry's Commentary," *Crux* 25, No. 3 (September 1989): 19.

[3] Jason E. Vickers, *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 65.

[4] Roger Thomas, "The Non-Subscription Controversy amongst Dissenters in 1719: The Salters' Hall Debate," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 4, No. 2 (July 1953): 171–72.

[5] Alexander H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England: Their Rise, Decline and Revival* (London: Publication Committee of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1889), 502–532.

[6] Philip Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 98–207; Vickers, *Invocation and Assent*, 65–167.

Oxford.[7] In 1681, he enrolled at a Dissenting seminary in London. However, he soon transitioned to studying law at Gray's Inn in London from 1685–86.[8] After his return home in 1686, he preached at some Dissenting churches. A group of believers in Chester called him to pastor there as they began a new Presbyterian assembly in 1687. After receiving ordination in London, he answered the call to Chester and served there for twenty-five years.[9]

By the early 1700s Henry had become a well-recognized preacher and writer among Dissenting churches. He turned down several offers to pastor in more prominent places over the years. But in 1712, with his congregation's blessing, he accepted a call to Hackney, near London, to increase the sphere of his ministry.[10] Only two years into his tenure there, Henry became ill during a visit back to Chester. He died on the return journey in Nantwich, on June 22, 1714.[11]

Matthew Henry's best-known publication is his six-volume Bible commentary, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, based on tireless chapter-by-chapter lectures that took him through the Bible multiple times.[12] Publication began with the Pentateuch in 1706 and got through Acts before his death.[13] Romans through Revelation were compiled and published posthumously.[14] The commentary still has no peer in the English-speaking world, covering the whole Bible evenly with discussion of every verse, and addressing the ordinary Christian with the best of the

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[7] Allan M. Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," *The Reformed Theological Review* 73, No. 3 (December 2014): 181; David Bogue and James Bennett, *The History of Dissenters, from the Revolution in 1688, to the Year 1808* (London: Frederick Westley and A.H. Davis, 1809), 2:210–211, 290.

[8] Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 182; Bogue and Bennett, *The History of Dissenters*, 2:291. Harman claims that a disease outbreak sent him home soon, while Bogue and Bennett say that the influence of friends moved him to switch to law.

[9] Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 182; Bogue and Bennett, *The History of Dissenters*, 2:292.

[10] Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 183; Bogue and Bennett, *The History of Dissenters*, 2:294.

[11] Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 183.

[12] Bogue and Bennett, *The History of Dissenters*, 2:293–94; Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 187; Crump, "The Preaching of George Whitefield," 23.

[13] Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 187.

[14] Bogue and Bennett, *The History of Dissenters*, 2:296–97.

Puritan exegetical and experiential tradition.[15]

Henry's *Exposition* sold many copies and made an immediate impact. Among those influenced were the three greatest figures of the eighteenth century's British revivals: John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. John Wesley commended Henry's work, leaned on his *Exposition* to write his own Old and New Testament notes, and reported that many of his contemporary preachers were using turns of phrase they had picked up from the commentary.[16] Charles Wesley sourced some of his hymn lyrics from lightly-modified bits of language from *Exposition.*[17] Whitefield gave glowing praise for Henry's *Exposition*, which was among the few sources he constantly used in his sermon preparation.[18] Unsurprisingly, his sermons bear signs of heavy dependence on Henry.[19]

Aside from *Exposition,* Henry's best-known work is *A Method for Prayer with Scripture Expressions Proper to Be Used under Each Head*, in which he compiled 5,000 Scripture passages into a topical prayer system from his mental index of Scripture.[20] His other publications include two catechisms, a hymnal, several practical works, and numerous sermons.

The Trinity in the Old Testament

Henry's Old Testament exegesis on the Trinity follows familiar

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[15] Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 187–89; Allan M. Harman, "The Impact of Matthew Henry's Exposition on Eighteenth-Century Christianity," *Evangelical Quarterly* 82, No. 1 (January 2010): 14.

[16] Harman, "The Impact of Matthew Henry's Exposition," 4–7. This included many of Wesley's fellow Arminians, who would have taken exception to Henry's thoroughgoing Calvinism.

[17] Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 184–86; Harman, "The Impact of Matthew Henry's Exposition," 7–9.

[18] Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 186–87; Harman, "The Impact of Matthew Henry's Exposition," 9–11; Michael A.G. Haykin, "'The Fields Are White Ready unto Harvest': The Preaching of George Whitefield," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 7, No. 1 (January 2015): 173.

[19] Crump, "The Preaching of George Whitefield." John Brown of Haddington, Archibald Alexander, and Herman Bavinck would all likewise sing high praises of Henry's commentary (Harman, "The Impact of Matthew Henry's Exposition," 12; Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 188–89).

[20] Harman, "The Legacy of Matthew Henry," 195–96.

Reformed and Puritan patterns.[21] Namely, he employs the analogy of faith to see later revelation shedding greater clarity on obscure Old Testament adumbrations of the Trinity. In the Bible's opening verse, he wastes no time elaborating the Trinity from the use of the plural *Elohim* as the divine name, "which bespeaks . . . the plurality of persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This plural name of God . . . [confirms] our faith in the doctrine of the Trinity."[22] He takes the opportunity to explain the exegetical method that allows him to see the Trinity here and elsewhere in the Old Testament: "which [doctrine], though but darkly intimated in the Old Testament, is clearly revealed in the New." Accordingly, he cites Proverbs 8:30, John 1:3, John 1:10, Ephesians 3:9, and Colossians 1:16, among other texts, to shed light on the triune identity of God here. In Genesis 1:26, he again teases out the Trinity implied by plurality: "The three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consult . . . and concur . . . because man . . . was to be dedicated and devoted to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."[23]

Henry later uses the analogy of faith to identify divine persons as speakers in Psalm 45:6–7 and Isaiah 48:16. In the former, he follows the lead of Hebrews 1:8–9 to identify the speaker and addressee: "It is God the Father that says to the Son here, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*."[24] In the latter, he follows the link between Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:21 to identify the sending Lord God as the Father, and the Spirit-endowed sent one as the Son.[25]

Rich intertextuality also leads Henry to identify the personification of divine wisdom as the Son in Proverbs 8:22–31: "[This] intelligent, divine Person can be no other than the Son of God himself, to whom the principal things here spoken of wisdom are attributed in other Scriptures, and we must explain Scripture by itself."[26] In the ensuing discussion, he ties nearly every phrase to New Testament passages such

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[21] Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 2nd ed.(Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 4:214–26.

[22] Matthew Henry, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (Philadelphia: Ed. Barrington & Geo. D. Haswell, 1828), 1:22.

[23] Henry, *Exposition*, 1:28.

[24] Ibid., 3:331.

[25] Ibid., 4:220.

[26] Ibid., 3:671.

as Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:13, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 1:2–3.[27]

Some of Henry's Protestant forebears had pointed to "Angel of the Lord" passages as pre-incarnate appearances of the eternal Word.[28] Henry follows this pattern with restraint. On Exodus 3:2, he notes the precedent of seeing the second divine person as the angel in the bush, but remains agnostic.[29] In Judges 13:3, he affirms another commentator's Christological interpretation based the angel's divine name, Jehovah, in verse 19.[30]

The necessity of Trinitarianism

How importantly did Henry regard the traditional orthodox formulations of the Trinity? One indication appears in several passages where he elaborates theologically, sometimes adopting creedal terms and setting his interpretation against early-church and contemporary anti-trinitarian heresies.

Henry sees Psalm 2:7 as a key passage for the Son's eternal generation. Banking again on intertextual links, he regards the citation in Hebrews 1:5, given to prove Christ's divine subsistence (v. 3), as proof that David is speaking of eternal generation. Paul's quote in Acts 13:33 proves that David also refers to the resurrection as proof of the Son's eternal deity.[31] Henry's comment on Proverbs 8:22–31 also exhibits the orthodox vocabulary of essence and subsistence to explain Wisdom as a personification of the Son: "[Observe] His personality, and distinct subsistence; one with the Father, and of the same essence, and yet a person of himself."[32] Likewise, in a lengthy discussion on the deity of Christ in John 1:1, Henry explains that the verse asserts "his coexistence with the Father," for "The Word was with God . . . in respect of *essence* and *substance*: for *the Word was God,* a distinct Person or Substance, for he was *with God,* and yet the same in substance, for he *was God*."[33]

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[27] Ibid.,3:671–72.
[28] Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:224–25.
[29] Henry, *Exposition*, 1:240.
[30] Ibid., 2:166.
[31] Ibid., 3:201–202.
[32] Henry, *Exposition*, 3:671.
[33] Henry, *Exposition*, 5:660. He similarly employs traditional language, such as "nature," "person," "essence," or "subsistence," in his comments on John 10:30,

Perhaps Henry's fullest explication of the Trinity occurs in his comment on Matthew 28:20, which he identifies as the basis of ancient creedal formulations. This triune name "was intended as the *summary* of the first principles of the Christian religion, and of the new covenant, and according to it the ancient creeds were drawn up."[34] He drills deeper to explain the eternal relations of the immanent Trinity: "We confess our belief that there is . . . but one God, that in the Godhead there is a Father that begets, a Son that is begotten, and a Holy Spirit of both."[35] He similarly camps on eternal relations in the key text on the Holy Spirit's procession, John 15:26: "Here is an account of him in his essence, or subsistence rather. . . . He is spoken of . . . as a *divine* person, that *proceedeth from the Father*, by outgoings that were of old *from everlasting*."[36]

Henry also makes brief polemical asides, refuting the Sabellians and Arians of the early church in his discussion of John 10:30,[37] and contemporary Socinians based on the Son's eternal begottenness in John 1:14.[38] Even where he does not reference Socinians, their denials may underlie Henry's explication of the Holy Spirit's deity and personality (John 15:26; 1 Cor 2:10).[39]

The Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7) has a long historical pedigree as a trinitarian prooftext. Henry's long argument for its authenticity reflects the pressure the verse was weathering under the scrutiny of seventeenth-century text-critical scholarship.[40] In his comment, he calls

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2 Corinthians 13:14, Hebrews 1:2–3, and Hebrews 1:8 (Henry, *Exposition*, 6:508, 699, 701).

[34] Henry, *Exposition*, 5:350.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 5:879. He stakes his position in the Western tradition by defending the *filioque*: "The Nicene Creed says, *the Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son,* Gal. 4. 6. And the Son is here said to *send him*" (Henry, *Exposition*, 5:879).

[37] Henry, *Exposition*, 5:806.

[38] Ibid., 5:664.

[39] Ibid., 5:879; 6:405–406; see Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 39; Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:335.

[40] Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:234–36; Paul C.H. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: University Press, 2012), 301.

the divine persons here "a Trinity of heavenly Witnesses."[41] However, the brevity of dogmatic discussion implies that Henry knows he need not commit much of the Trinity's exegetical weight to this single verse.

Deity of Christ necessary for his mediation

Over against the Arianism gaining steam in his day, Henry affirms the deity of Christ in numerous places.[42] He repeatedly argues that the Son's mediatorial role requires him to be not only man but God. Using a cross-reference in Hebrews 1:8–9, he says of the Father's address to the Son in Psalm 45:6–7: "The Mediator is God, else he had neither been able to do the Mediator's work, nor fit to wear the Mediator's crown."[43] He makes precisely the same point in his comments on Isaiah 9:6, Jeremiah 23:6, and Hebrews 1:8.[44]

Baptism and the Trinity

The discussion above showed that Henry saw the baptism formula in Matthew 28:20 as the wellspring of the church's trinitarian confession. The organic bond between the sacrament and the Trinity is so profound to Henry that some trinitarian texts lead him to raise the issue of baptism spontaneously. Commenting on the plural *Elohim* in Genesis 1:26, he affirms, "Into that Great [triune] Name we are, with good reason, baptized, for to that Great Name we owe our being."[45] Similarly, the benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14 "speaks our duty . . . to live in a continual regard to the three Persons in the Trinity, into whose name we were baptized, and in whose name we are blessed."[46]

Communion with the Triune God

While firmly committed to orthodox statements of the Trinity, Henry saw this doctrine as more than abstract propositions. Following in the

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[41] Henry, *Exposition*, 6:858.
[42] Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 170–207.
[43] Henry, *Exposition*, 3:331.
[44] Ibid., 4:57, 437; 6:701.
[45] Ibid., 1:28.
[46] Ibid., 6:508. In another example, even while omitting to draw out the trinitarian shape of Ephesians 4:4–6 ("one Spirit . . . one Lord . . . one God and Father"), he nevertheless invokes the Trinity in reference to baptism in verse 5 (Henry, *Exposition*, 6:552).

footsteps of Owen and Cheynell in the preceding century,[47] and extending from the logic of baptism into the triune name, he saw the Trinity as an indispensable way of knowing and communing with God. John 14:1 affirms that belief in God the Father is inextricable from belief in the Son who reveals him, such faith being "an excellent means of keeping trouble from the heart."[48] He expounds Galatians 4:6 in a trinitarian structure, highlighting the Father's "wonders of divine love and mercy towards us," the Son's "submitting so low, and suffering so much, for us," and the Spirit's "condescending to dwell in the hearts of believers for such gracious purposes."[49] Ephesians 2:18 is a key text for Trinity-shaped devotion: "Christ purchased for us leave to come to God; and *the Spirit* gives us a heart to come, and strength to come, even grace to serve God acceptably."[50]

Henry's exegesis displays an orthodox opportunism. When invited by the text, he pauses to heartily explain Nicene trinitarianism or refute anti-trinitarian heresies. Even in subtler ways, creedal concepts of essence and subsistence, nature and person, form the theological grid by which he interprets Scripture. Drawing on rich intertextual connections by the analogy of faith, he uses New Testament clarity to amplify trinitarian whispers in the Old. The triune God who thus emerges from the pages of Scripture is the blessed giver of life, into whose name the Christian is baptized, and with whom he enjoys fellowship.

Catechisms

Henry published two catechisms to complement his denomination's Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC). *A Plain Catechism for Children* is a stepping-stone to the WSC,[51] and *A Scripture Catechism in the Method of the Assembly's* adds detail to the WSC in a way that ties the learner's

[47] Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 172–216.

[48] Henry, *Exposition*, 5:859.

[49] Ibid., 6:523.

[50] Ibid., 6:546. Additionally, 2 Corinthians 13:14 may most succinctly encapsulate communion with the triune God: "we can desire no more to make us happy than the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost" (Henry, *Exposition*, 6:508).

[51] Matthew Henry, "A Plain Catechism for Children," in *The Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. Matthew Henry, V.D.M.*, vol. 2 (London: Joseph Ogle Robinson, 1833), 861.

knowledge to Scripture references.[52] As expected, both works repeat the WSC's definition of the Trinity in Questions 5 and 6.[53] But his elaborations open a further window into his trinitarian thought.

Emphasizing again the link between baptism and the Trinity, Henry's *Plain Catechism* asks children, "Into whose name were you baptized? Into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."[54] Henry then asks, "How then must you take the Lord for your God? I must take God the Father for my chief good, and highest end; God the Son, for my Prince and Saviour; and God the Holy Ghost, for my Sanctifier, Guide, and Comforter."[55]

Though WSC implicitly agrees with Nicene and Chalcedonian definitions, Henry's expansion in *Scripture Catechism* provides space to affirm these formulations more explicitly and tie them to Scriptural prooftexts. A sample of this elaboration appears referring to eternal relations between the divine persons: "Is the personal property of the Father to beget the Son? Yes [Ps 2:7]. . . . Is the personal property of the Son to be begotten of the Father? Yes [John 1:14]. . . . Is the personal property of the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son? Yes [John 15:26]."[56]

Just as Henry's *Exposition* ties Christ's deity to his Mediatorial work, he makes a similar connection in *Scripture Catechism* by asking, "Is the Redeemer both God and man? Yes [Isa 9:6]. . . . Was he man that he might suffer? Yes [Heb 9:22]. . . . Was he God that he might satisfy? Yes [Acts 20:28]."[57] The union of deity and humanity in Christ makes his atonement effectual.

Scripture Catechism also features triune fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit works faith in the believer, bringing about union and ongoing

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[52] Matthew Henry, "A Scripture Catechism in the Method of the Assembly's," in *The Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. Matthew Henry, V.D.M.*, vol. 2 (London: Joseph Ogle Robinson, 1833), 865.

[53] "Westminster Shorter Catechism," accessed September 29, 2020, https://thewestminsterstandard.org/westminster-shorter-catechism/.

[54] Henry, "A Plain Catechism for Children," 862.

[55] Ibid. He repeats this formulation in *Scripture Catechism*, further underscoring the inherently triune nature of saving faith (Henry, "A Scripture Catechism," 887–88).

[56] Henry, "A Scripture Catechism," 869.

[57] Ibid., 879.

communion with Christ.[58] To receive God in true faith is to accept Father, Son, and Spirit in their respective economic roles.[59] This triune communion shapes the believer's prayer, ostensibly to the Father: "Must we pray in the name of Christ? Yes [John 14:13]. . . . Relying on his righteousness alone? Yes [Heb 10:19]. . . . Depending on the assistance of the Holy Spirit? Yes [Rom 8:26]."[60] Christian faith and piety are conscientiously directed to the triune God.

Against a historical backdrop of encroaching rationalism, *Scripture Catechism* briefly raises the question of reason and the Trinity, falling back on baptism and communion as experiential defenses: "Can this doctrine be measured by reason? No [Matt 16:17]. . . . But ought we to believe it? Yes, for we were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Matt 28:20] . . . and we are blessed with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost [2 Cor 13:14]."[61] Henry's prooftexts implicitly affirm the superiority of revelation over reason in disclosing the mystery of God's triunity.

"Faith in Christ inferred from faith in God"

At the prestigious lectureship at Salters' Hall,[62] on May 29, 1711 Henry delivered perhaps his most sustained and direct defense of the embattled Trinity, "Faith in Christ Inferred from Faith in God." Expounding John 14:1, he confronts the problem of "practical deism": believing in God according to natural religion while neglecting the Christ of revelation.[63] Accordingly, Henry mounts a multifaceted defense of Christ's deity and the necessity of believing in him distinctly.

Henry probes into the implied logic of the Nicene Creed to show that God is only a Father eternally insofar as he has an eternal Son: "Do we believe in God, as the *Father Almighty?* We must believe in Christ, as his

[58] Ibid., 887–88.
[59] Ibid., 898–99.
[60] Henry, "A Scripture Catechism," 923.
[61] Ibid., 869.
[62] Alexander Gordon, "The Story of Salters' Hall," in *Addresses Biographical and Historical* (London: The Lindsey Press, 1922), 133.
[63] Matthew Henry, "Faith in Christ Inferred from Faith in God," in *The Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. Matthew Henry, V.D.M.*, vol. 2 (London: Joseph Ogle Robinson, 1833), 784, 786, 795.

only-begotten Son; for Father and Son correlates (sic)."[64] Borrowing language from his discussion on John 1:1 in *Exposition*, he explains the divine implications of Christ being "the Word of God." If God's mind is eternal and essential, then Christ the Word is, too: "As the thought is one with the mind that thinks it, and yet may be considered as distinct from it, so Christ was and is *one with* the Father, and yet *distinct* from the Father."[65] Knowing God apart from Christ, the Word, is simply impossible.

Henry's discussion of a favorite anti-trinitarian prooftext, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28),[66] exhibits his familiar commitment to the analogy of faith. Other texts, such as John 10:30 and John 14:9, so roundly affirm Christ's equality of nature with the Father, that this statement must refer to his economic role as Mediator.[67] Going back on the offensive against anti-trinitarian rationalism, Henry piles up the many deficiencies of relying on natural religion without the light of written revelation: man's ignorance, God's majesty and mystery, sin's guilt and distortion of God's image, and the inescapable problem of death.[68] He closes with an extended salvo demonstrating the Christocentrism of the Christian faith.[69] The implications are clear: revealed religion is superior to natural, and revealed Christianity irrefutably centers on the divine-human person of Jesus Christ as its object of faith and worship.

Devotional works

Matthew Henry's commitment to trinitarian orthodoxy leaves a discernible footprint through his several practical and devotional works. This section examines a sampling of three: *A Method for Prayer*, *Directions for Daily Communion with God,* and *A Discourse Concerning Meekness and Quietness of Spirit*. The discussion is organized by different ways Henry affirms the Trinity, moving from lower to higher degrees of theological reflection.

Much of *A Method for Prayer* consists of Scripture quotes organized

[64] Henry, "Faith in Christ Inferred," 786.
[65] Ibid. Henry, *Exposition,* 5:660.
[66] Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 303–304.
[67] Henry, "Faith in Christ Inferred," 790.
[68] Ibid., 792–94.
[69] Henry, "Faith in Christ Inferred," 794–97.

topically under prayer headings. In several cases, Henry quotes trinitarian passages for his prayers, such as 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, Ephesians 2:18, and Hebrews 9:14.[70] Exhibiting slightly more theological reflection, he parallels the divine names in a way that implies their triunity: "Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."[71] One case occurs in his trinitarian expansion of God's name in 1 Timothy 1:17, calling him: "the only wise God, and our God, in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."[72]

Henry attributes deity to Christ, and both deity and personality to the Holy Spirit—constituent doctrines to the Trinity which run contrary to Socinian denials.[73] In one case, he adds "eternal" to cement the Son's deity in his citation of Hebrews 10:5–7.[74] In another, he echoes the intertextual connections evident in his *Exposition* by connecting Christ's glory "of the only begotten of the Father, who is in his bosom" (John 1:14, 18) with his identity as the eternal Wisdom of God in creation (Prov 8:30).[75]

Henry implies the Holy Spirit's deity by equating him with God, whether his presence in Psalm 139:7,[76] his identity as creator in Job 33:4,[77] or his agency as the divine giver of grace.[78] He upholds the Spirit's

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[70] Matthew Henry, "A Method for Prayer: With Scripture Expressions, Proper to Be Used under Each Head," in *A Method for Prayer: With Scripture Expressions, Proper to Be Used under Each Head; with Directions for Daily Communion with God; Showing How to Begin, How to Spend, and How to Close Every Day with God; to Which Is Now Added a Discourse Concerning Meekness and Quietness of Spirit* (Glasgow: D. Mackenzie, 1834), 20, 65, 117, 129.

[71] Henry, "A Method for Prayer," 225.

[72] Ibid., 262.

[73] Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics,* 4:275, 335.

[74] Henry, "A Method for Prayer," 110.

[75] Ibid., 203.

[76] Ibid., 7, 64. Notably, he does not take this personal interpretation of the Spirit in his comment on the passage in *Exposition.*

[77] Henry, "A Method for Prayer," 16.

[78] Matthew Henry, "Directions for Daily Communion with God; Showing How to Begin, How to Spend, and How to Close Every Day with God," in *A Method for Prayer: With Scripture Expressions, Proper to Be Used under Each Head; with Directions for Daily Communion with God; Showing How to Begin, How to Spend, and How to Close Every Day with God; to Which Is Now Added a Discourse Concerning Meekness and Quietness of Spirit* (Glasgow: D. Mackenzie, 1834), 390. Matthew

deity and personality by equating "[provoking] God to withdraw from us" with "[grieving] the Spirit of God, (by whom we have fellowship with the Father)."[79] Such talk could only refer to a divine person, equal in nature with God but personally distinct.

On numerous occasions in *A Method for Prayer*, Henry ascribes equal glory and worship to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He writes, "We may conclude with all doxologies . . . ascribing honour and glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."[80] A special class of this ascription of glory conjoins with the well-worn theme of baptism: "We must give honour to the three Persons in the Godhead distinctly, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that great and sacred Name into which we were baptized, and in which we assemble for religious worship."[81] To Henry, trinitarian baptism is the gateway into an entire life of conscientious trinitarian communion and worship.

In an even subtler expression of deep trinitarian thinking, Henry arranges some large portions of his prayers into a three-part structure, with each paragraph addressing a distinct divine person. Beginning *A Method for Prayer*, he writes, "Let us now lift our hearts . . . unto God in the heavens . . . Let us now attend upon the Lord . . . Let us now worship God, who is a Spirit."[82] Likewise, in an example Lord's Day prayer, "We keep this day holy, to the honour of God the Father, Almighty . . . We likewise sanctify this day to the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God . . . We sanctify this day also to the honour of the eternal Spirit."[83] More than a passing reference to the Trinity, this

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Henry, "A Discourse Concerning Meekness and Quietness of Spirit," in *A Method for Prayer: With Scripture Expressions, Proper to Be Used under Each Head; with Directions for Daily Communion with God; Showing How to Begin, How to Spend, and How to Close Every Day with God; to Which Is Now Added A Discourse Concerning Meekness and Quietness of Spirit* (Glasgow: D. Mackenzie, 1834), 106.

[79] Henry, "Meekness and Quietness of Spirit," 72. Elsewhere, he seals a prayer by importuning, "All this I humbly beg in the name, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer, to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Eternal Spirit, be honour, glory, and praise, henceforth and for evermore" (Henry, "A Method for Prayer," 200).

[80] Henry, "A Method for Prayer," 200.

[81] Ibid., 14, see also 177, 228, 231, 266.

[82] Ibid., 2.

[83] Ibid., 246-48.

structure addresses each person in a way that displays sensitivity to their economic roles. Henry thinks trinitarian at a foundational level.[84]

In some non-trinitarian contexts, Henry's prayers confess impenetrable mystery in God's being. Approaching God, he pleads, "Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment and yet as to us makest darkness thy pavilion; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness."[85] Similarly, "We must own his nature to be incomprehensible."[86] Henry's acknowledgment of divine mystery accords with the priority of revelation over natural religion that he championed in "Faith in Christ Inferred." Consequently, the Trinity's transcendence of human reason poses no problem to its veracity.

Hymns

Henry published a collection of hymn under the title, *Family Hymns, Gathered Mostly out of the Translations of David's Psalms*. True to its title, most of the collection's forty hymns are mashups of topically arranged language from various psalms, and in a few cases, New Testament texts. This section will examine features of the hymns that reflect Henry's trinitarian thought.[87] The discussion will begin with affirmations of the deity of Christ and the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit, and then move on to more explicit articulations of the Trinity.

Reflecting the principle of later revelation clarifying what came before, Henry replaces the original "God" in Psalm 47:7a with "Christ":

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[84] Smaller nuggets of one or two sentences represent a less formal example of similar trinitarian structure. Some cases are debatable whether the author is consciously juxtaposing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So much the better for showing the depth of his trinitarian instincts. "[A meek and quiet spirit] is consonant to that excellent religion which our Lord Jesus hath established, and as it renders the heart a fit habitation for the blessed Spirit. 'This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, to lead quiet and peaceable lives'." Henry, "Meekness and Quietness of Spirit," 156–57; see also Henry, "A Method for Prayer," 253, 255, 273.

[85] Henry, "A Method for Prayer," 4.

[86] Ibid., 5.

[87] I leave aside his unembellished use of passages that imply multipersonality in the Godhead. Some of those texts appear in the discussion of his *Exposition* above.

Sing praise to God, sing praise with joy,
Sing praises to our King;
for Christ is King of all the world;
All skillful praises sing.[88]

Similarly, in certain places he equates God with Christ, either by proximity or attribution. For instance, Hymn XLVIII begins with Psalm 110:1,

Jehovah to my Lord thus spake,
Sit thou at my right hand . . .

and ends with explicit attribution of divine glory and worship to Christ using language from Revelation 5:12:

Therefore to thee, O Lamb of God,
riches and power belong,
Wisdom and honour, glory, strength,
And every praising song.[89]

He likewise turns the language of Revelation 12:10, "The kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come," to a more explicit coequality of reign: "The glorious reign of God and Christ."[90]

Henry affirms both the divine nature and the personal subsistence of the Spirit by embellishing Psalm 51:11 with language from Ephesians 4:30:

O cast me not away from thee,
and though thy Spirit was grieved,
Yet of his comfort and his grace
Let me not be deprived.[91]

This formulation implicitly equates the presence of God with the Spirit of God, and yet speaks of him as a distinct person capable of affections.

In some hymns based on New Testament texts, Henry adds

[88] Matthew Henry, "Family Hymns, Gathered Mostly out of the Translations of David's Psalms," in *The Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. Matthew Henry, V.D.M.*, vol. 1 (London: Joseph Ogle Robinson, 1833), 720.
[89] Henry, "Family Hymns," 721.
[90] Ibid., 731.
[91] Ibid., 725.

trinitarian benedictions to his lyrics. A psalm adapted from Luke 2:14, 29, 32 ends with the climax:

> To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
> The God whom heaven and earth adore,
> Be glory, as it was of old,
> Is now, and shall be evermore.[92]

Again, he tacks a statement of coequal triune glory and worship onto the eternal reign of "our Lord and . . . his Christ" (Rev 11:15):

> To God the Father, Son,
> And Spirit, ever blest,
> Eternal Three in One,
> All worship be addressed,
> As heretofore
> It was, is now, and shall be so
> For evermore.[93]

Conclusion

Matthew Henry's works consistently display keen attention to the Trinity. He embraces a conscientious Nicene and Chalcedonian orthodoxy, often using classical terms such as "nature," "essence," "subsistence," and "person" in his exegesis of relevant passages. By the analogy of faith, he draws out trinitarian clarity where it is adumbrated in the Old Testament. His defense of the deity of Christ often highlights its necessity to his mediatorial work. On a practical level, Henry maintains a close bond between the Trinity and baptism per Matthew 28:20, as well as an ongoing Christian life of communion with the triune God.

Henry lived at a tumultuous time for the doctrine of the Trinity. As Socinian and Arian winds howled, the Dissenters neared the fateful crossroads of Salters' Hall. Within a handful of decades, his fellow Presbyterians and many other Englishmen forsook the Trinity for Unitarianism. Yet a candle of orthodoxy shone through the dark night of the eighteenth century. Among other standouts, Charles Wesley's hymnody preserved a strong witness to God's triunity in the hearts and

[92] Ibid., 731.
[93] Ibid., 733.

lips of many Christians in the pew, even when fashionable theologians had largely abandoned it.[94] The degree of Henry's contribution to the preservation of the Trinity is beyond the bounds of this study. Nevertheless, with the well-documented impact of his work in those days, and his direct influence on Charles Wesley and other prominent evangelicals, his works stood as a faithful beacon which may have substantially aided the church's collective remembrance of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[94] Vickers, *Invocation and Assent*, 169–89; Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 328.

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Jesus Christ in the "Chinese Enlightenment": A Case Study of Chang Wan-Kai's (1871–1931) Christology[1]

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In his letter dated March 19, 1817, Robert Morrison (1782–1834) recorded the opinion of a principal Buddhist monk concerning Jesus. He told Morrison,

> I have heard that the people in your part of the world, are exceedingly quarrelsome, and that Jesus dissuaded them from cherishing that spirit, recommending mutual forbearance and a yielding temper. On this account, in a fit of passion, they nailed him to the cross. He expressed an indifference about death, and, to the last, advised them to cherish the spirit he had recommended. After his death they saw him ascend to Heaven, and were so struck that they fell down and worshipped him who they had crucified. Now the people in the west worship him, as we worship Fuh [i.e., Buddha].[3]

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[3] Robert Morrison, "The Opinion of a Chinese Priest Respecting Christ. Extract of a Letter from Mr. Morrison, Dated 19th March, 1817," *The Indo-Chinese Gleaner* 1 (May 1817): 14. The Chinese word *fo* (佛) is the short form of a

The monk probably spoke with curtesy and good intentions, as he was trying to understand the "foreign path" Morrison advocated for ten years by then. Indeed, such a word of compliment was the best reception a Christian could hear from a Chinese in the following century. In comparison, Jesus was understood as a virtuous and enlightened teacher, a martyr, and a subject of worship.[4] Furthermore, in the monk's description, there was a difference between Jesus and the Western people, as the latter were "exceedingly quarrelsome" and evil. Contemporary historians have recognised that ethnocentrism became part of Chinese identity as early as in the formative age, and since then Chinese have imbibed the "anti-heterodox tradition" to their understanding of the world.[5] Christianity was then considered as

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Sanskrit transliteration of *buddho* (Chinese: *fo tuo* 佛陀). On Chinese translations of Buddhist classics, see Li Wei, *A Preliminary Study of the Origin and Methodology of Early Chinese Buddhist Translations* 早期漢譯佛經的來源與翻譯方法初探 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book, 2011); Jan Nattier, *A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Translations: Texts from the Eastern Han and Three Kingdom Periods* (Tokyo: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2008);

[4] Notice the word "Buddha" means "the awakened one" or "the enlightened one." Buddhas "are those who have awakened" from asleep and unawareness "to the true nature of things as taught in the Four Noble Truths… For Theravāda Buddhism, a Buddha is simply a human being who has undergone a profound spiritual transformation," and in Mahāyāna Buddhism, "the Buddha is seen as a cosmic being who from time to time manifests himself in human form." As someone who discovered the truth himself, Buddha's important function is "to act as a teacher, leading others to salvation by expounding the Dharma" (Damien Keown, *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 42). Also see Floyd H. Ross, *The Meaning of Life in Hinduism and Buddhism* (Reprint; Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); William Edward Soothill, and Lewis Hodous, complied, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1937); Robert E. Buswell, Jr., and Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Th. Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the Word "Dharma"* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988); Charles S. Prebish, *Introducing Buddhism* (London: Routledge, 2010); Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Introducing Buddhism* (New York: Friendship, 1956).

[5] See Charles O. Hucker, *China's Imperial Past: An Introduction to Chinese History and* Culture (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975); John K. Fairbank,

heterodox teaching to the orthodox Confucianism.[6] Moreover, since Jesus was the Westerners' "Buddha," he was only respected but not needed. Such an idea continued to develop along with the expansion of Chinese Christianity.[7]

"China's World Order: The Tradition of Chinese Foreign Relations," *Encounter* 27.6 (1966): 14–20; Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism 1860*–1870 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early* China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Michael D. Swaine, and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (Santa Monica, CA; Washington, DC: Rand, 2000); C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors* (Berkeley, CA; Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1961); Raphael Israeli, "Chinese versus Muslims: A Study of Cultural Confrontation" (PhD diss., University of California, 1975).

[6] Paul A. Cohen identified that the earliest Chinese work that exclusively against Christianity was compiled by Xu Changzhi (徐昌治) in late Ming dynasty, *Po Xie Ji* ("An anthology of writings exposing heterodoxy," c. 1640). Cohen then summarised that the "phenomenon of comparing Catholicism unfavourably with Buddhism and Taoism is on which is seen again and again in [*Po Xie Ji*] and other anti-Christian works of the Ming and Ch'ing. On doctrinal grounds alone, the orthodox intellectual of these periods frequently tended to reject Buddhism and Taoism as heterodox or, at least, to place them in a lower position vis-à-vis Confucianism. But when it came to defending Chinese culture as a whole, the two traditional teachings were, more often than not, drawn protectively to the bosom of orthodoxy in an attempt to marshal all available forces against the new foreign invader" (Cohen, *China and Christianity*, 23).

[7] Regarding the Protestant church in China, I have elsewhere argued that with Liang Fa's (1789–1855) conversion and ordination, Christianity became a Chinese religion; thus, Liang should be marked as the first Chinese Christian. Though Cai Gao (1788–1818) was baptised in 1814, two years earlier than Liang's baptism at Malacca, Cai did not contribute to the mission work after his departure from Morrison. See Baiyu Andrew Song, *Training Laborers into His Harvest: A Historical Study of William Milne's Mentorship of Liang Fa* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015); Baiyu Andrew Song, and Michael A. G. Haykin, eds., *Great Shall Be the Day of Jezreel: A Celebration of the 200th Anniversary of China's First Evangelist Liang Fa's Baptism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, forthcoming). Also see

As China had clashed with the West in wars, and experienced humiliations since the mid-nineteenth century, for many Chinese, "Christianity was simply the most conspicuous and irritating expression of a civilization which, in all its dimensions, they heartily detested."[8] Paul A. Cohen helpfully pointed out that there were four facets of Chinese antiforeignism:

> First, there was the anger-centered antiforeignism experienced by all classes; second, there was the fear-centered antiforeignism of the uneducated strata, perhaps more properly described as xenophobia; third, there was the contempt-centered antiforeignism of the educated, based on their overwhelming sense of Chinese cultural superiority; and, finally, there was the shame-centered antiforeignism of a small but growing number of protonationalistic Chinese, who were more averse to Western political encroachment than cultural influence and tended to favor reform along Western lines over wholesale rejection of the West.[9]

Due to the missionaries' legal privileges secured by the unequal treaties, as well as their social works (especially education, and intervention in local legal proceedings), the contempt-centred local elites and officials fuelled the populace's xenophobic anger, and as a result, many "missionary incidents" took place.[10] Chinese mobs chased and

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G. Wright Doyle, ed., *Builders of the Chinese Church: Pioneer Protestant Missionaries and Chinese Church Leaders* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015).

[8] Cohen, China and Christianity, 60.

[9] Paul A. Cohen, Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 49.

[10] Xiaobai Chu argues that "from the end of the second Opium War (1860) until the Boxer Rebellion (1900), countless anti-Christian movements took place in China. In those movements, Chinese literati played a crucial role, especially by introducing a particularly shocking image of Jesus Christ: Jesus as a pig [see Zhou Han's 周漢 famous depiction in *Jinzun shengyu bixie quantu* 謹遵聖諭闢邪全圖 (c. 1891)]." Significantly, by symbolising Jesus as a pig, it meant that "Jesus and his followers needed to be killed, Christianity to be exterminated to satisfy the ancestors and, ultimately, to defend the core of Chinese against Western culture" (Xiaobai Chu, "The Images of Jesus in the Emergence of Christian Spirituality in Ming and Qing China," *Religions* 7.32 [2016]: 7). Furthermore, Chu argues that the image depicted "Jesus Christ as opposing very essential

slaughtered foreign missionaries and Chinese "rice Christians," as well as destroying churches and monasteries.[11] In November 1899, the Boxers Rebellion, another grassroots movement, took place in Northern China, and as its slogan suggested, they aimed to destroy all foreigners, as well as their technology and culture.

