for the Church
MIDWESTERN
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Biblical Studies

MIDWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Spring 2016

Vol. 15 No. 1

MIDWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

SPRING 2016 (Vol. 15/ No. 1)

CONTENTS

Editorial iv

THEME: Biblical Studies

ARTICLES

Erasmus Before the Storm
TIMOTHY GEORGE 1-4

Of Coins and Crosses
THORVALD B. MADSEN 5-18

Does the Bible Contain Forgeries?
TERRY L. WILDER 19-36

The Reformers' Interpretation of Jesus' Teaching on Divorce and Marriage
JASON K. LEE 37-65

Bethel: Where is the House of God?
N. BLAKE HEARSON 66-83

The Divinity of Jesus and the Uniqueness of God: Are they Compatible? A Reflection on High Christology and Monotheism in Mark's Gospel
JOHN R. G. LEE 84-100

More Faithful than an Ox: Paul's Use of the Scriptures to Defend his Apostleship in Corinth
TODD R. CHIPMAN 101-122

BOOK REVIEWS

J. Alan Branch, *Born this Way? Homosexuality, Science and the Scriptures* (2016)
(Reviewed by Jason K. Allen) 123-125

David L. Allen, *1-3 John: Fellowship in God's Family* (2013)
(Reviewed by Steve W. Lemke) 125-126

Bruce Ashford and Chris Pappalardo,
One Nation Under God:
A Christian Hope for American Politics (2015)
(Reviewed by J. Alan Branch) 127-129

John Mark Terry, editor. *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History and Strategies of World Missions. 2nd edition* (2015)
(Reviewed by Robin Dale Hadaway) 129-132

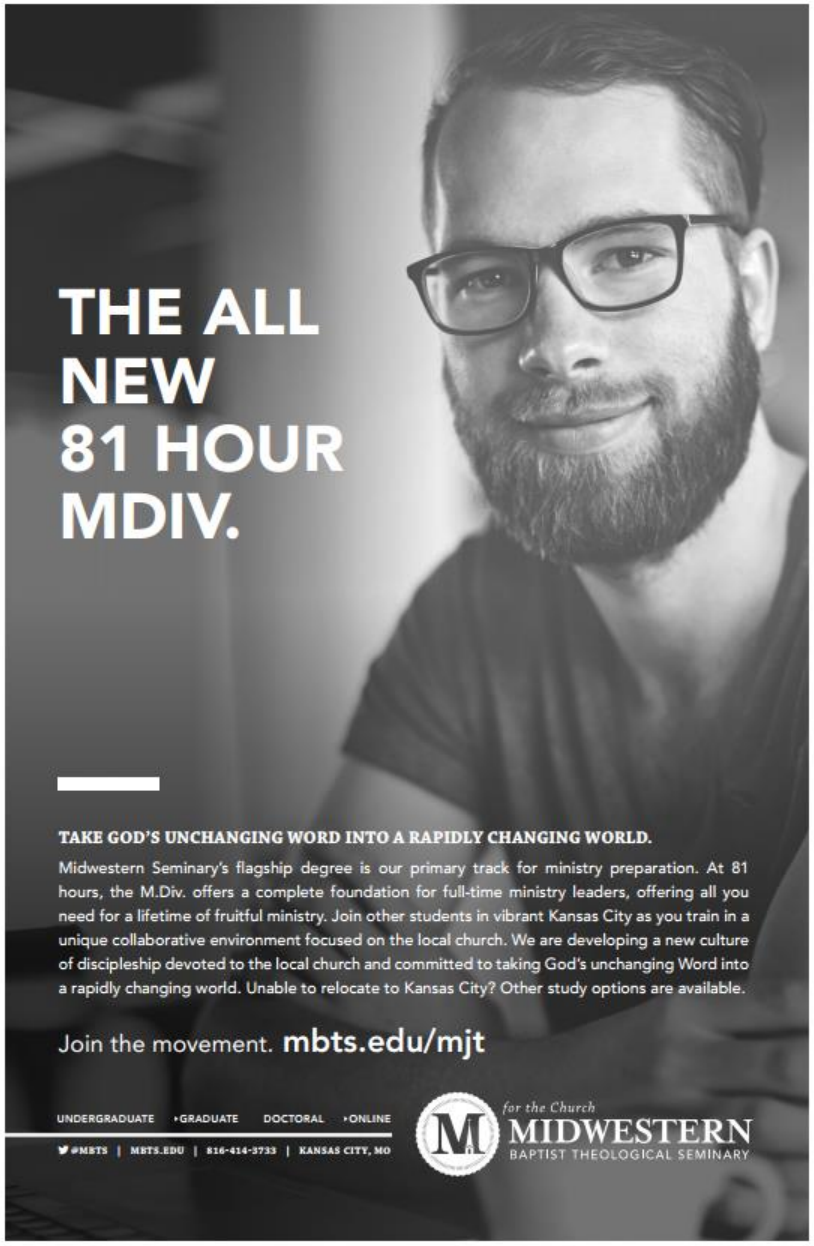
Rob Bentz, *The Unfinished Church: God's Broken and Redeemed Work-in-Progress* (2014)
(Reviewed by Rustin J. Umstattd) 132-135

Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson,
Heaven (2014)
(Reviewed by Nathan B. Edwards) 135-139

Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live?*
A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization (2015)
(Reviewed by Nathan Rose) 139-142

Charles L. Quarles, *Can These Bones Live?*
A Theology of Matthew: Jesus Revealed as Deliverer, King and Incarnate Creator (2015)
(Reviewed by Gregory E. Lamb) 142-144

Books Received 145


THE ALL NEW 81 HOUR MDIV.
TAKE GOD'S UNCHANGING WORD INTO A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD.
Midwestern Seminary's flagship degree is our primary track for ministry preparation. At 81 hours, the M.Div. offers a complete foundation for full-time ministry leaders, offering all you need for a lifetime of fruitful ministry. Join other students in vibrant Kansas City as you train in a unique collaborative environment focused on the local church. We are developing a new culture of discipleship devoted to the local church and committed to taking God's unchanging Word into a rapidly changing world. Unable to relocate to Kansas City? Other study options are available.
Join the movement. mbts.edu/mjt
UNDERGRADUATE ▸GRADUATE DOCTORAL ▸ONLINE
@MBTS | MBTS.EDU | 816-414-3733 | KANSAS CITY, MO
for the Church
MIDWESTERN
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

EDITORIAL:

Welcome to the Spring 2016 issue of the *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. Our theme for this issue is Biblical Studies, as we commemorate and reflect on several momentous historical events, such as Erasmus's Critical Greek New Testament of 1516. My prayer is that once again, each and every one who has given so sacrificially of their time and talents to this issue, are aware of my very sincere thanks for all they do.

This issue's Keynote Article is from Midwestern's own Dr. Thorvald Madsen, Dean of Graduate Studies, Director of PhD Programs and Professor of New Testament, Ethics and Philosophy. Dr. Madsen's, 'Of Coins and Crosses' is an excellent study of 'Matthew 17:24-27 in the Shadow of the Passion.' He expertly shows how in this passage we see both humility and grandeur, both compliance and anticipated victory in Christ's words and actions. He argues that what Jesus does in paying the tax compares to his being baptized by John: neither gesture is strictly necessary, however, their avoidance would invite questions that could not be immediately answered. Therefore, Jesus is baptized, and he gives the collectors what they ask, though by means that manifest his deity. Madsen concludes that the Messiah pays his dues, and soon enough he will pay ours.

In this issue, we are honored to include Articles by three dear friends of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary: the first is a very insightful piece from Dr. Timothy George, the Founding Dean of Beeson Divinity School. Dr. George shares his wise and challenging reflections, on the life and contribution of the Dutch scholar, Erasmus, to Christian history. The year before Luther's hammer blows were heard in Wittenberg, Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum Omne* was published in Basel. George reminds us, that the significance of this first edition of Erasmus's critical Greek New Testament in the history of New Testament studies, can hardly be overstated.

This is followed by a very valuable piece from a previous colleague here at Midwestern, Dr. Terry Wilder, now the Wesley Harrison Chair and Professor of New Testament, and the Associate Dean of the PhD Program, at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Wilder applies his expertise to the question of whether the Bible contains forgeries. After meticulously examining the arguments both for and against, Wilder concludes that the evidence we possess points unquestionably to the trustworthiness of Scripture.

The third and final guest Article comes from Dr. Jason K. Lee, the Dean and Professor of Theological Studies at Cedarville University.

Dr. Lee very carefully examines the Reformers' interpretation of Jesus's teaching on divorce and marriage, especially as found in Matthew 19. Lee argues that while there is some colorful diversity in the reformers' comments, they would also clearly affirm the "biblical view" of marriage: namely that God has designed it for intentional union, the blessing of children, and permanent unity as husband and wife.

We then have three fine pieces of scholarship from some of Midwestern's own teachers. We have a very helpful analysis from Dr. Blake Hearson, Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, and the Book Review Editor of this Journal. Dr. Hearson analyzes for us the question of, where exactly is the House of God? The penultimate article comes from Dr. John Lee, Assistant Professor of New Testament, who carefully walks us through how the early Christians were able to reconcile their monotheistic commitment with a high Christology, and he does this with Mark's Gospel as the background. Our concluding piece is from the pen of Dr. Todd Chipman, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, and which consists of a well-argued examination of 'Paul's Use of the Scriptures to Defend his Apostleship in Corinth.'

This issue of the *MJT* again concludes, with several relevant and thought provoking book reviews, edited by Dr. Blake Hearson.

Midwestern Journal of Theology: 15.1 (2016): 1-4

Erasmus Before the Storm[1]

TIMOTHY GEORGE
Founding Dean,
Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

Five hundred years ago this year, in February and March of 1516, a Swiss-German printer in Basel named Johann Froben published a volume of some 1,000 pages titled *Novum Instrumentum Omne*, "the whole New Testament." This was the first officially published edition of the Greek New Testament, and it was the work of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam. Next year, the scholarly world will commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, with much attention devoted to Martin Luther and the hammer blows heard in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. Before then, however, it is good to glimpse Erasmus in the *annus mirabilis* of 1516, the year before the storm broke loose.

Erasmus was at once the greatest scholar of his age and Europe's first public intellectual. He was also one of the most tragic figures among the reformers. Born the illegitimate son of a Dutch priest in 1466 or 1469—he most likely lied about the date of his birth in order to cover the shame of his situation—Erasmus early on developed a love for learning and a desire to know the ancient classics.

At age sixteen, he took monastic vows and joined the Augustinian Canons; in 1492 he was ordained a priest. The monastic routine did not suit him well, but he did like spending time in the library. Roland Bainton once said: "Luther entered the monastery to save his soul by good works, Erasmus to enlighten his mind by good books." He once took an entire volume of St. Augustine with him to bed at night! Unlike Luther, Erasmus never renounced his monastic vows, though he did acquire a papal dispensation that allowed him to live outside the monastery and to put off the habit of his order.

Although he studied at Paris for a while (in the same college at which John Calvin and Ignatius Loyola were later students) and was

[1] Reprinted with the author's kind permission from http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/03/erasmus-before-the-storm.

granted a kind of honorary doctorate from the University of Turin, formal academic life was not for him. The road which took him to Basel in 1516 had many detours and passed through many places: Deventer (where as a boy he studied with the Brethren of the Common Life), Oxford (where he met John Colet who encouraged him to learn Greek), Antwerp, Louvain, Venice, Rome, Cologne, London, and Cambridge. Erasmus was a migratory scholar, always on the move, the original "flying Dutchman." He traveled all over Europe looking for manuscripts, talking with printers, cultivating the friendship of humanist scholars and those interested in *bonae litterae*. He once said, "If Ulysses was the wisest man in Greece because he visited so many cities, my horse is the wisest in Europe because he has been to so many universities."

In the summer of 1514, Erasmus was once again on the road, or rather, on the river, traveling through the Rhine Valley from England to Basel. At each stop along the way, he was received with praise and acclaim at Mainz, where Gutenberg introduced the printing press more than a half-century before; at Strasbourg, where one of his young protégés Martin Bucer would soon introduce the Reformation; at Sélestat, the site of a famous Latin school commended by Erasmus for turning out "geniuses." At this point, Erasmus had become an intellectual rock star; his role in the revival of letters and the spread of learning was known all over Europe from Lisbon to Lithuania. Erasmus himself was well aware of the special role he had played in opening the world to the new learning that he believed would result not only in personal betterment but also in the renewal of society:

> It is I, as cannot be denied, who have aroused the study of languages and good letters. I have brought academic theology, too much subjected to sophistic contrivances, back to the sources of the holy books and the study of the ancient orthodox authors; I have exerted myself to awaken a world slumbering in pharisaic ceremonies to true piety.

Among the many virtues of Erasmus—and there were many—humility perhaps was not the greatest.

Erasmus's 1516 Greek New Testament was a pivotal moment in the development of biblical scholarship, but it was not met with universal acclaim. It contained many errors, and Erasmus later complained that

this volume, like many other books rushed into print, had perforce been "precipitated rather than edited." In his reconstruction of the Greek text, Erasmus had been limited to the use of five manuscripts and, as he knew, they were neither the oldest nor the best. The process of acquiring better manuscripts, clarifying textual variants, and improving his Latin translation would remain an ongoing task for the rest of his life. In all, Erasmus brought out five editions of the Greek New Testament over the course of two decades (1516, 1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535). He had prudently dedicated the 1516 edition to Pope Leo X, whom he had met at Rome in 1509 as Giovanni de' Medici. The pope in turn provided a letter of commendation. This helped Erasmus to fend off, though not to silence, charges of heterodoxy from his conservative Catholic critics.