In 1912, Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) succeeded his more "civilized" revolution and overturned the Manchurian Qing dynasty. Chinese intellectuals then organised the New Culture Movement (from the 1910s

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Chinese ethical values while simultaneously depriving his symbol of its true meanings. Jesus Christ's image appeared completely detached from its origins and subject to hostile localization. It became an alien symbol that was even alien to itself, a symbol no longer transmitting any higher meaning, and serving only as the carrier of common prejudice and repugnance" (Chu, "The Images of Jesus in the Emergence of Christian Spirituality in Ming and Qing China," 8).

[11] "Rice Christian" is pejoratively used to describe those "who converted only for material gain, whether in terms of employment or political favors" (Paul S. Cha, "Unequal Partners, Contested Relations: Protestant Missionaries and Korean Christians, 1884–1907," *Journal of Korean* Studies 17.1 [2012]: 9). Contemporary theologian C. S. Song, however, argues that the term needs to be re-understood, as "rice brings a concrete content to all talk about the future, about the world to come, and about the kingdom of God… Understanding rice in this way, Christians in China should have been proud to be 'rice Christians.' They should have represented this kind of 'rice Christianity' to their rice-hungry compatriots" (C.S. Song, *Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective* [Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005], 19). Also see Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (London: SCM, 1974). On the anti-missionary riots in China, see Alvyn Austin, *China's Millions: The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Li Zhang, and Jiantang Liu, *A History of Chinese Anti-Missionary Incidents* 中國教案史 (Sichuan: Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1987); Anthony E. Clark, *China's Saints: Catholic Martyrdom During the Qing (1644–1911)* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2011); Clark, *Heaven in Conflict: Franciscans and the Boxer Uprising in Shanxi* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2015); Barend J. Ter Haar, *Telling Stories: Witchcraft and Scapegoating in Chinese History* (Leiden, Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2006); John K. Fairbank, "Behind the Tientsin Massacre," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 20.3/4 (1957): 480–511; Ye Xiaoqing, "Shanghai Before Nationalism," *East Asian History* 3 (1992): 33–52; Xue Li, *Making Local China: A Case Study of Yangzhou, 1853–1928* (Zürich: Lit Verlag GmbH, 2018); Ruiyu Tang, *A Study of Tientsin Massacre in Late Qing* 清季天津教案研究 (Taipei: Liberal Arts Press, 2008).

to 1920s) as a means to refashion Chinese society. The old "barbaric" culture was "to be replaced by a new culture, washed of the noxious influences contaminating the old and patterned largely if not entirely on the culture of modern West."[12] At the same time, the "shame-centred" antiforeignism fuelled by the Republic's diplomatic failure at the Paris Peace Conference, was expressed by students and professors of Peking University on May 4, 1919, as they protested at the Tian'anmen Square.[13] Inspired by the Western Enlightenment, participants of the New Culture and May-Fourth Movements endorsed the scientific revolution and desired to make China a modern and democratic country.[14] At the same

[12] Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 226.

[13] On the May Fourth Movement, see Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley, CA; Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1986); Tse-tsung Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to 2000*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 192–210; Leigh Jenco, "Culture as History: Envisioning Change Across and Beyond 'Eastern' and 'Western' Civilizations in the May Fourth Era," *Twentieth Century China* 38.1 (2013): 34–52; Gloria Davies, "Towards Transcendental Knowledge: The Mapping of May Fourth Modernity/Spirit," *East Asian History* 4 (1992): 143–164; Christopher Harbsmeier, "May Fourth Linguistic Orthodoxy and Rhetoric: Some Informal Comparative Notes," in *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*, edited by Michael Lackner, Iwo Amelung, and Joachim Kurtz (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 373–410; Yang Lianfen, "The Absence of Gender in May Fourth Narratives of Women's Emancipation: A Case Study on Hu Shi's *The Greatest Event in Life*," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 12.1 (2010): 6–13; E. E. Liu, "What's Wrong with China's New Culture Movement?," *The China Critic* 21.6 (1988): 71–74.

[14] The scientific and democratic plead was first vocally coined by Chen Duxiu (1879–1942) in his *New Youth* magazine, as he stated: "We have committed that alleged crimes only because we supported two gentlemen, Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science … In order to advocate Mr. Science, we have to oppose traditional arts and traditional religion; in order to advocate both Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science, we are compelled to oppose the cult of the 'national quintessence' and ancient literature. Let us ponder dispassionately: has this magazine committed any crimes other than advocating Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science? If not, please

time, many scholars also embraced the Marxist-Leninist ideology and saw the October Revolution (1917) as a way forward for China.[15] Thus, for Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), one of the co-founders of Chinese Communist Party, "There are at present two paths open to us: one is the path of light that leads toward republicanism, science, and atheism; the other is the path of darkness leading toward autocracy, superstition, and theism."[16] Christianity and other faiths were understood as "opium of the people," which the enlightened people must reject.[17]

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do not reprove this magazine: the only way for you to be heroic and to solve the problem fundamentally is to oppose two gentlemen, Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science" (as quoted by Peter Buck, *American Science and Modern China, 1876–1936* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980], 183). Also see Edward X. Gu, "Who was Mr. Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectual (1915–1922)," *Modern Asian Studies* 35.3 (2001): 589–621; Q. Edward Wang, *Inventing China Through History: The May Fourth Approach to Historiography* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001).

[15] The late Jonathan Chao (1938–2004) argued that the two major sources behind the Anti-Christian Movement in 1922 were the Communist stand point of the Shanghai Anti-Christian Student Alliance, and ideas of the New Culture Movement that was carried by the Beijing Anti-Christian Alliance (Chao, "The 1922 Anti-Christian Movements and the Development of Chinese Contextualized Churches 1922年非基督教運動與中國本色化教會思想的發展," in *Chinese Church History: Collection of Essays* 中國教會史論文集, edited by Zhang Liandi [Taipei: Cosmic Care, 2006], 205). Though Communism and the New Culture Movement were the driving force of the Anti-Christian Movement, the geographical distinction Chao indicated is not necessary. As Cohen and others have observed that the Anti-Christian Movement in the 1920s was influenced by both the Communist ideology, the New Culture Movement, as well as traditional Chinese antiforeignism.

[16] Chen Duxiu, "Kelinde bei" (The von Ketteler Monument), *Xin Qingnian*5.5 (November 1918): 458, as quoted and translated by Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 229.

[17] For an outstanding study of the development of religious policies in Marxist countries, see Christopher Marsh, *Religion and the State in Russia and China: Suppression, Survival, and Revival* (New York; London: Continuum, 2011).

Jonathan Chao carefully summarised four major approaches applied by the Chinese intellectuals: substitution approach (i.e., Cai Yuanpei [1868–1940] and Hu Shih [1891–1962]), selective acceptance approach (i.e., Chen Duxiu), total rejection approach (i.e., Wang Xinggong [1887–1949], Bertrand Russell [1872–

For Christians in the early decades of the twentieth century, their challenge was the four-faceted antiforeignism and the "enlightened rationalism."[18] Thus, Christianity was identified with imperialism and unscientific superstition.[19] During the Anti-Christian Movements, critiques pressed on these two points in their arguments against the Christian church and their message.[20] In particular, Jesus' identity

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1970]), and the dualist approach (i.e., Tu Xiaoshi [1898–1932], Liang Shuming [1893–1988], Liu Boming [1887–1923]) (Jonathan T'ien-en Chao, "The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement, 1919–1927: A Protestant Response to the Anti-Christian Movements in Modern China" [PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1986], 101–111). Also see Yang Jianlong, *May-Fourth New Culture Movement and Christian Intellectual Movement* "五四"新文化運動與基督教文化思潮 (Shanghai: Shanghai Century, 2012).

[18] Hu Shih, "The Present Crisis in Christian Education," *Religious Education* 20.6 (1925): 435.

[19] Francis K.H. So observes that "Some of the excuses championed by these students included that: (1) Religion is unscientific. (2) Religion admonishes people to be self-contented, not to forge ahead, thus becoming obstacles to social progress. (3) Christianity is a cultural invasion. (4) Christianity is the pioneer of imperialism. (5) Religion mesmerizes and drugs the mind of the young people. Popular catchwords such as 'unscientific,' 'social progress,' 'invasion,' 'imperialism,' 'mesmerize' and 'drug' are summarily used. They do, indeed, reflect the spirit and the jargon of the May Fourth Movement" (So, "The Subverted Image of Christ in the May Fourth Era," in *The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ. Volume 3a*, edited by Roman Malek (Sankt Augustin, Germany: Institut Monumenta Serica; China-Zentrum, 2005), 891.

20 In April 1922, groups of students from both Shanghai (i.e., Communist nature Anti-Christian Student Federation) and Beijing (i.e., New Culture Movement inspired Grand Anti-Religion Federation) protested against Tsinghua University's host of the 11th World's Student Christian Federation Conference. With the influence of Marxism and Leninism, the Anti-Christian Movement of 1922 was politicalized, 'whereas earlier Christianity was opposed ... on rational and scientific grounds, now Christianity was to be oppcsed on the bases of national liberation, class struggle, and economic independence.'" (Chao, "The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement," 146). In August 1924, another wave of Anti-Christian movement was formed in Shanghai, with the support of the newly formed Kuomintang (i.e., Chinese Nationalist Party, KMT) in league with the CPC. When the May Thirtieth Incident happened in 1925, this anti-imperialism movement became a comprehensive anti-Christian movement attacking all Christian enterprises and all who propagated the Christian religion (Chao, "The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement," 178). On the Anti-Christian Movements also see Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920–28* (Notre Dame, IN: Cross Roads Books, 1988); Renchang Ye, *Anti-Christian Movements after the May Fourth Movement* 五四以後的反對基督教運動 (Taipei: Jiuda Culture, 1992); Yang Tianhong, *Christianity and Republican Intellectuals: A Study of Chinese Anti-Christian*

became a subject of disputes. The remaining of this paper aims to use Chang Wen-kai as an example to analyse how evangelical Christians sought to reconcile the tensions between orthodox fidelity and contextualization amid chaos, especially in the case of Christology.[21]

Movements 1922–1927 基督教與民國知識分子: 1922年–1927年中國非基督教運動研究 (Beijing: People's Publishing, 2005); Joseph Tse-hei Lee, "Christianity Along the Warpath: The Anti-Christian Movement in Shantou during the Eastern Expedition (1925)," *China's Christianity: From Missionary to Indigenous Church*, edited by Anthony E. Clark (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017), 21–51; Chen Yiyi, "Peking University's Role in China's Anti-Christian Movement in 1922–1927," *Social Sciences in China* 31.1 (2010): 184–197; Tatsuro Yamamoto, and Sumiko Yamamoto, "The Anti-Christian Movement in China, 1922–1927," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 12.2 (1953): 133–147; Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, "The Church as a Protector: Anti-Christian Cases and Resource Conflicts in Post-Boxer Chaozhou," *The Chinese Historical Review* 20.1 (2013): 33–53.

[21] Though Chang was regarded as one of the top one hundred Christians in twentieth-century China, he is by and large forgotten. Several reasons (i.e., political, linguistic, doctrinal, etc.) contributed to the lack of academic attention to Chang. See Candes Yuet-sheung Wong, "The Role of Zhang Wenkai (1871–1931) in the Anti-Christian Movement in the 1920s," (M.A. Thesis, The University of Hong Kong, 1997); Fan Daming 范大明, "Jesus and Laozi in Dialogue: Zheng Yijing's Understanding of Taoism 耶老對話：張亦鏡的道教觀," *Chuanshan Xuekan* 船山學刊 3 (2012): 123–132; Fan, "Jesus and Mozi in Dialogue: Zhang Yijing's Understanding of Mohism," *Wenshi Tiandi Lilun Yuekan* 10 (2012): 47–51; Fan, "Guanshiyin According to Modern Chinese Christians: Zhang Yijing's Understanding of Guanshiyin 近代中國基督徒眼中釘觀世音：張亦鏡對觀世音的認識," *Journal of Xiangnan University* 34.1 (2013): 48–53; Fan, "Judgment and Choice: Discovering the Relationship between Christianity and Chinese Culture––A Study of Zhang Yijing's Contextualized Theology 審判與選擇: 尋索基督教與中國文化的關係：張亦鏡本色神學之探," *World Religion Studies* 3 (2014): 130–142; Fan, "New Culture Originates from Ecclesiology: A Case Study of Zhang Yijing 新文化源於教會論: 以張亦鏡為中心," *Shilin* 3 (2014): 81–91, 68; Fan, "*True Light Magazine*: Discovering the Relationship between Christianity and Chinese Culture––a Study centred on Zhang Yijing 《真光雜誌》: 尋索基督教與中國文化的關係––以張亦鏡為中心的考察," in *Christian Literary Media and Modern Chinese Society* 基督教文字傳媒與中國近代社會, edited by Li Ling and Chen Jianming (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2013), 446–449; Fan, "God and Ancestors in Dialogue: Zhang Yijing's Understanding of Ancestral Worship," *Religious Studies*

From a Book Stealer to the "Literary Pastor": A Biographical Sketch

During his lifetime, Chang Wen-kai (張文開), or Chang Yi-jing (張亦鏡), was highly regarded by his contemporaries.[22] For instance, Wang Mingdao (1900–1991), "the dean of Chinese House Churches," treasured his meeting with Chang in Shanghai, as he later recalled that in spring

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1 (2014): 218–224; Fan, and Zhou Jianshu, "Religion, Education, and Sovereignty: Zhang Yijing and the Movement of Taking Back the Educational Sovereignty in Modern China 宗教、教育與國權：張亦鏡與近代中國收回教育權運動," *Journal of Zhangjiang Normal University* 34.1 (2013): 101–107; Zeng Tianxiong, and Fan Daming, "Christianity and Imperialism in Modern Chinese History: A Case Study of Zhang Yijing 中國近代史上的基督教與帝國主義：以張亦鏡為考察中心," *Philosophical Studies* 1 (2016): 107–112; Li Lanfang, and Zhang Qingjiang, "Guangzhou's Christian Intellectual Community in the Era of ROC and Their Efforts in Indigenizing Christianity: With Zhong Rongguang and Zhang Yijing as Examples 民國廣州基督徒知識分子與基督教中國化的努力: 以鍾榮光、張亦鏡為例," *Tian Ya* 3 (2017): 61–71; He Zhangrong, "Apologetics and Evangelism: Reflections over *True Light Magazine's* Responses to Christianity's Repression and Discrimination of Women during the Anti-Christian Movements 護教與宣教: 對真光雜誌在非基運動中對基督教歧視與壓迫女性對回應之反思," in *Christian Literary Media and Modern Chinese Society*, 415–423; Jue Wang, "Neither *Xi* (洗) Nor *Jin* (浸), But *Fu* (祓): Zhang Yijing's (張亦鏡) Translation of Baptism, Viewed from the Perspective of Identity," *Transformation* 34.3 (2017): 214–222; Wai Luen Kwok, "Seeking Justice in the Midst of War: The Experience of War for Chinese Christians as Revealed in *The True Light Review*, 1937–1941," *Studies in World Christianity* 24.3 (2018): 234–254.

[22] It is confusing for contemporary scholars to address Chang, as he followed the Chinese intellectual tradition, by giving himself a courtesy name (or style name) "Jianru 鑒如" and various pen names. Chang's birth name was Wen-kai 文開, and his frequently used pen name was Yijing 亦鏡. Beside it, Chang had over twenty other pen names. As Fan Daming identified, other pennames included, Jianyu 檢余, Jianru 諫儒, Ganyu 感予, Ganyu 感遇, Ganyu 甘雨, Jianyi 監彝, Fangtang 方塘, Qiuchan 秋蟾, Zhishui 止水, Gujing 古井, Donghong 冬烘, Liusheng 留升, Mujun 畝均, Wuming 庑銘, Heyin 荷寅, Pingji 萍寄, Zhenwei 圳隈, Zhenmei 珍枚, Yuelu 約廬, etc. (Fan, "Judgment and Choice," 130). These pen names were chosen for different contexts and occasions, and their occurrences were not equal.

1930, he got the opportunity to meet Mr Chang Wenkai, the editor of *True Light Magazine*, several times,

> Mr Chang had significantly contributed to the works of literature, especially in the area of defending the truth. I have read his works but did not know him. In 1929, he wrote to me after reading the *Spiritual Food Quarterly*, and we began to exchange letters; but only by now, I have the opportunity to meet him in person.[23]

In like manner, Chinese artist and editor, Lu Danlin (陸丹林, 1896–1972) described Chang as,

> a faithful Chinese Christian…He has a clear mind, respectful faith, a heart for the world's salvation, a striving spirit, the courage to resist external attacks; he is not bound by the pedantic tradition, and he welcomes revolutionary thoughts, as he particularly battles with the evil powers. His learning can be summarised by two words: refined and erudite.[24]

Chang was born on March 26, 1871, in Huangbao village [黃寶村], Zhongshan county [鍾山縣], Guangxi Province [廣西省]. His father migrated from Canton in his youth and later worked as a farmer.[25] Though Chang's father was uneducated, he was sent to school at a young age. In 1888, Chang visited Tiancheng (天成) village shop, where he found a copy of the Chinese New Testament on the shelf.[26] As he was learning *fengshui* (i.e. Chinese geomancy) at the time, Chang thought the Matthean genealogy was a list of deities, and he stole the New Testament

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[23] Wang Mingdao, "A Fortified City, an Iron Pillar, and Bronze Walls (Continued) 堅城鐵柱銅牆 (續)," *Spiritual Food Quarterly* 90 (Summer 1949): 24–25; this article later became the fourth chapter of Wang's autobiography, *After Fifty Years* (五十年來).

[24] As quoted by the editor, "A Biographical Review of Mr. Chang Yi-jing 評傳張亦鏡先生," *Biographical Sketches of the Celebrated Preachers* 歷代著名佈道家小傳, 20.

[25] Chang Wen-yan **張文妍**, "A Biographical Sketch of My Belated Brother **先兄亦鏡行述**," *True Light Magazine* 31.9 (1932): 2.

[26] Chang Wen-kai, "How I Became a Christian, and My Experience of the Last Thirty Years我信基督教的緣起和信後迄今三十年的閱歷," *Life Magazine* (1923): 1–10.

for that purpose.[27] However, Chang did not read it entirely until spring 1892, after his friend Zhang Xiutang (張繡堂) borrowed his New Testament and told him about Jesus, "the man of great talent (神人)."[28] In that winter, Chang went and studied at Tong'an (同安), where he met a Chinese Christian Chen Shou-sheng (陳受生).[29] As Chen was eager to organise a congregation, he wrote to the Southern Baptist missionary Rosewell Hobart Graves (1853–1912) for help, and Graves sent Tan Baode (譚保德), Li Biting (李弼廷), and Yu Baoguang (余寶光) from Canton to assist Chen.[30] Chang later recalled that he met Chen and the three evangelists on the street, and he later went to Chen's house to converse with them. With being introduced to the Saviour, Chang joined their Bible study group and later experienced conversion.

In spring 1893, Lu Zizhen (魯子珍), the Baptist pastor at Gaoyao (高要) came to Tong'an, and baptised Chang and other twelve or thirteen people.[31] Soon after, Chang received severe opposition from his father, as the senior swore to kill his son. With prayers, Chang escaped home in

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[27] Chang, "How I Became a Christian, and My Experience of the Last Thirty Years," 1.

[28] Chang Wen-kai, "My Understanding of Jesus Today 我今日對耶穌的認識," *True Light Magazine* 27.7 (1923): 45.

[29] Editor, "A Biographical Review of Mr. Chang Yi-jing 評傳張亦鏡先生," *Biographical Sketches of the Celebrated Preachers* 歷代著名佈道家小傳, 19.

[30] On Graves, see R.H. Graves, *Forty Years in China, Or China in Transition* (Baltimore, MD: Woodward, 1895); Jack Powers, "The Missionary Activities of R. H. Graves, 1853–1912" (Unpublished Paper, 1931). Also see Wu Ning, and Kai-Jian Tang, "The Missionary Work of Southern Baptist Convention in Guangxi at the Turn of the 20th Century 清末民初美南浸信會在廣西的傳教活動," *Journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities* 29.3 (2007): 115–122; Wu Ning, *The Arrival without an End: The Missionary Work of Southern Baptist Convention in Southern China (1836–1912)* 沒有終點的到達：美南浸信會在華南地區的傳教活動 (1836–1912) (Beijing: Religious Culture, 2013); Li Li, "Diversifying the Operation: Southern Baptist Missions in China at the Turn of the Century 1890–1910," *Baptist History and Heritage* 34.2 (1999): 42–55.

[31] Lu Zizhen was an active Chinese pastor in Canton area. In the 1870s, Lu served as the pastor of the congregation at Henan Qiankou (廣州河南塹口), which was one of the Chinese established congregations in Yaogu county (腰古). He later also served as the pastor at the Xinqiao congregation (新橋教會) till the early 1900s.

April and went to the Baptist Church in Canton, where he studied the Bible with other believers. In September, Chang returned home with Pastor Lu, and his father kept a close watch over him until his death in 1896. Three years later, Chang went to Hong Kong, where he co-edited the newspaper *China Xun Bao* (中國郇報) with Liao Zhuo'an (廖卓庵, b. 1872).[32] However, Chang was angered by the imperialistic environment in Hong Kong, and some of his Western colleagues' unfriendly attitudes. He then decided to return home and cut off all his foreign connections. At home, Chang operated a private school and did not associate with any church. In 1904, Yu Jianpan (余建磐), a Chinese pastor at Tong'an, came to visit Chang, and persuaded him to join the local church. A year later, Chang's brother Shou-nan (壽南) also became a Christian and received baptism.

In November 1905, as Chang accompanied his students to Canton, he met his friend Liao, who just returned from Japan and became the associate editor of *True Light Monthly*, which was established in February 1902 by Rosewell H. Graves. Knowing Chang's gifts, Liao invited him to work as an associate editor with Huang Huanmin (黃煥民). Later, as both Liao and Huang left the editorial office for other positions, Chang became the chief editor, and thus began his life-long ministry of being a "literary pastor." Though thrice Chang resigned and left the office, Graves and his colleague Jacob Speicher (1895–1900) entrusted Chang and invited him back.[33] In 1917, the periodical changed its name to *True Light Magazine*, and at the same time, Chang began to write apologetic articles in response to Confucian and anti-Christian criticism. As the editor, Chang worked diligently for over twenty years. He woke up at

[32] Chang Yijing, "Recounting the Correspondence between Yijing and Zhu'an Thirty-Seven Years Ago **談籔 三十七年前亦鏡與卓庵往還書札**," *True Light Magazine* 29.10 (1930): 81–85.

[33] Graves later commented: "I have known Chang for ten years. In the first five years, we were like un-read books, and there were naturally some disagreements and quarrels. During the latter five years, we read each other so well that we could understand each other without explanation…Though we come from different countries, we are certainly no other than brothers" (Chang Yijing, "Twenty-Five Years Since the Publication of *True Light Magazine, and My Twenty-Two Years Labour* 真光雜誌出世迄今二十五年及余濫竽其中廿二年之經歷," *True Light Magazine* 26.6 [1927]: 7).

three or four in the morning and worked fourteen to fifteen hours each day. As others recalled,

> A pen, two bottles of ink, a pair of scissors, a bottle of starch paste, a package of Chinese cigarettes, and a bottle of clean water became his sole companion during the day. Beside meeting visitors, dressing up and, taking meals … he spent most of his time at the table, where he wrote, edited, and published articles, read newspapers, wrote letters, and finished other works.[34]

Though by the end of his life, Chang published more than fifty titles, the intense schedule and heavy workload also damaged his health. Began in the 1920s, Chang felt pain with his feet. In June 1930, his illness became worse, and Chang was paralysed. As the editorial office was moved to Shanghai in 1926, Chang and his family thought it would be convenient for the family if he came back to Guangxi providence. However, shortly after his return, Chang died on November 1, 1930. A reader, who wrote to the magazine after knowing Chang's death, well summarised Chang's life, as he wrote:

> Mr. Yijing sacrificed his life to the Lord and served his heavenly kingdom. He refused to join any political party, or study abroad, or serve the government. Instead, he worked as a literary preacher. For twenty-seven years, he worked restlessly. His faithfulness in serving the Lord is undoubtedly rare and praiseworthy![35]

Jesus Christ the True Light

Unlike Jia Yuming (1880–1964) and T. C. Chao (1888–1979), Chang Wen-kai did not receive any formal theological education, and he did not write any treatise on Christology.[36] Instead, he presented his

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[34] Jiang Jianbang, "The Works of Mr. Zhang Yijing," *True Light Magazine* 40.12 (1941): 13.

[35] Ma Shuaiyi, "My Thoughts on the Death of Mr. Yiji," *True Light Magazine* 31.3/4 (1932): 11.

[36]On Jia, see Chi-Yueng Lam, "The Paradoxical Co-Existence of Submissiveness and Subversiveness in the Theology of Yu-Ming Jia" (MPhil Thesis, 2010), 76–106; Baiyu Andrew Song, "Jia Yuming (1880–1964)––A Chinese Keswick Theology: A Theological Analysis of Christ-Human Theology in Jia's *Total Salvation*," *Journal of Global Christianity* 4.1 (2018): 68–83. On Chao, see Yongtao Chen, *The Chinese Christology of T. C. Chao* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017); Daniel

understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ in his responses to non-Christian critics. Since Zhu Zhixin (朱執信, 1885–1920), a colleague of Sun Yat-sen, published his influential article "What is Jesus 耶穌是什麼東西?" in 1919, Chinese intellectuals began to challenge the historicity of Jesus in the Bible from a "scientific" ground.[37] Under the influence of German naturalist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919) and Japanese socialist Kōtoku Shūsui (1871–1911), Zhu presented Jesus as a selfish, disingenuous, and resentful man. Chen Duxiu and others, on the other hand, praised Jesus' spirit of benevolence and self-sacrifice. Nevertheless, like Robert Morrison's monk, their Jesus was merely a man, being superstitiously believed to be a God. For Chang, Zhu and Chen attacked not only the person of Jesus but also the core of Christian faith. Furthermore, their rationalistic framework was problematic, as Chang pointed out,

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Hoi Ming Hui, *A Study of T. C. Chao's Christology in the Social Context of China (1920–1949)* (Pieterlen; Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2017); Jingyi Ji, *Encounters Between Chinese Culture and Christianity: A Hermeneutical Perspective* (Münster, Germany: Lit Verlag, 2007); Matthew J. Douthitt, "Finding Chinese Jesus: Chinese Christians and American Missionaries in the Republic of China (1912–1949)" (M.A. Thesis, Rowan University, 2016); Alexander Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). As I have argued previously, the Keswick spirituality changed Jia's theology. Regarding his Christology, it is noticed that though he confirmed a more orthodox view of the person of Christ in his systematic theology, Jia expressed proto-Eutychianism later in his *Total Salvation*. As a work to apply Keswick spirituality, Jia specifically distinguished Christ's human nature before his crucifixion and while he was on the cross. By applying a tripartite anthropology, Jia argued that "when he was on the cross, his whole person (全人) was filled with sin––both his body, soul, and spirit are filled with sin. Both the internal and external of his person are full of sin. Thus, he became the greatest sinner of all the ages, and no one contains much more sin than his, as he took the sins of all generations" (Jia Yuming, 完全救法 *Total Salvation* [Hangzhou: Zhejiang Provincial Christian Council, {n.d.}], 126 [translations are mine]). In other words, instead of understanding ἁμαρτίαν in 2 Corinthians 5:21 as a noun (in contrast to δικαιοσύνη in the same verse), Jia confused it with interpreting ἁμαρτίαν as either "sinful" or "sinner."

[37] Chu Chih-Hsin [Zhu Zhixin], "What is Jesus?," in *The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ. Volume 3a*, edited by Roman Malek, 1197–1207.

> Intellect can only be used to understand and strengthen our reasonable, Bible-rooted faith, as well as to explain this faith to those who seek it. We shall not stand as a third person, and solely take a scholar's attitude to criticise this reasonable, Bible-rooted faith … [For some,] If we cannot use a scientific method to find Jesus' divine nature, Jesus should only be recognised as a great ancient perfect man; thus, [they] only worship his personality, and promote his principles, thinking that it is enough to save men, country, and the world by having his characters, and practicing his principles…people [then] become suspicious regarding prophecy, virgin birth, resurrection, the Holy Spirit, and the Last Judgment … However, to learn Jesus' characters and principles is not enough, [instead] we need to learn a complete Jesus [as both God and man]. Though we may not prove [his divine nature] with scientific methods, we cannot deny God's existence.[38]

Like later evangelicals such as Wang Mingdao, Chang believed that the fashion of understanding Jesus as a virtuous teacher was erroneous, as it did not teach the nature and mystery of the gospel.[39]

Virgin birth and the incarnation

Chang argued that the idea of the virgin birth was not foreign to Chinese, as it occurred several times in Chinese classics to mark out an extraordinary person's life.[40] If such a supernatural birth could happen to Chinese sages, it is more than possible for God to experience a virgin birth.[41] Along with John 1:14, Chang argued,

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[38] Chang Yi-jing, "The Ideological Trends in Today's Church 今日教會思潮之趨勢," *True Light Magazine* 26. 7–9 (1926): 98–99.

[39] Chang, "An Answer to the Questions Proposed by Mr. Zeng Guren in his Letter," 67.

[40] Also see Fan, "Judgment and Choice," 131–134.

[41] Cf. Chang Yijing, "On Mr. Chen Duxiu's *Christianity and the Christian Church*," in *Collections of Significant Documents of the Anti-Christian Movements in the Republic Era* 民國時期非基督教運動重要文獻彙編, edited by Tang Xiaofeng and Wang Shuai (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2015), 463–464; Chang Yijing, "The Birth of Jesus, and the Births of the Founders of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism 耶穌之生與儒釋道三教教主之生," *True Light Magazine* 29.12 (1929): 42–54.

> Jesus, in his nature, is the Dao [*Logos* 道] that coexisted with God in the beginning, his incarnation then means God took the human body to live with men. This is identical to the name and meaning of Immanuel, and precisely the Virgin Mary gave birth to him. Along with what he taught later, there was not a single word or action that did not prove the fact that he was the omnipotent Creator who came to this world. Thus, what others said about the strangeness of his birth should not make us unbelieve![42]

Furthermore, Jesus' divine nature is closely related to the effectiveness of his redemption. Quoting the 14th-century politician and scholar Liu Ji (1311–1375), Chang pointed out that only God by his merits can provide salvation and eternal life. Thus, "he gave his own Son" means God himself came to save:

> "begotten Son" is a metonymy, as God is like the sun, and light is begotten by the sun. God became Jesus in his incarnation to save the world, which was like the sun shines through the light to the world. Jesus is God's only Son, as light is the only begotten of the sun. Such is the meaning of Jesus being "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb 1:3 [ESV]).[43]

By defending Jesus' divine nature, Chang rejected Arianism. Moreover, he also rejected Docetism, as he understood that regarding his flesh, Jesus was from the stem of Jesse, the descent of Abraham and David, and he was truly a man.[44] Since his conversion, Chang believed that Jesus was the "Son of Man and Son of God 人子上帝子," and "the Saviour who was truly begotten by God 上帝篤生的救世主."[45] He further confessed that

> I only believe God is the triune Creator; Jesus is the Son of God, the only Saviour of mankind; everyone who sincerely believes in Christ will for sure receive the Holy Spirit, who is the helping Comforter;

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[42] Chang Yi-jing, "An Answer to the Questions Proposed by Mr. Zeng Guren in his Letter 答曾骨人先生來函所設問," *True Light Magazine* 29.1 (1930): 63.

[43] Chang Yi-jing, "Release from the Fall, and Have Eternal Life 免沈淪得永生," *True Light Magazine* 28.2 (1929): 17.

[44] Chang Yi-jing, "The first chapter of the New Testament 新約開編第一章," *True Light Magazine* 30.1 (1931): 1–6

[45] Chang, "My Understanding of Jesus Today," 45.

> men after death will certainly go to either heaven or hell; by spreading the gospel truth of Jesus, this world could be transformed to a heavenly kingdom, yet it cannot assert that there is no final judgment; I also believe that everything works according to the heavenly Father's will, and I can know it by reflecting on what I have believed and the experience of these thirty years.[46]

Death and resurrection

According to Chang, Jesus' death was the "most trustworthy and once-for-all atonement."[47] For the Jews, the cross substituted the sacrificial system. However, since the Chinese did not have such a tradition, it is necessary to contextualise this doctrine. Chang then described Jesus' death as,

> When the time came, there was a group of people who hated him, brought Jesus to be executed, to make his deathless body to die. He then raised from death, and became a spiritual body [靈體] to return to his Father … Thus, Jesus willingly let his body die, in order to reform Judaism, and to open a new epoch for the world to come … He died for sinners of the world.[48]

Here, a Docetic impression is caused by linguistic confusion, as well as the nature of his article. For his critics, there was no doubt of Jesus' death, if he were merely a man. It also explains why Chang spent very little time on Jesus' suffering and crucifixion.

Nevertheless, Chang believed that Jesus' "resurrection is the foundation of Christianity since if there were no resurrection, Christianity would not exist."[49] Based on his belief in the Bible's reliability, Chang examined the biblical texts, especially the Johannian account.[50] At the same time, Chang questioned the possibility for the

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[46] Chang Yi-jing, "How I Became a Christian, and My Experience of the Last Thirty Years我信基督教的緣起和信後迄今三十年的閱歷," *Life Magazine* (1923): 8.

[47] Chang, "How I Became a Christian, and My Experience of the Last Thirty Years," 9.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Chang, "On Mr. Chen Duxiu's *Christianity and the Christian Church*," 464.

[50] Chang Yijing, "My Opinions on Jesus' Resurrection 我也來說說耶穌之復活," *True Light Magazine* 24.5 (1925): 34–37.

apostles' dramatic change, if the resurrection did not occur. By quoting theologians, such as William Griffith Thomas (1861–1924) and John Chrysostom (d. 407), Chang argued against the swoon hypothesis, which argued that Jesus did not die, but only fell unconscious.[51] Furthermore, Chang argued with a high Christology, as he stated,

> the rule of the physical world can only regulate men, but not God. If Jesus were merely a man, [his resurrection] would be unbelievable, and there would be no such records. Since Jesus is God's only begotten Christ, his body is formed by the Dao that from the beginning was with God. As he often told his disciples before his suffering, that he was to be killed by evil men and raise in three days… [His resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit] prove that Jesus is indeed God's only begotten Christ, who has both human and divine natures, and he is the Saviour of all humanity.[52]

Conclusion

In one of his articles, Chang satirically asked what made him adopt an "unlearned" but high view of Christ, while the educated only believed Jesus as "the model of a perfect man, and the world's revolutionary."[53] Chang stated that his "unlearned" view of Jesus remained unchanged since his conversion; moreover, it was the same to those of the apostles'.[54] Chang continued:

> Many today ridicule Christians as adhering rigidly to ideas of the eighteenth-century, or sixteenth-century. However, I think even thoughts of the sixteenth, or eighteenth centuries are too new. It is better to trace it back to the thought of the apostolic age, which is truly old, and their understanding of Jesus is clearer. Moreover, by then, the mocking titles such as "the running dogs of imperialism," "Western servants," or "rice Christians" cannot even be applied. Since their thoughts are so old, their churches will certainly follow the Bible's teaching: as they are entirely independent of any protections of any foreign power, or missionary societies' financial support. If so, the church today would not be so much in darkness. Thus, regarding

[51] Chang, "On Mr. Chen Duxiu's *Christianity and the Christian Church*," 464–465.
[52] Chang, "My Opinions on Jesus' Resurrection," 37.
[53] Chang, "My Understanding of Jesus Today," 45.
[54] Ibid., 46.

> the question of knowing Jesus, whereas people are competitively seeking the new, I only want the ancient [teaching].[55]

As we have seen, Chang's Christology was not sophisticated. Nevertheless, his methodology was unique, as he did not reject the value of Chinese history or tradition. At the same time, he upheld the authority of special revelation as recorded in the biblical canon. With logic and personal experiences, Chang presented a "reasonable, Bible-rooted faith" to both his critics and Christian readers at a time of cultural and political upheavals.

[55] Ibid.

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Sick with Sin, Healed in Christ: Lessons from John Newton

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Would you know if you were sick? Today, sickness dominates the daily news. Even those not considered at "high risk" of death from COVID-19 fear having an asymptomatic case and passing it along to a vulnerable loved one. It is possible to have a sickness and not realize it. The same is true when it comes to deadly spiritual disease.