For all the flaws of the first edition, its significance in the history of New Testament studies can hardly be overstated. The Greek text Erasmus published became the basis for the *textus receptus*, which lay behind the King James Version of 1611 and subsequent translations until the revolution in textual criticism led by Tischendorf, Westcott, and Hort in the nineteenth century.

In addition to publishing the Greek text of the New Testament, his scholarly annotations, and his own Latin translation, Erasmus also wrote paraphrases of the New Testament. Starting with Romans in 1517 and concluding with Acts in 1524, he covered every book except Revelation. A paraphrase, Erasmus declared, was neither a translation nor a commentary but something in between these two genres. As he put it, the purpose of a paraphrase is to "say things differently without saying different things."

There is a common theme running through the twists and turns of Erasmus's long and interesting life. He called it the *philosophia Christi*: a program of educational and moral reform based on the recovery of classical letters and biblical wisdom and centered on personal devotion to Jesus. More than anywhere else in his many writings, the "philosophy of Christ" is evident in the *Paraphrases*. No doubt this is why Katherine Parr, the sixth wife of Henry VIII and the only one to outlive her husband, arranged for Erasmus's paraphrases to be translated into English. In 1547, King Edward VI issued a royal injunction requiring that the *Paraphrases*, along with a copy of the English Bible, be publicly displayed in every parish in the Church of England. Nicholas Udall, a Tudor playwright who supervised the English paraphrase project, portrayed

Erasmus as a true proto-Protestant, "the chief leader and shower of light and the principal opener of a way unto the evangelical truth now in these last times by God's goodness shining forth into the world."

But the fact is, Erasmus cannot be claimed unambiguously as a champion for either side of the Reformation divide. Erasmus was an early defender of Luther and agreed with many of his criticisms of traditional Catholic piety. There is some truth in the old saw, "Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched"—a jibe which originated in the sixteenth century among some of Erasmus's Franciscan critics. Luther learned from Erasmus that the Greek word *metanoeite* meant "to repent" not "to do penance" and this insight was reflected at the first of his 95 Theses. A few years later, Luther had at hand the second edition of Erasmus's Greek New Testament as he labored to "verdeutschen" the Bible for his German people. But, as lines began to be drawn in the sand in the Reformation disputes, Erasmus chose to be, as he put it, "a spectator rather than an actor." "Let others court martyrdom," Erasmus remarked. "I don't consider myself worthy of this distinction."

In April 1517, six months before Luther's posting of the 95 Theses, Erasmus wrote to Pope Leo X: "If ever there was a golden age, then there is a good hope that ours will be one." But the violence of the rhetoric and the temper of the times into which Erasmus was reluctantly drawn dampened his optimism. In 1522, Erasmus grimly declared, "I am a heretic on both sides." His whole grand project of *bonae litterae* seemed on the verge of going up in flames. From Basel, where Erasmus lay dying in 1536, he wrote to his old friend Willibald Pirckheimer, a fellow humanist and patron of letters: "Peace is perishing, and love and faith and learning and morality and civilized behavior. What is left?"

Erasmus lived most of his life among the learned languages of Latin, Greek, and to a lesser extent Hebrew. He also advocated the translation of the Bible into the developing vernacular languages of Europe, so that, as he put it, God's Word might be read by everyone—"the farmer, the tailor, the mason, prostitutes, pimps, and Turks." At the very end, Erasmus's final words were murmured not in the classical tongues he knew so well but rather in his native Dutch—just two words he must first have heard from his mother in Holland, "*Lieuer Got*," he said, "O, Dear God."

Midwestern Journal of Theology: 15.1 (2016): 5-18

Of Coins and Crosses: Matthew 17:24-27 in the Shadow of the Passion

THORVALD B. MADSEN
Dean of Graduate Studies,
Director of PhD Programs,
Professor of NT, Ethics, and Philosophy,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Exodus 30.11-16, God commands Moses to receive a half-shekel "ransom" for each male life, coincident with any census taken of the people.[1] This tax would maintain Israel's Tabernacle and deter prideful assessments of battle strength: the less one counts, the less everyone pays.[2] Thus, when David takes an improper census of Israel and Judah, his punishment is a pestilence inflicted on the people for three days, claiming 70,000 lives, just as Exodus 30.12 had warned: "each shall give a ransom for his life to the LORD when (Moses numbers) them, that there be no plague among them" (parenthesis added).

Nehemiah 10.32-33 refers to an annual third-shekel tax, "for the service of the house of (their) God." Therefore, the *didrachma* of Matthew 17.24-27 could have resulted from some mixture of these previous two taxes.[3] Finally, since one shekel was worth four drachmas, a double-drachma would have met the obligations of one person. A Greek *stater*—like the coin found in the fish's mouth—was worth four drachmas; and

---

[1] All translations of Scripture are taken from the English Standard Version.

[2] On the military background of this census, see, e.g., John Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3, (Waco: Word Books, 1987), pp. 402-403; James P. Hyatt, *Exodus*, NCBC, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 294; U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, Translated by I. Abrahams, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967 (1951), p. 394; R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Downer's Grove, IVP, 1973), p. 206.

[3] This tax and the half-shekel of Exodus 30.11-16 differ in quantity and timing, and thus one cannot be assured of a practical identity of the two taxes. But the third-shekel tax was collected annually, and this fact may have influenced the timing of the half-shekel collection.

thus a stater would have covered the taxes of two people, as it did for Jesus and Peter.[4]

Generally speaking, we know what the Temple Tax was and who was expected to pay it.[5] But other mysteries remain. For example, why do the collectors ask Peter, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?" if such payments were routine and largely uncontroversial?[6] Does it matter, given the question about taxes, that Jesus speaks to Peter first, as he enters the house; and if so, why? In that case, Matthew could be making a point as to nature of Jesus—one implied by his having supernatural foreknowledge—but why make such a point just here, i.e., at the end of chapter 17 and/or the beginning of chapter 18? From a theological standpoint, there could be more happening in these verses than meets the eye.

In v. 27, two more puzzles emerge. Why does Jesus pay the half-shekel with a coin found in a fish's mouth, even the first one caught by Peter? Why does Matthew not confirm that Peter found the coin, as predicted by Jesus? Perhaps the tone of v. 27 is wry, as if to say, "Go and search the floor of your car: there you will find $20.00 in change, for you and for me."[7] Such a reading is possible. Nothing in the context excludes it; but should v. 27 be understood as such? To some of Matthew's readers, this story seems primitive and historically suspicious.[8] What should we ourselves make of it, given the wider context of this gospel?

---

[4] Cf. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, Third Edition, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 90-93.

[5] On the Mishnah's provision for some "distraint" in collecting this tax, cf. *Shekalim* 1.3 & 6.5; William Horbury, "The Temple Tax," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, Edited by Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule, (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), p. 282.

[6] Otherwise, the question may not have been asked at all, though informal pressure to pay it would always have been present. So, then, Ben Witherington, *Matthew*, (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), p. 331; Jeffrey Gibbs, *Matthew 11.2-20.34*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 2010), p. 884, fn. 22: "The payment of this tax by an adult Jewish man would also signal that he intends his whole family (his wife and children) to be identified with and benefit from the temple."

[7] So, then, R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 671.

[8] So, e.g., B. D. Chilton, "A Coin of Three Realms, " in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University*

In his detailed study of this passage, David Garland reduces all such questions to one decisive issue. Verse 27 begins with the phrase, "However, not to give offense to them . . . ." But now we ask with Garland: who is Jesus trying not to offend or scandalize? If we could identify the would-be stumblers in this case—i.e., the people whom Jesus is concerned not to put off—we would have the information needed to address the other matters noted above; and thus we should organize the available theories of vv. 24-27 by seeing them as efforts to identify the people whom Jesus is trying not to scandalize.[9] With this framework as our guide, consider the following options.

1. Roman Authorities of the Late First-Century

One theory says that vv. 24-27 resolve a dilemma arising after the Temple's destruction, not during Jesus' lifetime. After 70 A.D., when the Temple had been destroyed, the Romans repurposed the Temple Tax as an offering for the Jupiter Capitolinus, a shrine located in Rome.[10] Therefore, in paying the Temple Tax, Jewish Christians would have become supporters of pagan idolatry. So what was a conscientious Christian Jew to do? According to this theory, vv. 24-27 were manufactured by the gospel writer to set a dominical precedent for these Jewish Christians, and a permissible one at that: they are allowed to pay this tax—never mind its actual effect—because Jesus did the same thing his own day, or nearly so. Jesus paid the Temple Tax needlessly and voluntarily, not under compulsion, for the sake of peace (17.27).[11] Therefore, *mutatis mutandis*, Jewish Christians should still pay the half-shekel, not because they must do so, but rather because they can do so with noble intent: by paying the tax, they avoid dead-end controversies with the powers that be.

---

of Sheffield, Edited by Stanley Porter, Stephen Fowl, and J. A. David, (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1990), p. 279.

[9] David Garland, "Matthew's Understanding of the Temple Tax (Matt 17:24-27), *SBL Seminar Papers 1987*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), p. 190.

[10] There is no dispute that the Romans confiscated the Temple Tax for this purpose. Cf. Josephus, *Jewish War*, 7.218; David Garland, "The Temple Tax," p. 197.

[11] So, then, M. McEleney, "Mt 17:24-27—Who Paid the Temple Tax? A Lesson in the Avoidance of Scandal," *CBQ* 38, n. 2, (1976), p. 182.

On the surface, and leaving aside questions of biblical authority, this view seems fair enough. Suppose that Matthew did not write this gospel, or at least not these verses; and suppose, furthermore, that their real author faced an ongoing dispute about Temple taxes, roughly as this view proposes. In that case, whose example would count for more in everyone's eyes than the example set by Jesus; and what would Jesus have done, if the Temple Tax were funding a pagan shrine? Apparently, this author's answer, suggested by vv. 24-27, is: 'Be still, and pay the tax.' Nevertheless, such an interpretation proves to be unworkable on multiple levels, one of the latter being this: vv. 24-27 could have happened in the *prima facie* setting of Matthew's gospel; and if so, we have no reason to search for alternative theories as to their provenance. The following strands of evidence indicate the possibility of some controversy regarding the Temple Tax itself and the extent of anyone's liability to pay it.

Even in the time of Christ, certain Jews did not pay the Temple Tax. They objected to it on grounds of principle, and others found it to be economically burdensome.[12] Priestly exemptions were claimed, and others disputed the frequency of tax. As an example, then, 4Q159 insists that the Temple Tax is a one-time payment, not a yearly obligation:

> 6 [Concern]ing [the ransom:] the money of valuation which one gives as ransom for his own person will be half [a shekel,] 7 only on[ce] will he give it in all his days.[13]

M. Shekalim 3 reflects a dispute regarding personal exemptions from the Temple Tax: "They did not exact pledges (regarding the Shekel) from the priests, in the interests of peace." *M. Shekalim* 4 then says:

> R. Judah said: Ben Bukri testified at Jabneh that if a priest paid the Shekel he committed no sin. Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai answered: Not so! but, rather, if a priest did not pay the Shekel he committed sin; but the priests used to expound the Scripture

[12] On the economic motive, see, e.g., Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*, Translated by Wilhelm Linss, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), p. 415.
[13] All translations of the Mishnah are taken from Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah*, (Oxford: OUP, 1933).

> to their advantage, *And every meal offering of the priest shall be wholly burnt: it shall not be eaten. . .*

Thus, while Josephus suggests a tax paid routinely even in the Diaspora (*Jewish Antiquities* 14.110-111; 18.312), the collectors could still have challenged Peter regarding the Temple Tax. What will the rising prophet from Galilee do when the collectors arrive, given his views of the Temple itself (e.g., Mt 26.61; 12.6)? If such a question could have been asked of Jesus himself, vv. 24-27 would not require a post-70 setting. They make adequate sense as an abbreviated, historical report.

Likewise, this first view puts Jesus on the wrong side of an ethical dilemma. Suppose that the writer is using the imaginary example of Jesus to justify indirect maintenance of the Jupiter Capitolinus, all to avoid offending Roman authorities.[14] In that case, the writer has fashioned a purely consequentialist argument that would justify many forms of syncretism: one need only have a demand and possible offense, should it not be met.

The same view also implies an unhelpful analogy that allows payments to the Jupiter Capitolinus. Jesus's argument only works if (a) he is the son of Roman authorities and (b) they are "kings of the earth." The latter is plausible, of course: a broadside reference to 'kings of the earth' would include pagan kings well enough, along with others; but one cannot agree that Jesus has described himself along the lines of (a) above. The same worry arises, assuming that the "sons" of v. 26 are members of a larger group—e.g., the early church and/or the Jewish people. For this argument to work at all, their fathers would have to be gentile "kings of the earth."[15] Nevertheless, the strongest, immediate objection to this first view is the one recently noted: Jesus would not have sanctioned taxes for the Jupiter Capitolinus, whatever the peaceable consequences might have been. We may thus proceed to a second proposal.

---

[14] So D. A. Carson, "Matthew," *EBC* 8, Edited by Frank Gaebelein, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

[15] So, then, Luz, *Matthew*, p. 415; Richard Bauckham, "The Coin in the Fish's Mouth," in *Gospel Perspectives VI*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), p. 228.

2. Unconverted Jews Collecting the Temple Tax between 33 and 70 A.D.

Where there is no Temple, there can be no Temple Tax *per se*, but between the resurrection and 70 A.D., Jewish Christians had to thread a certain cultural/theological needle. What should they do with a tax that funds a Temple made redundant by the cross of Christ? As Jews, they would have been expected to support the Temple, if for no other reason than to express solidarity with the people of Israel. But their reasons for not paying this tax were complex and, for that reason, poorly understood by Temple Tax collectors. Therefore, taking this historical reconstruction as established, one arrives at another theory as to the presence of vv. 24-27 in Matthew's gospel. The writer composed vv.24-27 freely to address circumstances faced by Jewish Christians living between the cross and 70 A.D. The latter needed an acceptable and permissive approach to this tax, and they receive one from the example of Jesus himself. He paid the Temple Tax in his own day, and by the same token, Jewish Christians can pay it now, all for the sake of peace. Some actual rights, including a right to withhold some taxes, need not be exercised (cf. 1 Corinthians 9, *passim*).

This second option makes sense to some extent, because it identifies a plausibly scandalized group: if Jewish Christians refuse to pay the Temple Tax, the collectors of it would probably take offense, especially if they drew a straight line from 'following Christ' to 'rejecting traditional taxes.' The same view also tracks with Matthew 5.9, which blesses the "peacemakers" as "sons of God." So we have made progress beyond our first theory; however, this one also falls short on several counts. For example, the basis of compromise seems wrong here. If Jesus can upend tables and call out hypocrites, why change course now, as Matthew advises, assuming that *skanalidzo* means 'to offend,' as modern translations assume?[16] Likewise, one might reject this view in favor of some others, given the tone and emphasis of chapters 17 and 18 as a

[16] BDAG, *skandalidzo*, cites v. 27 under the subheading, 'to shock through word or action, *to give offense to, anger, shock*, while recognizing 'to cause to be brought to a downfall, *cause to sin*, as one of this word's other possible definitions. On the translation of skandalidzo as 'to give offense,' see also NIV, NAS, RSV, and KJV.

whole: compared to the dramatic events and teaching before and after vv. 24-27, a worry about Jewish-Christian relations over taxes seems rather pedestrian. Finally, for the sake of simplicity, one ought to regard this incident as historical and concerned with the Temple Tax in Jesus' own lifetime, unless this theory is defeated by overwhelming factors.

3. Unconverted Jews Collecting the Temple Tax before 33 A.D.

The previous theory may identify an actual dilemma sensed by Jewish Christians: either Jesus or the Temple, but not both. Nevertheless, a post-33 A.D. date is not required in this case: Jesus himself—or anyone else associated with him—could have been asked about the Temple Tax, giving rise to the same core problem. What conclusions follow from his paying the Temple Tax, and what should his disciples do? To borrow categories from 1 Corinthians, the 'strong' would insist that one not pay the tax, while the 'weak' are less certain either way; but the former could still decide to pay the tax, for the sake of peace, because Jesus himself did so for the same reason.[17] Here is a way to stay on good terms with unconverted Jews, without compromising on essentials. Accordingly, by way of analogy, one finds Paul able to circumcise Timothy voluntarily, with no sense of bad faith, for the sake of his missionary endeavors (Acts 16.3).

This view receives vv. 24-27 as history, which is an elegant explanatory move. It also accounts for the presence of this passage in Matthew's gospel. The earliest followers of Christ faced a real dilemma created by the sufficiency of the cross, set against an established tradition of Temple taxes, a tradition which would have continued while the Temple survived. Finally, the present option connects vv. 24-27 tightly to chapter 18: if the disciples were to follow the example set by Jesus, they would be humbling themselves for the sake of the kingdom (cf. 18:4), rather than claiming rights that should not be exercised where the good of someone else is at stake. Accordingly, there are no obvious flaws here. Everything fits well enough, aside from one issue. This interpretation may do insufficient justice to the content of vv. 22-23,

---

[17] So, e.g., David McClister, "'Where Two or Three are Gathered Together': Literary Structure as a Key to Meaning in Matt 17:22-20:19," *JETS* 39/4, (1996), p. 552; Garland, "Temple Tax," pp. 205-6.

where we see an arresting sequence of events. Jesus predicts that he will be "delivered into the hands of men," then his disciples become distressed; and the next scene involves Peter getting asked about the Temple Tax. Could these collectors be salting an open wound from chapters 16 and 17, albeit inadvertently? Perhaps so; but in that case, the problem with the present view, where Jesus becomes our moral example, is not so much what it includes, but rather what it might omit. We shall return to this possibility in due course.

4. Jews Collecting a Disputed Tax

A fourth interpretation of this passage sees it as teaching the same lesson as before and postulates the same objects of offense. They are the tax collectors, at the very least, plus any others who would receive a report of what Jesus intends to do. Therefore, by not paying, Jesus might offend a substantial group of unconverted Jews. But according to this fourth view, Jesus refuses to pay the tax for a new reason, contrasting sharply with the others we have considered. Thus far, a line has been drawn between (a) Jesus and his followers and (b) everyone else; and in that case, their freedom derives from a status only Christians could enjoy, along with Jesus himself. They are sons, while the rest of the Jews are not, and this difference excuses the former from the Temple Tax.

However, as noted above, the problem in vv. 24-27 might be something else entirely. Possibly these collectors are receiving a tax that should never have been collected at all, from anyone, or at least not as often. It is certainly not being collected for the *original* reason, which was to deter casual headcounts of citizen soldiers and to emphasize the dependence of each life upon the grace of God (Exodus 30.11-16). The upkeep of the tabernacle was a secondary issue, not the main thing, which means that the census tax should not have become an income-stream for the Temple, as seems to have been the case by the time Peter fields the collector's question. Thus, Jesus has to decide (a) whether he will pay this disputed tax and, if he does, (b) how to do so without conceding its legitimacy. The coin in the fish's mouth solves the latter

problem, and his motive for paying is the larger need to avoid secondary controversies.[18]

This fourth view handles the content of vv. 24-27 well in many ways. It depends on a recognized fact about the Temple Tax: some Jews denied that it should be collected annually, and its OT basis is unclear. Either the amount needed to be changed, down to a third-shekel (Nehemiah 10.32), or it should have been collected only with each census. In any case, the mere practice of taxing Israel for the Temple would have put the Heavenly Father's approach at odds with "kings of the earth." So we can see elements here of a relatively strong argument: vv. 24-27 present Jesus as finding a third way through impassable terrain. Nevertheless, two main difficulties remain. First, even though Jesus pays the Temple Tax in an unusual manner, he still pays the tax—which he should not do, assuming its dubious rationale. If the priests should not have collected the Temple Tax—or anything like it—we may doubt whether Jesus paid it, as v. 27 indicates. Secondly, this view decontextualizes vv. 24-27 vis-à-vis chapters 16-17 and 18: if vv. 24-27 concern the rights of Jews as such—not the narrower circle of Jesus and his disciples—we wonder what it might add to the structure of Matthew's narrative.

5. The Interpretation Offered Here

Each of the views considered above contributes to our understanding of vv. 24-27, and we should not be surprised at their variety. Nevertheless, we have been suggesting at various points that the most satisfactory view would see this passage as serving Matthew's larger theological agenda. It has to work where it appears, either by (a) tying up loose ends from chapter 17 or introducing the discourse of chapter 18; and most interpreters adopt the second strategy. If 18:1-4 defines greatness as humility, the response of Jesus to the Temple Tax becomes prime example of self-denying condescension. He pays the half-shekel unnecessarily for the sake of good relations with unconverted Jews—and

[18] William Horbury, "The Temple Tax," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, Edited by Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule, (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), p. 285: "He paid the tax so as not to cause offence, but in a way which did not admit liability"; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, p. 417.

perhaps a few *converted* ones who do not see matters as clearly as he does. Nevertheless, we could rightly ask whether this theory introduces implied moral instruction prematurely, given the content of earlier chapters. Is something said in the previous chapter(s), or does something happen, which would invest an innocent-looking question about taxes with subliminal urgency? We propose to explore this last possibility in the remainder of our discussion.

We begin by recapturing the general flow of thought in Matthew's gospel, moving from 16.1 to 17.23. In 16.1-12, two groups manifest doubts regarding the identity of Jesus. The Pharisees ask for a "sign from heaven," notwithstanding the miracles reported in 4.23 to 14.36, because they refuse to believe. His wonders are too numerous and publicly available for the Pharisees and Sadducees to have overlooked; and thus their demand in v. 1 suggests an ulterior motive. It is not, after all, a matter of finding stronger grounds to call Jesus 'Messiah'; and thus he classifies them as evil and adulterous. Yet they are not the only ones whose eyesight has failed: the disciples also miss the point of his warning, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (16.6), because they doubt who he is or, at the very least, the extent of his power. As vv. 8-11 emphasize, a man who can feed thousands in the wilderness cannot be ordinary, though Jesus does not make this inference for them. On the contrary, the loop waits for vv. 13-20 to get closed, which escalates the drama of Peter's famous confession.

In vv. 13-20, Jesus asks who others say that he is, and the disciples answer with the standard, popular guesses. Jesus is (somehow) John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, or another prophet. Then Jesus asks his own disciples, in response to which Peter gives the astonishing answer: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Verse 17 then explains how Peter—fresh from the incident in vv. 5-12—could now answer so correctly and confidently. That is, the self-revelatory power of God the Father has made all the difference. It is this power which can withstand assaults from the forces of hell, intent on destroying the kingdom of God (v. 18); and it precedes and underwrites the subsequent binding and loosing of the church.[19] Thus we see a transition

[19] The future perfect tenses, plausibly to be understood here as *shall have been bound* and *shall have been loosed*, emphasize the primacy of "heaven" in binding and loosing, as opposed to the idea that "heaven" will fall in line with local church

from ignorance to knowledge, effected by God himself, which is meant to astonish the reader by its extent. At one point, the disciples do not understand the reference of Jesus to leaven; then they understand both it and far more—even the full identity of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. But in the next scene, found in vv. 21-23, the narrative takes a turn for the worse.

Peter has confessed Jesus' true identity, and so we assume that it would be permissible for the disciples to tell others about him; but surprisingly, Jesus forbids an evangelistic campaign on his behalf. In verse 20 he "strictly charge(s) the disciples to tell no one that he (is) the Christ"; and we must wait until vv. 21-23 to see why. In this latter passage, Peter becomes a *scandalon* to the "Christ, the Son of the living God." Having confessed his identity as such, he now denies that Jesus could really suffer and die in Jerusalem, at the hands of the "elders, and chief priests, and scribes." Therefore, we observe in chapters 16 and 17 a persistent problem that gives an edge to Matthew's gospel. Jesus will be a crucified Messiah, not one having immunity from this kind of violence and disgrace. We might say that the cross humanizes Jesus entirely too much for Peter, notwithstanding his earlier confession. The same paradox confounds John the Baptist in 11.1-6: Jesus has not done the proper, Messianic thing and rescued him from prison, if not to have prevented him from being arrested in the first place. Therefore, if John ever manages not to be dissuaded by these unwelcome paradoxes, he will have been, like the Peter of vv. 16-17, "blessed" of God.

We return, then, to the unusual command of v. 20. Jesus forbids evangelism without explaining his reasons for doing so; but now we know: as vv. 21-23 imply, a 'gospel' proclaimed by disciples who have not accepted the cross of Christ would be dangerously misleading. Such 'good news' would promise great advantages to the disciple, while concealing (or just overlooking) its central challenge, viz., how one might race to the bottom of human power structures and approval, through persistent

---

transactions. So Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 426; but cf. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 681, who downplays the causal sequence suggested by Morris (*et al.*): "The choice of participles is best explained as motivated by the desire to represent coordinated action: 'What you bind/loose on earth will have been [at that precise moment also] bound by God.'"

self-denial. As Jesus took up his cross, so must his followers (vv. 24-25), knowing that this path leads finally to glory (vv. 27-28). Each person is repaid for his deeds (v. 27), and the glory received later is signaled by the forthcoming Transfiguration.

The Transfiguration (17.1-8) puts the glory of Christ on display for Peter, James, and John; and from previous events we know that they need this kind of help. Jesus has recently insisted, against strong opposition from Peter, that he will suffer and die in Jerusalem; and if he can suffer, so will they. All of it has been overwhelming for the disciples, and thus we can understand Peter's resourceful offer in response to the Transfiguration. "Lord," he says, "it is good that we are *here*. If you wish, I will make tents *here*, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (v. 4, emphasis added). If Jerusalem is the place of death, Jesus can stay alive by not going there. But no such plans will avail. Nothing will keep Jesus from his cross, as the Father himself insists: "This is my beloved Son . . . listen to him." No one wants to hear that Jesus will die or that any of his disciples will suffer; but when the Son speaks, his words must be accepted, not contradicted by the "things of man" (16:23).

The same worry drives the conversation of vv. 9-13. Both Isaiah and Malachi predict the coming of a prophet who somehow prepares the Messiah's way. A voice in the wilderness calls out, "make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3). In the latter days, an Elijah (of sorts) will come to "turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers," lest the land be struck with a "decree of utter destruction" (Malachi 4:5). But suppose that John the Baptist is the wilderness prophet and latter day Elijah, as Jesus has declared him to be. In that case, the disciples understandably ask, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?," based on an intuitive argument: if John the Baptist is Elijah, and if Elijah prepares the way, this way prepared by him should not entail beheadings and crucifixions. Yet it does entail those events, to square the circle once more; and the difficulties raised by a crucified Messiah are felt to be so grave by the other disciples that their faith has recently become smaller than a mustard seed (17:20). Their unbelief—occasioned by references to the passion—has kept them from healing even one epileptic child (v. 14).