John Newton, the author of the celebrated hymn, "Amazing Grace," commenting on the "madness of the heart" of the prodigal son before he "came to himself' in the far country, pointed out that the unregenerate are "insensible of their disorder." Newton wrote:

> In fevers and other illnesses, people know they are ill, readily own it, and desire relief. But distracted people usually think themselves well - or at least that what they suffer arises from without and not from within. This is the sinner's case again. Nothing but the power of the convincing Spirit, can make him sensible of his true state, so as to feel one desire for the great Physician. Sometimes in distraction they think everybody mad but themselves. There are many such mad sinners, who though they have all these marks of an unsound mind, think themselves the only wise folks, and affect to pity or despise them that fear the Lord, as if they were out of their senses.[1]

[1] John Newton, sermon "On the Parable of the Prodigal," No. 6, Luke 15:17, which can be accessed online at:
https://www.iohnnewton.org/Groups/285042/TheJohnNewton/newmenus/Sermons/SERIES/Luke
15 Prodigal/No 6.aspx
Similarly, in "Sermon 15: Messiah's Easy Yoke," Newton writes, "The skill of a physician may be acknowledged, in general terms, by many; but he is applied to, only by the sick (Matthew 9:12). Thus our Saviour's gracious invitation to come to Him for rest, will be little regarded, till we really feel ourselves weary and heavy laden. This is a principal reason why the Gospel is heard with so much

"But," Newton concludes, "there is a Physician who is mighty to save…" God knows our sickness even when we can't discern it. A critical aspect, then, of God's work in every human being he redeems is making them aware of their spiritual sickness and its danger. Only when you become aware of your illness will you seek the cure. "While we remain upon earth we are in the Lord's school," Newton explains, "and a principal lesson we have to learn is a knowledge of ourselves, and this can only be attained by a painful experience." He continues,

> The deceitfulness of the heart which we allow in words, enables it to disguise, conceal, and cover its own emotions, so that the supposed sense we have of its deceitfulness is often the very thing that deceives us. We say that the sea is deceitful, and with good reason. It sometimes looks so smooth and glossy that no one who has tried it would think it dangerous; but this is only in a calm. A small breeze will ruffle it, and in a storm it roars and rages. But the heart is more deceitful than the sea. It will swell and rage when there seems no wind to put it to motion or to awaken any suspicion_.it is of importance to know (so far as we are able to bear it) how bad we really are. For they will most prize the physician, and most readily comply with his prescription, who are most sensible of the malignity of their disease.[2]

Newton repeatedly emphasized the importance of recognizing that you are sick with sin, writing in a 1771 letter: "Now the more you are sensible of that soul disease which is called sin, the more you will desire to experience the power and skill of the Great Physician."[3]

This is a profoundly biblical image; Jesus provided this analogy

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indifference. For though sin be a grievous illness, and a hard bondage, yet one effect of it is, a strange stupidity and infatuation, which renders us (like a person in a delirium) insensible of our true state. It is a happy time, when the Holy Spirit, by His convincing power, removes that stupor, which, while it prevents us from fully perceiving our misery, renders us likewise indifferent to the only mean of deliverance."

[2] John Newton, "Letter to Mrs. Dawson," October 31, 1788, in *The Letters of John Newton* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2007), 341.

[3] Newton, "Letter to Elizabeth Cuningham," dated 17 June 1771, accessible online at:
https://www.iohnnewton.org/Groups/327974/TheJohnNewton/newmenus/Letters/manuscripts/Cuninghams/1771 Jun 17.aspx.

originally, presenting himself this way in Matthew 9:12: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." It is also an image that, as Newton's letters show, provides helpful and timely insights into pastoral care.

These themes saturate Newton's letters and hymns.[4] His letters are a treasure trove in themselves, showing how practical theology is, and Newton's frequent references to sin as sickness and to the Lord as his divine physician further clarify the pastor's role as one who dispenses the medicine of the gospel to sick souls. If, for example, the pastor dispenses spiritual "care of souls," he must be humble, yet firm, insisting on the proper treatment, and certainly patient as "healing" (sanctification) takes place.

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[4] E.g., "I think I see with pleasure that the Great Physician whose skill and compassion are infinite, has begun to take your case in hand." Newton, "Letter to Elizabeth Cuningham," dated 10 December 1771, accessible online at: https://www.iohnnewton.org/Groups/327975/The John Newton/new menus/Letters/manuscripts/Cuninghams/1771 Jun 17.aspx.
"What can I do but carry it by faith and prayer to the Great Physician who can (and he only) cleanse, and soften and empty, etc.; and then new mould it according to the form of his divine Gospel,
animate it with his love, and fill it with his own Spirit." Newton, "Miscellaneous Thoughts," dated Friday 23 June 1758, accessible online at
https://www.iohnnewton.org/Groups/256703/The John Newton/new menus/Journals/Miscellaneous
Thoughts/Miscellaneous Thoughts/Miscellaneous Thoughts.aspx.
Likewise, see Newton's journal entry for Sunday 7 December 1777, accessible online at
https://www.iohnnewton.org/Articles/371467/The John Newton/new menus/Hymns/OH Book 2/OHBook 2.aspx
Likewise, Newton's journal entry for Thursday 12 February 1778, accessible online at
https://www.iohnnewton.org/Articles/371475/The John Newton/new menus/Hymns/OH Book 2/OH
Book 2.aspx Additionally, "Letter to Mrs. C," dated May 29, 1784, found in John Newton, *The Works Of John Newton* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015), *4.54*.
Finally, among other sources cited above and below, see "Letter to Mrs. W," dated October 31, 1767, in *Works,* 268.

A Personal Image

Just as Jesus' remarks were so powerful in the context of his healing miracles, and sin as sickness is an apt metaphor in our day of the COVID-19 pandemic, spiritual sickness was pertinent in the days of Newton's ministry.

Newton (1725-1807) lived in a day far removed from modern medicine. Sadly, in those days it was not taken for granted that children would emerge safely from the womb and grow into adulthood, or that women would survive childbirth. For the Puritans, "Earthly life was a long process of dying."[5] In such a context, Newton's letters mention prayer to God as the great physician, able to heal both spiritual *and* physical ailments.[6]

Another powerful explanation for Newton's predilection for seeing sin as illness and Christ as doctor is that God used physical illness in his life to humble him. At the age of 30, "his health was broken by a stroke."[7] Likewise, "he was reduced almost to death on the Guinea coast," but "throughout these sad events there ran a divine purpose..."[8] Just as God brought healing to his body, Newton acknowledged that God had healed his soul. This is a helpful pastoral insight itself: God can use our physical illnesses to reveal our spiritual needs.[9]

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[5] Houlbrooke, Ralph, and Ed. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales. "The Puritan Death-Bed, c. 1560-c. 1660." *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1996), 128-129.
This was the case for many years. For example, in the first century, "it is estimated that, on average, one-half of all children died before their sixth birthday." S.M. Baugh, *Ephesians* Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press), 508

[6] E.g., "I am glad to find that you have still hopes of the child's recovery. May the Lord, the good and infallible Physician confirm them."
https://www.iohnnewton.org/Groups/327976/TheJohnNewton/newmenus/Letters/manuscripts/Cuninghams/1772 Mar 28.aspx
Likewise,
https://www.iohnnewton.org/Groups/327982/The John Newton/new menus/Letters/manuscripts/Cuninghams/1782 Jun 18.aspx.

[7] John Newton, *Select Letters of John Newton* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1960, repr 2000), viii.

[8] Introduction to *The Letters,* 8.

[9] E.g., "Sickness" in J.C. Ryle, *Practical Religion* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1878, reprinted 2013), 339-41.

In one of his letters, Newton lamented the physical illness of the recipient's sister, and encouraged them to look to Christ with faith: "Hide yourself under the shadow of his wings; rely upon his care and power; look upon him as a physician who has graciously undertaken to heal your soul of the worst of sicknesses, sin!"[10] In another letter, Newton adds, "All our *soul complaints* amount but to this—that we are very sick; and if we did not find ourselves to be so—we would not duly prize the infallible Physician."[11]

"My Ailment," Newton Himself as Sick Spiritually

Because sin continues to be present in the believer after justification, Newton was clear: we need ongoing spiritual care. Nevertheless, the believer can have joy that the divine doctor has taken up their case; through Christ, God has undertaken to heal our hearts of the worst of sicknesses, sin. "Sin is the sickness of the soul, in itself mortal and incurable, as to any power in heaven or earth but that of the Lord Jesus only," Newton wrote, "But He is the great, the infallible Physician."[12]

Newton clearly affirmed the reality of indwelling sin in the believer and would surely have resisted the triumphalism of many evangelicals today. Newton was a clear proponent of the Reformation dictum that believers are simultaneously justified and still sinful. The Christian, Newton said, "believes and feels his own weakness and unworthiness, and lives upon the grace and pardoning love of his Lord. This gives him [a] habitual tenderness and gentleness of spirit."[13]

Part of Newton's ongoing appeal to modern audiences is this humility; he writes as a sinner to sinners, claiming no superiority, only clinging to the cross.

This humility shines as Newton spoke of himself as a patient under God's soul care who must follow the doctor's orders. Lamenting his ongoing sin sickness, Newton wrote:

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[10] John Newton, letter 4, London, dated August 19, 1775, which can be accessed online:
https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/newton/The Letters of John Newton - John Newton.pdf

[11] John Campbell, ed., *Letters and Conversational Remarks, by the Late John Newton* (NY: 1811), 32.

[12] John Newton, letter dated July, 1764, to Mrs. Wilberforce.

[13] Newton, *Works of,* 1.170.

> However, I trust I am in the school of the great Teacher, and I humbly hope he will carry on the work he has begun. What I want, what I pray for, is a simple dependent spirit, to be willing to put myself entirely into his hands, to follow him without asking questions, to believe him without making objections, and to receive and expect every thing in his own time and his way. This is the course we take when we consult an earthly physician; we consult him, but we do not pretend to direct him.[14]

In other words, the believer patiently trusts the Lord's care, following the Lord's instructions as to his spiritual progress. This stills murmuring and complaining. Newton continues:

> Thus would I give myself up to my heavenly, infallible physician; but this is one branch of the good which, when I would do, I find evil is present with me. But it is likewise one part of the sickness I groan under, and which he has in mercy undertaken to cure; and therefore, though I am very sick indeed, I trust I shall not die, but live and declare his wonderful works.[15]

A repeated theme in Newton's letters is that he lamented his slow sanctification, his lapses and ungodliness, and would have despaired if he did not trust in Christ's strength as a divine physician rather than his own strength as a patient. In a letter titled "My Ailment," he explained that his spiritual sickness "is far from being removed."[16] At the same time, he loves his healer. Newton wrote that Christ, with tenderness, "assures me that it shall not be to death, but to the glory of God; and bids me in due time expect a perfect cure." Newton chalks up all his setbacks to his own faults: "I am a strange refractory patient; have too often neglected his prescriptions, and broken the regimen He appoints me to observe."

Here Newton suggests that were he a patient in a hospital, he would

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[14] John Newton, letter dated March 13, 1781 to Miss Medhurst, found in *The Works of the Rev. John Newton,* 4 vols. (New-Haven: Nathan Whiting; 1826), 4.412-413.

[15] John Newton, letter to Miss Medhurst, *Works of the Rev. John Newton,* 4.412-413.

[16] John Newton, Letter dated June 2, 1772, "To B. West, Esq.," found in *Works of John Newton,* 4.133.

have been released as "incurable," but Christ releases none of his patients, and none are beyond his ability. He praises Christ: "indeed, there is none like him. When I have brought myself low. He has still helped me."

Newton extends the analogy, speaking of how it can be discouraging to think of how long he has struggled with sin, himself as a patient who doesn't always like the doctor's remedies, and the world's ungodly perspectives as "air" he breathes that exacerbates his condition. The world, the flesh, and the devil only make our spiritual sickness worse, were it not for God's intervention. However, just as we would refer our friends and neighbors to a good doctor, Newton sees his purpose in referring others to Christ. He explains, "one thing that makes me willing to stay is, that I may point him out as a Physician of value to others. We sometimes see in the newspapers acknowledgments of cures received. What sheets and quires of advertisements would be necessary, if all the Lord's people were to publish their cases…"

Newton's letters bear out that calling God places upon his patients: to testify to the greatness of their Healer.

The Worst Infection: Sickness in Newton's Hymns

Newton wrote several hymns on this theme. Based on Matthew 9:12, "Physician of My Sin-Sick Soul" pleads for God to have pity upon the singer:

Physician of my sin-sick soul
To Thee I bring my case;
My raging malady control,
And heal me by Thy grace.

Here Newton focuses on the power of sin's sickness, the devastating effect it has on him (e.g., "makes me deaf, dumb, and blind…[it] robs me of my rest"), and its extent—he is sick from head to toe (cf. Isa. 1:6):

It lies not in a single part,
But thro' my frame is spread
A burning fever in my heart.
A palsy in my head.

In the power of physical sickness over us, we see a picture of sin's consequences. He remarks, "No words of mine can fully paint / That

worst distemper, sin." Only God can cure this ill: "For never can I hope a cure / From any hand but Thine."[17]

Likewise, Newton's hymn "The Good Physician" reminds us that "The worst of all diseases is light compared with sin…" Newton references the great pandemic of Numbers 21, where the people were healed by looking to the pole with the bronze serpent upon it, an event Jesus saw as a preview of his own ministry (John 3:14-15). Newton's hymn rhythmically praises God for rescue and commends Christ to others. "How lost was my condition / Till Jesus made me whole! / There is but one Physician / Can cure a sin-sick soul." The hymn continues:

The worst of all diseases Is light,
compared with sin;
On every part it seizes,
But rages most within:
'Tis palsy, plague, and fever,
And madness -- all combined;
And none but a believer
The least rebel can find.

Newton's next stanza suggests that human remedies offered no relief; "this proved more distressing / And added to my pain." Unregenerate persons do not see sin's sickness, only its effects, and "Some said that nothing ailed me." However, when all seems lost, here, with poetic grace, Newton's hymn pivots from the depths of despair to the joys of salvation as God's gift. He continues,

At length this great Physician,
How matchless is his grace!
Accepted my petition,
And undertook my case:
First gave me sight to view him,
For sin my eyes had sealed;
Then bid me look unto him,
I looked, and I was healed.

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[17] *Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the use of Christians* (Lexington, KY; Joseph Carless, 1803). This can be accessed online at https://www.iohnnewton.org/Articles/371228/The John Newton/new menus/Hymns/OH Book 1/OH Book 1.aspx

He poetically concludes with an invitation:

Come then to this Physician,
His help he'll freely give;
He makes no hard condition,
'Tis only -- look and live.[18]

This invitation also serves as a reminder that salvation comes by faith and not by works, akin to the free offer hymn, "Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy" by Joseph Hart.

Newton not only draws on the deadly serpent saga of Numbers 21 and John 3:14-15, he also brings out the healing miracles of Jesus. Newton wrote a hymn titled "Here at Bethesda's pool," that uses the phrase, "sin-sick soul":

Here streams of wondrous virtue flow
To heal a sin-sick soul;
To wash the filthy white as snow,
And make the wounded whole.

Similarly, Charles Wesley wrote in the same era, "Savior of the sin-sick soul/Give me faith to make me whole."[19] This deeply biblical theme has stood the test of time among diverse peoples, being featured in the African-American spiritual "There Is a Balm in Gilead," based on the striking passage of Jeremiah 8:22 ("Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"). It declares,

How lost was my condition
Till Jesus made me whole!
There is but one Physician
Can cure a sin-sick soul.[20]

Of course, Newton is not the first or only Christian writer to refer to this theme. For example, Matthew Henry (1662-1714) explained in *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (London, 1708-1710): "The

[18] John Newton, "The Good Physician," *Olney Hymns,* accessible online at: https://ccel.org/ccel/newton/olneyhymns.h1 62.html

[19] Accessible online at: https://hymnary.org/text/savior of the sin sick soul

[20] Newton's theme was also picked up by Washington Glass, "The Sinner's Cure" in *The Revivalist,* 1854.

blood of Christ is balm in Gilead, his Spirit is the Physician there, all-sufficient; so that the people may be healed, but will not. Thus [they] die unpardoned and unchanged, for they will not come to Christ to be saved."

Ministry as Soul Cure

Today, seminaries use medical analogies to argue for an educated pastorate: you would not want an unlicensed, untrained surgeon to work on your body, and likewise, you should not want an untrained pastor to care for your soul. Unwittingly, such arguments echo John Newton's understanding of pastoral ministry as dispensing spiritual healing. He wrote:

> My course of study, like that of a surgeon, has principally consisted in walking the hospital…I endeavor to walk through the world as a physician goes through Bedlam: the patients make a noise, pester him with impertinence, and hinder him in his business; but he does the best he can, and so gets through.[21]

Writing of a situation every pastor can identify with, Newton once again uses this illustration:

> I have seldom one-hour free from interruption. Letters, that must be answered, visitants that must be received, business that must be attended to. I have a good many sheep and lambs to look after, sick and afflicted souls dear to the Lord; and therefore, whatever stands still, these must not be neglected.[22]

Pastors, as under-shepherds of the chief shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), are spiritual physicians, caring for the souls under their care. Newton applied this broadly to his ministry, explaining that just as a doctor diagnoses patients each with different maladies, so too pastors will encounter various specific sin-sicknesses. He said,

> So far as I can judge, anatomy is my favorite branch; I mean the study of the human heart with its workings and counter-workings as it is differently affected in a state of nature or of grace, in the different seasons of prosperity, adversity, conviction, temptation, sickness and

[21] Richard Cecil, Memoirs of the Rev. John Newton, edited by Marylynn Rousse, 100, 103

[22] Richard Cecil, *The Life of John Newton,* edited by Marylynn Rousse, 139

the approach of death.[23]

The Bible itself provides many illustrations of the workings of the human heart - such as Jonah's stated reasons for disobeying God (Jonah 4:1-2). Pastors can see their own heart-sicknesses in such biblical portrayals and proclaim to their congregations what they themselves need to hear, taking the very medicine they prescribe.

The Pastor's Spiritual Pharmacy

Just as Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor* (1656) outlined how pastors should care for specific categories of hearers (e.g., covenant children, the unconverted, the backsliding, etc.), Newton also explained the various kinds of sin- sicknesses that pastors will face. "In the course of your acquaintance," Newton wrote in a letter, "you will meet with some in a backsliding state, some under temptations, some walking in darkness, others rejoicing in the light…"

Newton argues here that pastors should be keen observers of human nature. The pastor not only engages the world and its depictions of life (like the portrayal of jealousy and deception in Shakespeare's *Othello*), but he examines how sin operates in his own heart. He writes,

> Compare these with the word of God, and your own heart. For though some circumstances vary, the heart of man, the aids of grace, and the artifices of Satan, in general, are universally the same. And whenever you are to preach, remember, that some of all these sorts will probably be before you, and each should have something said to their own peculiar ease.[24]

Such study equips pastors to tailor the application in sermons to each case, just as a physician prescribes specialized medicine for each patient. At the same time, Newton pointed out that while the details may vary, the remedy is the same for all: the gospel of Jesus Christ. Newton concludes,

> Of him all awakened souls love to hear much. Let Jesus therefore be your capital subject. If you discuss some less essential topic, or bend

[23] Newton, *Select Letters,* viii.

[24] This letter can be accessed online: http://www.gracegems.org/Newton/02.htm

> all your strength to clear up some dark text, though you should display much learning and ingenuity, you will probably fall short of your main design, which I dare say will be to promote the glory of God, and the good of souls.[25]

Learning from Lepers

Newton's pastoral theology of "anatomy," the study of the workings of the human heart, filled his writings with a characteristic humility. When you look at your own heart and see how sin has diseased it, you will be gentle in dealing with other sin-sick souls. For example, Newton placed himself in the shoes of the lepers who called out to Jesus:

> When the poor leper's case I read,
> My own described I feel;
> Sin is a leprosy indeed,
> Which none but Christ can heal.

After lamenting "The more I strove myself to cure / The more the plague increased," Newton continues,

> While thus I lay distressed, I saw
> The Savior passing by;
> To him, though filled with shame and awe,
> I raised my mournful cry.
> He heard, and with a gracious look,
> Pronounced the healing word;
> "I will--be clean," and while he spoke,
> I felt my health restored.[26]

In this hymn, Newton was tapping into another biblical source for the likening of sin and sickness: leprosy. Seventeenth century Bible interpreter Benjamin Keach explained the significance of leprosy in the Bible: "By the plague of leprosy, all expositors agree, was represented the hateful nature of sin."[27] Likewise, the famous English preacher Charles

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Nathan Strong, Abel Flint, and Joseph Steward, compilers, *The Hartford Selection of Hymns: From the Most Approved Authors* (Hartford: Peter B. Gleason and Company, 1799).

[27] Benjamin Keach, *Preaching for the Types and Metaphors of the Bible* (Grand

Spurgeon said in a sermon on Leviticus 13 that we should "see in the leper the sinner."[28] After telling us of the horrors of the disease of leprosy, Spurgeon adds that it is still a poor portrait of "the loathsomeness of sin." Sin will destroy a person over time. Sin will mangle a person's soul. Just as the leper brings his leprosy to everything he touches, so our sin corrupts whatever we touch—except for Jesus, the pure physician who heals what he touches.

The likeness of leprosy to sin is fascinating in our day of COVID-19 isolation. With new eyes, we read of the isolation leprosy brought on: "The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp" (Lev. 13:45-46).

Previously, many of us would find it hard to imagine walking up to someone only to have them shout at you: "Away, unclean!" Yet this was the experience of lepers in ancient Israel, and in today's COVID-19 plagued world this startling interaction does not seem so impossible.

Leprosy was not only frightful, sometimes involving disfigurement, it was painful and lonely. It was life-shattering in its effect on one's daily life, family, work, and worship. Leprosy made one unclean in God's theocratic kingdom of Israel, in the ceremonial laws of his covenant made at Sinai. It separated you from others and prevented you from worshipping in the temple. However, physical leprosy neither now nor then could truly separate you from God. What separates us from God has always been our unclean hearts and unclean hands. As Isaiah 59:2 says, "your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God."

This is the way of the Bible—as John's gospel particularly makes clear—it speaks of spiritual things through physical ones (e.g., "you must be born again"). It speaks of perfect peace in the picture of the lion laying down with the lamb. It speaks of spiritual blemishes in terms of skin-blemishes like leprosy. This explains why it was the *priests*—spiritual officers without medical knowledge—who confirmed the healing of lepers (Lev. 13:9-56).

Rapids: Kregel, [1855] 1972), 919-20.

[28] This can be accessed online at http: //www .spurgeongems.org/vols 7 - 9/chs 353.pdf

Likewise, when Jesus healed lepers, he communicated something beyond his ability to heal diseases: his ability to heal souls. 1 Peter 2:24 speaks of Christ's atoning work as bringing healing: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." He became like the leper to secure the dwelling place of believers in God's presence for eternity. The leper's cry, "away, unclean," found its answer when Jesus suffered the exile of God's curse and cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He became like a leper for believers—both spiritually—as God punished him for our blemishes—and physically, as he suffered in his body for our sins. Now God invites believers, healed spiritual lepers, into his eternal presence and will never say, "away, unclean" to us. As Newton expressed it,

Come, sinners seize the present hour,
The Savior's grace to prove;
He can relieve, for he is power,
He will, for he is love.

God should distance himself from us because he is light and we are marred by spiritual darkness, yet through Jesus, he invites sinners to draw near. The poet T.S. Eliot's description of Christ as a "wounded surgeon," is apt: he carries the cure for all of humanity's ills.[29] He was wounded for our sins (Isa. 53:5), but he is also the *resurrected* surgeon. As such, we should commend him to others, as Newton exhorts, and give thanks to him as the leper in Luke 17 did.

[29] T. S. Eliot, "East Coker" (1940).

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The SBC's Civil Rights Hub: American Baptist Theological Seminary

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A team of African American college students entered Woolworth's department store in Nashville on Saturday, February 27, 1960. Despite jeers of "Go back to Africa!" they proceeded silently to their objective: the store's segregated lunch counter. Refused service by the restaurant's staff, they watched a group of white ruffians advance toward them. Then violence erupted. For the next hour, the students were punched, spat upon, and had their heads banged on the counter. Their backs and hair were burned with cigarettes. When police arrived, they did nothing to the perpetrators of violence. But they arrested the black students for disorderly conduct and marched them off to jail.[1]

Over the next four months, African American college students continued to challenge a ban on black diners at Nashville's lunch counters. They faced insult, assault, and arrest, drawing national media attention in the process. Eventually, the students' nonviolent confrontation of injustice paid off. Nashville desegregated its lunch counters in May 1960.

Among the sit-in's leaders were students at a small school in north Nashville funded in significant measure by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Known as American Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS), the institution's student body included future congressman John Lewis and future civil rights leaders Bernard Lafayette and James Bevel. At ABTS, they imbibed the preaching and literature of the civil rights movement. They huddled around radios to hear Martin Luther King Jr. preach from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery. They studied Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent resistance. They read Howard Thurman, Reinhold Niebuhr, and other authors who

[1] Jon Meacham, *His Truth Is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope* (New York: Random House, 2020), 69-70.

inspired King. ABTS was "a place filled with political ferment and passion," journalist David Halberstam wrote. Its students brought to the sit-ins "a quiet, unwavering strength" "based on an unshakable religious faith."[2]

That the SBC funded such an institution was ironic to say the least. Many of the convention's leaders and entities, and even the convention itself at times, opposed the civil rights movement. For instance, Oklahoma pastor Herschel Hobbs, who was elected SBC president a year after the Nashville sit-ins, took issue with nonviolent direct action aimed at ending segregation. Civil disobedience programs like the one in Nashville "are a prime cause of the widespread lawlessness and violence which are plaguing our nation today," Hobbs lamented in a civil rights era sermon. "We are reaping the harvest of civil disobedience."[3]

In the wake of Lewis's death last year, it is time for reexamination of the complex and conflicted relationship between Southern Baptists and ABTS—an oft overlooked facet of the American civil rights movement. The seminary was a hub of civil rights activism funded unwittingly by a denomination noted for its opposition to such activism.

A Seminary Established

ABTS opened in 1924 as a joint venture between the SBC and the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. (NBC) to train black ministers. Southern Baptists had considered a school for African Americans since the early twentieth century. At the 1913 SBC annual meeting, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President E. Y. Mullins noted that black "brethren [in the NBC] have expressed a desire for conference with and the advice and co-operation of the white Baptists of the South" regarding a college for black ministers. In response to Mullins, the convention pledged "practical financial assistance."[4] The SBC also appointed a committee to look into the matter.

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[2] David Halberstam, *The Children* (New York: Random House, 1998), 65, 70.

[3] Herschel Hobbs, "The Christian and Law Observance," Box 3, Folder 3, Herschel Hobbs Papers, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee. The sermon has not date, but content referring to the Supreme Court's *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision suggests the sermon was preached in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

[4] 1913 SBC Annual, 21, media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1913.pdf.

For the next decade, the SBC and NBC negotiated the details of a new college. As possible locations they considered Memphis, Louisville, Atlanta, and Birmingham before finally settling on Nashville, where ABTS was established on 53 acres with plain brick buildings on the banks of the Cumberland River, overlooking downtown. The school would have two governing bodies. A board overseeing the buildings and grounds would have eight members from the SBC and four from the NBC. A board to oversee seminary affairs would be established by the NBC, with a membership to include twice as many National Baptists as Southern Baptists.[5]

From its inception, ABTS struggled to maintain administrators and students. The school's first president, Sutton Griggs, served just one year and was followed by a series of short-tenured leaders. In its first 56 years, ABTS had eleven presidents.[6] The seminary competed (often unsuccessfully) for ministerial students with historically black colleges like Morehouse, which enjoyed better funding. From 1955 to 1965, ABTS averaged approximately seventy students per year, with thirteen graduates annually.[7] Amid these struggles, at least two matters were unclear: Could such a school contribute meaningfully to the civil rights movement, and, if so, who would fund it?

A Civil Rights Legacy

The answer to the first question proved to be an emphatic yes. Not only did ABTS students participate in the Nashville sit-ins. They also took part in the Freedom Rides of 1961 to challenge segregation in interstate bus travel. Additionally, by Lafayette's count, ABTS placed more people on Martin Luther King's executive staff than any other school: Lafayette, Lewis, Bevel, C. T. Vivian, and Paul Brooks.[8] The students' stand for civil rights came at great cost. They were insulted, beaten, and jailed. On more than one occasion, some wondered if they would die in the fight for equality.

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[5] Keith Harper, "Echoes of Irony in 1995: The Defunding of American Baptist College, Nashville, Tennessee," pp. 4-6, paper delivered at the Conference on Faith and History, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, October 6, 2018, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.

[6] Harper, "Echoes of Irony in 1995," 7.

[7] Ibid., 6.

[8] Halberstam, *The Children*, 658.

One such occasion arose November 10, 1960—two days after John F. Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon in the US presidential election. Three ABTS students paid for their food at a Nashville Krystal restaurant and sat down only to be confronted by a hostile employee who said the restaurant was closed and they needed to leave. When they remained seated, the employee poured detergent on them, hosed them down, and turned up the air conditioning to freeze them out. Having received word of the developing incident, Lewis and Bevel arrived on the scene. But their attempts at speaking with the general manager were futile. He told them to leave because he was going to fumigate the restaurant. Then he sent his staff out the back door, locked the front door, and switched on a fumigator filled with insecticide. The students were trapped. Bevel began to quote the biblical account of Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. "We were both coughing, gasping for air," Lewis recalled years later. "We're going to suffocate, I thought." But a bystander thought the plumes of insecticide were smoke and called the fire department. When firemen arrived, the general manager who locked the students in opened the front door. They were saved.

ABTS students drew the strength for such stands from their experiences in and out of the classroom. When it came to extracurricular activities, few had a much impact on them as James Lawson's workshops on nonviolent protest. Lawson was a black minister trained at Ohio's Oberlin College. After spending nearly a year in federal prison for conscientious objection to fighting in the Korean War, he spent three years as a Methodist missionary in India. Upon his return to the US, he met King, who urged him to travel south and help lead America's struggle for equality. Beginning in the fall of 1959, that meant leading workshops in Nashville each Tuesday night. Joined by black students from other Nashville schools—including Fisk University and Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial (now Tennessee State University)—the ABTS students studied with Lawson the literature that inspired civil rights leaders. They covered Gandhi, Niebuhr, Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited*, and Henry David Thoreau's 1849 essay "Civil Disobedience." More practically, they studied what to do if beaten during a nonviolent protest.[9] Lawson's workshops were a major part of the kindling for Nashville's sit-ins.

[9] Meacham, *His Truth Is Marching On*, 56-64.

But there was kindling in ABTS classrooms too. Though administrators didn't broadcast it to the public, especially their Southern Baptist benefactors, the seminary's curriculum included an undercurrent of civil rights activism. Julius Scruggs, a 1965 graduate who went on to become NBC president, recalled that President Maynard Turner allowed students to participate in civil rights demonstrations and "let it be known" he embraced such activism.[10] Civil rights literature was "very much in the classroom," Scruggs said, and enthusiasm for the civil rights movement was "demonstrable on campus." An advanced New Testament course taught by Nashville pastor Kelly Miller Smith Sr. examined Thurman's presentation of Jesus' taking the side of the oppressed. When African American theologian James Cone began to advance black liberation theology in the late 1960s, it reminded Scruggs of what he encountered at ABTS.[11]

In 1949, Thurman, a black pastor and theologian, presented Jesus as "a member of a minority group (the Jews) in the midst of a larger dominant and controlling group (the Romans)."[12] Wherever Christ's "spirit appears," Thurman wrote, "the oppressed gather fresh courage; for he announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them."[13] Scruggs also recalled classroom instruction on Niebuhr, whose work influenced King's rejection of liberal optimism about human nature. In *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Niebuhr argued that even though humans may behave respectfully as individuals, they are more likely to sin as members of groups. For civil rights leaders, that analysis helped explain the South's resistance to integration.

An Ironic Contrast

Much of that instruction was funded by the SBC. In 1960 alone, the convention allocated $80,000 for the ABTS operating budget and an additional $25,000 for capital needs.[14] Adjusted for inflation, that

[10] Julius Scruggs, telephone interview by author, February 22, 2021.
[11] Scruggs, interview by author, February 22, 2021.
[12] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, with forward by Vincent Harding (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 18.
[13] Ibid., 29.
[14] 1960 SBC Annual, 58, media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1960.pdf.

amount is equivalent to more than $900,000 in 2021. The SBC's allocation to ABTS continued at a similar rate over the next several years. That funding level was ironic since civil rights activism tended to draw opposition from Southern Baptists in that era.

A case in point was the backlash when King spoke at Southern Seminary in 1961, addressing a chapel audience and later a combined session of the seminary's ethics classes.[15] In response to King's visit, Southern Baptists in general, and even the seminary's trustees, expressed alarm. Seminary President Duke McCall had all of his speaking engagements in Mississippi canceled in the wake of King's appearance. One man in Dothan, Alabama, said he planned to devote $40,000 to getting McCall fired.[16] McCall's wife and children received "nasty" phone calls because of the incident, and other faculty members who defended the seminary's invitation of King became targets of attacks too.[17] Many Southern Baptists sent the seminary letters of complaint.[18] Eventually, the seminary's trustees expressed "regret for any offense caused by the recent visit of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., to the campus."[19]

To be sure, the SBC made notable progress in racial reconciliation during the civil rights era as well. All six SBC seminaries integrated by 1958, with Southern, Southwestern, and Golden Gate (now Gateway) Seminaries admitting blacks in the 1940s. The Christian Life Commission (precursor organization to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission) championed racial justice throughout the 1960s. In 1968, the full convention adopted a "Statement Concerning the Crisis in Our

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[15] Ora Spaid, "Dr. King Says 'Segregation Is Dead,'" *The Courier-Journal*, April 20, 1961, Folder 14-4-K1a, Duke McCall Papers, Archives, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. For a summary of King's visit, see Henlee Hulix Barnette, "The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Civil Rights Movement: The Visit of Martin Luther King Jr., Part Two," *Review and Expositor* 93 (1996):77-126.

[16] *Duke McCall: An Oral History with A. Ronald Tonks* (Nashville: Baptist History and Heritage Society and Fields Publishing, 2001), 224.

[17] Ibid.

[18] See Folders 14-4-K1, 14-4-K1b, Duke McCall Papers, Archives, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

[19] "Copy (Letter to be sent to all persons who have written the Seminary protesting visit of Martin Luther King)," July 27, 1961, Folder 14-4K1, Duke McCall Papers, Archives, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

Nation," which denounced racism and vowed to "personally accept every Christian as a brother beloved in the Lord and welcome to the fellowship of faith and worship every person irrespective of race or class."[20]

By and large, however, Southern Baptists in the mid-twentieth century opposed the very type of work they funded at ABTS. Three examples illustrate the point:

- In 1956, W. A. Criswell, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, denounced integration in speeches at the South Carolina Baptist Convention's state evangelism conference and before the state's legislature. Ministers must resist mandatory desegregation as a "denial of all we believe in," he said, decrying the Supreme Court's 1954 public school desegregation ruling as illegitimate. "Let them integrate . . . but they are all a bunch of infidels."[21] Criswell changed his view by the late 1960s, yet his statements in 1956 seemed to reflect broader Southern Baptist sentiments of the time.
- In 1964, Baptist Sunday School Board President James Sullivan apologized for what he called a "grievous error" when churches complained that a Training Union quarterly cited books written by King and other civil rights leaders. "This is an error for which we are extremely sorry," Sullivan wrote, and one which we have taken firm steps to prevent in the future."[22]
- Also in 1964, the SBC declined to express support for the historic Civil Rights Act then making its way through Congress. When the Christian Life Commission asked the convention to express such support, messengers adopted a substitute motion instead, which advocated "peaceful Christian solutions" in "racial relationships" but declined to mention the landmark legislation. At first, the substitute

[20] 1968 *SBC Annual*, 67-69, media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1968.pdf.

[21] "Dallas Pastor Stirs Controversy with Statements on Integration," *The Baptist Message*, March 1, 1956, pp. 1, 4. "Dallas Pastor Challenges Race Integration in Church," *Dallas Times Herald,* February 22, 1956, p. 1. "Criswell Rips Integration," *Dallas Morning News*, February 23, 1956, p. 1.

[22] James Sullivan to James B. Cambron, October 7, 1964, Box 14, Folder 67-64, Records of the Executive Office of the Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

motion was declared defeated on a standing vote. But because the margin appeared slim, a ballot vote was taken and the motion was adopted.[23]

During the civil rights era, the contrast between the prevailing ethos in the SBC and at ABTS made the latter's civil rights impact all the more remarkable. Lewis and his classmates emerged from the 1960s as national heroes to many. According to Jon Meacham's analysis, Lewis "was as important to the founding of a modern and multiethnic twentieth- and twenty-first century America as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and Samuel Adams were to the creation of the republic in the eighteenth century."[24] Current ABTS President Forrest Harris summarized the seminary's ironic success this way: "God has subversive and mysterious ways to achieve what God's purposes are, and sometimes we are not aware that we are being used for that." Neither Southern nor National Baptists were "aware of what this school ultimately would come to be and how it would impact the Civil Rights Movement."[25]

A Historical Footnote

Irony persisted all the way to the end of the SBC's relationship with ABTS in 1995. That year, messengers to the convention's annual meeting both cut ties with the seminary and issued the SBC's most significant apology to date for its racist past. The SBC handed full control of ABTS affairs and assets to the NBC after a 71-year partnership, noting an NBC request to assume full responsibility.[26] Sluggish enrollment and finances also factored into the decision. At the same meeting, messengers adopted a resolution "lament[ing] and repudiate[ing]" racial injustice in the convention's history and "genuinely repent[ing] of racism of which we have been guilty."[27] The two actions seemed at odds. ABTS observers

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[23] 1964 SBC Annual, 72, 74, media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1964.pdf.
[24] Meacham, His Truth Is Marching On, 5.
[25] David Roach, "College Fueled Civil Rights, Now in Theology Battle," *Baptist Press*, March 1, 2019, https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/college-fueled-civil-rights-now-in-theology-battle/.
[26] *1995 SBC Annual*, 294-95, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1995.pdf.
[27] "Resolution On Racial Reconciliation On The 150th Anniversary Of The Southern Baptist Convention," *Southern Baptist Convention Website*,

noted the strange confluence of circumstances.[28] When the seminary served as a civil rights staging ground, the Jim Crow-friendly SBC apparently never considered cutting ties. Yet when the SBC finally embraced the civil rights movement legacy, it relinquished perhaps its most direct tie to that legacy.

https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/resolution-on-racial-reconciliation-on-the-150th-anniversary-of-the-southern-baptist-convention/.