With this overview in mind, we may summarize the preceding context of 17.24-27 as follows. Chapters 16 and 17 deal intensively with Christology, set against the backdrop of the Lord's forthcoming betrayal

and crucifixion. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God; but he is guaranteed to suffer under the powers that be in Jerusalem. Accordingly, the question asked of Peter in v. 24 might well have been heard by him with the ambiguity of chapters 16 and 17 still in mind. Is Jesus merely a teacher, or is he more? Does he pay taxes to ordinary collectors, like every other Jew; and if so, is he finally just one of them? In other words, the collectors ask a simple question about taxes; but what Peter hears, beyond their ordinary words, is the implied question, "To whom is Jesus really subject?" Or again, "Does the Messiah pay his dues?" These questions may illuminate the emotive backdrop of vv. 24-27; and if so, we can understand why Jesus responds as he does in these same verses.

Speaking metaphorically, vv. 25-27 transfigure Jesus two more times, so that the natural and supernatural are strategically juxtaposed, reflecting the core paradox of a crucified Messiah. Jesus knows supernaturally that Peter has been asked about the Temple Tax. He also receives the coin needed to pay this tax by means available only to the Son of God. Nevertheless, Jesus still pays the Temple Tax. He still pays his dues, with Peter reaping the benefits of this relatively small miracle. So we see in vv. 24-27 both humility and grandeur, both compliance and anticipated victory; and on this basis, we should not be surprised to find subsequent teaching in which self-aggrandizing impulses are struck down by an unwelcome counterexample: the model of a child. For the same reason, we might have expected the other exhortations of chapter 18, requiring various forms of self-denial for the sake of the kingdom.

Finally, we consider the original question. Someone might be scandalized, if Jesus declines to pay the Temple Tax; but who is it? The tax collectors are at risk, we can safely conclude; but Jesus may have others in mind as well. Suppose that Jesus is concerned about creating a temptation to sin or to stumble, rather than merely causing someone to be offended. In that case, the "them" of v. 27 includes anyone who might observe Jesus refusing to pay, or just hear that he did so, without knowing who he really is. He may be watching Jesus closely, and even sympathetically; and if so, Jesus might choose to avoid a needless controversy about taxes. To some extent, therefore, what Jesus does in paying this tax compares to his being baptized by John. Neither of these gestures is strictly necessary; however, their avoidance by Jesus just then would invite questions that could not be immediately answered. Therefore, Jesus is baptized. He gives the collectors what they ask,

though by means that manifest his deity. The Messiah pays his dues, and soon enough he will pay ours.

Midwestern Journal of Theology: 15.1 (2016): 19-36

Does the Bible Contain Forgeries?[1]

TERRY L. WILDER
Wesley Harrison Chair and Professor of New Testament,
Associate Dean, PhD Program,
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Introduction

Books in antiquity unquestionably contained forgeries, writings that were purportedly authored by someone who did not actually write them.[2] Critical scholars today argue that not only are many ancient works forged, but so also were some books found in both the Old and the New Testaments.[3] Terms like "pseudepigrapha," "pseudepigraphy," or "pseudonymity" are often used to refer to such writings. Technically, a forged or pseudonymous text is not authored by the person whose name it bears and there must be the intention to deceive, from whatever motive.[4] Such deceptive works are written after the purported author's

---

[1] Terry L. Wilder, "Does the Bible Contain Forgeries?" in *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture*, ed. Steven B. Cowan and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 165-81, reprinted with kind permission of author and publisher.

[2] E.g., see W. Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum: Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung*, Handbuch der Altertumwisssenschaft 1/2 (München: Beck, 1971) for a thorough look at all kinds of forgeries. See also Bruce M. Metzger, "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha," *JBL* 91 (1972): 3-24.

[3] For example, most recently, Bart D. Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God: Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011).

[4] Motives cloud the issue. The intention to deceive is what is important. See the definition by J. D. Denniston, "Forgeries, Literary Greek I. Greek," *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. N. G. L. Hammond; 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 444. Recent treatments of whether pseudonymity, for example, if present in the NT, was meant to deceive have determined, "Yes." See A. D. Baum, *Pseudepigraphie und literarische Fälschung im frühen Christentum. Mit*

death by another person or during his life by someone who is not commissioned to do so. Plenty of these writings existed in ancient times, having been created by Greek, Roman, Jewish, and even Christian writers.[5]

Forgeries or deceptive pseudonymous writings are not the same as anonymous texts. The former works make definite bogus claims to authorship; the latter do not. Several anonymous works exist within both the Old and New Testaments. For example, the book of Judges, the Gospels, Acts, and Hebrews do not make definite claims to authorship. That is to say, the authors of these works did not specifically identify themselves, though they were surely known to their recipients.

Strictly speaking, those biblical works most often classified by scholars as forged or pseudonymous are the OT books of Daniel and Isaiah,[6] and certain Pauline and Petrine letters and those of James and Jude[7] in the NT—namely, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, the Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Peter, James and Jude. One might also note that several forged, pseudo-apostolic works exist outside of the NT canon—for example, *3 Corinthians,* the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, and the *Gospel of Peter*.

---

ausgewählten Quellentexten samt deutscher Übersetzung (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2001); J. Duff, "A Reconsideration of Pseudepigraphy in Early Christianity" (unpublished D.Phil. thesis; Oxford University, 1998); and T. L. Wilder, *Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004).

[5] Speyer, *Fälschung;* Wilder, *Pseudonymity*, 35-74.

[6] For a defense of the unity/single authorship of the book of Isaiah see, e.g., the introductions in Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, NAC 15a (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), and idem, *Isaiah 40-66*, NAC 15b (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009).

[7] E. E. Ellis ("Pseudonymity and Canonicity of New Testament Documents," *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church. Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, ed. M. Wilkins [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 212-224; 220) notes that *only* the Pauline and Petrine epistles can be classified as pseudepigrapha. He says that the letters of James and Jude cannot be classified as such because the names of the authors ("Jude…brother of James" [Jude 1] and "James…servant of the Lord Jesus Christ" [James 1:1] "are less precise and could refer to a number of individuals." However, nearly all critics think that the names James and Jude refer to famous individuals of this name and many scholars think that they are used pseudonymously.

Pseudonymity in Greco-Roman and Jewish Writings

To promote the idea that pseudonymity as forgery exists within the canon, critics often appeal to Greco-Roman and Jewish sources. Sometimes scholars justify the presence of pseudonymous writings in Scripture by pointing to the practice in the Greco-Roman schools (e.g., the Pythagorean and Cynic schools). But while some pseudonymity may have been customary in such settings (cf. Iamblichus, *de Vita Pythagorica* § 198, 158), not all school productions, and likely most, were created acceptably in this context (cf. Diogenes Laertius 10.3). Authors of no reputation would often write using the pseudonym of an older, reputable figure in order to secure a hearing for their own works, thus the forgeries.

Specific attributions of authorship were not typically found within ancient Jewish writings. This conclusion is reached because ancient Israelite literature was customarily anonymous.[8] Nonetheless, deceptive pseudonymity or forgery can be found amongst the Jews. The phenomenon occurred mostly in apocalyptic writings after 200 B.C. and arguably was due to a general belief that prophetic inspiration had ceased (cf. Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.41; *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 11a). Evidently, like many Greco-Roman writers of little or no repute, some Jewish authors also wanted their forged writings to carry clout.

Jewish literature is generally not very helpful to a study of pseudepigraphy/forgery in early Christianity. As far as the NT is concerned, the writings most often classified by critical scholars as forgeries are letters. Thus, one really should look to Jewish epistolary literature to establish a precedent for the NT. Only two pseudonymous letters have come down to us from Jewish sources: the *Letter of Aristeas* and the *Epistle of Jeremiah*. The former work, strictly speaking, is not a letter because it does not occur in epistolary form. It is an apologetic narrative providing an account of the translation of the Hebrew OT into Greek. The latter writing, a sermon warning the Jews against pagan idolatry, calls itself a letter and identifies its senders and addressees, but purports to be a copy of an epistle. Thus, neither is entirely comparable to NT epistles. Other pseudonymous Jewish letters exist (e.g. *1 Baruch, 2 Baruch 78-87, 1 Enoch 92-105,* and some letters contained in *1* and *2*

[8] See Morton Smith, "Pseudepigraphy in the Israelite Literary Tradition," in *Pseudepigrapha I* , ed. K. von Fritz (Genève: O. Revedin, 1972), 191-227.

Maccabees), but such writings occur within composite, apocalyptic or narrative frameworks. These letters had a different form and function than NT epistles and are not relevant to the latter.

Nonetheless, some pseudonymous letters can be found within Christian circles. However, these epistles are few in number and unremarkable (e.g. the *Letters of Christ and Abgarus,* the *Letter of Lentulus,* the *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca,* the *Epistle of Titus,* the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, the *Epistle of the Apostles, 3 Corinthians,* and the pseudo-Ignatian letters). They also do not closely resemble any NT epistles and were written at a much later date. Accordingly, though forged letters unquestionably can be found, scholars should not be so quick to consider the presence of forgeries in the NT because no contemporary pseudonymous writings exist which are just like the disputed NT letters. We will specifically look later at an OT book that many consider forged and also an appropriate precedent for the presence of forgeries in the NT.

People in Antiquity, Including Early Christians, Knew How to Detect Forgery

Sometimes the presence of forgeries in the Bible is defended with the appeal that the ancients were either naïve and thus fooled into receiving forgeries into the canon, or not equipped to detect such works like we are today. Nothing could be further from the truth. People in antiquity, including early Christians, knew well how to determine whether a work was genuine or forged.

Since the time of Herodotus, historians, grammarians, and philosophers in antiquity exercised an intensive criticism of documents attributed to recognized figures, not only to determine their authenticity, but also to stop the pseudonymity of various documents from misleading others.[9] For instance, Herodotus questioned, on the grounds of content, whether Homer authored the Cyprian poems (*History* 2.116-17), and he also doubted that Homer wrote the Epigonean

[9] Speyer, *Fälschung,* 114. E. Schnabel, "Der biblische Kanon und das Phänomen der Pseudonymität," *Jahrbuch für Evangelikale Theologie*. 3 Jahrgang (1989): 66.

epic (*History* 4.32);[10] Ion of Chios mentions in his *Triagmi* that Pythagoras may have ascribed some of his own poems as verses of Orpheus (Diogenes Laertius 8.8; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.131);[11] Aristotle doubted that Orpheus authored the Orphic poems (*De Anima* 1.5);[12] Cicero generally suspected that the Sibylline utterances were neither inspired nor authentic (*De Divinatione* 2.85, 2.110-12, 2.116);[13] Herennius Philo doubted that *About the Jews* was actually written by Hecataeus (Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.15);[14] and Sextus Julius Africanus questioned in his letter to Origen the authenticity of the Susanna history (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.31.1).[15]

Some of the criteria used in antiquity to decide whether a work was genuine or forged were the criticism of style, the analysis of vocabulary, the evaluation of teaching, and the discovery of anachronisms.[16] And, people in antiquity, including early Christians, were quite familiar with such methods.[17] For example, Dionysius of Alexandria resolved through a comparison of style and language with the Gospel of John that Revelation was not authored by the evangelist (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.25, 1-27);[18] Eusebius also referred to and used these grounds when separating false apostolic writings from

---

[10] Speyer, *Fälschung*, 114. See Speyer (*Fälschung*) for a full discussion of *Echtheitskritik* in antiquity amongst the Greeks and Romans (112-28), the Jews (152-55), and the church Fathers (179-210).

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 123.

[14] Ibid., 152, 160.

[15] Ibid., 153.

[16] Schnabel, "Kanon," 66.

[17] Ibid., 184. Speyer examines some of the criteria used in the *Echtheitskritik* of the church fathers which included: style and language (181-83), and chronology and other criteria (184-86). Newer criteria involved the lack of attestation by the apostolic church (186-90) and the absence of inspiration (190-92).

[18] Ibid., 182. Many agree (e.g. W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the NT* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1975], 471), however, that Dionysius is writing in connection against the apocalyptic doctrine of chiliasm, and thus says that Revelation was written by a John other than the apostle John; Dionysius wants to establish the dissimilarities between Revelation on the one hand, and the Gospel and Epistle of John on the other (cf. Eusebius, *Eccl Hist* 7.25,27).

genuine ones (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.25,7);[19] and Jerome concluded with the help of style criticism that 1 and 2 Peter were written by different authors.[20]

Early Church Evidence

Known early Christian responses to forgery are more numerous than Jewish responses to pseudepigraphy, and they do not affirm the practice in any way whatsoever (cf. Tertullian's comments in *On Baptism* 17 on the *Acts of Paul*; Serapion's remarks on the *Gospel of Peter* recorded in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* 6.12.2-4.; the reference in the *Muratorian Canon* to "forged" Pauline letters, etc.). The language used by early church leaders in reference to pseudonymous works clearly describes them as fraudulent and deceptive. Early Christians simply did not embrace pseudonymous works they viewed in such a pejorative manner. If discovered, they firmly rejected such writings as deceptive.

Not all critics agree. Some scholars argue that the early church was really only concerned about the content of works and not their authorship. However, this theory does not explain the exclusion from the church's canon of several forged pseudonymous writings which were orthodox in their content (e.g. the *Preaching of Peter,* the *Apocalypse of Peter,* the *Epistle of the Apostles,* the *Correspondence of Paul and Seneca,* the extant *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, etc.).

Other critics object that the evidence of later, Gentile Christian attitudes towards pseudepigrapha and forgery is anachronistic and should not be used to judge the first-century, Jewish-Christian phenomenon of pseudonymity. The fact, however, that the Jews themselves rejected pseudonymous works like *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* from the Hebrew canon helps render the latter theory untenable. Undeniably, second-century orthodox Christians strongly disapproved of pseudonymity and forgery, and it is improbable that Christians and Jews from an earlier era had a different opinion on the matter.

---

[19] Schnabel, "Kanon," 184.

[20] Ibid. Speyer notes that Jerome then attempted to clarify the differences of style and language with the explanation that Peter may have had different interpreters.

Even more scholars note that the church's rejection of pseudonymity took place in a period when a great deal of heretical literature attributed to the apostles was circulating. Thus, the latter phenomenon possibly colored the way that orthodox churchmen, who were concerned about heresy, looked at all pseudonymity. The early church, however, could conceivably have responded differently—for example, by only screening the content of documents and not their authorship. Notably, the early Christians did no such thing; instead they utilized both standards when recognizing books as inspired of God and canonical. They rejected pseudonymous works explicitly written and forged in the apostles' names.[21]

New Testament Evidence

More so than the Old Testament, the New Testament contains passages which especially have a tremendous bearing on the question of pseudonymity and forgery in early Christianity. For example, in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 Paul warned the church against accepting the false teaching that "the day of the Lord had come." He cautioned his readers that, no matter through what agency they had received this heresy—whether through "spirit, word, or letter"—he and his missionary associates had nothing to do with it. Paul would have objected to a pseudonymous letter being attributed to him which contained falsehood, wrong teaching, or material that he did not write. The apostle clearly puts a moratorium on pseudonymity in his name (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:17).

The Pauline signatures in the NT (cf. 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17; Phlm 19) indicated the apostle's use of a secretary and provided readers with a sign of his letters' authenticity and authority. Paul would have frowned upon someone using a facsimile of his signature in a pseudonymous letter which purported to be his.

In Revelation 22:18-19 John warned that no one was to tamper with what he had written in the book by rewriting it in any way. One can extrapolate from this interpretation of these verses to somebody writing another book and falsely attributing it to him by means of pseudonymity. John would object to a pseudonymous letter being attributed to him which contained falsehood or material that he did not write. To write a

[21] Wilder, *Pseudonymity*, 123-47.

forged work and attribute it to somebody is a sort of extension of tampering with an existing document. Thus, to enlarge pseudonymously an existing body of literature—for example, the Pauline corpus—by adding a few inauthentic works is to tamper with Paul's actual writings.

Biblical Appeals for Truth

The Old and New Testaments contain several appeals for truth that are difficult to reconcile with the thinking of an author who had deliberately used forgery. If we start with the NT, we see in 1 Timothy 4:1-2 that Paul warned his readers not to embrace the doctrine of "deceitful spirits" and "hypocritical liars." In Ephesians 4:15 he instructed his readers to "speak the truth in love." In Ephesians 4:25 he exhorted the church to "put off falsehood and speak truthfully." In Colossians 3:9 he admonished his readers: "Do not lie to one another." Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer (1 Cor 6:19; 12:13) and is described as the "Spirit of Truth" (John 14:17; 16:3), created an ethos in the Christian community in which pseudonymity and forgery would have been frowned upon and could not have flourished. Also, a careful study of the terms for "deception" (cf. the Greek word *apataō* and the entire Greek *pseud*—prefixed word group) reveals that a concept of legitimate deception for the NT is difficult to support.

Old Testament axioms and appeals for truth are in keeping with those found in the New Testament. For example, the Lord spoke to Moses and gave him several laws of holiness, one of which in Leviticus 19:11 says, "You must not steal. You must not act deceptively or lie to one another" (HCSB). Proverbs 12:22 teaches, "Lying lips are detestable to the Lord, but faithful people are His delight" (HCSB). Isaiah 63:8 describes God's people as those who "will not deal falsely" (NASB). Psalm 24:4 states that the one "who has not sworn deceitfully" (HCSB) may stand in the Lord's holy place, and in Psalm 43:1 the Psalmist pleads with the Lord to "rescue me from the deceitful and unjust man" (HCSB). While one can find several examples of people in the OT who used deception in mitigating and understandable circumstances (Abraham, Gen 12:13; 20:2; Isaac, Gen 26:7; Jacob, Gen 27:19; Elisha, 2 Kgs 6:19; David, 1 Sam 21:2; and Jehu, 2 Kgs 10:18–19), the OT clearly never condones it. Again, all of these examples would seem to create an environment in which forgery would have been disapproved of and not have thrived.

Internal Evidence from the New Testament

Scholars who point out that forgery was a problem in antiquity—unlike others who say that no concept of literary property existed among the ancients—follow the lead of David Meade and others, to say that the NT contains forgeries, e.g., 1, 2 Timothy and Titus, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, and 2 Peter. To defend the latter thesis, they marshal arguments against the disputed letters of the NT. Those arguments usually focus on items like: (1) a different vocabulary and style than the purported author's style; (2) a lack of emphasis on characteristic doctrines taught by the supposed author; (3) occasional and situational details in the letters being later than the purported author's lifetime; and (4) the letters containing historical allusions to certain details which simply cannot be placed within the book of Acts. In the next section, we will look briefly at the authorship of the Pastoral Letters, three NT letters that many critical scholars consider to be forgeries.

The Pastoral Letters

Scholars cast more doubt on the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles (1, 2 Timothy and Titus) than on any of the other Pauline letters.[22] Some argue that the Pastorals were written after Paul's death by a writer who used the apostle's name to strengthen the authority of these letters.[23] Others suggest that these writings were composed by a disciple or later admirer of Paul who included some genuine notes from Paul in his work.[24]

---

[22] This section on the Pastorals is largely borrowed from Terry L. Wilder, "Pseudonymity and the New Testament," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (ed. D. A. Black and D. S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 296–335.

[23] For example, Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles* (Tübingen, Mohr, 1986). See also David Meade (*Pseudonymity and Canon* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986]) who argues that the pseudonym is an attribution of authoritative tradition.

[24] For example, P. N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Oxford, 1921). More recently, see I. Howard Marshall, in collaboration with Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999). He believes the Pastorals are not

Those who argue against the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals do so on the basis of the following (or at least similar) criteria.[25] First, scholars who hold to the inauthenticity of the Pastorals stress that the vocabulary and style of these letters differ from the other Pauline epistles.[26] Many words found in the PE do not occur in the other Pauline writings[27]—for example, the term "godliness" (*eusebeia*, 1 Tim 6:11). Moreover, 175 different *hapax legomena* appear in the Pastoral Epistles that are found nowhere else in the NT[28]—for example, the terms "slavetraders" (*andrapodistēs*, 1 Tim 1:10), "perjurers" (*etiorkos*, 1 Tim 1:10) and "integrity" (*aphthoria*, Titus 2:7). Stylistic differences also exist between the Pastorals and the rest of the Pauline corpus—for example, several particles are absent from the Pastoral Epistles but are present in the other Paulines.[29]

Such contrasts lead many to believe that Paul did not write the Pastoral Epistles. However, this argument does not consider that the variations in subject-matter, occasion, purpose, and addressees may account for many of these differences.[30] Rather than pointing to a pseudo-author's style, the specialized vocabulary and style in the PE arguably reflects instead Paul's desire to communicate clearly to his audience. The use of a secretary by Paul may also explain the presence of many words in the Pastorals. Stylistic arguments tend to be quite subjective and unimpressive. Differences exist within the other Pauline letters that are just as extensive as those between the Pastorals and the rest of the Pauline corpus.[31] Furthermore, the Pastoral Epistles are

---

pseudonymous but allonymous, i.e. a later compiler arranged Pauline traditions and materials without any intention to deceive his readers.

[25] The arguments used against the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals are extensive and quite technical and cannot be taken up in full here. For a fuller defense of Pauline authorship, see William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000).

[26] This difference is usually considered the most substantial and significant objection to the Pauline authorship of the PE.

[27] D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downer's Grove, IL.: IVP, 1990), 619.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 633.

[31] For example, Paul's letter to the Philippians contains many words that are not found in Paul's other writings nor in the whole of the NT. Do we then conclude

simply too brief to determine with accuracy the writing habits of a particular author.[32]

Second, defenders of pseudonymity in the Pastorals contend that the church structure in these letters is too advanced for Paul's time.[33] That is to say, the Pastorals are said to correspond to a later period when church government was more organized and controlled.[34] Moreover, opponents of authenticity often argue that the Pastoral Epistles reflect a church government of monarchial bishops. However, the fact that Paul appointed elders at the start of his missionary work strongly shows his concern for orderly church government (cf. Acts 14:23).[35] Other biblical passages also indicate that church structure played a key part in Paul's ministry (cf. Acts 20:17-28; Phil 1:1; see also Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12). Furthermore, the instructions regarding overseers in 1 Timothy and Titus simply do not reflect the monarchial church government which began to develop in the second century.[36] For example, in Titus 1:5-7 the word "overseer" is used interchangeably with "elder," and since elders are to be appointed in every town, there is no indication of monarchial government.

Third, those who argue against the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals date the heresy opposed in these letters later than Paul's lifetime. In the second century, gnostic heretics came on the scene denying the resurrection of Christ and practicing both a moral license and rigid asceticism.[37] Some advocates of pseudonymity in the Pastorals argue that the words "myths" (*mythoi*) and "genealogies" (*genealogiai*) in 1 Timothy 1:4 pertain to a developed Gnosticism of the second-century.[38]

---

that Philippians is pseudonymous? No scholar that I know of is willing to do so. The unique words found in Philippians, like those in the Pastorals, can be plausibly explained by Paul's specific purpose for writing these letters.

[32] Terry L. Wilder, "Pseudonymity and the New Testament," *Interpreting the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 296–335; 325.

[33] Guthrie, *Introduction*, 615.

[34] Ibid. 616.

[35] Ibid., 625.

[36] Ibid., 627.

[37] Thomas D. Lea, "Pseudonymity and the New Testament," *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. D. A. Black and D. S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991); Guthrie, *Introduction*, 617.

[38] Lea, "Pseudonymity," 554.

They also contend that the Greek term for "opposing arguments" (*antitheseis*, another *hapax*) in 1 Timothy 6:20 referred to the title of a second-century work written by the heretic Marcion. Others note that the false teaching in these letters contains many Jewish elements (1 Tim 1:7; Titus 1:10, 14; 3:9) as well as some ascetic characteristics.[39]

The identity of the opponents in the Pastorals is still debated amongst scholars:[40] some say that the heresy opposed in the PE is some type of Judaism;[41] others view the opposition as Jewish-Christian opponents to the Pauline mission;[42] many say that the false teaching is a form of second-century Gnosticism;[43] still others identify the false teachers with an ascetic movement of some sort.[44] In any event, those who argue that the opponents in these letters are later than Paul—whether Jewish, ascetic, Gnostic, or a combination of these—need to consider that Jewish elements (cf. Gal 2) and asceticism (cf. Rom 14) also operated in Paul's time, as well as Gnosticism in its incipient form, which likely stretched back into the first century. Consequently, the opposition combated in the PE does not require a date later than Paul's lifetime.

Fourth, supporters of pseudonymity contend that the Pastorals do not emphasize characteristic Pauline doctrines like the Fatherhood of God, the believer's union with Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the cross.[45] Many also suggest that too much of a concern for the transmission of "sound teaching," i.e. tradition (1 Tim 2:4), and the use of creeds (cf. 1 Tim 3:16; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 2:2; Titus 2:11-14, etc.) in the

---

[39] Guthrie, *Introduction*, 628.

[40] The following characteristics are those provided in a summary by I. H. Marshall, in collaboration with P. H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 46–51.

[41] E.g., see C. Spicq, *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 4th ed., 2 vols., EBib (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1969), esp. 85–119.

[42] See Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 47.

[43] This view enjoys the most support. E.g., see J. Roloff, *Der Erste Brief an Timotheus*, EKKNT (Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1988), 228–38; L. Oberlinner, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, Dritte Folge, *Kommentar zum Titusbrief* Band XI/2, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum NT (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 52–73; M. Goulder, "The Pastor's Wolves: Jewish Christian Visionaries Behind the Pastoral Epistles," *NovT* 38 (1996): 242–56.

[44] E.g., see D. R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983).

[45] Guthrie, *Introduction*, 618.

Pastorals reflect Christianity at the end of the first century.[46] Standards of this nature, however, are not accurate criteria for determining authenticity. The so-called absence of typical Pauline themes is overstated. For example, the lack of references to the Holy Spirit in the Pastoral Epistles (found only in 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 1:14; Titus 3:5) is not as big a problem as it first may seem. Colossians and 2 Thessalonians mention the Holy Spirit only once; Philippians also refers to the Spirit very few times. Moreover, the emphasis on Christian doctrine in the Pastorals does not require a later date. During his ministry, Paul stressed holding firmly to tradition (cf. 1 Cor 11:2), and often cited creedal sayings and hymns in his letters (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-5; Phil 2:6-8; Col 1:15-17, etc.).[47]

Finally, opponents of the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles argue that these letters contain historical allusions to Paul's life which cannot be placed within the book of Acts. For example, Paul has been with Timothy and left him in Ephesus to combat false teachers while he went to Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3); similarly, he has left Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5); Paul also referred to Onesiphorus who had been seeking for him in Rome (2 Tim 1:16-17); and he is now a prisoner (2 Tim 1:8, 16; cf. 4:16). This objection suggests that only what is recorded in the book of Acts may be considered authentic. Traditionally, defenders of the authenticity of the Pastorals respond to this argument with the theory that Paul was released from his imprisonment in Acts 28, travelled back to the East, and was later arrested and imprisoned in Rome again. Under this view, the references to Paul in the Pastorals cannot be placed within the data of Acts because they happened at a later date.

Those who hold to the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals also point out that the book of Acts does not record many details of Paul's life (cf. 2 Cor 11).[48] Thus, the fact that Acts does not record a second Pauline imprisonment in Rome is not unusual. If Paul had been martyred at the end of his imprisonment recorded in Acts 28, it is difficult to imagine that the author would have completed his work without mentioning this event.[49] Moreover, the fact that Paul expected to be released from prison in Philippians (1:19, 25; 2:24), while he did not in the Pastorals (2 Tim

[46] Guthrie, *Introduction*, 619.
[47] Ibid., 632.
[48] Ibid., 622.
[49] Ibid., 624.