[28] See, for example, Harper, "Echoes of Irony in 1995."

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The Fear of the Lord: A Missing Antidote to Homiletical Idolatry?

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The apostle Paul explicitly connects preaching to the fear of the Lord when he writes, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others" (2 Cor. 5:11, ESV).[1] This essay explores how the fear of the Lord can foster humility, displace idolatry, and undergird faithful, fruitful preaching. It begins with a working definition of the fear of the Lord. A review of pertinent Old and New Testament texts then supplements this definition. Next is a catalogue of what good things God intends for those who fear Him, what that fear induces God's people to embrace, and what it moves them to renounce. A few lengthier biblical texts are examined more closely to explore how the fear of the Lord relates to idolatry in preaching and how its presence or absence impacts both preachers and their hearers. The essay concludes with some reflections on how the fear of the Lord shapes preaching in ways that tend to mitigate homiletical idolatry.

What is the Fear of the Lord?

An accurate definition is key, given the loose use of the term "fear of God" in popular parlance. This insistence echoes the wish of John Calvin, who wrote, "I wish that Christian writers had always exercised such restraint as not to take it into their heads needlessly to use terms foreign to Scripture that would produce great offense and very little fruit."[2] Two respected resources supply concise definitions that will establish what this essay is about:

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[1] All citations are from the ESV. Pronouns referring the God in the passages quoted are not capitalized but left as in the ESV. Similarly, the word "Lord" is retained in small caps in those citations.

[2] John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), I: 789.

> The Fear of God is distinct from the terror of him that is also a biblical motif. Encompassing and building on attitudes of awe and reverence, it is the proper and elemental *response* of a person to God. . . The fear of God is a fundamental quality of those who have an *experiential* knowledge of God.[3]

The second definition tells us that the main word for fear in the expression, 'the fear of the LORD' occurs

> ...as *an equivalent for true religion*. . . Thus to fear God is to keep His commandments (Dt. 5:29; 6:2, 24; Eccl. 12:13, etc.) and His laws (Dt. 31:12f; 28:58; cf. Jer. 44:10), obey His voice (1 S. 12:14; Hag. 1:12), walk after Him (Dt. 10:12) or in His ways (Dt. 8:6; 2 Ch. 6:31) or simply serve Him (Dt. 6:13; 10:20; Josh. 24:14).[4]

Other biblically derived affirmations round out these definitions. For instance, those who fear God assemble to worship Him (Ps. 22:25; 96:9; Rev. 19:5); they hope in His steadfast love (Ps. 33:18; 147:11). This fear does not preclude joy but instead fosters it (Ps. 2:11). Fear of the Lord often produces involuntary trembling in those who encounter God or see His works. This occurs not only in God's people but also in God's inanimate creation and in outsiders to the covenant people (Heb. 12:21; Dan. 6:26; Mic. 7:17; Is. 19:16, 64:2; Ex. 20:18; 1 Chron. 16:30). By contrast, the wicked, instead of listening to God and obeying Him, listen to transgression in their hearts and have no fear of God before their eyes. Indeed, they flatter themselves in their own eyes and are arrogant (Ps. 36:1, 2,11). These are hallmarks of those who have *no* fear of God. They do *not* tremble before his presence (2 Pet. 2:10). Such people, especially among His covenant people, God labels as foolish, senseless, blind, stubborn, and rebellious because they do not exhort each other to fear the Lord despite the evidence of His worthiness all around them in creation (Jer. 5:20-31). If the fear of the Lord is experiential knowledge of God, its absence provides the capstone summary of the essence of

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[3] "Fear of God," ed. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1998), 277, emphasis added.

[4] G.A. Lee, "Fear", in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1982) 2:289, emphasis added.

human sin: "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18).

Crucially for homileticians and preachers, the fear of the Lord is not merely the *beginning* of wisdom, though it is that (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10); it is also *instruction* in wisdom (Prov. 15:33), and it is *wisdom itself* (Prov. 28:28). The fear of the Lord is clean and enduring because God is holy and does not change (Ps. 19:9). The fear of the Lord is also the beginning of *knowledge* (Prov. 1:7). Indeed, knowledge of God is inseparable from fearing Him since it is both the *means* of knowing Him and the *result* of knowing Him (Prov. 1:29; 2:5; 9:10; Ps. 25:14).

The fear of the Lord is virtually synonymous with humility: "The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life" (Prov. 22:4). Moreover, obedience is clear evidence of the fear of the Lord. When Abraham in obedience was willing to sacrifice Isaac, God took that as proof positive of Abraham's fear of Himself (Gen. 22:12).

What does God intend for those who fear Him?[5]

The fear of the Lord is a person's heart and life response to God's saving work. So, it is profitable to reflect on what blessings come with that salvation as described in Scripture in connection with the fear of the Lord. God assures those who fear Him of his steadfast love and grants them His righteousness (Ps. 103:11, 13, 17). This means life, not death (Prov. 14:27, 10:27; 19:23), mercy (Luke 1:50), salvation, and glory (Ps. 85:9) instead of wrath (Rev. 11:18). Better still, God takes pleasure in those who fear Him (Ps 147:11), makes them His friends, and lets them know Him (Ps. 25:14). The fear of the Lord is therefore the believer's treasure since the Lord Himself is their "stability, abundance of salvation, wisdom and knowledge" (Is. 33:6).

The fear of the Lord leads those who fear Him into obedience which is for their good (Deut. 10:12-13). God wants it to go well with them and their descendants (Deut. 5:29; 1 Sam. 12:13-14) and for them to lack no good thing (Ps. 34:9). He looks after those who fear Him (Ps. 33:18),

[5] I use the word "intend" instead of "promise" because many of the texts that describe what accompanies the fear of the Lord are proverbs and as such express what blessings God intends for those who by grace truly know Him experientially. I take these to be God-given encouragements that move believers to trust God, not to woodenly claim the blessings without resting in Him.

provides for them (Ps. 115:5), protects and delivers them (Ps. 34:7), fulfilling their righteous desires and answering their prayers (Ps. 145:19). Knowing that the Lord Himself is their refuge, they have confidence (Prov. 14:26) and contentment (Prov. 15:16, 19:23). Those who fear the Lord have peace, comfort, and hope in the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31).

It is not surprising, with all these blessings attendant upon the fear of the Lord, that such fear moves His people to seek Him rather than shrink from Him (2 Chron. 26:5). When they do so and see Him in His awesome holiness, the fear of Him moves them to *put off* the old life and *put on* the new (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22-24). Thus, on the one hand they cleanse themselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and on the other hand they "bring holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). In this essay, we will emphasize what we are to put off, especially idolatry.

What then does the Fear of the Lord move His people to put off, renounce and avoid?

We are to renounce a range of things. For instance, we need not envy sinners: "Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD" (Prov. 23:17). Like Nehemiah the faithful will avoid *anything* that smacks of oppression (Neh. 5:15). For instance, they will not mistreat the vulnerable (Exod. 19:14). Indeed, we will turn from any and every evil, for the fear of the Lord is equivalent to—and inseparable from—turning from evil (Job 28:28; Prov. 8:13) and is itself the means of doing so (Prov.16:6; cf. Gen. 20:11).

Most significantly, those who fear the Lord will see the necessity of going to the heart of the matter and turning from all forms of idolatry. Joshua 24:14 captures this well: "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD." Notably, in this context, Joshua must remind the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God" (24:19). The people's resolve to serve the Lord led to Joshua's admonition, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel." The people responded, "The LORD our God we will serve and his voice we will obey" (24:23-24). Joshua then "wrote these words in the book of the Law of God" (24:26). Their resolve proved insufficient to produce consistent obedience, but at least they grasped that to abandon their

idols in the fear of the LORD necessitates obedience to God *as He reveals Himself*. Joshua's inspired record of their resolve and of God's demands *as Scripture* underscores how the Bible can function to teach, rebuke, correct and train in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Integral to that scriptural teaching is the fear of the Lord.

Second Kings 17:7-41 is an extraordinarily rich description of how idolatry led to exile and how the exile—at least the early days of it—failed to cure Israel of idolatry. When the exiles in Samaria lived among pagans who were also resettled there, "they did not fear the LORD" (17:25a). When the LORD chastened them with lions, the king of Assyria, in an ill-informed attempt to appease the "god" who sent the lions, called in a priest of Yahweh from Bethel (i.e., the theologically wayward north) to instruct everyone in the "fear of the LORD". That priest's defective teaching clearly failed to emphasize the Lord's *exclusive* demands, and the results were flagrant syncretism (17:25-41). All this is recorded in an account dripping with irony.[6] The relevance for contemporary preachers should be obvious: present- day idolatry is almost always some unholy amalgam that, even if it *claims* the fear of the Lord or displays some other spiritual veneer, too often fails to renounce culturally-ingrained ideas that in practice take precedence in shaping those who hold them.

How specifically, does the Fear of the Lord shape preaching?

Foundationally, it underscores the truth that an accurate doctrine of God is essential in preaching. After all, as Deuteronomy 6:13 says, "It is *the* LORD *your God* you shall fear. *Him* you shall serve and by *his name* you shall swear" (emphasis added). In other words, we do not revere some generic, cultural god but the true and living God revealed in Scripture. That is why when Paul writes of his preaching, "I believed and so I spoke" (2 Cor. 4:13), he imbeds these words in a richly theological context. He believes what has been written about the triune God. Every sermon should teach rich, balanced truth about God as that truth appears in the text being expounded or other texts that shed light on it. Preachers are not to treat the fear of the Lord as some merely human state of mind to be achieved, but rather to see it as what happens when we hear God's

[6] Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Kings: The Power and the Fury*, Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2005. 237-255.

voice and respond appropriately.

The transcendent Creator God who made everything nevertheless stoops to relate to his creatures. How he does so He reveals in Scripture. That word comes to us with all the authority that God has as God. How does this impact the preacher? God himself tells us: "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word" (Is. 66:1-2). The fear of God is inseparable from reverence for His word. For those called to preach, that very awe of God and trembling before his word necessitates proclamation. As Amos 3:8 says, "The lion has roared; who will not fear; the LORD has spoken; who can but prophesy?" And, if the Lord Jesus himself, by the Holy Spirit, delights in the fear of the LORD (Is. 11:2-3), how can the faithful pastor-teacher want anything less for himself and his hearers? In both content and tone, every sermon should convey that Scripture is true and therefore trustworthy. Thus, the fear of the Lord shapes both the preacher and the sermon.

So, because the fear of the Lord is such a comprehensive expression for a genuine, life-altering response to God's grace, every preacher should be characterized by it and every sermon should aim to foster it. This reality shapes the preacher because only those who tremble at God's word can expect to preach it as a living word from the true, living, holy God. Ezra embodies this posture. He reacted with horror when, upon the return of the exiles, he heard the report of pervasive intermarriage with local pagans. He reacted as he did precisely because he trembled at God's word, and it was arguably that reaction that drew others who also trembled at God's word to rally to him and listen for a word from the Lord (Ezra 9:4). Ezra's prayer of confession, with its recitation of God's saving mercies (9: 6-15), is a model of praying theologically in the assembly of God's people. His experiential knowledge of God's grace engendered heart-felt, vividly embodied, humble confession and apparently elicited the supportive counsel of others who also trembled at "the commandment of our God" (10:4). We homileticians may well offer advice on preaching that connects, but Ezra's example dwarfs anything we might devise by our puny techniques. Spiritual reality in the preacher's life is the spark that ignites those who hear.

The fear of the Lord informs the *aim* of every sermon. No response any pericope calls for can be valid apart from fear of the Lord. No belief, no attitude, no action a preacher commends from the biblical text that

does not, assume, include, or entail the fear of the Lord is at best a partial response to the text and at worst a serious distortion of how the word of God sanctifies us.

The fear of God is thus both a transforming reality in the life of the preacher and a bedrock aim of every sermon. This mirrors its dual function in Scripture as both cause and effect, as root and fruit. That dual nature of its working comes into focus as it relates to preaching when we recall that the fear of the Lord is both *commanded* (Deut. 6:2, 13; 10:12, 20; 13:4)—indeed *universally* commanded (Ps. 33:8)—and *taught*. Because it is to be taught, it may be learned (Deut. 14:23; 17:19). Those who do not yet fear God may be moved to do so (Exod. 9:30). Significantly, it can *only* be learned by those who *hear* (Deut. 31:12-13; Ps 34:11; Prov. 2:1-5; 2 Chron. 26:5). Obedience to God's word is thus both a means to fearing God and the result of doing so (Deut. 6:2. Cf., Phil. 2:12). This obedience includes everyday obedience such as, for instance, honoring the aged (Exod 19:32), or a magistrate giving impartial judgment (2 Chron. 19:4-7; cf. 2 Sam. 23:1-4). Preaching that aims to engender the fear of the Lord therefore repeatedly sets forth the Lord himself whom we are to fear (Luke 12:5); it also patiently teaches by precept and example how to hold fast to the Lord and to walk in His ways. Preaching rightly aims for a response since learning is dependent upon hearing, and hearing implies obeying God's voice. As always in Scripture, this obedience is *the obedience of faith* (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Indeed, we preachers need to remind people to trust the Lord. "You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD!" (Ps.115:11a).

How then do preachers teach the fear of the Lord?

Happily, multiple biblical passages tell us how to fear God. Crucially, we must recall that God Himself persistently teaches His people. Nevertheless, left to themselves, His people do not listen in order to receive instruction (Jer. 32:33). So, He must give them a heart to fear Him (Jer. 32:38-40). That comes first for all of us. The fear of God is a response to His gracious initiative. Further, repentance is not a one-time event. We must continually exhort God's people, "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil" (Prov. 3:7). This means helping listeners accept correction. God says to His rebellious people, "Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction" (Zeph. 3:7). Humble listeners accept correction. Teaching people to fear the Lord also

includes inviting listeners to recall and reflect upon what God has done for His people. Samuel in his farewell address urged his listeners, "Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For *consider* what great things he has done for you" (1 Sam. 12:24, emphasis added).

We preachers should also be encouraged when we recall that in the Old Testament, this teaching often happens in the context of multi-generational, cross-cultural corporate worship where we are to hear God's word:

> Assemble the people, men, women, little ones, and the sojourner within your towns that you may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and to be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess (Deut. 31: 12-13).

The good news for those who preach is that God's word may be fruitfully *mediated* through those who speak in his name. Recall the response to Haggai's preaching. "Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD" (Hag. 1:12). God sent Haggai; Haggai preached; the people heard God's voice through Haggai's words; they obeyed and feared the Lord.

Nor is the reach of the fear of the Lord restricted to his covenant people. Because God is one, the fear of the Lord can fall upon anyone who sees Him at work on behalf of His people (2 Chron. 14:14; 17:10; 20:29). On the great Day, when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14), we may expect that people "shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun" (Is. 59:19).

How do we who preach keep ourselves fit for this lofty assignment? To put it otherwise, how does God keep us humble and purge our idolatries? How do preachers learn the fear of the Lord? God's directive for kings in Deuteronomy 17:18-20 provides a helpful example for us.

> And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life,

> that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

How does the Fear of the Lord counter idolatry?

Let us acknowledge that the fear of the Lord is not *the* integrating motif of all of Scripture.[7] It is important, foundational, and pervasive, but one must not claim more or less for it than Scripture does. Moreover, it is not a talisman, a formula, or a trick that we may invoke to banish idols from preaching. Nevertheless, idolatry, no fear of God, and faulty handling of Scripture go together. In Jeremiah's day God upbraids his people for the twin sins of forsaking Him, the fountain of living waters and instead hewing for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13). Of the spiritual leaders of these idolaters God says, "The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' *Those who handle the law* did not know me; the shepherds transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal an went after things that do not profit" (Jer. 2: 8, emphasis added). In sum, "the fear of me is not in you, declares the LORD God of hosts" (Jer. 2:19c). Mercifully, there is a remedy. When we humbly walk in the fear of the Lord and aim to help our listeners fear Him too (Deut. 10:12; 13:4; 2 Chron. 6:31), our preaching will be better in several ways. Thus, we will counter idolatry in the Romans 12:21 fashion, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Moreover, since pride is arguably the besetting sin of pastors, and idolatry is the epitome of self-made religion, the fear of the Lord is the God-prescribed antidote to it. "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil" (Prov. 3:7).

How then will our preaching be better and thus displace idolatry?

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[7] John Bunyan in his "A Treatise of the Fear of God" almost treats it as if it is. He lists fourteen virtues that flow from it, and thirteen privileges that accompany it before moving on to "uses" of the doctrine. These include examination, exhortation and encouragement as well as eleven ways to grow in the fear of God.

First, walking in the fear of the Lord reminds us that how we relate to God is foundational to everything else, homiletical and otherwise. The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom (Pr. 9:10; Ps. 111:10). It is the *beginning* of knowledge (Prov. 1:7). We convey wisdom and knowledge in our sermons, but these are not ends in themselves. Rather, they are means of fostering the fear of the Lord *and* those outcomes we should expect when it flourishes. Accordingly, we preach to help people seek Him first and always (Matt. 6:33). We preach *theologically* so that our listeners will fear the true and living God and turn from idols. Our posture before God, kneeling humbly before Him—whether literally or symbolically— cannot help but be perceived by our listeners. We are like Isaiah as described in Isaiah 6:1-7. Our fear of Him is not pasted on but rather is instinctive, even reflexive when we have been in His presence. When we know the fear of the Lord experientially, we will preach the gospel humbly and authentically as the needy sinners we are.

Second, it follows that we as preachers and our hearers will look to God Himself in prayer for all we need to know and follow Him. Our persistent prayer should be, "Teach me your way O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name" (Ps. 86:11). This too will be contagious.

Third, since we affirm that the fear of the Lord is inseparable from obedience to the Lord, and is sometimes described as its prerequisite and sometimes as its fruit, we preachers may sometimes exhort our listeners to specific forms of obedience; at other times we will urge them directly to fear the Lord as our text dictates and as our listeners seem to require. Both approaches are found in Scripture. When the fear of the Lord is evident in our lives, our calls for obedience are less likely to be moralistic or legalistic. Instead, biblical exhortations rooted in the biblical text and required by it will more likely function not merely to challenge us to the obedience of faith, but also will push us back to grateful reliance on God's grace in the gospel. It is not as if the fear of the Lord *merits* God's approval. Indeed, as Mary sang in the Magnificat, "His *mercy* is for those who fear Him" (Luke 1:50, emphasis added). Significantly, God's grace does not preclude the fear of the Lord, it begets it. "If you O LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared" (Psa. 130:3-4). When the fear of the Lord pervades our lives and sermons, our indicatives and imperatives will find a more biblical balance; neither will be slighted or overemphasized.

Fourth, our preaching will be better because we will realize that the fear of the Lord gives us responsibility but not the final say. It is humbling in that we have *agency,* but not *control*. As we preachers live and preach in the fear of the Lord, we will be forced to rely upon Him to engender this fear in our listeners. But that fact does not absolve us from exhorting listeners to fear Him, and fearing Him to obey Him, by faith. Instead, it frees us not just in our preaching but in our lives.

For instance, when we live in the fear of the Lord, we will model contentment, for, "Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it" (Prov. 15:6). Or as Proverbs 19:23a puts it, "The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; . . ."

Fifth, our preaching will be better because living in the fear of the Lord reminds us to preach eschatologically. The fear of God is bound up with judgment. That fact gives us an ongoing impetus to imitate the Thessalonian Christians, who "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:9-10). When we neglect to preach in light of the Parousia, we inevitably disregard a crucial biblical incentive to repentance.

Sixth, the fear of the Lord will foster *gravitas* in our preaching. In a day when we are tempted to trivialize the weighty, when a consumer mentality contaminates both pulpit and pew, and where an immature need to be liked entices preachers to preach out of the *fear of man,* we desperately need the biblical antidote. I think Paul speaks to the contrast between the two motivators in 2 Cor. 2:17: "For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ." He reinforces the idea in 2 Cor. 4:2, where living *in the sight of God* is functionally equivalent to living *in the fear of the Lord:* "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." Gravitas will thus be the default tone of our messages when we walk in the fear of the Lord. Even joyful messages will be appropriately serious, and rebukes will be adequately weighty because sin will not be trivialized.

Supremely, seventh, when we live and preach in the fear of the Lord, our preaching will be Christocentric in an organic sense. That is because we will model, urge, expect, and delight in precisely what the Holy Spirit

wrought in our Lord Jesus. "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord" (Is. 11:2-3a).

In sum, we who preach and teach others to preach, serving as we do in the study, in the academy, and in the pulpit, are perennially enticed by a host of idols. We will never subdue all of them by as sort of 'whack-a-mole' strategy of knocking them down one by one, for they will always reassert themselves in some form or another. Instead, let us "cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). Let us ask the living God to grant this fear of Himself to us and our listeners, not least through our faithful preaching of His word before which we tremble.

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Spurgeon's Heart for Rural Preachers and Ministries

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While many young pastors long for an influential ministry in the population centers to increase their platform and reach more people, Spurgeon believes they should embrace rural ministries. From his upbringing to his first ministry post, Spurgeon would look back with much affection to the time he spent in these rural areas—areas that those in the cities would ignore or outright forget. Spurgeon's ministry was laced was references to his rural upbringing.

Spurgeon Idealized Rural England

Spurgeon was born in Kelvedon in Essex on June 19, 1834. Early in his childhood, he went to live for a time with his grandfather James in Stambourne, approximately 60 miles from London's center, and developing a love for "his beloved Fenlands." For Spurgeon, this rural area was a place where he learned and ultimately submitted to his Lord Jesus and, as we shall see, surrendered to God's call to ministry. Thomas Breimaier noted that Spurgeon "would idealize rural England,"[2] specifically Stambourne, the place where he lived with his grandparents, James and Sarah. God used his relatives and neighbors in these areas to show Him the wonders of Christ and ministry, and Spurgeon believed that others could be of use in those areas as well. After all, Christ plants His church in all manner of places.

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[2] Thomas Breimaier, *Tethered to the Cross: The Life and Preaching of C.H. Spurgeon* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 21-22.

Find the Church of Christ wherever you will, and you shall find her scorned and despised of man. Find her in Scotland, and her Covenanters have to hide themselves in the midst of the mountain, and read the Word of God by the lightning flash, to escape from the dragoons of Claverhouse. Find her in England and where was she? Not in the cathedrals of her cities, but in the dungeons of her rural towns like Bedford with John Bunyan; not among the great and noble who were the persecutors, but among the poor and conscientious who were the persecuted.[3]

Spurgeon's First Time Preaching was in a Rural Area

Spurgeon first preached at a small home in Teversham, no more than 15-16 years of age. He was on the receiving end of the Preachers' Association's leader James Vinter's plans to have Spurgeon preach without his consent and knowledge. Spurgeon remembered that "Bishop" Vinter wanted him to accompany someone to Teversham, "for a young man was to preach there who was not much used to services, and very likely would be glad of the company."[4] The young man to preach was Spurgeon himself, who would have balked at such a notion had Vinter phrased this task differently! He preached one of his Sunday School talks.

He described the place of the gathering as a "low-pitched room of the thatched cottage where a few simple-minded farm-labourers and their wives were gathered together; we sang, and prayed, and read the Scriptures, and then came my first sermon."[5] God used that first preaching occasion to send Spurgeon on a trajectory to preach as a vocation.

Spurgeon's First Pastorate was in a Rural Area

In his *Autobiography*, Spurgeon looked back at how God used him even as a young lad in that farming community of Waterbeach. "Have you ever seen the poverty, and degradation, and misery of the inhabitants, and sighed over it? . . . But was it ever your privilege to walk through that village again, in after years, when the gospel had been preached there? It has been mine."[6] It was here where Spurgeon first pastored on October

[3] Spurgeon, "Fire! Fire! Fire!" *MTP* 7:397 (1861).
[4] *Autobiography* 1:200.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., 1:228.

7, 1851 at the tender age of 17, serving there for two years as their pastor. Waterbeach, located near Cambridge and approximately 70 miles northeast of London, was far away from the cultural center of England (and the world, one might add). Yet, the taste of seeing God change so many hardened sinners into followers of Christ reminded Spurgeon that God was at work in every area. As such, this set a course for Spurgeon to a continued reliance on the gospel of Jesus, regardless of his situation. Hear William Estep's words:

Waterbeach meant more to Spurgeon than just a place to preach. It was here that he felt that God had unmistakably put his seal upon his ministry, for in that English hamlet he claimed his first convert for Christ. His first pastorate also became his divinity school. His inherited Calvinism had been underlined and reinforced by a cook in the Agriculture College. To her he often referred in words of tribute and gratitude for what she had taught him. In Waterbeach his intensive pursuit of his vocation with its opportunity for ready application of lessons learned in the study became the necessary preparation for what was to become his life's work, his London pastorate.[7]

While Spurgeon's ministry and fame would come during his 38-year ministry in London, the largest city in the world at that time, it was at Waterbeach (as Estep noted) where God would confirm his calling. "I would rather bring the poorest woman in the world to the feet of Jesus than I would be made Archbishop of Canterbury."[8] He had no desire to climb the ecclesiastical ladder as was often the case with other ministers in the Anglican church. In fact, his heart always stayed with those who could offer little due to their status in the culture.

Urging Younger Preachers Toward Rural Areas

Spurgeon's heart always stayed with those forgotten communities, even urging younger preachers in his Pastors College to take advantage of the opportunities these areas presented. In one rather lengthy paragraph in the first volume of his *Autobiography*, he closes the section of his account at Teversham this way:

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[7] William R. Estep, "The Making of a Prophet: An Introduction to Charles Haddon Spurgeon," *Baptist History and Heritage* 19:4 (1984), 8.
[8] Ibid.

> Are there not other young men who might begin to speak for Jesus in some lowly fashion—young men who have hitherto been mute as fishes? Our villages and hamlets offer fine opportunities for youthful speakers. . . . If they go out and tell from their hearts what the Lord has done for them, they will find ready listeners. Many of our young folks want to commence their service for Christ by doing great things or nothing at all; let none of my readers become victims of such an unreasonable ambition.[9]

Spurgeon's advice serves young, aspiring ministers well even today. Even from an early age, Spurgeon refused to ignore those whom others disregarded or had forgotten. And in this case, even as Spurgeon moved to the historic New Park Street Church in England's capital, the city did not diminish his love for those in the country. But more than this, he knew that, "he who talks upon plain gospel themes in a farmer's kitchen, and is able to interest the carter's boy and the dairymaid, has more of the minister in him than the prim little man who keeps prating about being cultured, and means by that—being taught to use words which nobody can understand."[10]

The rural areas sharpen the preaching of many a young preacher to help them remain biblically precise while helping those who do not have the benefits of education such as farmers and laborers understand the Word of God in their own language. These experiences helped Spurgeon connect with the lower and middle class of London, much to their delight.

Spurgeon's preaching emerged not in the ivory towers of Cambridge but in the lowly villages surrounding it. He was more concerned with feeding sheep than giraffes. . . . Even after moving to London, Spurgeon retained his early earthy idioms and used illustrations common to the Victorian experience.[11]

The rhetoricians and orators that occupied London's pulpits failed to connected to the common citizen like Spurgeon did, and looked upon Spurgeon with contempt. Robyn Carswell rightly reflected on how Spurgeon's critics viewed him.

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[9] Ibid., 1:202.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Christian George, ed., *The Lost Sermons of Spurgeon*, Vol. 1, xx.

> On many Sundays, crowds that numbered over ten thousand attended his sermons. However, Spurgeon was not without his critics. The press, Anglican ministers, and even members of his own denomination took many opportunities to disparage the young Baptist minister. They thought his technique and style were vulgar and base, and antithetical to proper worship and religious decorum. Despite his detractors and their frequent and malicious attacks, Spurgeon's success escalated.[12]

The vulgarities and baseness to which Carswell refers originate from Spurgeon's rural upbringing. Whereas other preachers in the city sought to impress the elite of society with their academic and high-flown oratory, Spurgeon would use illustrations that connected to the average person, regardless of their station in life. The experiences he had in the rural areas planted a seed in his heart for his sermons (and, as a result, the gospel) to use whatever means necessary to bring clarity to the preaching of the Word. Thus, whenever any delivery or doctrine of preaching arose that confused the Word, Spurgeon did not hesitate to address this problem.

In a sermon in 1860 quoted in his *Autobiography* , he lamented the "new theology" that took hold in all-too-many pulpits:

> I have often thought, that the best answer to the new theology is, that the true Gospel was always preached to the poor . . . I am sure that the poor will never learn the Gospel of these new divines, for they cannot make head or tail of it; nor will the rich either. After you have read one of their volumes . . . it sours your temper, it makes you feel angry, to see the precious things of God trodden underfoot . . . we can allow a thousand opinions in the world, but that which infringes upon the doctrines of a covenant salvation, through the impudent righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ–against that we must, and will, enter our hearty and solemn protest, as long as God spares us.[13]

Spurgeon's willingness to preaching the gospel to the poor in person in a way that they could understand not only expressed his pastoral heart to

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[12] Robyn Carswell, "Charles Spurgeon: The Prince and the Paupers," *Historia* (2005), 118.

[13] Spurgeon, *Autobiography* 1:260.

have all embrace the gospel, but also demonstrated a trajectory that began in those early ministry years in those rural areas.

Whether you live in London or in any other great town amidst reeking sin, or dwell in the country amidst the dense darkness which broods over many rural districts, you are under bonds to be up and doing. It may be a cross to you, but for Jesus' sake you must uplift it, and never lay it down till the Lord calls you home.[14]

Jesus Did Not Neglect the Rural Areas

Spurgeon reminded his congregation that Jesus Himself did not neglect the rural areas. In an 1873 sermon, Spurgeon recounted a time when Jesus once again put the religious leaders in their place, observed that:

> … in argument he had proved their folly, and had crumpled them up till they were like so many bruised bulrushes; but there he paused, he did not pursue the conflict further, but retired to Galilee, into the lone places and rural districts of the country, and preached there the gospel.[15]

God provides a remnant of believers in rural areas as well, and have been on the receiving end of persecution by religious leaders:

Cases of persecution are by no means rare. In many a country village squires and priests rule with a high hand, and smite the godly villagers with a rod of iron. "No blankets, no coals, no almshouse for you, if you venture into the meeting-house. You cannot live in my cottage if you have a prayer-meeting in it. I will have no religious people on my farm." We who live in more enlightened society, little know the terrorism exercised in some of the rural districts over poor men and women who endeavour conscientiously to carry out their convictions and walk with Christ.[16]

Though religious persecution came at the hands of the "village squires and priests" because of their walking with Christ, Spurgeon reminded all who heard that Jesus saw their situation and would bring comfort and

[14] Spurgeon, "Up from the Country, Pressed into Service," *MTP* 31:1853 (1885).
[15] Spurgeon, "The Gentleness of Jesus," *MTP* 19:1147 (1873).
[16] Spurgeon, "Suffering and Reigning with Jesus," *MTP* 10:547 (1864).

strength in those times of trouble. Yes, Jesus saw the plight of believers in rural areas as well.

God Gives Strength to Those in Rural Ministries

In Spurgeon's book *An All-Around Ministry*, a series of lectures he delivered to the students at his Pastors College, he spoke to those who would preach and minister in areas of low visibility. Yet, his experience in serving in these types of areas helped him encourage those students who were doing so as well. In this lengthy paragraph, Spurgeon shows how well he knows the challenges that arise from such ministries.

Faith in God enables many of you, I know right well, to bear much hardship, and exercise much self-denial, and yet to persevere in your ministry. My heart rejoices over the many brethren here whom God has made to be winners of souls; and I may add that I am firmly persuaded, concerning many here present, that the privations they have undergone, and the zeal they have shown in the service of their Lord, though unrewarded by any outward success, are a sweet savor unto God. True faith makes a man feel that it is sweet to be a living sacrifice unto God. Only faith could keep us in the ministry, for ours is not a vocation which brings with it golden pay; it is not a calling which men would follow who desire honor and rank. We have all kinds of evils to endure, evils as numerous as those which Paul included in his famous catalogue of trials; and, I may add, we have one peril which he does not mention, namely, the perils of church-meetings, which are probably worse than perils of robbers. Underpaid and undervalued, without books and without congenial associates, many a rural preacher of the gospel would die of a broken heart, did not his faith gird him with strength from on high.[17]

This last sentence in that quote resonates in the heart of every rural preacher. "Underpaid and undervalued, without books and without congenial associates, many a rural preacher of the gospel would die of a broken heart, did not his faith gird him with strength from on high." Spurgeon outlines the internal and external challenges rural ministries bring, tempting young preachers to stay away to pursue a ministry with a higher visibility, higher pay, and higher respect from congregants and fellow ministers alike. Yet, Spurgeon reminds them that, "though

[17] Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry*

unrewarded by any outward success," God sees, and God knows—that ministry, indeed, is a "sweet savor unto God."

Spurgeon recognized that those rural areas are mission fields populated with souls in need of rescue. Yes, God may call one to serve in population centers as God called Spurgeon to London. Yet, Spurgeon never forgot those dear souls as the cities often do. And God does not forget. Are you willing to serve Christ in these forgotten areas so that they may see and know Christ as their Lord?

> O mosses and hill-sides of Scotland, in the Covenanting times, many believed on him there! Talk not so exceeding proudly, O ye cathedrals or ye great tabernacles; for many have believed on Jesus by the highway side, out on the village green, or under the spreading oak. Out in the desert of southern France, where men fled for their lives to hear the gospel, many believed on Jesus. In what place cannot Jesus triumph?[18]

Jesus can and will triumph in every place. How thankful we are that Spurgeon reminds us of that reality.

[18] Spurgeon, "A Cheering Incident at Bethabra" *MTP* 32:1924 (1886).

***Vox Petri: A Theology of Peter*. By Gene L. Green. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020. 485 pp. $49.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-5326-8309-1.**

Gene Green's *Vox Petri* synthesizes Peter's theology as witnessed in Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter. Dean of Trinity International University's Florida campus, Green is most qualified to write a theology of Peter given his 1979 dissertation on the theological ethics of 1 Peter, a Spanish-language commentary on 1 and 2 Peter, and *Jude & 2 Peter* in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series. *Vox Petri* fills a gap in scholarship between "minimalist and maximalist approaches" to New Testament witnesses to the theology of the apostle Peter (11). Green agrees neither with minimalist scholars that none of the New Testament writings is a valid source for reconstructing Peter's theology nor with maximalist scholars who would uncritically reconstruct Peter's theology from all possible witnesses from early church history. In *Vox Petri*, Green presents Peter's theology as witnessed in the New Testament writings that are most historically likely to be connected to him based on the testimony theory of epistemology: Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter. Since Green considers these books to contain Peter's testimony, his central thesis is that though Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter do "not necessarily" contain Peter's *ipsissima verba*, his precise words, they do "allow us to recover the *ipsissima vox* of Peter," his unique voice (18). Green's goal in *Vox Petri* is to convince other scholars and students of the New Testament that Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter contain theology that derives from the apostle Peter himself.

Chapter 2, "The Testimony of Peter," lays the foundation of *Vox Petri*. Testimony offers "reliability, not relativity" for knowledge about the subject of the testimony, and it is "a principal source of human knowledge" (27-28). In the ancient Greco-Roman culture, testimony was an acceptable source of knowledge (29-31). "The ancient and contemporary category of testimony offers a framework within which we can understand how received story and interpretation hold together" regarding Peter's own theology (32). Based on the standard of historically reliable testimony, Green concludes that Peter likely stands behind the Gospel of Mark, that Luke's record of Peter's speeches in Acts is accurate, and that Peter used an amanuensis to write 1 Peter. Green does not treat 2 Peter as a testimony to Peter since "not a few in both ancient and modern times have questioned the authenticity of the letter," even

though Green personally "leans towards [accepting 2 Peter] as a work traceable to the apostle" (97). Based on the historical reliability of Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter as witnesses to Peter's theology, Green argues from these sources that "Peter was foundational for Christian theology" (98).

In the rest of *Vox Petri*, Green treats Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter as testimonies to Peter in two chapters each. The first chapter on each source argues that the source is a historically reliable source for Peter's theology. Green first presented these arguments for each source in chapter 2, but he expands his argument in favor of Mark being a reliable source of Petrine theology in chapter 3, and he condenses his arguments in favor of Acts and 1 Peter as containing Peter's theology in chapters 5 and 7, respectively. Chapters 4, 6, and 8 are the most significant chapters in *Vox Petri*, as they present Peter's theology in Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter. The final subsequent chapter shows how Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter bear witness to Peter's consistent theological voice, which nevertheless has distinct emphases at various times to different audiences. In Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter, Peter presents Jesus as the Son of God who reigns over the kingdom of God upon His life, death and resurrection. Peter also describes salvation in all these sources as a new exodus, reminiscent of Isaiah's own descriptions of new covenant salvation. To Peter, Christ is consistently the God-Man who baptizes His people in the Holy Spirit of God and who accomplishes salvation for people through His substitutionary atonement at the cross. Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter likewise agree that the end times "have come with the revealing of Christ in the present" (414). Furthermore, between the first and second comings of Christ, Christians are to "live according to the will of God, even as Christ did" (416).

Green's primary argument in *Vox Petri* is compelling: Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter all bear witness to Peter's theology, which became foundational to the Christian church. Though Paul gets more attention from New Testament scholars, Peter's theology is just as important as Paul's theology. Though Peter's direct literary output is less than Paul's, Peter nevertheless has much to contribute theologically through the derived testimony of Mark's Gospel and the record of his speeches in Acts.

Despite its overall success, *Vox Petri* has a couple of weaknesses. First, though Green's argument is compelling, it is unhelpfully repetitive. With material from chapter two being alternately expanded or condensed in later chapters arguing for the reliability of Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter as

witnesses to Peter's theology, the book could have been at least fifty pages shorter without weakening Green's case for the validity of these sources. Second, Green's argument that 1 Peter, like Mark and Acts, depicts Christian salvation as the new exodus prophesied by Isaiah could have been more thorough. Green cites the 2011 PhD thesis on the use of Isaiah in 1 Peter by Patrick T. Egan only once (322n21). However, Egan persuasively argues that Isaiah's theology pervades the theology of 1 Peter, from direct quotations and allusions to implicit echoes, and his work has since been published as a book that is readily accessible (Patrick T. Egan, *Ecclesiology and the Scriptural Narrative of 1 Peter* [Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016]). More thorough engagement with Egan's book would have also strengthened Green's sections on God as Creator, Father and Judge in 1 Peter, on the person and work of Christ in 1 Peter, and on the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter. For those interested in the theology of 1 Peter in particular, Egan's *Ecclesiology and the Scriptural Narrative of 1 Peter* is essential reading.

Despite these minor flaws, *Vox Petri* is a vital book on Peter's theology. It demonstrates that Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter are all historically reliable sources of Peter's theology. In so doing, *Vox Petri* shows that Peter is as theologically significant an apostle as Paul, and it rightly encourages readers to give renewed attention to these parts of the New Testament that are still all-too-easily overlooked in favor of Paul's letters. Every Bible college and seminary library should own a copy of this book. Pastors will also find this book invaluable in mining the theological riches of Mark, Acts, and 1 Peter as they preach or teach these books.

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***Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: John: Volume 2A*. By Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. vi + 251 pp. $29.99, Hardcover. ISBN 978-0310528838.**

Christians are hungry for this kind of book. New Testament background information can make the Bible come alive. How is this possible? It is simple. In this volume, it's through the color pictures (almost 100 of

them included) and the precise commentary excerpts about the "world, time, place" context of Jesus and John's day. When readers see this local color/commentary – whether it's pictures of the Pontius Pilate inscription, a Roman cross or Roman nails, sandals from Masada, Judean coins, or an explanation of the Pool of Siloam – this background information can not only provide the shared knowledge necessary to understand the text but also help readers identify with the situational context that moves the Bible from *abstract* propositions to *real* communication that speaks to the human heart. No one knows this better than Craig Keener, and no one has done more for the church to make historical background information accessible than Keener. This volume is exhibit A of Craig Keener at his best. We as teachers stand on his shoulders, and it is our opinion that this resource should be on every shelf of those who teach through the Gospels on a regular basis. While it may not be the type of book that is meant to be read cover-to-cover like a thesis, it will be a valuable tool in the hands of those who appreciate how historically conditioned words can activate a context in the minds of a target audience. The reader can simply find their chapter/verse, marked out nicely in this volume, and see if they are missing any critical historical information that could impact their understanding of the text.

Craig S. Keener (PhD in NT/Christian Origins, Duke University) is well-known in biblical scholarship. His *IVP Bible Background Commentary* (which doesn't include color pictures like this volume) has sold more than half a million copies and his other 30+ books are scattered across the globe. Subscribers of Keener's daily emails are well aware of his vast knowledge of the historical-cultural context of the Bible. In fact, those who went to college with Craig in Springfield, MO tell stories of Keener's famous 3x5 card system that he used to file his biblical background notes. (Keener did inform us at a 2020 regional SBL meeting in St. Louis that he was able to digitize many of his 3x5 cards!). His four-volume commentary on the book of Acts (2012-15) is the best example of Keener's tireless work, not only in the biblical text but also in the world of Jesus' day, particularly the extra-biblical Jewish backgrounds. Yet, apart from Keener's biblical commentaries and the almost twenty sidebars of spiritual reflection in this particular volume, the best way to get to know Keener's Christian heart is to read his 2016 book *Impossible Love*, a book he co-wrote with his wife Médine Moussounga Keener. For the last twenty years, Dr. Keener has served as the F. M. and Ada Thompson

Professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, a Wesleyan seminary located in Wilmore, Kentucky. Most recently, Keener delivered the Presidential Address at the 72nd Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society.

The ZIBBC series has a specific template and Keener uses it well. Yes, this is a commentary, but not a "verse-by-verse" exegetical commentary in the traditional sense. For instance, the series does not intend to comment on every verse in John's gospel, nor does it choose to zero in on linguistic/literary context issues such as Greek verb tenses, discourse structure, or narrative criticism. There are a few exceptions to this. First, Keener is not afraid to comment on Johannine wordplay in the flow of the narrative (like "born again/born from above" in the Nicodemus account in John 3). Second, Keener does include two important sidebars on literary structure: (1) the structure of John's prologue in John 1:1-18 and (2) the structure of the farewell discourse located in John 13-17. Third, Keener divides John's narrative into literary episodes (set off in blue font in the commentary), which demonstrates that the ZIBBC series is not naïve to a progressing literary context as a meaning-making context in its own right. But, in keeping with the ZIBBC series philosophy, Keener devotes most of his attention to the historical-cultural context of John's gospel. Concerning the situational context (which most would consider part of the historical-cultural context), Keener dedicates four pages at the beginning of the commentary to front matter questions about John and his readers. Here, Keener suggests a setting involving a relationship between John, the son of Zebedee, and his readers, namely scattered Jewish Christians. The relationship between John and his readers involves the shared knowledge of the Judean-Roman war of AD 66-73. According to Keener, if John writes his gospel in the 90s (Keener's suggestion due to the "new Temple" motif in the narrative), then the Temple has been destroyed and many Judeans have scattered and are now disenfranchised, facing opposition from other Jews. Thus, John, writing from Ephesus, seeks to encourage these early Jewish communities that "their faith in Jesus is genuinely Jewish and that it is their opponents who have misrepresented biblical Judaism" (5).

Concerning the page layout of the commentary, each background issue that Keener comments on is encapsulated by a word or phrase followed by its chapter and verse reference in parenthesis. All of this set

off in bold font, making it convenient for the reader to move around the page quickly. A double-space separates each commentary entry, leaving the average page with about seven background entries, depending on the size of any pictures and sidebars included. Across 212 pages of commentary entries, Keener also includes the following four items: 65 sidebars (which further explain particular Johannine background issues in more detail), approximately 100 color pictures/maps, about 20 small sidebars of application reflection (in service to the church), and 2 comparison charts. After the commentary section is finished, Keener completes the volume with a one-page annotated bibliography and 37 pages of end notes. One of the best features of the volume is that Zondervan printed the volume on glossy paper which gives an aesthetic appeal to each page, leaving the reader with a beautiful presentation.

As Clinton Arnold (general editor of the NT ZIBBC series) makes clear in the series preface, the vision behind the series was "to draw upon the relevant papyri, inscriptions, archaeological discoveries, and the numerous studies of Judaism, Roman culture, Hellenism, and other features of the world of the New Testament and to make the results accessible to people in the church" (vi-vii). Beyond Keener's mastery of these aforementioned contexts, it is clear in this volume that Keener also recognizes the importance of the history of interpretation and the NT use of the OT. For example, John's use of the phrase "lamb of God" evokes the Passover lamb from the OT and ultimately from Isaiah 53. Keener does not shy away from commenting on John's OT quotations and allusions as important background information. We should also add that Keener is sensitive to synoptic issues, involving Matthew, Mark, and Luke's presentation of Jesus. In fact, Keener's full-page depiction of the "Gospel Accounts of the Resurrection" is one of the many highlights of the commentary.

Are there any weaknesses of the commentary? Not really. Of course, one can always find fault with what Keener has left unsaid or perhaps even his interpretation of John's purpose statement in John 20:31 (see page 3). If we had to nitpick, it is true that many of Keener's commentary entries are short, leaving the more experienced reader wanting more. But, we suggest that the more serious scholar could solve this problem by supplementing the commentary with Keener's two volume commentary on John published by Baker in 2003. Also, some may not prefer ZIBBC's decision to employ endnotes rather than footnotes, but endnotes seem

to fit the page layout better because of all the pictures and sidebars included in this volume. Regardless, Keener takes care of his readers with meticulous bibliographic data that allow them to chase down more detailed information if need be. Finally, there is always that vexing hermeneutical question regarding biblical backgrounds that seminary students often face at some point early on in their career – the question about the "clarity of Scripture" vs. "the complex hermeneutical process that said Scripture demands" (borrowed from Osborne's *Hermeneutical Spiral*). Those who have heard Keener lecture or are familiar with his humble scholarship are not surprised that he has no intention of taking the Bible out of the hands of non-scholars. Keener himself, as a young Christian, once rejected the use of historical-cultural context. This is part of his personal story as a scholar. While Keener does not set out to answer that vexing hermeneutical question in this volume, one can feel his humility throughout each page. May his tribe increase and may more readers gain access to excellent background information by purchasing this resource.

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***Jesus Christ: His Life and Teaching, Vol. 1: The Beginning of the Gospel*. By Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2018. xvi + 561 pp. $35.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-0881416084.**

This is the first volume in a projected six-part series (*Vol. 2: The Sermon on the Mount* was published in 2019), translated from the Russian original. The Russian born and Oxford educated Metropolitan Hilarion (b. 1966) is a distinguished churchman and a prolific biblical scholar, theologian, and church historian, as well as an accomplished composer of sacred music. This polymath is also the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations for the Russian Orthodox Church, serving as something like an ecclesiological diplomat for his communion.

The series is an overview of the life and teaching of Jesus as presented in the four canonical Gospels of the New Testament, from an Orthodox Christian perspective. This initial volume, consisting of eight chapters, examines some of the key topics of prolegomena to the study of Jesus and the Gospels (from a survey of the contemporary scholarly search for the "historical Jesus" [chapter 1] and introduction to each Gospel [chapter 2] to an examination of Jesus's way of life and character traits [chapter 8]) from a distinctly Orthodox perspective.

With the collapse of communism in recent decades in Russia and Eastern Europe, the Eastern Orthodox Church is experiencing an unprecedented revival in its traditional homelands, and it is even making inroads in the Western world. This book provides a unique insight into the Orthodox approach not only to historical-critical study of the Bible but also to the life of Jesus and the Gospels. This is particularly intriguing since, as Robert Letham has pointed out in *Through Western Eyes: Eastern Orthodoxy: A Reformed Perspective* (Mentor, 2007), the Eastern Church in its long history experienced neither the Reformation nor the Enlightenment.

Metropolitan Hilarion suggests that Gospel studies can be divided into at least five historical periods (see 152-170). First, there was the writing of the Gospels in the first century. Second, there was the time of the apostolic fathers in the second century. Third, there was the time of the ecumenical councils from the third to the eighth centuries. Fourth, there were the ten centuries from the Seventh Ecumenical Council (AD 787) to the eighteenth century. The fifth period, starting in the mid-eighteenth century up to the present, saw the development of rationalistic modern biblical criticism. At the close of the twentieth and into the early twenty-first century, however, the author suggests there has been a "reverse tendency" towards the necessity of seeing the Bible holistically within its tradition and not as "some lifeless museum exhibit" (166).

The author is fully conversant with the most recent trends in Western academic scholarship of the New Testament and open to profit from them, yet also, refreshingly cautious and critical with respect to many of its excesses and unfounded conjectures. An example of this can be seen in his analysis of the Q hypothesis in response to the so-called Synoptic Problem. Metropolitan Hilarion concludes: "The entire discussion is based on nothing more than guesses and presuppositions. At present

within the scholarly community voices are growing ever louder in asserting that the Q source is nothing more than a phantom invented by scholars…." (63). It is also there in the affirmation of the traditional authorship of the Gospels, the full acceptance of their historical reliability, and their early dating. Perhaps most importantly, with regard to Christology, this book asserts that Jesus and the Gospels must be understood in light of the ancient orthodox ecumenical creeds. The failure of the modern search for the "historical Jesus" to understand the Lord Jesus Christ from a confessional perspective has brought it into "total collapse" (272).

It might be said that this book approaches the study of Jesus and the Gospels within what Craig Carter calls the "great tradition" (see Craig Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* [Baker Academic, 2018]). It accepts the historical reliability of the Gospel tradition, offers harmonizing interpretations of any perceived rough edges, and is shaped by the traditional (pre-critical), patristic reception of them. For these reasons, many conservative and evangelical Protestants will find much with which to resonate. At some points, however, Protestant readers might have their views challenged, as with the Metropolitan's textual arguments regarding Mary's virginity and whether or not she had other children aside from Jesus (246). At perhaps only a few points will the Protestant reader suffer dismay, as with what seems to be the naive discussion regarding whether the shroud of Turin might provide any historical evidence as to the physical appearance of Jesus (492). Even this, however, perhaps reflects the unique Eastern interest in icons and visual representation of Jesus and the "saints." At this point, it should also be pointed out that the book not only contains an expansive text, but it is also filled throughout with multiple illustrations from Christian art inspired by the Gospels and the life of Jesus.

For many Westerners, Eastern Orthodoxy is exotic and incomprehensible. This book will prove helpful to Protestant readers as it provides them access to one of the Russian Orthodox Church's most influential intellectuals and leading churchmen as he considers modern historical-critical biblical studies in light of traditional Orthodox understandings of Christ and the Gospels. The book concludes with the author describing the travels of Billy Graham to the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War to interact with believers and speak in churches, citing

Graham's 1971 book *The Jesus Generation*. Metropolitan then observes that his own generation was not a Jesus generation: "In the 1960s and 1970s, few in the Soviet Union knew or spoke of Jesus Christ: his name was mentioned only in specialized literature on 'scientific atheism'" (534). He then notes that today things seem to have been reversed. It is in the West that many are speaking of a "post-Christian" age while in the East there is "a largescale revival of religious life" (535). He concludes with this hopeful note: "The post-Christian age will come only after the second coming of Jesus Christ. As long as the history of mankind continues on earth, Christ will continue to act in history. His divine countenance will always attract people, and generation after generation will become Jesus generations" (537).

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Pastoral Theology, Volume 1: The Man of God: His Calling and Godly Life **By Albert N. Martin. Montville, NJ: Trinity Pulpit Press, 2018. lvi + 456 pp. $39.95, Hardcover. ISBN 978-1943608119.**
Pastoral Theology, Volume 2: The Man of God: His Preaching and Teaching Labors **By Albert N. Martin Montville, NJ: Trinity Pulpit Press, 2018. xii + 651 pp. $32.50, Hardcover. ISBN 978-1943608126.**

Albert N. Martin (b. 1934) retired in 2008 after serving for some forty-six years as a pastor at Trinity Baptist Church in Montville, New Jersey. He is generally recognized as one of the "founding fathers" of the modern Reformed Baptist movement in America. Over the years Martin exerted significant influence in various ways among his fellow Calvinistic confessional Baptists. One way was through his dynamic preaching ministry. Long before the internet, cassette tapes of Martin's sermons "went viral" as they were widely shared, reviewed, treasured, and then passed on to other eager listeners. Another way was in his ministry of giving counsel to other men in ministry or those who aspired to enter the ministry. Yet another channel of influence was his establishment of the Montville Ministerial Academy (1976-1998) where many future

Reformed Baptist pastors were trained for service in the churches. The *Pastoral Theology* series represents Martin's magnum opus, completed in his retirement, and based on his lectures on pastoral theology delivered over the years at the ministerial academy and in ministry conferences. The first two volumes were released in 2018, and a projected third volume *The Man of God: His Evangelizing, Shepherding, and Counseling Labors* will complete the trilogy.

These volumes are massive and rich in content. This review will provide a brief overview of the first two volumes and then offer some analysis and assessment of them as a whole.

Volume 1:

As the title indicates, the First Volume focuses on the call and life of the minister. It is prefaced by a commemorative and historically valuable biographical sketch of Martin by John Reuther (xxi-lvi). Unit One examines the call to ministry (1-223). Here the man who aspires to the ministry will find a treasure trove of information to aid in his discernment. Martin is careful to stress that his goal is not to address merely a call to preach but a call to "*the pastoral office*" (3). He addresses not only the aspiration to this office but also the requisite qualifications of Christian character and experience, as well as the requisite mental, spiritual, and leadership gifts. These include the "gift of utterance" which begins with "*a natural, acquired, and cultivated ability to speak so as to secure the listening ear of the average person*" and ends with "*a special endowment of the Holy Spirit*" (148). This unit closes by noting that "*sober self-assessment*" must also be accompanied by "*external confirmation*" from a church to constitute "*a valid call*" (195). It is the church then that must recognize a man and ordain him to the pastoral office.

Unit Two addresses the life of the minister as a man of God (225-436). This unit begins with the "fundamental assertion" that "*sustained effectiveness in pastoral ministry is generally realized in proportion to the health and vigor of the pastor in his relationship to God, the church, himself, the management of his time and manifold responsibilities, and his family,*" resting on a "fundamental axiom" that "*a sustained effectiveness in pastoral ministry will generally be realized in direct proportion to the health and vigor of the redeemed humanity of the man of God*" (227). The remainder of the unit is a sustained exposition of each aspect of this assertion as it rests on this axiom. Of the many highlights, one might note Martin's holistic emphasis not only on the pastor's spiritual standing and

intellectual abilities but also the physical and emotional equipment necessary for the fulfilment of this calling (303-332).

Volume 2:

The second volume focuses on the preaching and teaching labors of the pastor. It is a manual on homiletics including three units (following the two units in Volume I). Unit three (1-210) addresses various issues related to the content and the form of the sermon under seven various axioms, addressing issues like the form and structure of the sermon, the use of illustrations, and the length of the sermon. This unit closes with a helpful discussion weighing the pros and cons of the use of a manuscript in preaching. Unit four (211-439) continues the discussion of the sermon's form and content, beginning with an overview of three basic categories of sermons: topical-expository, textual-expository, and consecutive expository. It then revisits each category and provides thoughts on building the introduction, body, and conclusion for each type of message. Unit five (441-626) discusses the act of preaching (sermon delivery), including the pastor's emotional constitution, voice, and physical actions.

Analysis and Assessment:

These volumes constitute a substantial contribution to the discipline of practical theology. Younger ministers often desire to learn from the counsel and experience of older men in the ministry. They crave mentors and models, but these are not always immediately available. This series gives to such men, in written form, access to the invaluable insights of a mature and careful pastor who labored for decades as a pastor. Martin is known, perhaps above all, as a highly effective preacher. The second volume constitutes a master class in homiletics, from which all pastors will profit, even if they do not agree with every one of the author's practices or convictions.

These works are brimming with practical suggestions and memorable insights too numerous to mention that will aid and stimulate the pastor as he reflects upon his calling and hones his craft. Let me sample just a few of these:

In Volume I, Martin suggests that the minister memorize the Westminster Catechism early in his ministry (287), provides an overview of eight categories of balanced pastoral reading (devotional, theological, biographical, church history, pastoral and homiletical, polemical, contemporary, and secular) (292-299), urges the saying of "I love you" to

more than spouse or relatives (345), and admonishes the development of a "structured schedule" (406).

> Here too are but a few gems from Volume II:
> Preaching is "an unconsciously imitative spiritual art" (78). Sermon application is "the highway from the head to the heart" (85). "If you want to say it well, write it out first" (181). The sermon introduction is the "John the Baptist" of the sermon (286). Younger men should avoid taking up a sermon series through Romans or Deuteronomy (370). "Excessive use of illustrations can shrink the spiritual stomachs of our people, causing them to desire ear-tickling anecdotes, clever and striking analogies, and shorter and shorter sermons that do not demand serious mental and spiritual concentration" (378). Beware the thirty-year old seminary professor (382). Do not make your sermons a "quotation factory" and "Injudicious quoting of others is wearisome" (386-387). "Be yourself—your emotional self" (401). "When we say *finally*, we should then end the sermon" (415). "Never is the Holy Spirit more in control than when we control ourselves" (486). Ministers are often most vulnerable to temptation on Mondays (538). Every preacher's three greatest instruments are his head, his heart, and his voice (553).

Martin notes at the outset that he was urged by others to put his popular lectures notes into written form. A team of editors worked with the author to complete the project. The result is this handsome three-volume resource for pastoral ministry that will benefit for years to come not only Reformed Baptists, but also those in wider Protestant, evangelical, and Reformed circles. The author draws often from prominent men of the past who have written on the ministry and frequently shares long, extended quotations from their works. These include the works of men like Bunyan, Owen, Spurgeon, and Ryle, among others. In some ways, these volumes constitute an anthology of classic evangelical literature on practical theology. Though the writing is most often engaging and aphoristic, some might complain at points that it is repetitive (especially the sections on the form and structure of the three categories of sermons in Volume II) and reflects the "filling out" of Martin's lecture outlines.

One might also add that, though appreciative of Martin's use of classic Protestant orthodox and evangelical authors, the resources are primarily

drawn from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Few voices are heard from the shared Christian tradition before the Reformation or from contemporary Christian thought. Still, this is perhaps fitting in reflecting the ministerial models, "the masters of the inner life" (Vol. I, 281), most especially the Puritans, upon whom Martin effectively patterned his ministry. These volumes are, in the end, to be highly commended. They will undoubtedly prove spiritually profitable both to those contemplating the call to ministry and to those already engaged in pastoral labors.

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***The Whole Armor of God: How Christ's Victory Strengthens Us for Spiritual Warfare*. By Iain M. Duguid. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019. 128 pp. $14.99, Paperback. ISBN 13-9781433565007.**

For anyone who is tired of reading books on the Christian life that simply say to be good and to try harder only to be left miserable and despairing because of constant failure, Iain Duguid's *The Whole Armor of God: How Christ's Victory Strengthens Us for Spiritual Warfare* is a balm for the weary soul. This book encourages believers to joyfully rest in the finished work of Christ as their only hope for success in the Christian life. Duguid currently serves as professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Along with his academic work, he is the founding pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Glenside, PA. His pastoral heart shines through this little book. In fact, *The Whole Armor of God* is the fruit of a sermon series he has preached over the years.

Chapter one lays out Duguid's understanding of sanctification which provides the groundwork for the larger discussion of the of the armor of God. Duguid critiques a common assumption about the armor: "What many of us hear in these words is a call to triumphant action, as if it is completely up to us to take on the devil and withstand his schemes" (14). God has done his part, now the believer does his. This perspective creates two kinds of people: the "radical disciples of Jesus" who "live an epic life by putting on that armor," or the "loser Christians" who time and again

fall into temptations (14). The result of such a mindset is "that we become proud of ourselves and judgmental of others if we think that we are doing well in our struggle against sin and Satan" (15). The counter result for those who constantly fail is despair.

Thankfully, this understanding of the armor is not biblical: "In reality, God's awesome power is not something we can choose to tap into, as if we were in charge of the process; rather it is something inevitably at work within all those whom God has chosen and called according to his purpose" (15). A call to stand in the armor of God is not a call to "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" and "do better." Instead, it simply means, "clinging desperately to Jesus Christ as our only hope of salvation" (22). Why? Because, "Our sanctification rests first and foremost on the finished work of Christ in our place" (16). God is the one who has predestined us for holiness. He made the provision by sending His Son to die for sinners. He has definitively defeated sin and death. The Holy Spirit is the one who works in believers giving them the power to conquer sin. Moreover, God's purpose is not that believers always stand, but sometimes the Lord allows them to fall into sin so that they "would grow in humility and dependence upon his grace" (20). The power to overcome sin and Satan is not in the believer, but by the Holy Spirit through the power of the death and resurrection of Christ.

From this view of sanctification, Duguid explains the various pieces of armor in the subsequent chapters. Christians gird themselves with the belt of truth by saturating their minds and hearts with the Word of God. Doctrine is important. Christians must renew their minds every day with the truth of God's Word. Furthermore, Christians have been given the breastplate of righteousness: "The righteousness of Christ protects believers against two of the chief lies that the devil wants us to believe, which are that God doesn't really love us and that sin doesn't really matter" (45-46). The righteousness of Christ shields believers from these accusations of Satan. Their righteousness is not their own, but Christ's. Moreover, because believers have been saved to holiness, they must not take sin lightly, but strive to kill it with all their might.

Believers have also been given shoes that are ready in the gospel of peace. This readiness is primarily "to share the good news as heralds of the gospel" (52-53). Believers should always be ready to share Christ with those around them. Believers are also given the shield of faith: "Faith is the means by which we flee to God for refuge" (68). When Satan attacks,

and believers feel themselves sinking, they cling to the Lord by faith. The Christian's helmet of salvation is "his or her sure hope of salvation" (79). No matter what happens in this life, the believer knows that a glorious inheritance is awaiting. This hope brings great assurance and boldness in the current battle. Finally, believers have the sword of the Spirit. The Word of God serves as a set of shears to prune, as a scalpel which cuts out believers' deepest infections, and as a sword to wield off the enemy's attacks. Finally, all of these weapons become powerful for believers as they pray for God to work: "Prayer is not so much another weapon that the Christian has been given as it is the means by which all of his or her weaponry is kept effective, under the control and guidance of God" (104).

The Whole Armor of God provides strength and encouragement for believers in their spiritual warfare. The strengths of this little book are many. First, Duguid provides solid exegesis of the armor of God. He rightly shows that Paul's mind draws these images from the Old Testament, specifically the Divine Warrior figure of Isaiah. Nevertheless, he writes in a way that is easy to understand and never loses his pastoral tone. Second, this book is saturated in the gospel. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the message preached here. Duguid rightly shows that the believer's sanctification ultimately rests in the finished work of Christ. This brings relief to weary souls that are tired of failing but also reveals the great power source that is available to them.

This book also brings clear and direct application to the believer's life. For every piece of armor Duguid provides concrete ways for how the believer can apply the truth in the passage. This direct application personalizes the didactic sections. It also helps believers to see how the truth connects to life. A minor criticism of the book is that it has no formal introduction or conclusion. Having an introduction and conclusion would enhance the book by providing direction on where it is going (introduction) and reviewing where it has been (conclusion).

The Whole Armor of God is a small, but powerful tool to encourage believers in spiritual warfare. Duguid shows how Christ's life, death, and resurrection brings victory to our daily struggles. Any believer who wants to be encouraged and strengthened to withstand spiritual attack will be encouraged by this book. This book would make an excellent small group or church Bible study. The chapters end with several questions that could facilitate group conversation. If you are discouraged and struggling with

your war with sin, pick up this little book. It will be a great source of comfort and strength in your battle for holiness.

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***Born Again: The Evangelical Theology of Conversion in John Wesley and George Whitefield*. By Sean McGever. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020. 296 pp. $23.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1683593300.**

Sean McGever's *Born Again: The Evangelical Theology of Conversion in John Wesley and George Whitefield* offers a refreshing look at critical points of evangelical doctrine and practice via the work of two of evangelicalism's most well-studied figures. McGever serves as an adjunct faculty member at Grand Canyon University and as an area Young Life director in Paradise Valley, Arizona. *Born Again* is a published adaptation of McGever's doctoral thesis (University of Aberdeen, Ph.D.), and its content reflects areas of import considering McGever's wealth of experience both in ministry "on the ground" and within the academy.

The work maps Wesley's and Whitefield's thoughts on the doctrine of Christian conversion and demonstrates the two were closer than is often assumed in their views. McGever argues that, despite their more popular disagreements, Wesley and Whitefield both viewed conversion as an "experience of turning to God in terms of inaugurated teleology" (11). That is, both theologians viewed Christian conversion in light of both a moment of repentance and the ongoing process of one's sanctification. McGever employs the pair of theologians as a case study to address the broader topic of the contemporary evangelical understanding of conversion and the relationship between justification and sanctification.

McGever presents his argument according to nine points of "espoused theology" from the pair's primary works. In the first four chapters, McGever identifies direct, theological motifs extracted from primary sources. Among the motifs McGever recognizes are (1) conversion as an experience of turning 'from' and 'to'; (2) the pre-conversion experiences of conviction, convincing, and awakening; (3) instantaneous conversion; and (4) the continued experience of conversion. McGever considers these

motifs alongside more general, attendant themes found in the theologians' works and preaching ministries, including baptism, assurance, and the *via/ordo salutis*. In the fifth chapter, McGever establishes his argument, pointing out significant points of agreement between the pair. In the sixth and final chapter, McGever briefly reflects on the volume's main argument in light of both a modern understanding of conversion, justification, and sanctification and contemporary approaches to evangelism and discipleship.

McGever's desire to adequately summarize the duo's conversion theologies is ambitious. He demonstrates adept command of primary sources throughout the volume and relies on secondary sources as an appropriate buffer between his own assertions and potential interlocutors. McGever's insistence on using ample evidence from primary works gives the narrative and his overall argument firm standing.

A persistent challenge of any work of historical theology is resisting the temptation toward anachronism, particularly in drawing theological conclusions and crafting summary statements. McGever toes the line well, organizing overall motifs and categories using language familiar to the theologians themselves. For example, in relating the pair's views of what events precede conversion, McGever employs the triad of descriptors "convinced, convinced, awakened" and relays how these terms are active throughout each theologian's respective corpus (25, 98). By tethering key components of his argument directly to primary source material, McGever better ensures the historical integrity of his approach.

McGever's faithfulness in this regard unintentionally amounts to some frustration for readers familiar with popularized disagreements between the two theologians in view. What are glaring contradictions in Wesley and Whitefield's respective beliefs in some areas do not ultimately threaten McGever's thesis; in fact, he deems them secondary in light of his specific thesis, though he likely would not categorize them as such in broader theological discussions.

The author addresses these disagreements in the book's fifth chapter, among them divergence in views on the divine decrees which precede the moment of conversion and the concept of Christian perfection which represents a post-conversion category. McGever contends, however, that these popularized points of disagreement do not diminish what he sees as thoroughgoing agreement concerning the bare-bones doctrine of

conversion. He writes, "…while (Wesley's and Whitefield's) disagreement had been terse and livid at times, an important kernel of agreement is at its core: the *telos* of conversion as the journey of Christian growth through ongoing sanctification" (210). Despite warrant for further conversion and debate on the implications of the pair's disagreement elsewhere, McGever's focused thesis holds its own. He presents a substantial, well-rounded case for why the conversion theologies of Wesley and Whitefield can be viewed apart from their disagreements regarding pre- and post-conversion events. The effectiveness of McGever's argument is due, in part, to his historical theological method and the volume's overall structure.

McGever frames his summaries of each subject's theology in two categories: espoused theology and attendant themes. What constitutes the subjects' espoused theologies are the aspects of conversion which the two comment upon directly throughout their respective corpora. McGever identifies attendant themes in the pair's theologies as themes that do not receive substantial direct reflection, but which still reflect the contours of each theologian's theology of conversion. These attendant themes are closely related to the points of espoused theology in application and practice. McGever's choice of these three attendant themes seems arbitrary at first glance, but his argument for their inclusion is compelling.

A final strength of McGever's work is the author's posture towards historical theology and its practical effects. Though works of historical theology do not require modern prognostication, McGever obliges and the few pages he devotes to such work leave the reader wanting more. The work is exemplary of what historian and scholar Timothy George has elsewhere called "theological retrieval for the sake of renewal."

Via his concluding thoughts, McGever reflects on the conversion theologies of Wesley and Whitefield in light of modern approaches to evangelism and discipleship. In McGever's view, it is significant that both Wesley and Whitefield agree that the *telos* of Christian conversion is key, primarily because their agreement demonstrates for modern evangelicals that critical points of agreement can be found despite significant disagreements. Moreover, McGever believes his argument bodes well for modern evangelicals because it demonstrates that prominent evangelical forebears viewed conversion in a *specific way*, i.e. always keeping the Christian's ongoing sanctification in view, rather than merely the

moment of one's conversion. McGever's goals for the work, while stated clearly, present a minor concern for how the volume might be received.

McGever's stated desire is to equip evangelicals with tools for renewed reflection (3). He aims his critique at those who have effectively reduced robust systems of theological inquiry into pithy formulae for the sake of expedience and more tangible "results." Though the volume seeks to reorient modern proponents of quaint systems and "easy believe-ism" (222), that crowd may put the volume down yet unconvinced. A more balanced approach might seek to more intentionally stir up pockets of evangelicalism who have observed, along with McGever, the futility of the "Four Spiritual Laws" approach and are needing additional kindling for the flame already lit.

All told, *Born Again* is as significant contribution in the fields of historical and systematic theology. The volume is a worthy conversation starter which portends to equip and strengthen evangelicals' understanding of their own history and what these specific historical signposts mean for the future.

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***All That Is In God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*. By James E. Dolezal. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017. 162 pp. $18.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-1601785541.**

James Dolezal received his Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is an associate professor in the School of Divinity at Cairn University. He also serves as visiting faculty for the Institute for Reformed Baptist Studies Theological Seminary. His previous book, *God Without Parts*: *Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness*, also examines the classical doctrine of God's simplicity. According to the Acknowledgements, this book grows out of the Southern California Reformed Baptist Pastors Conference in November of 2015.

Although Dolezal writes in a polemical style, the author offers the work as contemplative theology (xv). Dolezal concerns himself with a view of God that he calls "theistic mutualism" that believes it preserves the best of the ideas of being and becoming in God that currently affects modern Calvinism (xiii-xiv). In six chapters, the work responds to the differences between this view and the view of classical theism over simplicity and related attributes such as aseity, infinity, and eternity.

Chapter 1 lays out the idea of the incommensurability of these two views (3). The following chapters "spotlight the conflict between the classical and mutualistic perspectives on God by examining some of the significant doctrinal flashpoints-most notably, divine immutability, simplicity, eternity, and substantial unity" (7). Dolezal observes that the mutualistic perspective depends on univocal thinking (3).

In chapter 3, Dolezal describes the idea of an unchanging God in relation to the clear teaching of Scripture on the independence of God from creation (12). He states that Thomists and the Reformed orthodox understand the implicit connection between pure actuality and aseity (16). Also, God's covenant faithfulness flows from his unchangeable being (19). Dolezal then examines the mutualistic teachings of those in the reformed world that hold various degrees of mutualism. Responding to theistic mutualism, the author states that it is like an "acid that cannot but burn through a whole host of divine attributes traditionally confessed of God" (35).

According to the doctrine of simplicity, all that is in God is God. Chapter 3 argues that God is not made of any parts, even "a set of great-making properties" (43). He then shows an agreement with this position through the history of the church, which he says reaches its summit in Thomas Aquinas, who was able to "nuance the doctrine" because of several factors "perhaps the most important was the recovery of Aristotle's metaphysical framework" (55). These metaphysical assumptions hold through the eras of the Reformation and Protestant orthodoxy (56).

Chapter 4 examines various ways that ideas of composition in God erode the doctrine of simplicity. Dolezal lays out three categories of theologians who depart from simplicity: those who disregard simplicity, those who deny simplicity, and those who distort simplicity (60). He then responds to representatives of each view, particularly relating the last view to modern evangelicals (71). He advises the need to maintain

simplicity, contending that theologians need to presuppose the essential accuracy of Aristotelian metaphysics, "or at least that version of it as modified by Aquinas and others" (63).

In chapter 5, the author explores the doctrine of God's eternity and his relation to time. He challenges the basic assumption of mutualism that "God cannot create or bring about temporal effects without ontologically participating in the temporality of His creation" (96). He then shows that many mutualist explanations of God's attributes imply a change in God to adapt to creation. He admits that calling God an eternal Creator seems odd (97). But with Hermann Bavinck, we must say that creation comes about with time and not in time (101).

Chapter 6 takes up the question of the Trinity in relation to God's simplicity. Here, the author considers how compositional models of God relate to tritheism with an eye to social Trinitarianism (124). He also shows how compositional models support the position of eternal functional subordination (132). Dolezal explains and defends the classical idea that the persons in the Trinity are relations defined by the confession as "subsistences" (121).

In the Conclusion, the author reiterates that these two views "are not two slightly different ways of saying basically the same thing" (135).

Many aspects of Dolezal's book commend it to the reader. He warns, though, that it may be more philosophical than they may expect (xiv). Three strengths stand out, his use of historical witnesses, his three categories of deviation, and his helpful chapter on the Trinity.

Dolezal peppers his work throughout with historical witnesses that show that these ideas about God have a pedigree. Indeed, he admits the classical view finds its best proponent in Thomas Aquinas. The author also indicates frequently that the Dutch Reformed theologian Hermann Bavinck holds similar views. Additionally, he quotes from the English Puritans and other Dutch Reformed thinkers of the past. These witnesses help his argument since much of his concern for the drift into theistic mutualism happens among modern Reformed thinkers, and these witnesses have credibility (74). If nothing else, these witnesses give the reader a taste of these authors and a sense of Church history.

A detailed and helpful analysis comes in describing the three ways that theologians differ on simplicity. Although he argues that all mutualistic and composite models of God have slippage into tritheism, he does admit that many also fight this tendency. In fact, he commends

many for resisting Openness Theology (3). Not only is this fair and kind, but it is also rhetorically sound if someone wants to persuade others who hold antithetical views.