4:6-8), also suggests a subsequent Roman imprisonment. Furthermore, a social-historical study of Paul in Roman custody in Acts 28 indicates that Paul was likely released.[50]

External evidence from the early church also attests to the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. Several early church leaders accepted these letters as canonical and Pauline—for example, Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Irenaeus. Eusebius, the early church historian, said, "The epistles of Paul are fourteen, all well known and beyond doubt."[51] These "fourteen epistles" included the Pastorals. Furthermore, the Pastoral Epistles are listed among the Pauline letters in the Muratorian Canon. The Pauline authorship of the Pastorals was not seriously questioned until the nineteenth century.

In light of the evidence, a resort to a forged authorship for the Pastoral Epistles is not necessary. They, like the rest of the New Testament writings, may be relied upon as authentic and trustworthy. Those who say that the Pastorals are forged need to take a closer look at the evidence for the onus of proof weighs heavily upon them.

Internal Evidence from the Old Testament

Often critical scholars will argue that forgeries can be found in the Old Testament. Since this is the case, they will say, it should then come as no surprise that forged works are also present in the NT. Amongst other books, these critics frequently point to the OT book of Daniel as being an example of such a work. But is Daniel a forgery?

Daniel

Daniel claims to be written by the prophet Daniel during the time of the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C.[52] In the third century A.D.,

---

[50] Brian Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody. The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, Vol. 3, ed. Bruce W. Winter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 191. He states, "The custody in Rome as Luke reports it and the probable material basis of the deliberations leading to that custody . . . constitute a significant and highly-placed Roman estimate of the trial's probable outcome; i.e., that Paul will be released."

[51] Eusebius, *Hist eccl* 3.3.

[52] This section on the book of Daniel largely follows and extensively borrowed from the argument in the article by Stephen R. Miller, "Daniel, Book of," in

the neo-Platonist Porphyry first proposed that Daniel was instead written by an unknown Jew during the second century B.C. who wrote under the false name of Daniel. The purpose for composing such a work was to encourage Jews as they resisted the Syrian-Greek tyrant named Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who ruled from 175 to 164 B.C. during the Maccabean era. If the thesis above is true, then Daniel would be the last of the OT books written.

Critical scholars who place Daniel in the second century B.C. first say that the book contains several unhistorical accounts and *vaticinia ex eventu*, i.e., prophecies after the event. They generally think that the author wrote chapters 7-12 and introduced his material with the stories in chapters 1-6, taken from a Danielic body of writings dating from the prior century. They seem neither to believe in predictive prophecy nor think that a sixth-century writer could have known such historical details about the purported setting. For them, the so-called historical inaccuracies concerning events prior to the second century indicate a later date of writing. However, Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, made plain that Daniel's prophecies were known prior to the time of Alexander the Great (d. 323 BC).[53] Moreover, the book's historical reliability has been often established by archaeological discoveries (e.g., the historical authenticity of Belshazzar and Jerusalem's invasion by the armies of Babylon ca. 605 B.C.). Further, the supposed historical inaccuracies, when closely examined, can be reasonably explained.

Second, those who place Daniel in the second century B.C argue that the book's position in the Hebrew canon with the Writings instead of the Prophets indicates a late date of writing. This objection, however, is not insurmountable. The Masoretes may have been influential in assigning Daniel to the Writings because he was not appointed or ordained as a prophet; further, much of the book bears the character of history than it does prophecy.[54]

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, gen eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 386-88. The arguments used against the historicity of Daniel are extensive, quite technical, and cannot be taken up in full here. For a fuller defense, see Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, NAC 18 (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1994).

[53] Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews,* 11.8.5.

[54] Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 424.

Third, those who hold to a Maccabean thesis for Daniel contend that the language of the book indicates a late date. Daniel contains some words of Persian, Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. This mixture of words has led scholars to put forward a late date for the book. However, the presence of such language does not necessitate a late date. Daniel finished his book after Persia conquered Babylon. He also served in the new government's administration. So, the presence of Persian loanwords is understandable. These Persian words and expressions seem to provide substantial evidence for an early date of writing because they are old words that stopped being used around 300 B.C. The presence of three Greek loanwords in the book (3:5, 7, 10, 15) also do not demand a late date because archaeology has shown that Greece and other Mediterranean Sea nations had considerable contact with each other prior to the sixth century B.C. Conversely, if Daniel was written in the second century during Greek rule over Palestine, one would think that numerous Greek words would instead be present in the text. Daniel's Aramaic shows noticeable parallels with the early Imperial Aramaic found in texts like the Elephantine papyri that date from the fifth century B.C. or earlier. Furthermore, Daniel's Aramaic does not correspond with later examples of Aramaic discovered at Qumran, e.g., like that found in the Genesis Apocryphon.

Fourth, arguments for dating Daniel based on its theology are on shaky ground because if Daniel can be reasonably and objectively dated to the sixth century by other means, as I think it can, then the theology within the book would be of the same time period.

Those who hold to the traditional view that Daniel was written in the sixth century B.C. maintain that the history and predictive prophecy in the book is dependable, accurate, and supernatural. First, those who argue for Daniel's historicity contend that Jesus and NT authors thought that Daniel composed the book (cf. Matt 24:15 with Mark 13:14; Matthew 26:64 with Mark 14:62 and Luke 22:69; Heb. 11:32-34). Second, they point out that the book declares to have been written by the prophet Daniel (Dan 1:7; 12:4), to be the story of a person who actually went through the exile and resided in Babylon, and to be a prophetic forecast of events in the future (Dan 7:2, 4, 6-28; 8; 9:2-27; 10:2-21; 12:4-8). Third, eight manuscripts of Daniel were discovered at Qumran. One of them (4QDan^{c}) dates to ca. 125 B.C. and may have even been written earlier. This fact actually favors an earlier date for Daniel

because if the book was originally written in the second century, then it would not have gained widespread acceptance by the Qumran community in such a short time, roughly 40 years. R. K. Harrison writes that "there would ... have been insufficient time for Maccabean compositions to be circulated, venerated, and accepted as canonical Scripture by a Maccabean sect."[55] Fourth, the Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT by Jewish scholars in Egypt that was widely used by Diaspora Jews. Advocates of the Maccabean hypothesis propose that 30 years after Daniel was composed, it was received into the Hebrew canon, carried to Egypt, and there then translated into Greek. The latter proposal is improbable. Scholars by and large concur that the Pentateuch was translated into Greek in the mid-third century B.C. Arguably, all of the OT books were translated around the same time. Surely Daniel was translated into Greek by ca. 130 B.C. when Ben-Sirach's grandson composed the prologue to Ecclesiasticus. Fifth, Ezekiel mentions Daniel three times in his book (14:14, 20; 28:3). These references from the sixth-century prophet would seem to decide the matter in favor of the traditional view. However, Miller explains,

> Since the discoveries at Ras-Shamra . . . scholars who accept the late date have attempted to explain these passages by declaring that Ezekiel was referring to a mythological figure named Danel, who appears in the Ugaritic epic, "The Tale of Aqhat." A devastating argument against the theory that Ezekiel's Daniel is this Ugaritic hero is that Danel was an idolater! Ezekiel must have been referring to the author of the book of Daniel. If so, the historicity of Daniel and his book would seem to be established.[56]

The Old Testament book of Daniel can be defended as historically authentic. In light of the evidence, a resort to a forged authorship for Daniel is not necessary. Like the rest of the Old Testament, the book may be relied upon as authentic and trustworthy. Those who say that Daniel is a forged book should closely examine all of the evidence and consider the possibility of miracles and predictive prophecy.

---

[55] R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1127.

[56] Miller, "Book of Daniel," 387.

Conclusion

Did the authors of certain biblical books lie about their identities, using the names of apostles or prophets or whomever in order to gain a hearing for their works or to invest them with authority that they themselves did not have? No doubt such writings were in circulation, many from Gnostic and other groups, but when discovered, they were always soundly rejected, most notably by the early church. For example, Asian church elders ousted a colleague from his post for composing a forgery (cf. Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17), writing out of "love for Paul" the apocryphal *Acts of Paul*, which included the pseudo-apostolic letter of *3 Corinthians*.[57] Despite the presbyter's profession that he had meant well, his action warranted removal from office. The elders arguably removed him for writing a forgery, either writing a work that fictitiously bore Paul's name or for composing a fiction about the apostle. Likewise, Serapion, bishop of Antioch, rejected the use of the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* in the church at Rhossus.[58] He had initially allowed the church to read the book because he thought it was authentic. However, when he further examined the work, he discovered that it contained false teaching and forbade its use. Serapion rejected the *Gospel of Peter* because of its heresy and its forged authorship. This documentary evidence is in keeping with the tenor of all that we have seen in this chapter.

Indeed, any alleged forgery present in either the OT or NT would have to have had successfully escaped from some intense scrutiny. As we have seen in a previous chapter written by Darrell Bock, Paul Wegner, and myself, we possess the right canon of Scripture and we also have the correct OT and NT books, none of which, I am convinced, are forgeries.

Those who say that forgeries exist in the Bible really need to take a closer look at the evidence. The onus of proof weighs heavily upon them. As we have seen, any objections to the authenticity of biblical books can be plausibly answered.[59] The evidence we possess points to the trustworthiness of Scripture.

---

[57] Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17.

[58] Eusebius, *Hist eccl* 6.12, 2ff.

[59] See Terry L. Wilder, "Pseudonymity and the New Testament," in *Interpreting the New Testament*, eds. D. A. Black and D. S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 296-335.

Midwestern Journal of Theology: 15.1 (2016): 37-66

The Reformers' Interpretation of Jesus' Teaching on Divorce and Marriage

JASON K. LEE
Dean and Professor of Theological Studies,
Cedarville University

Introduction

One glance at the headlines for any U.S. newspaper/ news site at the end of June 2015 makes it clear that marriage, and specifically the "definition of marriage" is a hotly contested contemporary debate. In the questions asked by the Supreme Court justices in their initial hearing of the Obergefell v. Hodges and in their decision (e.g. majority and particularly in the minority), the question of a "traditional" view of marriage was raised, though ultimately dismissed. Many evangelicals rightly noted, that for the church, the question was not just one of the "traditional" view, but one of a "biblical" view.

During the Reformation, questions related to "traditional" view of marriage and a "biblical" view of marriage were commonplace. The theological discussion often gravitated around the topics of clerical marriage and marriage as a sacrament. These discussions often included references to Jesus' teaching on divorce, marriage, and celibacy found in Matthew 19.

Partly due to the pattern of commenting on the biblical texts established by Erasmus' *Annotations*, which accompanied his publication of the New Testament in 1516, the reformers often explained their theological views through explicit comments on the biblical text.[1] Among the vast amount of religious documents in the Reformation era, arguably the most influential on biblical interpretation was Erasmus' *Novum*

[1] See Jason K. Lee, "Theological Interpretation in the Reformers: A Case Study of 'Son of Man' Texts in Matthew" in *Aspects of Reforming*. Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2013.

Instrumentum (1516)[2] was intended to be a revision of and improvement on the Latin Vulgate with its outdated and incorrect grammatical constructions.[3] Erasmus added two other features to justify his revisions to the approved Latin text. In parallel columns with his Latin text, Erasmus provided the Greek (Byzantine) text. Later in the work, he included his *Annotations*, which often explained why his translation revised the Latin of the Vulgate and clarified his translation's connection with the Greek text. These secondary features were to provide the textual (the Greek text) and grammatical/ theological (*Annotations*) rationale behind Erasmus' Latin translation. Erasmus may have intended to provide a better quality Latin text, but it was his secondary features of the Greek text and his *Annotations* that would most dramatically affect the Protestant reformers, even those that rejected Erasmus' humanist program.

Like many other portions of the reformers' platform for change, their marriage views needed to flow from the biblical text if they were going to upend contemporary religious views or civil practices. Matthew 19 serves a crucial text in the Reformers' discussion because it provides one of the longest canonical presentations of Jesus' teaching on marriage. This text is crucial for them, because it draws on three other biblical texts. In contemporary parlance, Matthew 19 contains two usages of intertextuality (Ge 2 and Dt 24) and one use of inner-textuality (Mt 5). In Matthew's account, Jesus' reply to the Pharisees' first question includes an extended quotation of Genesis 2 and a concluding interpretation that emphasizes God's intention of a lifelong union in marriage. The Pharisees' second question includes a quotation and a brief, slanted interpretation of Deut. 24. Jesus' corrective reply includes a thematic overlap with his discussion of marriage and divorce in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5.

Appropriately, this paper will navigate some of the reformation comments on Matthew 19, but will also reflect some of Reformation

---

[2] Erasmus' first edition published in Basle in 1516 was entitled *Novum Instrumentum.* Subsequent editions in 1519, 1522, 1527 and 1535 were entitled *Novum Testamentum.*

[3] Henk Jan De Jonge, "Novum Testamentum a Nobis Versum: The Essence of Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament," *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 35.2 (Oct 1984): 395-396. Cf. De Jonge, "Erasmus' Method of Translation in His Version of the New Testament," *The Bible Translator* 37.1 (Jan 1986): 135-138.

commentary on the other three texts as well. So, after an all too brief example of one reformer's description of marriage and how these texts provide a crucial textual framework for the discussion, this paper will turn to the reformers' interpretations of the background texts (from elsewhere in Matthew and in the Pentateuch) before focusing on some of the Reformation exegetical insights into Matthew 19. The heavy dose of Reformation selections in this essay is intended to let the reformers "speak" to a contemporary, biblical view of marriage.