Probably the most substantial aspect of the book is Dolezal's chapter on the Trinity. His chapter on Eternity also attunes the reader to the issues involved in that complicated discussion. But the chapter on the Trinity not only attunes the reader to the issues involved, but it also answers the central question readers have been asking, "Yes, but what about the Trinity?" This chapter delivers a thorough and sound explanation of the doctrine. The explanation of the persons as relations highlights the chapter. Dolezal rightly says that there are real distinctions between the persons (118). The distinction is not between the essence of the Being of God and the persons but between the persons themselves (119). Also, this distinction is not from the human perspective of God as he argues for the distinctions of the attributes (120). These are real and eternal distinctions. Helpfully, Dolezal pushes back on the idea of the eternal functional subordination of the Son because it takes the distinctions too far and follows from a compositional model of God (132). In the end, Dolezal appropriately encourages us to resist the temptation to soften the mystery of God (108).

Unfortunately, the main weaknesses of the work stem from these same strengths. They involve rhetoric, views on univocal and analogical language, and the Trinity.

Dolezal offers the book as contemplative theology, but it comes across often in a stringently polemical tone. Early, he invokes the idea that those who disagree are on the path to idolatry (7). Later, he quotes "the Catholic author, J.F. Sheed," that all heresies in his day stem from denying simplicity (40). Rhetorically, invoking heresy and idolatry as an argument offers little help. Additionally, past heresy stems from simplicity. Dolezal admits that the Arians maintain the unity of singularity (109). But according to Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, the Arian heresy comes from the unity of simplicity.[1] Something deeper than simplicity prevents heresy.

Dolezal's analysis does not provide a discussion of analogy, Thomistic or otherwise. This oversight may stem from the adaptation of the work

[1] Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 8

from a conference. Yet, he invokes univocism as a bad thing without adequate explanation. He mentions analogy and anthropomorphism occasionally, even noting Bavinck's dictum that the Scriptures are anthropomorphic through and through (20). In one place, he confuses analogy with the metaphorical language of the poetry of Scripture (86). Analogy and metaphor are different. Because analogy is central to Aquinas's view of simplicity, the book needs at least a section on analogy. Also, Bavinck's view calls into question Dolezal's deployment of simplicity as a controlling, almost univocal, concept. Bavinck's view of anthropomorphism includes the idea that simplicity is an anthropomorphic idea.[2] The book does not consider Bavinck's full view but treats simplicity as a univocal concept, evident to all and not an accommodated idea around which we need to tread carefully and hold in mystery.

Probably the most obvious error Dolezal makes happens when he objects to theologians seeing the solution to the problem of the one and the many in the Trinity (70). Cornelius Van Til famously claims this arguing that the one and the many are equally ultimate in God.[3] Curiously, Dolezal invokes Van Til as a supporter of his view of simplicity in his other major work.[4] Also, he sees the solution as one of genus and species, a view Van Til also rejects (70). The author frequently considers the relationship of the one and the many as a difference between simple unity in God and creaturely multiplicity (70). Dolezal does not apply unity and diversity as equally ultimate, and this favors the unity of simplicity over the Trinity as his starting point.

All That Is In God has many strengths and some unfortunate weaknesses. Readers can gain much from reading it but should do so thoughtfully because the author has not taken everything that the Trinity implies into his account of simplicity. He correctly warns against the degradation of simplicity. While affirming real distinction in the Trinity, he fails to apply this to the questions. Trinitarianism affirms the unity of simplicity, but it also affirms real diversity in God. If all that is in God is God, then God's essence involves both simplicity and diversity

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[2] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2 (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004), 100, 105.
[3] Christopher Watkin, *Jacques Derrida* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishers, 2017), 90.
[4] James Dolezal, *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications 2011), 175n23.

without composition. As Van Til says, we begin with the self-contained ontological Trinity, not just the unity of simplicity.[5] By doing that, we genuinely avoid the temptation to soften the mystery.

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***Eschatological Discipleship*. By Trevin Wax. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2018. 269 pp. $29.99, Paperback. ISBN 9781462776382.**

The gospel of the Lord Jesus presents a God who initiates redemption to restore of His creation. Trevin Wax, who serves at Lifeway as senior vice president of Theology and Communications and editor of the Gospel Project curriculum, aims to call the church to recover a view of God's work as eschatological. Wax has a Ph.D. from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and has written several books with a similar focus as *Eschatological Discipleship* and furthers his efforts to encourage the contemporary church to think biblically about her calling to make disciples.

Wax opens his work with a survey of terminology, establishing learning as formative not just the conveyance of information. Wax builds an argument that discipleship is emulation of others, founded upon orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and worldview. Wax provides a strong discussion of wisdom as more than law abiding Christian living. Instead, the morality of Scripture encompasses a transformed individual who then inculcates the timeless gospel to specific issues and circumstances (37-8). Wax defines Eschatological Discipleship as "spiritual formation that seeks to instill wisdom regarding the contemporary setting in which Christians find themselves (in contrast to rival conceptions of time and progress) and calls" the Christian to faithful obedience as witness of God (41).

[5] Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1979), 23.

Chapter 2 surveys the Old Testament literature to establish a general narrative of discipleship. Wax takes a sweeping view which makes his defined view of discipleship seem tangential to the Old Testament narrative. The inclusion of examples would strengthen the argument of the book, showing discipleship models in Abraham and Lot, Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha to name a few.

Chapter 3 addresses the Gospels and the Luke-Acts corpus. Wax focuses on Luke's theme of witness as faithful presentation of the true work of Christ to the lost world. Faithful witness by God's people leads to onlookers repenting of sin and turning to God by faith in Jesus, which incorporates people into God's eternal family. Wax argues for the witness of believers in Christ as the logical basis of eschatology as the focus of discipleship.

Chapter 4 incorporates Paul's letters in the discussion, highlighting Paul's eschatological language and its connection to Christ's work forming the church according to His will. Paul's exhortations to obedience are couched in the resurrection of Christ and the promised resurrection of the believer, with 1 Thes 5:1-11, Rom 13:11-14, and 1 Cor 15:34 as the primary eschatological evidence. Paul believes eschatology is the great influence for Christian obedience and for the lost person's persuasion to faith. The *telos* of the Christian life is emulating the Savior in obedience and through suffering (93).

Wax changes direction in Chapter 5 to apply his understanding of eschatological discipleship to contemporary issues, showing the wisdom of Christian teachings. The question "what time is it?" permeates the following chapters, guiding the discussion to discern the place of societal problems in the grand narrative of God's redemptive work and to discover how the gospel addresses the Enlightenment, sexual revolution, and consumerism.

The Enlightenment is the first issue Wax addresses with chapter 6. The Enlightenment developed to be a thought system antithetical to faith and revelation as dependable epistemology. Reason is the cornerstone of the age, which promised freedom from authoritarian constraints so one could exercise their will freely. Wax helpfully distills the academic tenants of the Enlightenment into how they practically effect the thinking of a modern person, who Wax inspects through the thought of Emmanuel Kant and John Smith. Science bolsters the modern person's introspective epistemology by self-authenticating reason. The

Enlightenment promises the inevitable decline of religion by continual human progress for the essence of being human is reasoned progress.

Wax rightly attributes progress as the primary object of Enlightenment eschatology but he does not give attention to the goal of progress, leaving a potential weakness in his contrast. If his silence is due to the absence of a promised goal then that should be stated as such, strengthening his argument.[6] Furthermore, his silence detracts from his helpful contrast between an Enlightenment approach to history and a Christian view of history as continual rise and fall of sinful people carried by God's grace and. The Christian learns from history rather than evades history.

In Chapter 7 Wax analyzes modern sexual ethics as individual purpose and personality redefining morality for sex as personal expression. Wax anchors the beginning of changing sexual ethics in secular Romanticism, which argues human liberation occurs by loosing internal desires repressed by religious institutions. Also, Wilhelm Reich argued for self-fulfillment as the ultimate good, influencing the romantic sexual ethic. Similar to Enlightenment *telos,* the new sexual ethic promises progress, yet the fickle progress requires a false sense of value in expression, idealized in the media. Wax applies Christian truth to challenge the sexual revolution by properly dealing with sex and sin in accordance with God's word and providing a "haven of human flourishing" in the church for those harmed by the revolution (158-9).

Chapter 8 cautiously addresses Consumerism as the consumption of goods to create identity and value rather than the use of good in response to value. Wax offers three reforms: supporting human value isolated from productivity, God's gospel is not based in moralistic therapeutic deism, and church discipleship should be regular and dependable.

Wax culminates his argument in Chapter 9 with three common views of discipleship and how eschatology applied to those views can strengthen discipleship. These views are "discipleship as evangelist reproduction" (191), discipleship only concerned with personal piety

[6] Although not essential to his argument but germane to the issue of *telos* in a post enlightenment context is what Kant says about the outcome of his argument for reason. Kant says that reason produces happiness or the fulfillment of human desires in the goal of human autonomy. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, vol. 1, A Library of Universal Literature 11 (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1901), 583-90.

(201), and discipleship as motivation due to the principles of the gospel (212). Wax concludes a greater emphasis on eschatology would strengthen discipleship in the church and prove effective in areas unknown until further research is completed.

Overall, *Eschatological Discipleship* provides a persuasive emphasis on what the author views as lacking in contemporary discipleship ministries, a view of one's present efforts in light of God's *telos*. Although one strength of the book is the thorough depth of research, the scope and structure of discussion, at times, yields a cumbersome read. Wax includes all referenced voices in the narrative body slowing and stretching the flow of thought to where it is difficult to follow. Better use of substantial footnotes to incorporate tertiary voices, would make this beneficial volume more readable and accessible.

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***Theoretical-Practical Theology. Vol. 2. Faith in the Triune God.* By P. van Mastricht. Edited by Joel R. Beeke. Translated by Todd M. Rester. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2019. 660 pp. $50.00. Hardcover. ISBN 978-1601786746.**

The reader might ask why anyone would read a theology book that was originally published in Latin at the end of the 17th century. Being a theologian who pastored churches in the Netherlands and taught in universities at Germany, van Mastricht gave us an easy-to-read book (thanks also to the English translator) that combined biblical exegesis with application. This thorough treatment of Theology Proper is from the pen of a Reformed theologian who earned his Doctor of Theology degree and knew the biblical languages. Richard Muller of Calvin Theological Seminary called him a prominent theologian, and *Post-Reformation Digital Library* lists several of his other Latin treatises as well his magnum opus, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*.

At the time of its writing, there were two other popular works of theology that focused on both theology and piety: Turretin's 3 volume *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (1679–1685) and Watson's *A Body of*

Divinity (1692). However, Jonathan Edwards wrote that this 7-volume set by van Mastricht was "much better than Turretin or any other book in the world, excepting the Bible" (letter to the Joseph Bellamy on January 15, 1746/7, *Archives at Yale*, Series II: Jonathan Edwards Correspondence, c. 1735-1757). Watson's book likewise had a catechism format with questions and answer, but much of the book was made up of his sermons. Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service* (1700), which was published just after *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, had a similar format and emphasis. However, in his review of van Mastricht's work for *Credo Magazine*, Ryan McGraw, who teaches at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, pointed out that van Mastricht offered both precision like Turretin and devotion like Brakel in one book set. He also pointed out that Brakel offered much less biblical exposition than van Mastricht.

The author gave no explicit purpose in writing this volume and did not specifically tell for whom he wrote it. However, judging from van Mastricht's interaction with and criticism of Descartes, Socinianism, and other non-Christian teachings, he likely wrote *Theoretical-Practical Theology* to help ground his readers in the Reformed faith so they would not be taken in by non-Christian ideas.

This volume is second in a proposed seven-part series of which the publisher has yet to publish the other five volumes. True to his subtitle, *Faith in the Triune God*, van Mastricht began this volume with a chapter on Saving Faith. Then in chapters 2-4, he dealt with the existence and knowledge of God, the essence and independence of God, and the name of God. In the bulk of the book, the author addressed the attributes of God (chapters 5-23) and the Trinity (chapters 24-27). Every chapter has a brief introduction and four parts, and each of the last three parts logically follows the part before it. The exception is chapter 3 and chapter 4, in which "The Exegetical Part" is followed by two theorems that each contain the other three parts. (Perhaps the author mistakenly used the label, "The Didactic Part" in chapter 3 under the second theorem instead of "The Dogmatic Part" since it is the only place where he used that label.) The author gave word-by-word exegesis of the Hebrew and Greek (primarily *textus receptus*) of selected Scripture in "The Exegetical Part." Relying on this exegesis, logic, and quotations from Scripture and other sources, he made several assertions in "The Elenctic Part." Van Mastricht used the previous parts to form questions followed by unorthodox

answers in "The Dogmatic Part," which also contain objections to the unorthodox answers and the Reformed position on the question. The author elaborated on several applications in "The Practical Part," which flow out of the previous parts. Nearly every paragraph has an introductory statement with an outline number and page number at the Table of Contents for easy access. The back of the book also includes extensive scripture and subject indexes. The latter reflects the depth of the author's knowledge of relevant topics, movements, and people.

The reader of this review is correct to assume that I have a favorable impression of this book. Having investigated the author and similar works and having read several sections from this book, I heartily recommend it for theological libraries, pastors, teachers, and other serious students of theology. Such a work could easily be dated, but van Mastricht's use primarily of Scripture in each part makes it relevant to current readers. More theologically educated readers will appreciate the author's interaction with both orthodox theologians and heretics. Those who do not espouse Reformed theology may not appreciate the Calvinistic perspective, but even they would receive much profit by reading and studying this book.

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***Homiletics and Hermeneutics: Four Views on Preaching Today.* Edited by Scott M. Gibson and Matthew D. Kim. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. 192 pp., $21.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-9869-7**

Scott Gibson and Matthew Kim, seasoned preachers and teachers, serve as the editors of this magnificent volume that presents four perspectives within contemporary preaching. In this typical point counter-point format, four homiletic heavyweights each present their position while providing a brief response to the other three. The interlocutors are Bryan Chapell (redemptive-historic approach), former president and chancellor of Covenant Theological Seminary, Kenneth Langley (theocentric approach), adjunct professor of preaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity

School, Abraham Kuruvilla (christiconic theological approach), senior research professor of preaching and pastoral ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary, and Paul Scott Wilson (law-gospel approach), professor of homiletics at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto.

The editors' stated fourfold goal was to offer a healthy discussion on the theological/hermeneutical approaches to preaching, foster exchange among preachers who hold to different approaches, provide a means for the reader to define their own hermeneutical approach, and to answer the question, "What can the reader learn from a theological tradition other than their own" (xiii)? Each contributor offers biblical, theological, homiletical and applicational rationale for their hermeneutical approach. The editors conclude the book with a summary assessment of the authors' hermeneutical and homiletical approaches.

Driven by biblical theology, Bryan Chapell presents the redemptive-historic approach. Revelation is the interpretation of redemption which culminates in the redemptive work of Christ, hence a Christ-centered hermeneutic and "expository preaching is Christ-centered preaching" (9). Chapell believes that one can maintain textual integrity by answering: "What does this text reflect of *God's* nature that *provides* redemption? [and] What does this text reflect of *human* nature that *requires* redemption" (16)? Chapell consistently affirms this does not mean "finding Jesus on every page," instead how each text "point[s] to Christ" (107). For Chapell the purpose of preaching is to preach Christ in every sermon.

The impetus behind Abraham Kuruvilla's christiconic approach is the theological sense behind the "pericope." He defines this as "a preaching text, irrespective of genre or length" (45). He emphasizes *what the biblical authors are doing with what they are saying*. To determine this "it is best to privilege the text and its immediate context" (50). The goal and the purpose of preaching: "God's Word is applied, and God's world is becoming a reality" (56). Kuruvilla continues, "Preaching Christ in this sense is the proper goal of preaching, for it is the will of God to conform his people to that image of his Son: *christiconic* interpretation" (62).

For Kenneth Langley "preaching should be God centered because God is God centered and wants us to be God centered in everything we do" (81). This is his theocentric approach. He reinforces this with the God-centeredness of Jesus' and the Bible's own preaching as "reason enough to be God centered in preaching" (88). Langley would concur with John

Piper that "the goal of preaching is the glory of God in the glad submission of his people" (89). In Langley's approach, even if he conceded the grand narrative as the theme of preaching, he would "insist that God is the main character of the story" (35).

Paul Scott Wilson employs the law-gospel hermeneutical approach, although he prefers the less prickly trouble-grace paradigm. He assumes "that the purpose of preaching is to proclaim the gospel, which [he defines] as God's saving actions recorded anywhere in the Bible that have greatest clarity in Jesus Christ" (117). In the end, *trouble* (law) puts the burden on *humans* to act, *grace* (gospel) places the burden on *God* to act, which He has already done in Christ Jesus (122). Wilson views trouble occurring both on the vertical axis (against God) and the horizontal axis (against man) (39).

A few caveats of note. It seems with any hermeneutic, there is always the danger of imposing some system, thought, or belief that somehow diminishes the sacred text – which is the main thing. It may be the excessive imposition of biblical theology on texts (the danger of the redemptive-historic approach), focusing so much on what the biblical *author* is *doing* with *what he is saying* that one might forget what the *Author* is *doing* with what *He is saying* (the danger of the christiconic theological approach), elevating any person of the Trinity at the expense of the others – it would seem best that the text dictate that (the danger of the theocentric approach), or allowing one's hermeneutic to rigidly dictate to the text instead of allowing one's hermeneutic to be subservient to the text (the danger of all four approaches, but especially the law-gospel approach). One wonders with Gibson and Kim, "Is there a pure hermeneutical form that can take the text at face value without imposing one's theological framework? Is this even possible" (158)? Of the four, Wilson's approach appears too complicated and forced both hermeneutically and homiletically – it seems to be the least text-driven.

To be sure, each contributor holds to a steadfast commitment to Scripture and the preaching endeavor. Discussions like these often break down to an either/or scenario, yet here there are many instances of both/and. Take for instance each author's defined purpose for preaching: for Chapell – to preach Christ in every sermon, for Kuruvilla – to apply God's Word to conform God's people to the image of His Son, Langley – the glory of God in the glad submission of His people, and Wilson – to

proclaim the gospel. These are distinctions worthy of embracing in all sermon preparation and delivery.

In addition, there are other elements that merit consideration for each preacher's approach. Chapell provides a helpful framework for relating a biblical text to Christ – texts are either 1) *predictive of* His work, 2) *preparatory for* His work, 3) *reflective of* His work, or 4) *resultant from* His work (12). Kuruvilla's pericopal theology is the most helpful for the ability to render precise, faithful application of the text (62). Langley's *homiletical rationale* (95-99) serves as a faithful guide to what a sermon should be – "It seems to me that a sermon ought to be big, because God is big" (99). Wilson reminds us that "Proclamation … allows the listener not just to hear *about* God, but *to meet* God" (144).

Unique to its field, this book combines the best of hermeneutic and homiletic scholarship. For further study of hermeneutical approaches, read *Biblical Hermeneutics*: *Five Views* (IVP Academic, 2012) or for an even broader discussion of hermeneutical and homiletical issues see Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (editors) *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*: *A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators* (Zondervan, 2005). *Homiletics and Hermeneutics* will prove indispensable 1) as a quick reference for the faithful pastor as he and the Spirit wrestle with the text of Scripture, and 2) as a companion text for seminary or doctoral homiletic courses. Sermons fail for a variety of reasons, could it be that the homiletic failed because the hermeneutic was faulty? To "*preach the Word*" (2 Tim 4:2) effectively, the pastor must "*divide the Word*" (2 Tim 2:15) rightly. Gibson and Kim provide a format that will aid the preacher in the process from text to sermon as they tease "out the theological presupposition of approaches to preaching" (xi-xii). *Homiletics and Hermeneutics* will be a welcome addition to the pastor's study or the seminary classroom.

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Acts. New Cambridge Bible Commentary. By Craig S. Keener. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. xviii + 699 pp. $39.99, Paperback. ISBN 9781108468688.

Craig Keener is the F.M. and Ada Thompson Professor of Biblical Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky (i). Keener is the author of numerous books, including recently published works *Gift and Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today*, *Christobiography*, and *Galatians: A Commentary*. Keener is also "the author of the longest and one of the most carefully researched commentaries on the Acts of the Apostles" (Back cover).

Acts New Cambridge Bible Commentary (referenced as *Acts* NCBC hereafter) seeks to provide a more accessible commentary than Keener's previous four-volume commentary published by Baker Academic from 2012-2015 (xvii). The commentary is in keeping with the New Cambridge Bible Commentary series in academic goals and design. Concerning the NCBC series' academic aims, *Acts* seeks to clarify or explain the Christian scriptures with modern exegetical techniques but deliver the information in an accessible manner (Back cover). In design, *Acts* is similar in both page length and use of the NRSV, although this volume assumes the reader has access to the NRSV translation as it omits all translations (xviii). This review provides a review of Keener's 2020 Acts commentary, compares the NCBC commentary with the author's previous multivolume work on Acts, and recommends a target audience for both works.

Keener's NCBC *Acts* commentary is an abridged version, or about a tenth, of Keener's multivolume *Acts* commentary published by Baker (xvii). The Cambridge commentary seeks to provide a more accessible commentary (xvii). In addition to the brevity, Keener subdivides Acts into smaller units to keep the book accessible (336). About the format, this volume has an introduction, an Acts bibliography, and the commentary section. Each unit in the commentary is approximately three to ten verses in length. These units do not represent literary units but manageable sections of text (336). The "Acts Bibliography" provides a list of resources subdivided into categories like "More Academic Commentaries," "Less Technical Commentaries," and "Sample Acts Studies" (87-90). Keener includes excurses titled "A Closer Look," where he finds applicable throughout the commentary. The "A Closer Look" sections focus primarily on Acts background information (i.e. Africa, Antioch, "Christians," and Corinth) (xv-xvi).

Keener suggests a date range of the 70s-80s A.D. for the composition of Acts (46). He suggests that Luke authors *Luke-Acts*, the Luke who is a travel companion of Paul (48-49, 385). For Keener, Luke's purpose is to convey historical information likely with a primary objective to equip believers, not to evangelize (53). The commentary proper, or exegesis through the book of Acts, borders between a pastoral and academic tone. The commentary predominantly provides an in-depth understanding of the text along with extensive historical context. Keener's notes do not require knowledge of the Greek language. The NCBC commentary is not short on citations as Keener cites the 3437th footnote by the final page (The first two sections, "Introduction" and "Acts Biography," have individual citation counts) (635).

Comparing Keener's recent abridged commentary with his four-volume commentary is done based on content and target audience. First, there are no observable shifts or changes in Keener's understanding of Acts (dating, authorship, purpose, and audience). The new volume does have updated footnotes. For instance, looking at the introductory matter published, one will note references after 2012, the year Keener's introductory volume was published. Some footnotes appear to add resources that support previous conclusions, and the newer reference is listed last (24n120). Other footnotes appear to be completely new or updated, such as footnote 35 on page 9, which references only two works, and both are dated 2016 and 2014. Another example is a footnote that tells the reader to "see thoroughly" a dissertation published in 2019 (100n19).

Second, the comparison between Keener's Acts commentaries may best be made thinking of target audiences. Keener's larger four-volume work is superb in the expanse of resources cited and the material covered. The monumental four-volume series is a resource suited best for libraries or Lukan scholars. The 2020 commentary is recommended for pastors, students, and scholars. *Acts* (NCBC) will save one money and shelf space compared to Keener's four-volume commentary. But the NCBC commentary still provides more than the necessities for studying the book of Acts. For individuals seeking to purchase a single reference, Keener's NCBC commentary on Acts is arguably the resource to acquire.

If you own Keener's larger Acts commentary, or especially if you own a digital copy, it is not recommended to acquire the 2020 abridged version of Keener's work. For scholars concerned about missing new

information, you may consider reviewing the new volume for updated references. Prudent readers will observe that Keener is likely incorporating resources gathered for his other recent publications. For instance, a footnote discussing biographies (100n19) cites a similar source from the same author in Keener's *Christobiography* published by Eerdmans in 2019 (*Christobiography* 628). This suggests that Keener's avid readers are likely to observe fewer 'new' contributions in *Acts* (NCBC). Still, readers not closely following Keener's scholarship may reap the benefits of Keener's recent scholarship consolidated into one book. Therefore, students or scholars seeking the latest information will likely benefit from searching specific passages and footnotes.

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***Epic: An Around-The-World Journey Through Christian History*. By Tim Challies. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2020. 176 pp. $19.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-310329046.**

Epic hopes to tell the history of Christianity in a way never done before. Challies wants to tell the *epic* story of Christianity by joining together small stories that create a timeline chronology of the Church (8). Challies also desires to give an experiential teaching of Church history (9). He creates an experience by showing historical artifacts that capture each small story from Church history (9). A film documentary exists that chronicles the book's making and focuses on how Challies found the artifacts versus the historical value or information about the objects themselves (9). The book spans twenty-four countries, six continents, 180,000 miles, and eighty museum visits (6). *Epic* has thirty-three chapters, each focusing on a historical object. Although *Epic* is a church history book, the book's design is to entertain as well. This review summarizes the contents, reviews the book, and suggests who may benefit from Challies' *Epic*.

Epic is a book designed for education and entertainment. The book is short (in page length), soft covered, full of pictures and illustrations, and the print has generous spacing. The book's design is more similar to an

atlas or a stately magazine than a classroom textbook. Challies writes in a first-person monologue as he chronicles his journey around-the-world and seeks historical Christian artifacts. But he organizes *Epic* chronologically. Each chapter roughly follows a three-step pattern: (1) narration of Challies journey, (2) segues for the reader from artifact to artifact by orienting the reader geographically to the location and chronologically in church history, and (3) the history of the artifact.

Challies begins his journey before the Church's birth and before the birth of Jesus as he visits the statue *Augustus of Prima Porta* (11). Challies ends his journey in two destinations. First, he ends his physical journey at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as he experienced the Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon's preaching rail (135-136, 168). Second, Challies chronologically finishes his journey, ending the reader's experience in the book, with the YouVersion Bible App, founded in 2006 and still in use today (165-167). Mixed amongst the thirty-three artifacts, *Epic* includes six "Quick Looks." The "Quick Looks" provide similar historical stories as the main chapters, but the "Quick Looks" included artifacts that didn't meet Challies' requirements (Share artifacts rather than locations, buildings, or memorials; and all artifacts are available to the public) (112). However, Challies still wanted to include these historical pieces in the *epic* journey.

Initially, there was concern the book was a by-product of the film documentary and that the book may not meet Challies expectations. But, the book is a product without compromise. *Epic* accomplishes its expectations of telling the history of Christianity in a way never done before. Challis meets these expectations by choosing interesting artifacts with quality narration, which creates an experiential "feel" or a multisensory experience for the reader (Picture/Story/History). *Epic* exceeds expectations because the book was educational and entertaining. With short chapters, the book seems designed to read quickly or periodically. Although the sections were short, each historical object receives pertinent background information for the reader to grasp its historical importance. No prerequisite knowledge is required to enjoy the history lessons. The book would best suit the Church (pastors, lay leaders, and congregants), but the book would also be enjoyable for scholars or fans of history.

Challies writes *Epic* in a well-versed first-person narrative that is easy to read and fits the style of the book. He resists any negative overtones

of academic writing. Challies resists condescending tones, which may deflate a reader who has never heard of prominent Church figures like Charles Spurgeon, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards. Challies' kind manner enables church members with minimal knowledge of church history to follow Challies' journey through time. The accompanying maps and pictures were both fun and engaging. The inclusion of maps helps position the reader geographically and allows the reader to follow alongside Challies. The images are quality pictures that often inform the reader about the object and its location in-country or its location within a museum.

The choice of the pieces was excellent. These artifacts are a key piece to recommending the book also to scholars. Unlike strictly academic books, Challies finds historical objects that would likely never reach the eyes and ears of every Church historian, let alone the average reader. Such notable inclusions are "Marie Durand's Inscription" (89), "Brookes Slave Ship Model" (108), and "Amy Carmichael's Plaques" (130). These three examples also witness to the diversity of the historical figures covered. Challies includes people from around the world, each gender, and people with different social status and social influence. This diversity provides a sweet picture of God's Glory and Power as He uses every believer to accomplish His will on earth.

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***Narrative Apologetics: Sharing the Relevance, Joy, and Wonder of the Christian Faith*. By Alister McGrath. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019. 168 pp. $15.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4934-1924-1**

One of the most fundamental and ancient vehicles for communicating cultural values has been the narrative. From stories passed down on how a people group came to live in an area to reasons why it is not a good idea to sneak into someone's house, mess up his bed, sit in his chair, and eat his porridge, human beings seem to be created with an innate sense of understanding truth through narrative. Knowing this, could we use

narrative to present a defense for the Christian faith? It is this question that Alister McGrath addresses in his book *Narrative Apologetics: Sharing the Relevance, Joy, and Wonder of the Christian Faith*.

Alister McGrath holds three doctorates from the University of Oxford in molecular biology, divinity, and intellectual history. He currently serves as the Andreas Idreos Professor in Science and Religion at the University of Oxford and the director of the Ian Ramsey Center for Science and Religion (167). McGrath specializes in modern apologetics and answering many of the modern outspoken opponents of the Christian faith. He has authored over thirty books and publicly debated both Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett on the subject.

McGrath opens by explaining that the current method of teaching and doing apologetics centers around using factual evidence, whether scientific, historical, or rational, to make a case for the validity of the Christian faith. According to McGrath these approaches fall short of their goal and ultimately hurt the case for Christianity rather than helping it. He explains that, "One of the difficulties facing an apologist is that demonstrating the reasonableness or truth of Christianity does not always lead people to embrace it. Something may be true yet possess little, if any, relevance for human existence" (15). McGrath sees the issue, not that the current methodology or pedagogy for apologetics is wrong, rather it is lacking an essential element that makes those truth claims relevant to a contemporary audience. It is here that McGrath suggests that the shift to a narrative framework is necessary. His goal in producing this book is to show the benefit and necessity of a narrative approach to apologetics and to offer practical suggestions for its application in the church.

The book is divided into seven chapters. In the first two chapters McGrath introduces how the current apologetic methodology has fallen short and how a narrative approach can revitalize this sacred task. He founds this on a well-argued and nuanced theological basis for his method. Building on this in the remainder of the book, McGrath details the practical outcomes of a narrative approach and lays out a workable framework that can be used to convey the Christian message.

The thrust of the book's argument is that the old methods of apologetics that are currently being taught were developed to meet the need of older objections. Many of these arguments came out of the schools of higher criticism that developed in the nineteenth century.

McGrath believes that the answers to these "modern" objections are insufficient to address Postmodern questions. We no longer live in a world that asks of Christianity "Did that really happen?" or "Is that really true?" The question now has become, "So what?" Proving the fact that Moses actually existed or the Exodus is historical does little for the single mother who is struggling to balance her job and her responsibilities to her children in the midst of a pandemic. People are no longer asking Christians if what the Bible says is true, they want to know how its message is going to change their life. McGrath suggests that the use of narrative in our approach to answering these questions is the key to turn the perception of the gospel from a propositional concept to an external reality that has practical meaning for everyone where they are.

McGrath maintains that the narrative approach is not something new, but rather a revitalization of something old and more natural. The capacity for humans to convey ideas through story is not something that was developed long ago but rather something that is written in our *Imago Dei*. We communicate best by telling stories about our lives because God is telling His story through our lives. He writes that because, "human beings were created in the image of God, they possess a capacity to create stories that in some way reflects the divine rationality that remains embedded within humanity, despite the fall" (45). McGrath illustrates this with the example of suffering in the life of an individual. Many Christian and secular thinkers have labored for years to come up with a logical and coherent reason for this phenomenon. Narrative helps us navigate this and other difficult issues in life not by helping understand them intellectually but by helping us grow through them spiritually, and it is this unique characteristic of narrative that makes it essential for giving real answers to a suffering world. The argument being that one can easily refute a logical proposition but it is difficult to argue against someone's personal experience. Moreover, we must also show how this personal hope is not solely existential. In short, we must help to rewrite the narrative that the world at large is telling.

In explaining the practical application of doing narrative apologetics McGrath stresses the need to tell a better story than the stories that our neighbors are being told by the world. He illustrates this by using narrative examples from Lewis and Tolkien among others. The examples that McGrath gives are clear, however, it would have been helpful if he also explained more clearly how one can incorporate narrative into their

own apologetics. There are times when McGrath gives great examples and illustrations but does not seem to give clear instructions on how the reader can actively apply the principles.

McGrath writes with clarity and authority with the pastor or Bible college student in mind. One drawback of writing for this audience is that some of the language may be too heavy for the average churchgoer. While a background in philosophy is not required to understand the basic premise of the book, McGrath does use some philosophical terminology that may be too technical for a lay audience and may require some adaptation to be used in a Sunday school or Bible study setting. Those that do have some background in philosophy will appreciate how McGrath argues his points and will no doubt recognize many of the references. This book would serve well as a text for an undergraduate course in apologetics or Christian philosophy. Those with regular preaching responsibilities will also find solid advice on how to construct illustrations that will serve as vehicles for deeper theological truths that otherwise may have some dozing in the pew. McGrath also includes an extensive notes section that allows readers to investigate primary sources or gain a deeper understanding of some of his arguments.

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***Exegetical Gems from Biblical Greek: A Refreshing Guide to Grammar and Interpretation*. By Benjamin L. Merkle. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. 171 pp. $19.99, Paperback. ISBN 9780801098772.**

Only a small percentage of people on planet earth consider grammatical findings of a dead language to be "gems." But, for those who have eyes to see, *Exegetical Gems from Biblical Greek,* in fact, delivers precious insights from the text of the New Testament that both justify and inspire ongoing study of biblical Greek. Benjamin Merkle is Professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and his years of practice teaching Greek in the classroom shine through his book from cover to cover. *Exegetical Gems* is among a trio of recent publications on

NT Greek produced by Merkle. He coauthored *Greek for Life: Strategies for Learning, Retaining, and Reviving New Testament Greek* (Baker Academic, 2017) with Robert Plummer, and *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (B&H Academic, 2020) with Andreas Köstenberger and Robert Plummer. *Exegetical Gems* serves as a nice complement to the other two and is unique among other Greek language and grammar publications.

Exegetical Gems is designed to be a tool to help readers more successfully use the Greek language. While other works may aim toward the same goal, *Exegetical Gems* is unique in its approach. First, Merkle seeks to motivate readers with examples of instances where knowledge and use of Greek is key to answering debated texts. Second, Merkle helps readers review grammar and syntax in a manner that is arguably more interesting and engaging than rereading a thick Grammar. *Exegetical Gems* is comprised of thirty-five short chapters. Each chapter covers an aspect of Greek syntax that identifies and explores various "exegetical gems" (defined as "substantial insights from NT passages gained by a proper knowledge and use of Greek," vii).

Merkle identifies three primary audiences for *Exegetical Gems*: 1) college or seminary students who desire an augment to their main textbook, 2) students who previously learned Greek and are looking for a resource to help them keep or recover their Greek, and 3) teachers of Greek who might benefit from the thirty-five examples of key passages where knowledge of Greek is essential. *Exegetical Gems* is accessible at all three levels. Furthermore, each chapter can stand on its own so readers can benefit from selecting chapters that are most urgent or appealing for their purposes and read them in isolation from the others without any issue.

The primary strength of *Exegetical Gems* lies in its ability to simultaneously reinforce grammar and syntax while discussing debated interpretations of NT passages. Such an approach hits the target of being motivating and informative. Merkle does a good job of succinctly setting the stage for each exegetical gem by posing alternative viewpoints in a debated text or issue. Therefore, one of the secondary benefits of Merkle's work is that it orients readers to debates that they ought to be aware of. In some instances, the debate in view is large and complicated. Helpfully, Merkle provides great footnotes which point readers to key works that deal with the issues in more depth.

Whereas *Greek for Life* had virtually no engagement with the Greek text, *Exegetical Gems* has readers in the Greek text on just about every page. In addition to predictable chapters like Nominative Case, Colwell's Canon, and Verbal Aspect, Merkle includes the following chapters at the end of the book: Context, Word Studies, Exegetical Fallacies, Discourse Analysis, and Diagramming. Chapters all follow the same template: introduction, overview, and interpretation, and are about four to six pages in length. The brevity of each chapter might be considered a strength by some and a weakness by others. This reviewer considers it a strength because this feature affords readers manageable engagement with important issues without having them slug through article- or book-length treatments.

It is odd that *Exegetical Gems* contains no bibliography. Each chapter has numerous citations to scholarly works. A bibliography would have been helpful especially when readers encounter shortened bibliographic information in a footnote and are forced to hunt for the first occurrence of the cited work. To complicate matters, most of the citations are placed in the form of footnotes, but some are in parenthetical references. For example, a block quote on page 43 is concluded with the parenthetical reference "(Wallace 290)." Readers who properly identify this to be a reference to Daniel B. Wallace are left to guess which work of his is being referenced. Perhaps the answer is obvious to two of the book's three target audiences, but students may struggle.

Overall, *Exegetical Gems* is not only motivating and informative, but it is also enjoyable to read. Each chapter is a nice little package that carries a substantial punch. All three of Merkle's identified audiences could indeed benefit from this book and will likely find it to be an enjoyable read.

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***God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology*. By Steven J. Duby. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019. 352 pp. $40.00, paperback. ISBN 978-0830848843.**

God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology falls within a long tradition of theological and philosophical scholarship in the pursuit of exploring the dimensions of divine aseity. In this work, Steven J. Duby seeks to defend the thesis that, contrary to the claims of some contemporary theologians, natural theology and metaphysics have a place in the epistemic domain of theology proper.