Luther as an Example of Reformation Views on Marriage[4]

Luther provides a useful and lively example of the reformers' discussions of marriage in his *Estate of Marriage*. Throughout the work, Luther interacts with various biblical texts and yet Gen 1-2 and Matt 19 figure prominently. The German reformer finds these texts foundational for a "biblical view" of marriage. Genesis 1 provides the appropriate candidates for marriage according to Luther. He writes:

> In order to proceed aright let us direct our attention to Genesis 1 [:27], "So God created man... male and female he created them." From this passage we may be assured that God divided mankind into two classes, namely, male and female, or a he and a she. This was so pleasing to him that he himself called it a good creation [Gen. 1:31].[5]

Luther identifies the sexual identity of the male and female as essential to God's creative design and for His ordinance of marriage. Their physical differences are to stimulate mutual appreciation between the male and female for God's creation of sexual identity as a God-honoring characteristic of His design. God's creative design of human bodies as

[4] This brief survey of Luther's view is not intended to introduce all of the concepts that arise in Luther's discussion on marriage. See Michael Parsons, "Luther and Calvin on Marriage" for more on Luther's perspective overall. The introduction in this paper is simply to note a pattern of Luther referring in polemical pieces to the key biblical texts covered in this paper, especially Matthew 19.

[5] LW 45:17.

particularly male or female removes any gender confusion or transition in gender. Luther continues to reflect on Genesis 1:

> Therefore, each one of us must have the kind of body God has created for us. I cannot make myself a woman, nor can you make yourself a man; we do not have that power. But we are exactly as he created us: I a man and you a woman. Moreover, he wills to have his excellent handiwork honored as his divine creation, and not despised. The man is not to despise or scoff at the woman or her body, nor the woman the man. But each should honor the other's image and body as a divine and good creation that is well-pleasing unto God himself.[6]

Luther explains the reason that the "male-ness" and "female-ness" are essential to God's design for humans is that God pairs His creation of humans with the ordinance of multiplication and filling the earth. In short, for Luther, the Bible teaches that God made man and woman sexually distinct so that He could unite them in marriage for the purpose of having children. He stresses this point in saying, "For it is not a matter of free choice or decision but a natural and necessary thing, that whatever is a man must have a woman and whatever is a woman must have a man. For this word which God speaks, "Be fruitful and multiply," is... more than a command, namely, a divine ordinance [*werck*] which it is not our prerogative to hinder or ignore."[7]

Luther then turns his attention to Matthew 19:12 to indicate that there only three exceptions given by Jesus to this ordinance of God of a man and woman marrying and having children. The "exempted" categories are "eunuchs who have been so from birth", those made so by men, and those who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom. Luther adds, "Apart from these three groups, let no man presume to be without a spouse. And whoever does not fall within one of these three categories should not consider anything except the estate of marriage. Otherwise it is simply impossible for you to remain righteous."[8] Luther transitions from these textual comments about the types of eunuchs identified in the Matthew text to a polemic on how the vows of chastity made by monks and clergy provide no power to withstand the ordinance and intent of God's creative design. The human body was made male or

[6] LW 45:17-18.
[7] LW 45:18.
[8] LW 45:18-19.

female and was made for the marriage union to produce children. No amount of resolve can withstand the inevitable force of God's creative design. A chastity vow only reroutes this design for sexual union to illicit channels of fulfillment. Luther contends that not only should priests and monks not make such vows, but if they have made such vow, then they should forsake the vow in light of God's greater ordinance.[9]

For Luther, this recognition of God's creative design of male and female and the need for the marital, procreative union leads to contentment and joy in marriage. If someone (married or single) does not value God's design for marriage then they are destined to malign the marital relationship or seek some inappropriate expression of its design. Luther challenges:

> For this reason young men should be on their guard when they read pagan books and hear the common complaints about marriage, lest they inhale poison. For the estate of marriage does not set well with the devil, because it is God's good will and work. This is why the devil has contrived to have so much shouted and written in the world against the institution of marriage, to frighten men away from this godly life and entangle them in a web of fornication and secret sins.[10]

If Luther scholars read Luther like some people read Nostradamus, then they would have a field day with a "web of fornication" and "secret sins" as if Luther was able to foresee the heinous nature of internet pornography or an Ashley Madison account.

Biblical Commentary on Marriage Texts

From the example of Luther's *The Estate of Marriage*, one can see that the reformers' tendency when reflecting on Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce in Matthew 19 to utilize other key biblical texts. Since Jesus' own comments draws readers back to Genesis 2, the reformers often followed a similar hermeneutical path. Often when describing a biblical view of marriage, the reformers drew on Genesis 1-

[9] LW 45:19.
[10] LW 45:19.

2 in their discussions. Specifically, the textual connection between Mt 19:5 and Ge 2:24 is essential to the reformers' positions. In the dialogue with the Pharisees in Mt 19, Jesus or the Pharisees draw on two Old Testament texts (Ge 2 and Dt 24) explicitly. The reformers value this intertextuality and contemporary readers will better understand the Reformation commentary on Mt 19, if there is an understanding of the reformers' comments on Ge 2:24-25 and Dt 24:1-4.

Genesis 2:24-25

In commenting on Ge 2, the reformers note some essential characteristics of God's creative design for marriage. The marriage is union between a man and a woman that is intended to be permanent, exclusive, and procreative. Defining marriage according to God's original design for it, gives the potential for peaceful and productive lives that glorify God in spite of the ravages of sin in human relationships. God's design for marriage includes the male and female recognizing God-given roles of leadership or submissiveness.

Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt describes the complementarian relationship between a husband and a wife. This ordered relationship fulfills the human desire for unity and yet accomplishes the purposes of the distinction of the sexes. Karlstadt explains:

> God created a helpmeet for Adam who was his equal, yet different. He therefore created Adam first and Eve after, ward and gave the man authority and the woman submissiveness. Just as he created Adam to the glory of God so that he might fully cling to God's will, praise, counsel, and help. Spouses retain their equality if they remain in the instituted unity, with the woman being obedient and submissive to her husband, holding him in honor and treating him well, always mindful that she has been taken from the man and is called she-man. A husband, on the other hand, must not forget that woman is his bone, flesh, and blood. He ought always to love her and never hate or envy her. He ought to refrain from anything that might separate him from his wife, as Adam says, "On this account a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife." When married people

> pervert the instituted order so that she becomes man and he she-man, it is inevitable that conflicts and tensions arise. For wherever God does not govern there unrest and the devil's play take over. Man is the head on the basis of the divine order. This order is perverted when the woman rules and the man is being ruled.[11]

In other words, as Karlstadt reflects on Ge 2, he sees not only a description of the original relationship between Adam and Eve, but he also sees prescriptive ideal for all future marriages. He refers to a loss of the male headship- female submission unity as a perversion that inevitably brings conflicts and turmoil rather than blessing. Later in the text, he clarifies that a woman has much to add to the order and organization of the family, but should not exert herself in the "governing of the will" of her husband.[12]

Peter Martyr Vermigli also extols the exclusive unity that occurs with the marriage relationship. By drawing on imagery from Ge 2, Vermigli notes the creation of woman from man as a sign that the purpose of this form of creation is to indicate that the woman and the man belong together. This union occurs in the marriage relationship. Vermigli writes:

---

[11] Andreas Karlstadt, *Regarding Vows*, in John L. Thompson (editor), *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11*, IVP Academic (2012), 106, (hereafter *RCS: Genesis*).

[12] Ibid. Since the subject of this essay relates to Mt 19 and its use of these preceding texts, there is not room to pause and discuss the theme of complementarity in the reformers' comments. This complementarity is notable in Karlstadt's comments above but also in this quotation from Wolfgang Capito's *On God's Work of the Six Days* (as cited in RCS Genesis p.54), "if the matter is borne in orderly fashion, a pious woman is also the glory of God, no less than a faithful man… Nonetheless, she is subjected to the man for the sake of order as well as the sequence of creation: for she was taken out of the man, not only on account of sin and the deceptions of the serpent that were allowed in before the man's fall. Wherefore in a marriage that is pious and restored to its first state, you should understand that a woman be underneath the man no less than in a common marriage. For Eve was blameless when taken from the man and given to him as a helper." Other similar comments from Ge 1-2 can be found in Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Musculus, et al.

> By the woman's formation from a rib, it is declared that in a marriage there ought to be a union of the whole to the part (and therefore a man pines for a wife) and of the part to the whole, so that the part may be preserved there (and therefore a woman seeks a husband). A husband therefore seeks a part of himself and gets back the member that was taken from him. It is also noted here that it is Christ's own teaching that marriage ought to be an indissoluble bond. You would recognize this so long as they are able to be one flesh, but it is destroyed by fornication, as well as by all those obstacles by which spouses are unable to be one flesh in such a way that they may both require and provide mutual kindness and service to one another.[13]

Vermigli depicts the virtue and permanence of the "indissoluble bond" of marriage. He also notes the devastating effect that sexual infidelity has on a marriage union. The stresses and obstacles of marriage can only be overcome by "mutual kindness and service to one another." Vermigli's biblical and theological basis for a permanent, marital union is God's method of creating the woman from the man, and the practical reality of a permanent, marital union is the need of regular grace and mutual forgiveness from each of the marriage partners.

While Vermigli emphasizes permanence from the Ge 2 text, Johannes Brenz stresses that the exclusive nature of the marriage relationship as being between one man and one woman. Brenz clearly indicates that God's creative design to marriage does not include polygamy or polyamory. Brenz writes:

> When Adam says ... "The two shall be one flesh," and Christ thus explains, "They are no longer two, but one flesh," it signifies without obscurity that it is not licit according to the natural law of marriage for one man to have two or more wives at the same time. Indeed, when God was going to give a wife to Adam, he created from his rib not two women but only one. And he says that two, not three, shall be one flesh... He clearly teaches that whoever takes one wife cannot, while she lives, pledge his troth to another spouse, because that is beyond his right. So what

[13] Peter Vermigli, Commentary on Genesis 2, in RCS: Genesis, 109.

> should we say about the patriarchs, who, though they were the holiest of men, still possessed more wives than one. My response is that this custom among the holy patriarchs was more tolerated by God than approved.[14]

So, for Brenz, God's creative intention for marriage is the bond of one man and one woman for life. The OT narratives that describe the patriarchs with more than one wife often indicate that all is not well with these unapproved marital arrangements. Calvin, likewise, describes how God created exclusive marriage to be a blessing and a part of human flourishing. He indicates that there a multitude of ways that contemporary marriages fall short of God's original design and that marital struggles are indication of the corruption of sin. Calvin contends:

> I confess, indeed, that in this corrupt state of the human race, the blessing of God that is described here is neither perceived nor flourishes. However, the cause of this evil must be considered, namely, that the order of nature appointed by God has been inverted by us. For if our integrity had remained to this day such as it was from the beginning, that divine institution would be clearly discerned and the sweetest harmony would reign in marriage: because then the husband would look with reverence to God, the woman would likewise be a faithful assistant to him, and with one accord they would both cultivate a mutuality that was no less friendly and peaceful than it was holy. But now, by our own fault and by the corruption of our nature, it has come to pass that this happiness of marriage has in large part been lost, or at the least is now mingled and stained with many difficulties.[15]

Wolfgang Musculus also describes how polygamy or other corruptions of the exclusive marital relationship of a husband and a wife are going to fall short of God's intention in marriage. Like many of the reformers, Musculus grounds the validity of marriage in God's creative design and for the purpose of procreation. After affirming the procreative role of

---

[14] Johannes Brenz, Commentary on Genesis 2, in RCS: Genesis, 109-110.
[15] Calvin on Gen.2:24, in *RCS: Genesis*, 110.

marriage and God's creation of both male and female sexuality for this "conjunction", Musculus comments on Genesis 2, "In this matter, neither a man without a woman nor a woman without a man avails for anything. That is precisely why marriage was established by God, and it was for that very reason God created and blessed not men alone nor women alone, but male and female together...."[16] Musculus indicates the fullness of God's blessing comes to men and women united in the marital relationship.

In his comments on Gen 2, Musculus explains that one reason that the fullness of the blessing to humanity comes only through the marriage union comes from how the woman was created to be a "fitting" companion with the man. Musculus explains:

> This word *kenegdo* signifies that a woman is prepared for the man and placed alongside him so that the companionship and intimacy that they living together may be undivided, not Iike that of animals who come together but once a year for procreation and afterwards wander off separately and unrestrained. A wife ought to be so yoked to her husband that she is inseparable from him."[17]

Musculus drives home his point of the created intention of companionship that comes through the exclusive design of marriage. He describes the physical union that happens in marriage and was later indicated by the apostle Paul draws on the fact that the woman is created out of the body of the man. He even adds a rhetorical flair about the woman coming from the man's side. He continues:

> God did not form woman from the dust of the earth as he formed Adam, but from Adam's own body: and even then, not from a lock of hair or a patch of skin, but from his flesh and bone. He took her from the inner-most parts of the man because he formed her to be united to him. Who does not see that God wished the man and the woman to be bound together tightly and to embrace one another in mutual love? To be sure, he joined every kind of

[16] Musculus' Commentary on Genesis, in RCS: Genesis, 105.
[17] Ibid., 104.