The book is divided into five chapters. Chapter one examines the purpose, object, nature, and limitations of theological knowledge. Duby asserts that God in his aseity—outside his economic actions—is the object of theological knowledge (25–26). Engaging with Luther and Karl Barth, the author defends the possibility of knowing God *in se* even with a *Deus absconditus* objection, which raises the challenge of divine hiddenness for the doctrine of God.

The burden of the second chapter is to establish the place and purpose of natural theology in church history. Duby begins his exploration by analyzing the positions of theologians in the early church and medieval age. He contends that Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin (among others) understood natural theology to have a proper place in God's divine self-disclosure to humans. Contrary to the push from students of Barth and Van Til, natural theology, observes Duby, held significant sway among Reformers. In the reformed epistemology sphere, Alvin Plantinga receives some attention as a theologian who does not position himself within the territory of those who affirm natural theology's utility in the pursuit of knowing God. Duby summarily concludes by affirming the positive role of natural theology in God's divine self-disclosure to humanity.

Moving to an analysis of the place of Christology in theology proper, chapter three engages with Barth and others who align closely with the Barthian method. Boiled down to its essentials, a Barthian method of theology begins with Christ and the incarnation as the epistemic locus of the doctrine of God. Contra Barth's all-consuming Christological epistemology, Duby argues that Scripture, not Christ, is the primary epistemological principle for a theology proper. Even so, he presents a positive case for the role of Christology in the doctrine of God, concluding that Christ is the basic principle of "our growth in theological

understanding as those already united to him by faith" (177). The chapter closes with a response to Barth's insistence that the *extra Calvinisticum* entails two Christs, one *asarkos* and one *ensarkos*.

Chapter four explores concerns raised in recent literature regarding the value of metaphysics as it relates to *theologia*. Duby engages with contemporary theologians (notably Schleiermacher and Barth), who express reservations towards the profitability of metaphysics as a helpful tool for theology proper. He proceeds to make a positive case for a healthy relationship between *theologia* and metaphysics, drawing extensively from medieval and early reformation scholars. Duby establishes that the study of God *in se* can benefit from the use of metaphysical concepts, and, far from driving a wedge between God and creature, metaphysics is not the culprit for any chasm created between God's transcendence and his economy in the created world.

The final chapter defends an *analogia entis*, wherein humans use analogical language to describe God *in se*. The author provides an exposition of Aquinas's philosophy of language in the lineage of Aristotle's view of analogy. The representative sampling from medieval and early modern scholars focuses primarily on analogy and univocity, the latter being a concept developed in rich detail by Duns Scotus. Duby notes carefully the criticisms raised by Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg, who judge the general idea of *analogia entis* to be a theologically dangerous jump from the contingent world to truths about a divine cause (271). He then concludes that the use of the analogy of attribution is a fair and helpful resource in present-day discourse about God *in se* (291).

As a project in divine aseity, *God in Himself* is a success for several reasons. First, the concept of God *a se* is often thought to be an idea of medieval ratiocination. In recent theological musings, God's aseity is hardly touched upon; for this reason, Duby's work is a welcome contribution. What is more, the work is a masterpiece of classically inclined theology. Second, the book is robustly philosophical, stringing together the disciplines of epistemology, ontology, metaphysics, and philosophy of language with theology. As a work of theology, Duby's employment of solid hermeneutical principles—the book evidently assumes authorial intent and Scripture's inspiration—lays the foundation for sound exegetical conclusions. This is evident from the work's careful analysis of relevant texts of Scripture. Duby's dependence of Aquinas in no way eclipses the book's use of Scripture to engage with

and enlarge Aquinas' thoughts. Third, even if academically out of range for the lay person, the book is accessible, and its contents are easy to follow. The headings and subheadings sufficiently inform the reader about the contents and arguments of a section or chapter. Additionally, one can easily follow Duby's position in the process of dialoguing with his partners. Throughout the book, readers will find summaries of positions followed by the author's corresponding responses under the recurring heading "Response." The book's format, then, allows for a rather thorough and accurate skimming of its contents.

The book admittedly rests extensively on the shoulders of Aquinas; as is evident throughout, 20th century neo-orthodox, Barthian theology is presented as a challenger to Thomistic thought. One wonders, however, why Duby did not put forward arguments of theologians from the same century as Barth in defense of the work's thesis. This observation owes itself to the fact that metaphysics in theology has shifted somewhat in the 20th century. Analytic theology, coupled with modality in metaphysics, seems to have enjoyed a fruitful career in the last hundred years, a time when Christian philosophers have availed themselves of the opportunity to use metaphysics in their theological writings. Scholars such as Dean Zimmerman, Peter Van Inwagen, Brian Leftow, Michael Loux, and Alvin Plantinga (among many others), have published extensively in the intersection between metaphysics and theology. Most prominently, the metaphysics of modality seems to have taken center stage in the last several decades. It seems, therefore, that Duby's work would have benefitted from interacting with the contemporary defenders of natural theology.

At one juncture, Duby looks to Plantinga as one who objects to a type of natural theology based on classical foundationalism, a theory in epistemology that understands properly basic (foundational) beliefs as the bedrock from which justification is conferred to other beliefs (113-14). Duby contends that Aquinas is a classical foundationalist. Two things may be said in response. First, Plantinga's assessment of classical foundationalism is largely limited to his argument for an externalist epistemology (foundationalism is internalist); it is not a defense of or attack on natural theology. Second, in Plantinga's *Warrant* series, Aquinas and Calvin are used as models of what Plantinga calls, *sensus divinitatis*, a concept strongly in favor of Duby's thesis. Duby appeals to

the *sensus divinitatis* when engaging with Plantinga; however, it appears the discussion lacked sufficient exposition at that point.

These minor criticisms notwithstanding, *God in Himself* is of great service to theologians who appreciate philosophy, especially metaphysics. Should there be a second edition of this book, the inclusion of a glossary of terms would be helpful, as even the more academic reader may not be classically trained enough to thoughtfully engage with the work in an exhaustive fashion.

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***The Mirror or the Mask: Liberating the Gospels from Literary Devices*. By Lydia McGrew. Tampa: DeWard, 2019. 582 pp. $24.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1947929074.**

If ever a title of a book matched the season of its release and review, Lydia McGrew's *The Mirror and the Mask* takes pride of place. Can those around you see you smiling as you read this line? It depends if you are wearing a mask. If you are masked, it is likely because of the CDC guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

But perhaps your mask has come in useful for other reasons. Your mask might allow you to hide what would be an unwelcome facial expression in the eyes of your companions. McGrew argues against those Evangelical scholars who suggest that the authors of the Gospels purposefully employed compositional literary devices common to the genre of ancient biography in order to mask apparent discrepancies surrounding Jesus so that they might create a more persuasive account of Jesus' ministry. McGrew claims that such scholarship portrays the Evangelists as masking the historical events of Jesus' life rather than recognizing the Gospels as mirrors of what Jesus said and did.

McGrew has especially put Michael R. Licona and his book *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels? What we Can Learn from Ancient Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2016) in her crosshairs. Licona investigates nine of Plutarch's *Lives* where in thirty-six places Plutarch writes of the same historical event in multiple biographical sketches. Licona offers

that these thirty-six over-lapping accounts provide windows for Gospels scholars to investigate differences in material common to multiple Gospels. Licona concludes that differences in the Gospels reflect differences in the common material in Plutarch's *Lives*. Just as Plutarch creatively abbreviates, minimizes, compresses, highlights, and synthesizes events, so do the Evangelists.

McGrew notes that many Evangelicals accept the Literary Devices view articulated by Licona because if frees them from having to harmonize discrepancies in the Gospels, discrepancies that Licona and company explain via literary devices. The Historical Reportage view that McGrew advocates states that the Gospels mirror Jesus' ministry and that discrepancies in the Gospels can be harmonized. She argues that the differences in the Gospels should be attributed to the fact that the Evangelists based their compositions on different evidence and knowledge. For McGrew, the mirror and the mask are at odds. Four parts form her book: Masking History (3-63), Unmasking Ancient History (65-226), The Mirror: The Gospels as Historical Reports (227-330), and The Mirror and the Mask in Gospel Examples (331-487).

Reviewing a book of this size requires selection of what is presented. Readers may be interested to know how McGrew interacts with Bart D. Ehrman. Since Licona's Literary Devices theory attempts to address Ehrman and other skeptics of the Gospels, McGrew's Historical Reportage model must advance on multiple fronts if it is to win the day. In Part Four—The Mirror and the Mask in Gospel Examples, McGrew recounts one of Ehrman's proposed discrepancies in the Gospels: Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to His disciples. Ehrman notes that in Matt 28:7, the angel tells the women at the tomb to instruct the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee and in Matt 28:16-17 Jesus meets them in Galilee, whereas in Luke 24:49, Jesus tells the disciples to stay in Jerusalem. For Ehrman, these passages contradict each other. As noted, McGrew's *Mirror and Mask* is a rebuttal of the Literary Devices theory advanced by Mike Licona. Licona suggests that Luke used a literary device called Compression in which an author brings multiple geographical and temporal specifics together into a general account for the sake of artistic brevity. In this way, Luke highlights Jerusalem as the church's central geographic location, implicitly minimizing any historical interaction Jesus may have had with the disciples in Galilee.

McGrew will have nothing of compression as an explanation for the supposed contradiction between Matthew 28 and Luke 24. She argues that Luke 24, in accord with John 20-21, has Jesus first address the disciples in Jerusalem but later meeting them in Galilee (461-64). After meeting Jesus in Galilee, perhaps with many other disciples as Paul describes in 1 Cor 15:6, the eleven return to Jerusalem and wait there for the promise of power from on high (Luke 24:49). There is a contradiction here but not in the biblical text: McGrew contradicts Ehrman's and Licona's impulse to synthesize some of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. She argues that no Evangelist provides a full account of Jesus' post-resurrection interaction with the disciples and thus their reports should be seen as complimentary and not contradictory (465-67).

At points in Part Four—The Mirror and the Mask in Gospel Examples, McGrew also counters Evangelical scholars when they cite theological grounds, rather than literary devices, to dismiss events in the Gospels. She notes that Licona, Craig Keener, and Gary M. Burge doubt the historical veracity of John 20:22, that Jesus breathed and promised His disciples the Spirit (469-74). These scholars argue that Jesus' statement is in theological tension with the account of Pentecost in Acts 2. McGrew argues that there is no theological tension between John 20:22 and Acts 2. Since John says that Jesus breathed—but stops short of stating explicitly that Jesus breathed on the disciples—Jesus' actions do not stand in tension with the explicit statements that tongues of fire and the Spirit came upon the disciples in Jerusalem at Pentecost as Luke reports in Acts 2. McGrew understands Jesus' statement in John 20:22 as a prediction of Pentecost, not a competitor to it. There is no need to posit that John needs to include a Pentecost-like event since he was writing only one volume vis-à-vis Luke's account of Pentecost in volume two of his works.

Licona bases his Literary Devices theory on the widely held thesis that the Gospels resemble ancient biography. Since many ancient biographers were trained in Greco-Roman rhetorical techniques and wrote to persuade more than report, perhaps the Evangelists did the same. And, as Licona's thesis goes, perhaps differences in the Gospels result from the Evangelists' use of literary devices. Part Two—Unmasking Ancient History (65-226) is the largest section of McGrew's book. Here she attacks not only Licona's Literary Devices theory but even the idea that

the Gospels resemble ancient biography. She is not playing small ball. Since the publication of the first edition of Richard Burridge's *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), the New Testament guild has generally held that the Gospels reflect the genre of ancient biography. McGrew maintains that such a conclusion does not square with the traditional authorship ascribed to Matthew, Mark, and John—Jewish men of likely modest education, lacking the rhetorical acumen that characterized Hellenistic biographers. Though Luke may have had such training (Luke 1:1-4), the other Evangelists likely did not. Since Matthew, Mark, and John were not trained Hellenistic biographers, they could not have been aware of the literary devices that Licona identifies in the Gospels attributed to them. For McGrew, even if the Evangelists, like Luke, had such training, they would not have employed said devices at the expense of accurately reporting Jesus' ministry. The Evangelists were devoted to mirror-reporting, not masking the events of Jesus' life for persuasive purposes.

I think McGrew is right and wrong. Her counterpunches to Licona's analysis of specific texts in the Gospels are generally persuasive and place her Historical Reportage model on the epistemic high ground. But her manner of engagement consists of multiple low blows, against Licona especially. The book becomes *ad hominem*. I am also concerned with McGrew's thesis that Matthew, Mark, and John could not have had the literary and rhetorical skills of ancient biographers. It is not the case that ancient biography requires (mis)use of literary devices, as McGrew claims. It is to the issue of Gospels and biography that we turn next.

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***The First Biography of Jesus: Genre and Meaning in Mark's Gospel.* By Helen K. Bond. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020. 360 pp. $34.20, Hardcover. ISBN 978-0802874603.**

Helen K. Bond reads Mark with the assumption that its author intends to write a biography of Jesus. Mark, writing shortly after the destruction of the temple in AD 70, gathers the oral traditions in his circle and

arranges them to (1) provide a rational for Jesus' death, and (2) set out a new honor code for Jesus' followers—who believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Bond argues that Jesus, like ancient philosophers, is executed on account of His teaching. Mark utilizes the genre of biography because it allows him a structure for codifying, historicizing, Jesus and His unique ethical teaching for successive generations.

In chapters 1-2 ("Mark as Bios" [15-37] and "Ancient Bio" [38-77]) Bond notes that the Gospels are initially labeled as such in accord with Mark 1:1, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (CSB). But it is unclear if Mark intends the term "gospel" as a label to be applied to his whole work or just the message about Jesus. Bond offers that Matthew's and Luke's use of Mark—providing birth narratives and accounts of Jesus' post-resurrection ministry—suggest that they too are intending to write biographies of Jesus. Mark provides a first-run biography, amassing traditions of Jesus' life and teaching into a coherent narrative. Matthew and Luke supplement Mark's Gospel so that their Gospels are more biographical, not less. Though throughout the history of New Testament interpretation, scholars differ in their appraisals of the generic label for the Gospels, David Aune (*The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* [LEC 8; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987]) and Richard Burridge (*What are the Gospels: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992]) influence many modern scholars to recognize a high degree of correspondence between the Gospels and ancient biography. Bond notes that biography is a fluid genre, encompassing many subgenres. She concludes that the Gospel of Mark is best considered an intellectual biography, akin to Philo's *Life of Moses*, presenting Jesus as an esteemed religious sage.

But the form of Mark's Gospel and its contents differ from other ancient biographies. Bond notes in chapter 3, "Mark the Biographer" (78-120), that from a biography one can discern much about the biographer. Greco-Roman biographers call attention to themselves and use their subject to advocate this position or that one. Mark is in the shadows throughout. Mark's style reflects the Jewish histories and prophets of the LXX, where the author's focus on the subject matter and present themselves in service of the narrative at hand. In Chapter 4, "A Life of Jesus" (121-66), Bond notes the similarities and differences between Mark's portrayal of Jesus and the ways that ancient biographers portray their subjects. Jesus distinguishes Himself by evading worldly honor and

position. Bond, following David Watson, (*Honor Among Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010]) offers that the Messianic Secret can be understood as Jesus' attempt to eschew what the subjects of ancient biographies clamor for: notoriety and societal dominion. As biographers persuade their readers to admire and adopt the character of their subjects, Mark persuades his readers to subvert contemporary codes of honor and reconfigure the concept of glory around the cross upon which Jesus dies. Returning to the ways that Jesus differs from the subjects of other biographies, Bond notes that in Mark, Jesus is presented as a timeless figure. The absence of a birth narrative or account of Jesus' early days provides the reader with a view of Jesus' timelessness, authority, and other-worldly power. Though Jesus suffers and dies as a man in weakness, weak He is not. Indeed, as Bond writes in chapter 5 "Other Characters" (167-221), Mark arranges the twelve, Jewish leaders, and minor characters around Jesus' authoritative actions and teaching.

So how does Bond address Mark's account of Jesus' death and resurrection? Ancient biographers describe the death of their subjects for the purpose of elevating their subjects' honor and persuading their audience to follow the virtues their subjects espouse. In chapter 6 "The Death of Jesus" (222-52), Bond notes that Mark emphasizes Jesus' social and emotional suffering, assuming his readers knew of the physical suffering Jesus endures on His way to and upon the cross. In this way, Jesus' death is consistent with His teaching on suffering, service, and self-denial. Though Jesus' death differs from the honor-laden accounts of the deaths of ancient philosophers, Mark's account resembles the structure of ancient biography. Bond suggests that Mark writes the centurion's statement, "This man really was God's Son!" (Mark 15:39, HCSB), to confirm for his suffering audience that the social ostracism, emotional pain, and physical abuse they endure are consistent with their confession of Jesus as Lord. In Mark's account, God confirms Jesus' deity by darkening the sky and rending the temple curtain when Jesus is crucified—and then raising Jesus from death. Bond sees Mark's Gospel ending at Mark 16:8. The women running from the empty tomb in fear squares with Jesus' identity and teaching: those following Jesus as Son of God and Lord embrace danger and endure it despite fear of being opposed for their confession of faith.

In sum, Bond argues that a biographer's choices in what to present about their subjects provide a window into understanding the biographer himself. She suggests that the genre of biography provides Mark with a grid for expanding the stories of Jesus' death and resurrection to include accounts of Jesus' teaching and followers. In this way, Mark, as a biographer, goes beyond just portraying Jesus as an esteemed figure. Mark's Jesus is worthy of more than sentimental emulation. Mark is concerned that his readers grasp the privileges and dangers of Christian discipleship.

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***Four Portraits One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition.* By Mark L. Strauss. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020. 656 pp. $59.99, Hardcover. ISBN 978-0-310-52867-8.**

Upon opening the Gospels, it quickly becomes apparent that these are documents and stories that in some ways belong to another time. The careful reader encounters characters, groups, locations, customs, language, and imagery that seems foreign. Mark Strauss, Professor of New Testament at Bethel Seminary, has attempted to alleviate some of these issues for readers in his work *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels*. This is the second edition of this work which now includes "An updated bibliography, the introduction of new theories, new methods, a new section on geography, expanded discussion on various topics, and a significant increase in footnotes citing primary sources and seminal works" (26).

Four Portraits, One Jesus opens with a discussion on the genre of the Gospels. Strauss argues they are "historical narrative motivated by theological concerns" (36). He then moves on to introducing historical-critical methods of Gospel research. The synoptic problem, form criticism, and redaction criticism all receive attention. Part one closes with an assessment of various literary-critical research methods (e.g., narrative, rhetorical, performance, feminist, and liberationist). From these conversations, Strauss lays the groundwork for his approach to the

Gospels. They are historical documents and have a composition history. Each Gospel must first be read as a literary and theological unity, and readers must give attention to the historical context of the authors and original audience (110).

Part two sets out to help readers understand the Gospels' historical, religious, and social context. Strauss provides an overview of significant moments in Israel's history from 539 BC to the second century AD. Readers are then introduced to the beliefs, religious practices, and sects of Judaism. Special attention is given to prominent theological "trends" within first-century Judaism (e.g., apocalypticism). The final chapter of this section details what daily life might have been like for the average family in the New Testament world.

The third section of this book provides a "narrative and theological analysis" of each Gospel (212). After noting each work's central theme, Strauss shows how each Gospel's unique literary features, plot, characters, and theological themes develop this idea. Each of these chapters concludes with a discussion of the authorship, setting, and occasion of each Gospel. While providing evidence for various options, Strauss argues for the traditional authorship of each of the Gospels. This section of the book will help readers understand the unique contribution each of the Gospels makes to our understanding of Jesus.

The final section of the book provides a broad overview of the quests for the historical Jesus and then moves to scholarship related to critical events in the life of Christ. Initially, Strauss summarizes the key figures and movements which have made significant contributions in the field. This is done with an eye toward those whose work has led to "skepticism concerning the historicity of the Gospels" (416). Following a sketch of these key figures, Strauss turns his attention to introducing the traditional criteria of authenticity and modern portraits of Jesus which have emerged from these approaches. Finally, Strauss offers his own defense of the historical reliability of the Gospels, and then he treats key moments in the life of Jesus. This includes discussions on Jesus's birth, message, words, death, and resurrection. The book concludes with Strauss's affirmation that at the very least, we can know that Jesus considered himself "the center of God's unfolding purpose for Israel and the world" and that "Jesus did not remain in the tomb" (629).

Strauss has laid out the contents of this book in a clear and accessible way for readers who want to be introduced to Jesus, the Gospels, and

relevant scholarship in the field. While readers might find similar content in other introductions and surveys, it is Strauss's approach as a scholar which sets his work apart. The evenhandedness with which he interacts with scholars and theories he might disagree with is exemplary. Nowhere is this more apparent than in chapter eleven on "Searching for the Real Jesus." In a discussion on the conclusions of The Jesus Seminar, Strauss notes, "While evangelicals have often dismissed the Seminar as hopelessly biased and hostile toward orthodox Christianity…a number of seminar members have made significant contributions to biblical scholarship, and it is important to weigh the Seminar's claims on a case-by-case basis" (427). This approach is also evident in his handling of various historical and literary methods of studying the Gospels. This willingness to highlight both the strengths and weaknesses of any scholar's work or theory is a helpful model for any student who wants to engage the relevant scholarship.

This book has also been thoughtfully put together to facilitate learning for an individual reader or those using it in a classroom setting. Each chapter opens with an overview of key ideas and objectives. Each chapter's main content is then supplemented with pictures, maps, charts, and sidebar discussions that help immerse the reader in the topic at hand. For example, throughout several pages on the Gospel of Luke, the content of the Gospel is not merely described, but readers are also able to see the "winglet" of the temple where Satan tempted Jesus, a map of important events during Jesus's Galilean ministry, and an image of a first-century fishing boat (324-327). These kinds of aids are scattered throughout the book and bring the biblical text to life. Each chapter closes with a summary, key terms, discussion questions, and an updated bibliography for further study.

In a book this size that treats so much material, there will undoubtedly be individual conclusions with which someone might disagree. Readers may also want to consider that this is a thorough introduction and survey in terms of the kinds of issues discussed. For someone who immediately wants to dive into the biblical portrayals of Jesus, they need to know Strauss supplies over 200 pages of introductory material before turning his attention to the Gospels' contents. This is a much more robust work than a mere summary of the Gospels. However, those willing to engage will not only be better students of the Gospels themselves but contemporary scholarship on Jesus as a whole.

Four Portraits, One Jesus is worthy of a place on the shelf of any seminarian, pastor, or educated layperson. It is a work that can be read in its entirety or returned to repeatedly to refresh one's understanding of a host of relevant topics. Strauss's work is sure to help lay a solid foundation for fruitful study for anyone interested in coming to know Jesus and the Gospels at a deeper level.

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***The Mystery of the Trinity: A Trinitarian Approach to the Attributes of God*. By Vern Sheridan Poythress. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2020. 688 pp. $40.00, Hardcover. ISBN 978-1629956510.**

Vern Poythress teaches at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He has a Ph.D. in Mathematics from Harvard University. After teaching math for five years, he pursued theological training from Westminster Seminary, Cambridge University, and ultimately received a DTh from the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. He has authored over twenty books, including *Logic: A God-Centered Approach to the Foundation of Western Thought*, a textbook combining his mathematical training with his theological training. According to the Forward, *The Mystery of the Trinity* comes as a *magnum opus* drawing from all his work.

The author desires this book "to deepen our knowledge of God and his majesty" (xxiii). He sets out six challenges the work addresses along the contours of the most challenging questions in theology. These revolve around God's absoluteness and his relationship with creation and his people. Poythress proposes that the doctrine of the Trinity, while not dissolving the mystery, provides a program for a deeper understanding of the issues (xxv).

Poythress organizes 48 chapters in eight parts, adding five appendices. Appendix A reveals a sub-purpose of the book. The author wishes to bring a current controversy, polarized between "Classical Theism" and "Mutuality Theology," into closer dialogue. Calling his own view Christian Personalism, he allies his instincts with Classical Theism

while raising questions about whether the Trinity or an abstract philosophical notion of essence is ontologically basic (607).

Part 1 begins by raising basic questions and highlighting necessary resources for pursuing the project. Here, he highlights the impact of suppressing the truth on the issues (17). He also deploys John Frame's square of opposition between Christian and non-Christian ideas of transcendence and immanence.

In Part 2, Poythress summarizes Classical Christian Theistic views. Beginning with Paul's Athenian sermon, Poythress posits God's absoluteness and aseity (27). He concurs with this position contending, "God cannot change" (57). Also, God cannot be decomposed into parts (73). God is simple (69). And yet, God finds no difficulty in relating as absolute (59).

The mysteries of diversity in the Trinity form the discussion in Part 3. The author states that simplicity does not exclude the diversity of the Trinity (81). While many threefold analogies exist, no full model of the Trinity occurs in creation, leaving in place mystery (81). And even with the diversity of Persons, all three Persons work in unity *ad extra* (96).

Part 4 brings to bear the author's previous work on how beginning with the Trinity informs language. God establishes human language because God thinks and speaks. Humans communicate in language because they bear God's image (107). All human language about God is accommodated. Poythress unpacks this central point by looking at three categories of theological language, anthropomorphism, creaturely comparisons, and technical language (184). Arguing that the Trinity provides the basis for unity and diversity that language presupposes, he notes that the world's view exemplified through Plotinus has tension between unity and diversity (110).

Aristotle's views, philosophical categories, and the idea of essence make up the substance of Part 5. Poythress contends that these ideas and technical terms do not help as much as many assume (263). God can surprise us with categories of his own (225). Only God is ontologically basic (204).

Part 6, because of the historical review, forms the most extensive section in the book. Here, Poythress examines how Aquinas, the Reformers, Turretin, and Charnock interact with Aristotle and the six challenges. He mainly considers how each theologian relates the revealed diversity of attributes to the simplicity of God. For views not beginning

with the Trinity, the trajectory sees God providing unity and creation involving diversity (306).

In Part 7, the author begins his interaction with the issues. Concerned with the two errors of a mutualistic view of God and an overly static view of simplicity, he argues that the Trinity allows for a different approach. Yet this approach does not dissolve the mystery even of God and his relation to creation (469). Poythress believes that the Trinity's identity and diversity provide the paradigm for understanding the identity and diversity of attributes in God (546). He cautions against language that sees God's revelation of himself as "merely" or "seemingly," which posits a less accessible real understanding of God (550).

Part 8 quickly surveys the attributes of love, mercy, will, and the knowledge of God considering the previous discussion. The author concludes by saying this book does not end the discussion but provides for the beginning of a discussion (589).

Poythress begins with a personal reflection and then offers the first three appendices that address the current controversy. In an irenic tone, Poythress pushes back mainly against the categorization of theistic mutualism by James Dolezal[7] (603). Appendix B offers some suggestions for Classical Christian theists. Appendix C offer suggestions for Christian personalists. In Appendix D, Poythress suggests dropping the language of God's essence because it only confuses issues (627). Appendix E offers a previously published article on "The Meaning of Accommodation."

Poythress writes *The Mystery of the Trinity* in an accessible and non-intimidating manner that encourages meditation. The reader immediately notices a different tone within the work. Although climbing the heights, Poythress offers the work as non-technical as possible. Footnotes only occur when necessary. The chapters are short, not wearying the reader. At the end of each chapter, the author provides questions for further study, central terms keyed to the glossary, and resources for further reading. He also connects the chapter's subject to Christ's resurrection and a prayer. These prayers occur through the appendices and focus on the majesty and mystery of God.

Second, Sinclair Ferguson commends a pastoral and irenic tone in the Forward. This tone frequently occurs with what this reviewer calls the

[7] James Dolezal, *All that is in God* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017).

Apollos principle. In Acts 18, when Priscilla and Aquilla correct Apollos about baptism, they approach him, noting his accuracy but encouraging "more accurate" views. This approach surpasses a simplistic right and wrong approach. While critiquing Aquinas, Poythress says about the accuracy of his ideas, "Aquinas is to be commended" (317). He notes that the Classical Christian theists are rightly “zealous for Transcendence” (611). Poythress suggests differences reflect only *modus loquendi*, as when he asks, “whether the underlying intent of authors may be better than their actual wording” (603). Poythress summarizes this oft-neglected feature of theological discourse, saying, "We listen in love, expecting the best" (192).

In addition to abundant charts illustrating the author’s ideas, he also offers compelling illustrations for his key arguments. Two stand out. Comparing finite human understanding and the infinite God to a two-story house, Poythress suggests that the philosophical approach sees the solution through philosophy as a “back staircase” only the experts can access (336-7). For the author, only Christ provides the stairway to heaven (487). Noticing two opposite dangers to the main questions, Poythress compares an overemphasis on transcendence to a black hole and an over-emphasis on immanence to quicksand (441, 475). Both can suck in thinkers. Both defeat themselves.

Poythress maintains his argument successfully throughout the book. Rather than seeing mystery as an escape route from difficult questions, he holds that all these issues have at their heart the mystery of the Trinity. The author shows that mystery frames the argument rather than provides an escape from explanation because of the Trinity. He clearly shows his commitment to Classical Christian Theism (57). Yet, he suggests that the view needs enhancement (489). This enhancement comes by beginning with the one and the many in the Trinity as equally ultimate (300). Christians should start with the Trinity as ontologically basic rather than starting with an abstract idea of being or essence (299). Poythress summarizes his labors saying, “Lest there be any doubt, every point made in this book is filled with and surrounded by mystery; ultimately deriving from the mystery of the Trinity” (476).

Dr. Poythress consistently deploys the ideas of archetype and ectype throughout the book. His definition states; “ectype. A derivative example, which reflects the original. The original is called the archetype” (651). While this definition provides a basic understanding of the

concepts, it leaves out key features and the terms' vital theological history. Franciscus Junius first employs the terms.[8] He uses archetypal theology to refer to God's understanding of himself, an understanding that finite creatures cannot access. God provides an ectypal or accommodated revelation of himself through revelation, which is analogical. By his use of analogy and accommodation, the author appears to be familiar with this theology (Appendix E). Unfortunately, the author also confuses analogy with poetic metaphor blurring the primary theological point of ectypal theology (152). Poythress uses the archetype/ectype distinction between a blueprint and its product or a principle and an application. These uses somewhat apply Junius's and the Reformed scholastics' use of the concepts. But without the theological background, the author runs the risk of establishing univocal thinking while arguing for analogical thinking.

This lack of clarity leads the author to misuse the archetype/ectype distinction. According to Junius, God accommodates ectypal theology for humanity. However, Poythress describes the plurality of the attributes as "an ectypal reflection of the archetype, the diversity of persons" (370). If the diversity of attributes is ectypal, then their plurality is only from a human point of view, the very point he counters throughout the book. Elsewhere, he says that "The distinction between God and the world reflects on a lower level the prior, archetypal distinction between the Father and the Word" (575). Perhaps Poythress only means what he notes Bavinck saying earlier, that without an *ad intra* distinction in the Trinity, there can be no *ad extra* distinction of God in the world (367).

Last, Poythress does not thoroughly discuss the one and the many, although he interacts with it at places (112). He sees the Trinity as an equally ultimate one and many (385). However, he seems to approach the Bible's teaching as a middle way (506). Behind the inverted views of transcendence and immanence lies an inverted one and many. Poythress, unfortunately, does not discuss this relationship.

These criticisms notwithstanding, the overall argument of *The Mystery of the Trinity* requires earnest attention. The serious student of the six challenging questions will find the book interesting and

[8] Willem van Asselt, "The Fundamental Meaning of Theology: Archetypal and Ectypal Theology in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Thought," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 64, no. 2 (2002): 319–335.

enlightening. Scholarship that ignores *The Mystery of the Trinity* ignores a major contribution to the discussion. Admirably, for such an insightful book, Poythress writes so that the serious layperson can also benefit.

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***The Ascension of Christ: Recovering a Neglected Doctrine*. By Patrick Schreiner. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020. 120 pp. $15.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1683593973.**

Each addition to the Snapshots Series, edited by Michael F. Bird, introduces a doctrine of the Christian faith in an accessible and engaging manner. *The Ascension of Christ: Recovering a Neglected Doctrine* by Patrick Schreiner is an important addition to the series that invites readers to explore the ascension of Christ. By the ascension (rising), Schreiner means Jesus' going up into heaven at the completion of his earthly mission. Schreiner argues that this doctrine serves as the bedrock for understanding Christ's life on earth and his continued work in heaven: "The continuing reign and life of the enthroned Christ is the theological core and narrative heart of Acts and the basis for the rest of the New Testament" (xiii).

A brief survey among a seminary class of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith will most certainly yield responses most familiar to anyone who has studied systematics: Christology, hamartiology, eschatology, etc. A select few, however, would respond with the ascension of Christ. A brief survey of the NT will yield very little explicit discussion regarding Jesus' ascension into heaven, but, according to Schreiner, this is not a good reason to avoid this pivotal event. Although the customary word for "ascent" (*anabasis*), is nowhere to be found in the NT, the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King (*munus triplex*) of the Messiah is culminated in this single event.

Schreiner establishes his work, not as a biblical theological treatise spanning the full scope of the Scriptures but rather using this event as "a key plot moment" or "a hinge on which Christ's work turns" (xvi). He begins with a brief discussion of reasons for neglecting the ascension. For

instance, at first glance, this plan may seem counterintuitive to the mission of the Messiah. Schreiner notes that "Jesus' life is good. Jesus' death is good. Jesus' resurrection is good. Jesus' ascension…we have questions" (3). Jesus would have made things like evangelism easy.

Another reason for overlooking the ascension, and perhaps the most significant, is the manner by which the Scriptures speak about the resurrection and the ascension. Luke 24:26, for instance, gives the impression that these two events are conceptually one. Far from one single event, the resurrection is the first act of a glorious unfolding that climaxes with Christ sitting on his throne. The ascension represents the culmination of Christ's threefold office.

Turning from reasons for its neglect, Schreiner then presents his readers with five reasons *not* to neglect this doctrine. Here Schreiner addresses head-on the rarity of explicit references to the ascension. He rebuts that all of the NT authors were simply writing with the assumption that the ascension had taken place and was immensely important: "The ascension revealed the Messiah's exaltation and triumph, finished his work on the earth, guaranteed his current sovereignty, broke the barrier between heaven and earth, thus pouring out the Spirit, and pledged his return" (11).

The centrality of the ascension is further demonstrated by its canonical placement. The narrative flow of the Gospel of Luke into the book of Acts hinges on the ascension: "If Acts pushes readers into a new phase of the story of God's work in this world, then at the center of this shift is the departure of Christ" (13).

Having established the importance of the ascension of Christ, Schreiner pivots and focuses on the *munus triplex*. As the Prophet, Christ's departure beckoned the arrival of his manifold presence. When Jesus ascended to his place at the right hand of God, the Spirit was offered promising that "Christ was not absent in the fullest sense" (33). In other words, the Spirit carried the presence of God *everywhere* when Christ ascended into heaven.

It is quite common to hear Jesus referred to as the Prophet, but far less "routine" (47) to refer to him as Priest. But this is precisely what he is. Christ lived out the role of priest on earth so he could then be "*installed* as the priest in heaven" (47). Jesus was not only the fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood, but more so the eternal High Priest who actively intercedes for his people. Without the ascension, Jesus is no

more than an earthly priest. But as a result of the resurrection and ascension, Jesus is not merely "an earthly priest, but a heavenly priest with a glorified body" (59), who serves in a better place: heaven (61).

Lastly, on earth, Jesus arrived as an unassuming King, born in a manger, and raised in poverty to be a carpenter. But Jesus was the *true* King. All of the previous kings of Israel were "idealized portraits" who were unable to live up to their calling to abide by the Torah and rule the people. But at the ascension, the true King takes his place in glory at the right hand of the Father to "rule in a new way in all righteousness and justice" (82). The ascension is pivotal in understanding Jesus as fulfilling the roles of Prophet, Priest, and King, and recognizing his continued activity on the throne.

Schreiner masterfully weaves the thread of Christ's threefold offices all the while highlighting the importance of the ascension. Since the ascension, Christ not only continues his work, but "he granted authority, gave gifts to his church, and blessed his people so that they might be prophets, priests, and kings on earth" (116). Far from a bad plan, the ascension of Christ was the perfect plan, invigorating the people of God to carry on the work of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Although this work is short, it carries a weight of importance of a volume many times its size. *The Ascension of Christ* is highly recommended to readers of all levels as they recover a neglected doctrine.

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***The Subversive Puritan: Roger Williams, Freedom of Conscience and Church and State*. By Mostyn Roberts. Durham, UK: Evangelical Press, 2019. 257 pp. $16.99 Paperback. ISBN 978-1-78397-247-0.**

What makes a historical figure relevant for the present day? This is the overarching question asked by Mostyn Roberts in *The Subversive Puritan: Roger Williams and Freedom of Conscience*. Roberts is pastor of Welwyn Evangelical Church and a former lecturer in Systematic Theology at London Seminary. Roberts combines the heart of a pastor with careful regard for furthering the academic conversation on Roger Williams to

provide a work that seeks to demonstrate the relevance of Williams and helps to introduce him to the unacquainted.

Roberts's presentation of Williams seeks to accomplish two goals: to tell the story of Williams life and answer three questions that "particularly absorbed Roger Williams and which still concern us today" (19). These three questions are "is liberty of conscience something we should treasure and protect?... what should be the relation between church and state?... how important is religion to the existence and stability of a society?" (19). *The Subversive Puritan* is therefore more than a biography; it is a work that seeks to show that a historical figure such as Roger Williams should be studied for more than just the interesting aspects of his life but because of the ongoing relevance of his ideas to the contemporary world.

The Subversive Puritan consists of fifteen chapters that can be divided into two broad categories. Chapters 1-11 are a biography of Roger Williams while chapters 12-15 are Roberts's analysis of Williams's relevance. The biography of Williams is organized in a chronological fashion and explores the major events of Williams's life as well as Williams's writings. The analysis portion seeks to answer the three questions driving Roberts's work through exploring and engaging with Williams's writings and life.

While the life story of Williams comprises most of this work, Roberts argues that Williams is "more important for why he did things than for what he accomplished" (17). This is in keeping with Roberts's goal of showing Williams's relevance to a contemporary audience. The historical facts of Williams's life serve only as the context for the more significant contribution of Williams, which according to Roberts is his obsession with liberty of conscience (17). Liberty of Conscience is the unifying theme for Roberts that ties the events of Williams's life together. Williams is presented as a figure who challenged established norms as a matter of Christian conviction, thus making him an exemplar for any present-day figure seeking to follow conscience.

Roberts's analysis of Williams situates him into the present-day conversation on issues of religious freedom and church and state. Roberts argues that contemporary figures who value individual liberty owe much to Williams (197-199). For Roberts adhering to a belief in liberty of conscience even within a secular society owes much to the Christian doctrine of humanity. Thus, contemporary Christians are

uniquely qualified to address religious liberty issues due to the theological framework necessary for understanding conscience (199-200). It is this theological framework that Roger Williams provides to contemporary audiences, as he derives his position from a theological as opposed to secular basis.

While Roberts states that all those who value freedom of conscience owe a debt of gratitude to Williams, his primary relevance is to modern day Christians. Williams serves to remind Christians "where the influence of the gospel ultimately comes from" (228). Williams is an example when Christians are in a minority position in society that Christians should "do what good we can in politics and society…but Christians should primarily be working for the coming of Christ's kingdom, not focusing on preserving or retrieving a so-called Christian culture" (228).

Mostyn Roberts clearly believes that Roger Williams is a voice that should be heard in the present-day discussion of religious liberty and the relationship of church and state. Roberts's work is a helpful addition to the conversation on Roger Williams and is both a biography and a call to action. Roberts presents the basic facts of Williams's life in a compelling manner that encourages the reader to both sympathize with Williams and see Williams in a contemporary light. One key strength to Roberts's presentation of Williams is in his discussion on the historical context of the relationship between church and state in Colonial New England. In this respect, Chapter 5 "The New England Way" is the most valuable chapter in the work. In this chapter, Roberts describes the relationship of church and state in Colonial New England that while in theory church and state were separate, the state was believed to be the "nursing father to the church" (74). This relationship of church and state meant that the state had a vested interest in the promotion of godliness in society as it created a virtuous and healthy society (81). Roberts points out that this was the primary point of contention between Williams and the political and religious leaders of Colonial Massachusetts and thus frames the context for understanding Williams. Williams lived in an era different from the contemporary world and Williams's struggles over conscience were the result of a context that was fundamentally theological as opposed to dominated by a secular mindset. Williams remained a devout Christian throughout his life and it was his religious convictions that led him to challenge both church and state. This continued Christian

conviction becomes the point for Roberts to see Williams as an exemplar for the contemporary struggle for Religious Freedom.

Roberts's presentation of Williams, while helpful in many areas, also suffers from a tendency to move beyond biography and analysis to polemical presentation. While Williams's ideas have relevance to contemporary discussions on freedom of conscience, Williams operated within a context far removed from the modern day. To treat Williams as authoritative on contemporary issues is to commit the fallacy of anachronism. Williams lived and thought within a historical context that shaped and informed what Williams did and believed. William's ideas help inform the contemporary discussion on freedom of conscience by providing a theological framework for such views, but Williams's relevance is found more in his contribution to the historical development of the idea of religious liberty than in the direct application of his ideas to the contemporary debate.

Roberts attempts to show Williams's relevance by seeing him as a minority voice against a majority that does not value individual conscience. Roberts appears to see this as roughly equivalent to the contemporary context for Christians. Roberts's audience is intended to be professing Christians which may create an echo chamber tendency in which Robert's ideas, and by extension Williams's ideas, are not challenged by those who hold to a secular viewpoint. While this tendency lessens the impact of the book and the potential audience of the work, it in no way degrades the overall value of this work for the theological student of religious liberty. *The Subversive Puritan* would be a helpful addition to the library of a pastor or those interested in the development of religious freedom as an idea.

Roger Williams is an important figure for study by anyone wishing to understand issues related to religious freedom and the relationship of church and state. Mostyn Roberts is helpful for any Christian unfamiliar with Williams and provides a helpful introduction to his thought and relevance, but should be read with an eye toward appreciating the impact of a historical figure and the impact that ideas have upon history.

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***The Letter to the Hebrews: A Commentary for Preaching, Teaching, and Bible Study*. By Jon Laansma. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017. 380 pp. $37.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4982-9321-1.**

There are those rare occasions where the logistics of one's travel situation are such that they may have to debase themselves with the indignity of ingesting airline food. No one raves about *Sky High Airline's* chicken-a-la-king or their mile-high-mini-corndogs. As a matter of fact, to make an apology for airline food is akin to telling others that the hounds of hell are lovable and cuddly. Indeed, airline food is sometimes not fit for consumption. The same could be said about some Bible commentaries too. However, that would not be true of Jon Laansma's *The Letter to the Hebrews: A Commentary for Preaching, Teaching, and Bible Study*.

Laansma, Associate Professor of Greek and New Testament at Wheaton College and Graduate School, has not only written a thoughtful compendium of exegesis in his commentary of Hebrews but also provides a practical-pastoral guide that is helpful to the task of biblical application. Of great significance is Laansma's useful introduction that does a capable job elucidating those standard features of commentaries: the book's outline, the book's original context, and the canonicity of the epistle. However, what sets Laansma's commentary apart from those more technical commentaries (i.e. William Lane's *Word Biblical Commentary: 47A and 47B* [2015] and Gareth Lee Cockerill's *The Epistle to the Hebrews: New International Commentary on the New Testament* [2012]) is how effortlessly the author illuminates the key themes of the book without making the reader enter the purgatory of highbrow intellectualism. Instead, this commentary is built for those pastors who have their feet firmly grounded in the trenches of gospel ministry—in the blood and the muck of their people. A people who needs to be warned on the one hand "Do not turn back!" and, on the other hand, be encouraged that "Heaven is reclaiming earth (46-48)."

Laansma helps the reader to see Hebrews as a Spirit-inspired sermon with three parts: first, exordium (introduction); 1:1-4:13; second, "the central exposition," 4:14-12:29; and finally, the peroration (conclusion); 13:1-7. Furthermore, Laansma splits the epistle into "thirty-seven-units," that can easily be used as a road map for a pastor's expository preaching schedule (8). Additionally, the author provides over 300 pages of commentary with a helpful application after each section, enabling the

preacher/teacher to expound upon, in a wide array, the practical implications of the letter of Hebrews to the life of a believer.

Of course, a commentary on Hebrews is not only of interest to a pastor simply for the benefits of dense application. Sometimes exegetes come to a commentary on Hebrews for the same reason people watch *NASCAR*—they want to see if the writer will be able to make it safely around the hairpin turns or to watch them crash and burn. Such dangerous turns are exemplified in Hebrews 6:4-6. Laansma rightly calls 6:4-6 "one of the difficult texts of Scripture (143)." The text concerns the state of "lapsed Christians," and it raises a crucial point: *Can those who have been genuinely saved fall away from the faith they once confessed?* This is especially applicable to those situations where some Christians have been forced into situations where they must either deny Christ before men to save their lives, or else confess Christ before men and risk being killed. Could those who denied Christ publically be readmitted into the church later, when it was safe to do so? Bishops, theologians, and pastors have groaned over this text and its implications for 2,000 years.

Laansma's treatment of Heb 6:4-6 is careful in his analysis and pastoral in his concern, which is commendable. Nevertheless, as clear as he is throughout his commentary, he runs the risk of being too ambiguous here. Pastors purchase commentaries for these precise situations—so it is incumbent upon the commentator to be as blunt as possible. Likewise, it seems that Laansma's argument stands against what the writer is trying to accomplish, which is to dissuade people from committing apostasy. Laansma even goes so far as to say, "Hebrews takes for granted that all believers continually sin and must therefore approach the throne of grace" (147). Furthermore, Laansma explains that "The temptation to use this passage as a means of frightening people or exercising power over them has probably always been strong, but this abuse must be avoided. Even Jesus in Matthew 12 did not declare that anyone had actually committed the sin that would not be forgiven."

Let the reader take note, that even as Laansma cites Matthew 12 to strengthen his argument, he also fails to harmonize it with the neighboring words of Jesus that say, "…whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (Mt 12:32). Laansma would have done himself and the reader a service if he had a brief excursus on *the unpardonable sin* (Mk 3:29; Hb 10:29) and how this might relate to Hebrews 6:4-6. In fairness to Laansma, he does

explain that the "dangers" of this text need to be communicated but with the proper amount of "sensitivity to the applications and fears that have grown up around it (149)."

Out of the hairpin turn of Hebrews 6, the author should be commended for his ability to bring together the Old Testament and New Testament parallels and make them discernible through his writing and the use of a small section of illustrations in his treatment of Hebrews 9. Likewise, the author's explication of Hebrews 11 on "faith" brings no new interpretation, but it does bring a fresh application. Consider Laansma's assessment that, "Faith has nothing itself but finds all things in God to whom it looks" (269). Further appealing is Laansma's earthy tone and polite disposition which is displayed throughout this work.

Ultimately, Laansma's work lands where it should, "Hebrews requires us resolutely to inhabit and commend the dream of the cleansing sacrifice that alone brings salvation for all people" and graciously gives faith that "strains toward the promise of a different city; a heavenly one, for here we have no abiding city (284)." I think there are points along the way where Laansma used a feather when he should have used a hammer (64-65; 143-147 [Heb 2:1-4; 6:4-6]). However, in the grand scheme of biblical interpretation the author's masterful way of illuminating Christology, covenant, atonement, and the kingdom was not only helpful to the reader's understanding but genuinely spurred the reader to Godly devotion.

Given a choice between say, Albert Mohler's sermon-based-abstract-commentary—*Christ Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Hebrews* (2017) or Laansma's commentary—I would push you in the direction of Laansma's commentary, but given that Mohler's commentary is only $9.99 on Kindle I would encourage you to buy both (at the time of this writing you could get Laansma's commentary on Kindle for $9.99 too). My point is this: Laansma's commentary offers capable exegesis, robust theology, and solid-gold application. Consume away.

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***Jacques Derrida*. By Christopher Watkin. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2017. 148 pp. $14.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1629952277.**

Christopher Watkin received his Ph.D. from Jesus College, Cambridge. He is a senior lecturer in French Studies at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. He works in the original French in both literary and philosophical disciplines, having also written *French Philosophy Today: New Figures of the Human in Badiou, Meillassoux, Malabou, Serres, and Latour*. After this present work on Derrida, Watkin has also written *Foucault* for the Great Thinkers series. These factors give him significant credentials for writing *Jacques Derrida*.

Many people misunderstand Jacques Derrida, and Christopher Watkin hopes to provide a better understanding of the influential philosopher. The author follows the idea of *audi alteram partum*, "hear the other side" or understanding before you critique (xxv, xi). In the first section, Watkin explains Derrida's views in three chapters. In the second section, he interacts with those views through a Reformed and specifically Van Tillian approach in two chapters.

In Chapter 1, Watkin addresses the question, "What is deconstruction?" Going over the central ideas of logocentrism, phonocentrism, and *differance*, the author shows that Derrida does not promote meaninglessness but openness (2). He also considers Derrida's famous saying, "There is nothing outside of the text," noting that many frequently misunderstand it (6). For Derrida, this phrase means that texts cannot signify anything beyond the text, not that realities do not exist beyond the text. As Merold Westphal says in the Forward, "It is a theory about the finitude of language and meaning, its inherent incompleteness and indeterminacy" (xii). Watkin adds that for Derrida, deconstruction is not a method that someone applies to texts like a cookie-cutter, but a recognition of the nature of any text's indeterminacy (21).

Chapter 2 explains that Derrida's method inherently speaks to politics and ethics. Because of *differance*, texts involve hierarchical binaries. These binaries can lead to violence (32). But Derrida does believe that a justice that transcends the text is not deconstructable (40). Watkin also shows the error of the critique that Derrida's view of deconstruction implies relativism, a common misunderstanding (28). He says, "Derrida insists, 'I am no relativist' because the term describes a 'way of referring

to the absolute and denying it'" (29). Relativism does not apply because Derrida holds to the incommensurability of language, not the relativism of "truths" (29). Watkin also explains Derrida's view of gift, that it intrinsically involves reciprocity. Pages 38-9 provide a chart on gift and its relation to the absolute and conditional in all of Derrida's works.

Chapter 3 describes Derrida's work concerning theology or what he critiques as "ontotheology." This idea is behind all western philosophy (43). It posits a God that provides for the rationally exhaustible self-presence that guarantees a text's self-identifying meaning (47). Watkin states that Derrida has Aristotle's Unmoved Mover in mind (46). Derrida, for similar reasons for denying relativism, also denies atheism because it involves a binary (43). The last part of this chapter explains why Derrida rejects messianisms because of the concept of openness. This rejection even includes Marxist concepts of messianism (48).

In Part Two, Watkin suggests a different approach to Derrida, not those of the past who either want to praise or bury Derrida (56). He offers engagement within a Van Tillian framework. In Chapter 4, Watkin notes the lack of interaction by Van Tillians (57). Here, he critiques some of John Frame's views on Derrida, who he admits this present work also utilizes (58). The main criticism follows Frame's charge that Derrida is a subjectivist (59). He also argues that Van Tillians should resonate with Derrida's emphasis on epistemological self-awareness (66). However, the author does critique Derrida for an exaggeration of the opaqueness of language (69).

In the last chapter, Watkin compares Van Til and Derrida in light of the incarnation described in the text of John 1:1-18. The author explains and applies Van Til's central idea that the one and the many are equally ultimate in the Trinity (87). Watkin shows that thought outside of the Bible privileges the one over the many (120). Christianity teaches absolute personal theism (79). He also introduces a tool he calls diagonalization, which critiques views considering problems of the one and the many (82). Watkin also suggests that the issue of the finitude of language finds a solution in the "top-down" idea that God reveals himself in accommodated words to his creatures (100). The author concludes *Derrida* calling for further reflection and critique of the concepts of equal ultimacy and diagonalization (125). He also provides a glossary and an annotated bibliography divided between select and additional references.

The irenic and dialogical tone of the work immediately strikes the reader. Watkin certainly demonstrates the ideal he espouses of *audi alteram partum*. Throughout the work, the author takes pains to portray the thought of Derrida accurately. The author's willingness to critique John Frame, while confessing his reliance on some of the Frame's ideas, shows his commitment to fairness (64). He also critiques William Edgar, another student of Van Til, for inaccurate popular portrayals of deconstruction (63). Watkin could have easily found 'infelicitous" comments from critics outside of the Van Tillian world (58).

Following this dialogical tone, Watkin also carries on a dialog of similarities and differences between Derrida and Van Til's works. He shows that both men have concerns over the limitations of language, although for different reasons. He also shows that both thinkers believe that context and pre-interpretation affect the meaning of texts (109). Van Til argues that based on the Absolute Personal Theism of the Bible, all facts and information have a prior pre-interpretation by God. Christians grow in their approximation of that correct interpretation (109). As noted above, both thinkers emphasize the need for self-awareness in epistemology. Watkin rightly says Van Tillians should welcome this shared concern (67).

The most significant feature of the work comes in Watkin's analysis of the one and many in the last chapter. This area of Van Til's thought often finds little notice, perhaps because many misunderstand his concern. Watkin correctly points out that non-biblical thinking often privileges the one or unity over the many or diversity. Derrida's philosophy emphasizes the many, but according to Watkin, it still presupposes the centrality of unity through favoring structure above determination (54, 89). Watkin's idea of diagonalization applies and corrects this misconstrual of the one and the many by philosophy. He shows this in the areas of gift, justice, and abstraction and particularization. Christians who follow his request for further refinement of these two areas will find a fruitful area of study.

Although Watkin utilizes many of Van Til's themes in *Jacques Derrida*, a lack of a discussion of Van Til's analogy idea leaves a gap in the work. The ideas of pre-interpretation, accommodation, and the one and the many all bear on Van Til's concept of analogy. However, a direct discussion of analogy would answer directly the concern about "the exhaustively present in an absolute logos" that Derrida discusses (13).

For Van Til, analogy emphasizes that although we do not have direct access to God's self-knowledge, we do have the truth. Derrida works from the idea that the Other is Wholly Other (29). Van Til's idea of analogy addresses this because while God's essence is inaccessible to humans, accommodated knowledge of God is not (13). God is other but not inaccessible.

At the beginning of the second part in Chapter 4, the title promises a comparison between Van Til and Derrida. But the reader waits for any real explanation of Van Til's views. Although Watkin compares Van Til and Derrida in the chapter, very little comes by way of introduction to those comparisons. Such an introduction becomes necessary considering the well-documented lack of understanding of Van Til's thought and ideas. Thankfully, by the end of the next chapter, Watkin deploys many of Van Til's basic concepts, and the astute reader can put together the main contours of Van Til's thought except for his views on analogy. Perhaps Watkin assumes his readers are acquainted with Van Til. But someone unfamiliar with him would benefit from a summary before the analysis.

Watkin deftly applies Van Til's Trinitarian thought to Derrida's philosophy. However, Watkin calls this the "third great pillar" of Van Til's thought, along with the Creator-creature distinction and absolute personality (87). However, Watkin quotes Van Til from his *Introduction to Systematic Theology* as saying that the one and the many coheres in the Trinity and "our knowledge rests on the ontological Trinity as its presupposition" (90). Perhaps, in the order Watkin presents these ideas, and they all matter, the Trinity comes third. From the Van Til quote, the Trinity comes first epistemologically because God provides the presupposition for all knowledge. The main critique of Derrida flows from offering a different presupposition for knowledge.

These criticisms are intramural and seek to strengthen the overall presentation by Watkin. Anyone who wishes to understand the fundamental thought of Derrida can benefit from Christopher Watkin. As an added benefit, the reader will also find a better understanding of Cornelius Van Til.

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***Orthodox Radicals: Baptist Identity in the English Revolution*. By Matthew C. Bingham. Oxford: University Press, 2019. Pp. xi + 234. $105.00, Hardcover. 978 0 19 091236 9**

A former doctoral student under Crawford Gribben at Queen's University Belfast, Matthew Bingham has established himself as a significant voice in English Separatist and Puritan studies. Bingham now holds a position as Tutor of Systematic Theology and Church History at Oak Hill Theological College in London. Though his published works are few, his papers and journal articles written at Queen's University are historio-ecclesiological in nature and are chiefly concerned with addressing what he considers to be historiographical errors made by church historians in the past. Bingham has also written, *On Being Reformed*, published in 2018, in which he and Gribben argue for a more ecumenical application of Calvinism to certain historical figures who traditionally have not been included in the Reformed mainstream. *Orthodox Radicals* is yet another controversial work by Bingham which is meant to "challenge" the traditional way of understanding Baptist identity in the 17th Century "by presenting a significant reinterpretation of the group known by historians as Particular or Calvinistic Baptists during the English Revolution and Interregnum" (4). Bingham claims that his book will fill the void in scholarship as the first "holistic, theologically sensitive yet historically rigorous study of 17th Century Particular Baptists" (7). Furthermore, he claims that the material in question has yet "to be subject to sustained, critical inquiry" (7). His prognostications alone warrant the query of those interested in the English Reformation or Baptist studies.

As the title aptly suggests, this new work by Bingham is chiefly concerned with identifying key figures who have traditionally been referred to as "Baptists" during the early to mid -17th century in England. He claims that Baptist historians have "been writing their own story for some three hundred years," and that denominational historians of the Baptist persuasion have not shown "fidelity to the early modern record" (1). *Orthodox Radicals* is therefore, no doubt, an attempt to set the record straight rather than merely add to an existing corpus of denominational historiography.

The book follows the chronological development of English Baptists, or *baptistic congregationalists*, as Bingham characterizes them. He begins to poke holes into traditional Baptist historiography in chapter one by

challenging the thought that there once existed a pan-Baptist identity which included both General and Particular Baptists, respectively. Rather than one Baptist identity being forged through a unified rejection of pedobaptism, and then subsequently dividing over soteriology, Bingham claims that the genesis of baptistic churches in London began as a "communal reassessment," stemming from the unavoidable implications of congregational polity upon the separatist and semi-separatist churches which embraced it (16). He uses the Jessey Circle as evidence to support his claims. He also uses John Spilsbery, the Church of Hexham, and General Baptist Luke Howard to add force to his argument. The Jessey church and other "Particular Baptist" churches were simply "practitioners of the Congregational Way emerging from and associated with the brand of religious dissent pioneered by Henry Jacob in 1616" (36).

Chapter two provides an argument for why Bingham wants his readers to consider Particular Baptists before 1660 as Congregationalists with different understandings of baptism, rather than Baptists with different understandings of soteriology (40). Particular Baptists, as we know them, were cut from the cloth of a wider fellowship of Congregationalists who shared the same Calvinistic soteriology. Baptist historians have erred, according to Bingham, in that they have repeatedly misaligned the Particular Baptists of this period with a pan-Baptist fellowship which included General Baptists. Again, the Jessey circle comes into prominence in this part of Bingham's argument. Bingham also challenges Steven Wright's work on the same subject, accusing him of downplaying the importance of soteriology in drawing lines of demarcation between the Particular and General Baptists of this time period. In sum, Bingham's second chapter highlights the close ties of fellowship between Particular Baptists and other non-baptistic Congregationalists, while simultaneously showing the discontinuity between the Particular and the General Baptists.

Bingham reinforces his argument in the third chapter by showing how, as time progressed toward toleration, baptistic Congregationalists emerged from other Congregationalist churches. The Half-Way Covenant which extended to the infants of believing parents was embraced by some, but not others. Bingham challenges the long-held assertion that believer's baptism was somehow embraced by some novel "crude biblicism" (66). If it emerged in the 1640's from biblicism, why not

earlier in the 1630's? Bingham claims that rather than being the product of crude biblicism, baptistic congregationalism sprang from a broader congregationalism which "created an inherently unstable ecclesiology situated neatly between the poles of Radical and Magisterial Reformations" (79).

As Bingham follows the chronology of the Interregnum, he draws attention to the way in which "baptistic congregationalists were viewed by those outside their movement" (91). If Particular Baptists were part of a larger pan-Baptist denomination, they would not have enjoyed such prominence in the Cromwellian regime. They were so influential, according to Bingham, that they affected the legislation of the decoupling of the birth records kept by the state and the baptismal records kept by the church (105). But only Particular Baptists were appointed as triers and ejectors in the Barebones Parliament. Bingham concludes that Particular Baptists were given much more respect than the General Baptists who were often maligned by Congregationalists for embracing Socinian and Arminian theology.

Finally, chapter five describes how "baptistic congregationalists viewed themselves" during the Interregnum (120). While denying the existence of a pan-Baptist identity, Bingham constructs a two-fold identity of Particular Baptists dividing them into "sectarians" and "ecumenical" (120). Jessey represented the ecumenical strain, while the sectarians are described as those who resisted the state ecclesiastical apparatus, repudiated all who disagreed with their stance on baptism, and understood themselves as strangers and exiles in a new Babylon" (122). In the end, Bingham creates his own way of identifying Particular Baptists within their proper socio-political religious milieu.

Orthodox Radicals is a critical work that substantially challenges the field of Baptist historiography. In contrast to Steven Wright's *The Early English Baptists 1603-1649*, it is surprisingly readable for more than just the scholarly. While Wright places his references on the same page of the text in footnotes, Bingham does not interrupt the flow for the reader, but rather places all references as endnotes following the conclusion. Bingham also interacts with Wright's work, though not enough to fully substantiate some of his own claims (52). The chapters follow a chronological pattern, and the author regularly condenses his thoughts in ways that make his thesis obvious in each chapter. There is no ambiguity to what he is claiming, though the reader may expect this

because of the audaciousness of Bingham's claims. Each chapter is divided into subsections which, although not consisting subtitles, divide the text into manageable parts, and show the flow of Bingham's argument. Each subsection could be said to serve as a specific premise to his overall argument in each chapter. This element of his writing makes reading this book enjoyable as it builds anticipation toward crescendos.

While trying to avoid the same mistake in this review as Bingham makes in his book, attention should be given to the uncharitable manner by which he critiques fellow contributors to his field of study. The reader will recognize this almost immediately. And while it is wise for readers to suspend judgment in the beginning, Bingham never relents in his assault on Baptist historiographers, which left this reader both surprised and disappointed in the end. His "reinterpretation" (4) of events is presented as a response to the "disproportionate attention" (7), "infidelity" (1), "imagination" (3), "insufficiency" (64), and "anachronistic explanations" (91) of previous historiographical work covering this period in Interregnum England. Reputable historians found in Bingham's critical crosshairs include Joseph Ivimey, Thomas Crosby, Murray Tolmie, B.R. White, and Steven Wright. His uncharitable rhetoric may be defensible if his claims withstood the same type of scrutiny, but they do not.

This book is of extreme value, however, simply for the sheer amount of research involved. Bingham has brought in vast amounts of relevant primary source material that serve to bolster his argument. Like Wright, the depth of his research alone is extremely valuable. However, this also provokes curiosity. If indeed he had the ability to access and provide so many sources to support his thesis, why did he not mention the ones that could be interpreted to provide evidence to the contrary? Furthermore, while his research was extensive in particular areas, he relegated his lines of inquiry only to the places he wanted to go, not necessarily to the places he should have gone. For instance, he claimed that his book would not cover the General Baptists for sake of time, yet the claims he makes must consider and engage with the General Baptists in order to be substantiated. In essence, he commits the very same "sin" (129) he accuses Crosby, Ivimey, Tolmie, and Wright of committing: "the failure to adequately account for the cultural, political, and theological contexts out of which the seventeenth-century rejection of pedobaptism emerged" (129). General Baptists were an essential part of the context he claims to describe. If he were to limit the context to London, he may have been

more successful in his defense. But by his apparent imprecision, he left himself open to unnecessary criticism, and cast aspersion upon his critical method toward other respectable historiographers.

Apart from the inconsistencies in method, Bingham misinterprets some key events during the Interregnum. In chapter four, he claims, "acceptance of the Anabaptist error did not spread by means of sustained doctrinal debate, but through personal alliances and new political arrangements" (116). This is only partially true, but it fits his thesis perfectly. Because he traces the development of baptistic congregationalists solely from the Jessey circle, can he make this claim. However, there were other Particular Baptists, such as Christopher Blackwood and Thomas Patient who did not come out of the Jessey circle, and who both published scathing critiques of pedobaptism and were famous among their enemies for doing so. Furthermore, Christopher Blackwood was converted to baptistic views by General Baptists, Francis Cornwell and William Jeffrey, two men who were not politically or personally aligned with Blackwood or any other Particular Baptists during that time. Scads of baptistic congregationalists existed during this time which do not fit within Bingham's paradigm, but they do not grace the pages of his reinterpretative history. And while this fact is disappointing on its face, it is even more disappointing given his harsh criticism of others whose errors he claims to correct.

For instance, while accusing his historiographical predecessors of being too anachronistic in referring to Baptists as General and Particular, he ends up referring to all Particular Baptists as either being 'ecumenical' or 'sectarian' (120).

Bingham repeatedly explains how the rejection of pedobaptism was not only a break from Reformed orthodoxy, but also from all of Christendom itself. In essence it was the only major theological and ecclesiological difference between Particular Baptists and mainline Congregationalists. And while the rejection of pedobaptism may have been "universally rejected by the Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic, and Orthodox alike," he goes too far in claiming that baptistic congregationalists and their opponents considered the rejection of pedobaptism as having no "patristic precedent" (102). Actually, baptistic congregationalists published many apologetical works claiming apostolic authority and patristic continuity with the practice of believer's baptism. They did, however, usually draw the line at Constantinian Christianity.

But there were two and a half centuries of patristic Christianity prior to Constantine.

In sum, Bingham's new addition to this distinguished Oxford series is substantial. It may be more appropriately titled, *Baptistic Congregationalists*. That is how he identifies "Baptist" during this era. The main problem with Bingham's argument is that because it fails to engage with the General Baptists, and only focuses on the Jessey Circle of Particular Baptists, it remains a partial argument from silence. There are two premises which this reader could not accept: the General Baptists and Particular Baptists did not interact before 1660, and the Particular Baptists were only represented by the congregational churches in London. Both premises reasonably lead to his conclusion, but they are not historically accurate.

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Challies, Tim, and Josh Byers. *A Visual Theology Guide to the Bible: Seeing and Knowing God's Word*. Illustrated edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 208 pp. $16.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-310-57796-6.

Following their well-received 2016 entry, *Visual Theology* blogger Tim Challies and communications pastor Josh Byers set out to introduce, and re-introduce, their readers to the wonders of God's Word. Through their varied ministries, the authors sensed a need for a comprehensive yet accessible guide to the Bible which would call their reader to a deeper engagement with Scripture while making use of both Challies's concise writing and Byers's keen eye for graphic design. While the book is well-researched and regularly cites common evangelical commentaries and systematic theologies, the authors succeed in keeping a broad readership, making the book accessible to youth groups, home studies, and more.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first section addresses the issues of authorship, transmission, and canonization, as well as the distinct theological qualities of the Bible: sufficiency, clarity,

authority, and necessity (which the authors refer to with the acronym "SCAN") (51). Byers's creative design work helps substantially in this section, clearly connecting each concept with a graphical cue (e.g., a logo to represent each genre of Scripture: quill and pen for poetry, two tablets for law, etc.) (21). Nearly every two-page spread includes a textual explanation matched to a graphic representation of the principle at hand. A two-page graphic powerfully presents the manuscript evidence of the New Testament over and above the classic works of Plato, Homer, and others. Thousands of dots fill the page demonstrating New Testament manuscripts and visibly reinforcing the confidence Challies and Byers want their readers to have in the preservation of the Scriptures (32-33).

The second section presents the motivation for diving into the Scripture and a common paradigm for Bible study: observe, interpret, apply, memorize. The paradigm is represented by the simple questions "what does the passage say, what does the passage mean, and how does the passage transform us?" The latter question is broken down into ten questions that can be used to apply the Scripture to head, heart, and hands (94-97). The content of this section is well-written and accessible, but there is a clear shift in the graphic contribution. The charts and infographics which carried the first section are overtaken by text explanations and repeated fragments of a larger graphic. However, the book does not lose its overall connection to the visual theme established earlier.

The final, and largest, section explains the whole of Scripture through a Christocentric lens. According to Challies and Byers, Scripture is a message about "who God is and what he has done to save you despite who you are" (103). The need for Jesus, the longing for Jesus, the coming and commands of Jesus become the major organizational points for the remainder of the book. The organization, and likely the audience, is similar to Vaughn Roberts's book *God's Big Picture*, though Roberts uses the theme of Kingdom throughout (Perished Kingdom, Perfected Kingdom, Promised Kingdom, etc.). Challies and Byers move through the whole arc of Scripture, hitting the high points and representing them graphically along the way. Additionally, this section includes frequent excellent examples of Byers's design work. On page 127 he correlates the 10 Commandments to Jesus's life of perfect obedience, line by line. On page 179 where he presents the common theories used to disprove the

Resurrection (swoon, theft, etc.) and shows how scriptural, historical, and logical evidence refutes each of them.

Challies and Byers have set out to entice and equip readers to deeper engagement and love for God's Word and to that end, they have succeeded. The book is substantial but intentionally laid out in digestible pieces. It lends itself to use as material for weekly adult teaching, family worship, homeschool, or age-graded ministry. It would make a worthy addition to church libraries and first-contact ministries such as military and prison chaplaincies. The additional resources provided online (www.visualtheology.church) provide other avenues to connect students to the specific helps included in the book (e.g., the brief introductions to biblical genres found on page 20, which can also be printed online and kept in a student's Bible). A short four-to-six-week study could be drafted from the book to aid new believers in getting the basic skills and overview needed to dive into God's Word.

One of the great challenges of pastoral ministry is connecting new believers to the Word. As members of a culture that has largely drifted from biblical engagement, many men and women find the Bible to be a confusing and distant book. By presenting the very basics of how to connect with Scripture (e.g., how to read a Scripture reference – book, chapter, and verse [19]), Challies and Byers succeed in connecting with an audience who can greatly benefit from their work. The book does not explore every possible nuance of the topics covered, nor does it intend to. Such exhaustive writing has its place, but not in introducing students to a new topic.

Logan Williams
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

PhD Graduates (2021)
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

PhD Graduates (2021) from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, with their PhD emphases, dissertation title and supervisory committee members.

May 2021

Jason Alligood, PhD (Systematic Theology),
Adam, Christ, And the Telos of Humanity: Escalation from Eden to the Eternal State.
Dr. Owen Strachan and Dr. Thor Madsen.

Chad Summa, PhD (Old Testament),
The Variant Order of Papyrus 967: A Possible Answer to Issues with the New Testament use of the Old Testament.
Dr. Dan McNamara and Dr. Steve Andrews.

Chris Carr, PhD (Missiology),
Paul's Letter to the Romans as Missiological Theocentric Document and Playbook.
Dr. Tom Johnston and Dr. Roy Harrell.

Adam Christian, PhD (New Testament),
The Use of Oral and Written Sources in the Synoptic Gospels: An Analysis of Synoptic Use of the Old Greek and the Text Surrounding the Old Greek Quotations.
Dr. Todd Chipman and Dr. Radu Gheorghita.

Jesse Colbert, PhD (Historical Theology),
Images of the Holy Spirit in the Apostolic Fathers and Early Apologists.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Michael McMullen.

James Fryer, PhD (Missiology),
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. Tom Johnston.

PhD Graduates

Ayodele Gbode, PhD (Ministry),
The Influence of African Traditional Religion and Judaism on the Beliefs and Practices of African Indigenous Churches and its Implications for the Nigerian Church.
Dr. Goldenstene Davis and Dr. Theophilus Olaolorun.

Martin Horn, PhD (New Testament),
Georg Sverdrup's Concept of the Free Congregation: The Congregation as the Bride of Christ.
Dr. Tom Johnston and Dr. Matthew Kimbrough.

Joshua Howard, PhD (Systematic Theology),
The End of All the Stories: An Eschatology of Satanic Exorcism in this Age.
Dr. Owen Strachan and Dr. Jason P. Kees.

Corey Johnson, PhD (Historical Theology),
Instructor of Children: An Analysis of Benjamin Keach's Doctrinal Understanding of Believers' Children.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Michael McMullen.

Brian Koning, PhD (Old Testament),
The Prophet and Sage: A Study on Intertextual Connections between Habakkuk and Job.
Dr. Blake Hearson and Dr. Rustin Umstattd.

Cory Marsh, PhD (Biblical Theology),
In This World You Have Affliction: A Johannine Theology of Christian Suffering.
Dr. Andreas Köstenberger and Dr. John Goodrich.

Michael Nelson, PhD (Ministry),
God's People Together: A Biblical Theology of Assembly.
Dr. Matthew Barrett and Dr. Jonathan Leeman.

Samuel Parkison, PhD (Systematic Theology),
Irresistible Beauty: Beholding Triune Glory in the Face of Jesus Christ.
Dr. Matthew Barrett and Dr. Craig Carter.

Paul Reese, PhD (Ministry),
Developing Soul Care in Pastoral Ministry According to the Bible: An Exegetical Sample for Theory and Practice.
Dr. Robin Hadaway and Dr. Rustin Umstattd.

Nathan Rose, PhD (Historical Theology),
The Prince of Preachers on the Prince of Darkness: The Ontology, Work, and Defeat of Satan According to Charles Haddon Spurgeon.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Michael McMullen.

Kyler Smith, PhD (Preaching),
The Hermeneutic of WA Criswell: A Critical Analysis.
Dr. Mark Howell and Dr. Jared Bumpers.

Kyle Taft, PhD (New Testament),
Identifying Liturgical Material in the Gospel of John: A Criteria Based Analysis of the Fourth Gospel.
Dr. Andreas Köstenberger and Dr. Todd Chipman.

Champ Thornton II, PhD (Theology),
Able to Admonish? Preconditions for One-Another Edifying Speech in the Letters of Paul.
Dr. Todd Chipman and Dr. Rustin Umstattd.

Ryan Weaver, PhD (Historical Theology),
The Importance of Soteriology for Attaining Christian Contentment in the Thought of Jeremiah Burroughs.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Michael McMullen.

Richard White, PhD (Missiology),
A Study of Missionary Attrition Among International Mission Board Missionaries for the Years 2008-2017.
Dr. Tom Johnston and Dr. Larry Gay.

PhD Graduates

Bartley Wooten, PhD (Ministry),
John A. Broadus: The Elective System of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.
Dr. Robert J. Matz and Dr. Ryan L. Rippee.

Adam Wyatt, PhD (Biblical Theology),
The Pride of State in the Bride of Christ: Toward a Biblical Assessment of Patriotism.
Dr. Owen Strachan and Dr. Alan Branch.

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

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