> animal in pairs, but of none do we read that they take females that have sprung from their own flesh; rather, it was enough that they should have the same bodily form, similar in appearance but differing in sex. Here, however, there appears the unique relationship of having the same flesh, indeed, the very same, on account of which the apostle says, "He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it." Note also that when God wished to form the woman from Adam's own body, he took her to be formed not just from any part of Adam but from his side: not from Adam's head, lest the woman grow haughty on account of her origin; nor from his feet, lest she seem to be demoted to the worthlessness and insignificance of a slave; but rather from Adam's side, so that he would know she was made to be his partner and the inseparable companion of his life, and so that she might legitimately cleave to his side, whence she was taken. This consideration argues against the inhumanity of those who treat their wives no differently than as if they had been acquired for a price along with other possessions, so that you would regard them as scarcely differing at all from handmaids. Such is especially the case for the marriages of those who practice polygamy.[18]

Having established the typical exegetical comments on Ge 2:24, we now turn our attention briefly to other main background text that figures into the reformers' understanding of Mt 19. In their rebuttal to Jesus' response affirming marriage along the lines of Ge 2, the Pharisees raise the teaching of Moses in De 24. The reformers recognize the textual connection and often interplay the Gospel text with the Pentateuch text regardless of whether they are explicitly commenting on Deuteronomy or Matthew.

Deuteronomy 24:1-3

In the legal material collected throughout Exodus through Deuteronomy, there are many commands given as stipulations to the various iterations of the covenant that the Lord is making with Israel.

[18] Musculus' Commentary on Genesis, in RCS: Genesis, 107.

Some of the commands are worded positively to encourage the people to aspire toward moral behavior and proper religious practices. However, some of the legal material carries the purpose of prohibiting or curbing inappropriate behaviors or practices. This "restraining evil" function is what most reformers see in the stipulations for divorce found in De 24.

Though the textual context of the Deuteronomy text has Israel wondering in the wilderness, like many Reformation exegetes Calvin connects the text with Jesus' later teaching on the matter in Mt 19. In commenting on De 24, Calvin writes:

> Although what relates to divorce was granted in indulgence to the Jews, yet Christ pronounces that it was never in accordance with the Law, because it is directly repugnant to the first institution of God, from whence a perpetual and inviolable rule is to be sought. It is proverbially said that the laws of nature are indissoluble; and God has declared once for all, that the bond of union between husband and wife is closer than that of parent and child; wherefore, if a son cannot shake off the paternal yoke, no cause can permit the dissolution of the connection which a man has with his wife. Hence it appears how great was the perverseness of that nation, which could not be restrained from dissolving a most sacred and inviolable tie. Meanwhile the Jews improperly concluded from their impunity that that was lawful, which God did not punish because of the hardness of their hearts; whereas they ought rather to have *considered*, agreeably to the answer of Christ, that man is not at liberty to separate those whom God hath joined together. (Mt 19:6)[19]

Calvin affirms the marriage union in its permanence, even more so than its intimacy. He affirms that "no cause can permit the dissolution of the connection," which was established between man and woman in God's first institution of marriage (Adam and Eve), serving as a "perpetual and inviolable rule" for future marriages. In his comments on divorce in De 24, Calvin draws on the pattern of marriage in Ge 2, following Jesus'

[19] John Calvin, Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony, reprinted in Calvin's Commentaries, Baker Books (2003), 3:1:93 (volume 3: part 1: page 93).

example. Though Calvin affirms that the provision of divorce in De 24 does not superintend God's original design for marriage, the reformer recognizes the need to explain why God made such a concession. Calvin explains:

> Still, God chose to make a provision for women who were cruelly oppressed, and for whom it was better that they should at once be set free, than that they should groan beneath a cruel tyranny during their whole lives. Thus, in Malachi, divorce is preferred to polygamy, since it would be a more tolerable condition to be divorced than to bear with a harlot and a rival. (Mal 2:14.) And undoubtedly the bill or scroll of divorce, whilst it cleared the woman from all disgrace, cast some reproach on the husband; for he who confesses that he puts away his wife, because she does not please him, brings himself under the accusation both of moroseness and inconstancy. For what gross levity and disgraceful inconstancy it shows, that a husband should be so offended with some imperfection or disease in his wife, as to cast away from him half of himself! We see, then, that husbands were indirectly condemned by the writing of divorce, since they thus committed an injury against their wives who were chaste, and in other respects what they should be.[20]

Furthermore, Calvin makes a close textual observation pertaining to the conditions of the certificate of divorce as Moses describes it. Calvin observes the callous nature of the husband who would issue the certificate of divorce because his wife is not physical pleasing to him. Calvin observes:

> Some interpreters do not read these three verses continuously, but suppose the sense to be complete at the end of the first, wherein the husband testifies that he divorces his wife for no offense, but because her beauty does not satisfy his lust. If, however, we give more close attention, we shall see that it is only one provision of the Law, viz., that when a man has divorced his wife, it is not lawful for him to marry her again if she have

[20] Calvin, *Harmony of the Law*, 3:1:94.

> married another. The reason of the law is, that, by prostituting his wife, he would be, as far as in him lay, acting like a procurer. In this view, it is said that she was defiled, because he had contaminated her body, for the liberty which he gave her could not abolish the first institution of God, but rather, as Christ teaches, gave cause for adultery. (Mt 5:31, and 19:9.) Thus, the Israelites were reminded that, although they divorced their wives with impunity, still this license was by no means excused before God.[21]

So, in his comments on De 24, Calvin points to both the callous nature of the hearts of the Israelite husbands that would make such a provision necessary. He also points out that the connection of divorce and remarriage would make the wife of an adulterer. Both of Calvin's points from De 24, he also sees in Jesus' teaching in Mt 19.

Similar to Calvin, Luther connects his exposition of Mt 19 to De 24. In his *Sermons on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, Luther explains on how Moses' provision for divorce sheds light on the low view of marriage held by the Israelites in the wilderness.

> That was Moses' law concerning the certificate of divorce, and the Jews made full use of this law, taking wives, and then chasing them away and taking others. They regarded marrying and taking a wife as no different than trading horses. If someone took a wife and she did not please him, he cast her out. And when he had sent away his first wife and the second also did not please him, he was sorry he had made the switch and soon wanted to have another or to have his first wife back. So they divorced abundantly, but Moses puts a limit on this and prohibits anyone from taking back his first wife. He wanted to prevent this so that they would not divorce so lightly. And on account of this stipulation in the law, many of them kept their first wife. For they thought: "If you get one who is worse, you will be unable to take back the first." Now, since the Jews were a very arrogant and wicked people, Moses permitted them the certificate of divorce so that they would not kill their wives or poison them to death.

---

[21] Calvin, *Harmony of the Law*, 3:1:94-5.

> And divorces abounded so much that they themselves were offended by this.[22]

Luther uses a device typical of his preaching as he takes on the persona of Jesus and speaks as if he were Jesus preaching the sermon. As Jesus, Luther releases strong vindictives against Jesus' Jewish contemporaries. Jesus (Luther) says:

> The Lord Christ replies to this and says, "Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because of the hardness of your hearts" [Matt. 19:8]. It is as if He wanted to say, "What? Moses?" He cuts through like a master and says: "Moses this, Moses that! God is above Moses. Since you are such scandalous Jews, wicked and wretched knaves, and cannot keep what God has commanded, Moses did not command you to do this but allowed it, so that no offense would take place and so that you would not strike your wives dead or poison them. Thus Moses did not give you this law because of your righteousness, honor, and piety; rather, he allowed you and was lenient because of the hardness of your hearts. He did not command it. Instead, Moses thought: 'This is such a proud and wicked people that they may well commit one murder after another. If they do not want to keep God's commandment, then let them divorce in order to prevent murder and poisoning. If anyone does not want to keep his wife with him in kindness, let her go so that nothing worse comes of it, and have a nice life! If you do not want to be married in God's name, then be whores and fornicators in the devil's name. You are such hypocrites, such stubborn, scandalous, and hard-hearted people, that no one could soften you up even with a hammer.'"

Obviously, in his presentation as Jesus, Luther indicates that the "divorce exception" based on De 24 is more of a sign of unrighteousness among the Jews, not a standard of righteousness. Another text in Matthew also interacts with the divorce text in De 24, there in Mt 5 as a

[22] Sermons on the Gospel of St. Matthew, LW 68:7.

part of the Sermon on the Mount, righteousness is also the overall concern.

Matthew 5:31-32

In the typical Reformation comments, the writers point out that most of Jesus' teaching on marriage in Mt 5 recurs in his longer teaching in Mt 19. However, because Mt 5 does provide an unique context for the teaching, some of their commentary keys on the theme of righteousness in the sermon.

In the Sermon on the Mount in Mt 5-7, Jesus provides a selection of examples of kingdom righteousness. Jesus' third example of kingdom righteousness links with his second one. The English reformer, John Carter (d.1634) notes how the theme of adultery connects the two examples. Carter explains:

> The remote occasion, which participates with adultery and so comes to be forbidden in the Seventh Commandment is causeless divorce (Now Christ allows of none to be just and warrantable, except in the case of fornication, whereby the marriage band is broken). The Scribes and Pharisees taught that Moses made it lawful for men to put away their wives for every cause and that he commanded to give her a bill of divorce which made her free to marry any other; but Christ, here and elsewhere, teaches far otherwise; that for the hardness of their hearts, this was only tolerated, not allowed; and that by such putting away, the hasty and furious husband occasioned both his wife and him that should marry with her to commit adultery, besides the temptations which he should put himself upon. So that by such divorces, a great many transgressions of this Law, both his own and of other folks were set upon this score.[23]

Not only does lust equate with adultery but so does marrying a divorced person. The exception clause here is that if a wife has already committed adultery then to divorce her does not make her an adulterer, since she

[23] John Carter, *A Plaine and Compendious Exposition of Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 902-03.

already is. Carter encourages that Christians should value the bond of marriage, in keeping with the Lord's design. Divorce does not help a person, but instead exposes them to multiple dangers and temptations.

The Genevan reformer, Theodore Beza also connects Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on Mount with that of Mt.19, saying that in both cases Jesus is correcting the sinful hearts of the husbands who had taken solace in the false interpretations on this issue by contemporary religious leaders.

> For here the scribes were not [merely] blundering [by adding] another adjective to the words of the law; but in this they were misrepresenting the law to a certain extent by a false interpretation. As it were, the husband clearly thought that when he handed over a certificate of divorce, his conscience would be absolved before the tribunal of God. Christ denies this. For it is one thing to teach it as a right, and another to soften as much as possible what they are not able to change. For that obligation of giving a certificate of divorce was no doubt keeping back many men, who were shameless inside, from having their wives sent away, because a certificate of this sort was more of a warning about the frivolity or dishonesty of the husbands than about the dismissed woman who was sent away for a flaw. This is supported below by [Matthew] 19:8. From this passage, it also appears that the consciences of some had been put at rest by this false interpretation of the Scribes, and that it had been disputed in the synagogues whether a certificate of divorce could be given for any cause you like. The husband had been sufficiently warned by conscience, about which Christ responded openly in this passage.[24]

Beza continues by noting further how Jesus' corrective comments are particularly aimed at husbands. As a biblical theme from Deuteronomy 24 and Malachi 2, since the husband is the head of the home, he bears special guilt in the dissolution of the marriage relationship. The wife is not given this right, but also does not carry the heavier burden of guilt. Beza writes:

---

[24]Beza, Annotationes majores, 35-36.

> Christ, however, did not allow the wife to go away from her husband, or to give a certificate of divorce to her husband, which appears from the context of the law itself (Deut 24:1), then especially from Malachi 2:16. But, the husband was separating himself from his wife, so that this certificate is able to be seen not as the dismissal of the wife, but the leaving of the husband from the wife in the aspect that is called "apostasy," and in fact there is no infamy in divorce without the husband sending his wife away from himself. Although God doubtless did not approve of this sort of act of husbands, it was tolerated by the Magistrate because of their hardness of heart.[25]

Much like his Genevan successor, Calvin indicates the same corrective tone in Jesus' words in Mt 5 (and those in Mt 19). After noting that Mt 19 provides the greater details of Jesus' teaching and thereby deserves a longer discussion, Calvin provides some "brief" comments on Mt 5. In these comments, Calvin makes a key distinction between the national or civil laws of Israel and the intention of the Lord's original standards. Whatever is allowed by the state in terms of civil laws that does not change the force of God's law on the nature and duration of marriage. Calvin explains:

> As the Jews falsely imagined that they discharged their whole duty toward God, when they kept the law in a national manner, so whatever the national law did not forbid, they foolishly supposed to be lawful. Divorces, which husbands were wont to give to their wives, had not been prohibited by Moses as to external order, but only, for the sake of restraining lewdness, he had ordered that "a bill of divorcement" should be given to the wives who were put away, (De 24:1).

In this selection, Calvin makes a distinction between the "national law" (i.e. civil law) and the original intention of God's design or commands. The purpose of the civil laws was often to restrain particular expressions

[25]Ibid., 36.

of evil rather than to promote the beauty of God's design. Calvin continues by noting that:

> But they did wrong in viewing as a matter of civil law, the rule which had been given them for a devout and holy life. For national laws are sometimes accommodated to the manners of men but God, in prescribing a spiritual law, looked not at what men can do, but at what they ought to do. It contains a perfect and entire righteousness, though we want ability to fulfill it. Christ, therefore, admonishes us not to conclude, that what is allowed by the national law of Moses is, on that account, lawful in the sight of God. That man, (says he,) who puts away his wife, and gives her *a bill of divorcement,* shelters himself under the pretense of the law: but the bond of marriage is too sacred to be dissolved at the will, or rather at the licentious pleasure, of men. Though the husband and the wife are united by mutual consent, yet God binds them by an indissoluble tie, so that they are not afterwards at liberty to separate.

Calvin notes that Jesus' teaching echoes the higher ideal of God's original design, even if the higher ideal simply points out the human inability to fulfill it, another typical theme of the Sermon on the Mount. Calvin concludes that since the marriage bond is indissoluble in the sight of God, then divorce and remarriage to another spouse amounts to adultery.

The Reformation Insights on Marriage from Matthew 19

Though the reformers defined biblical marriage drawing on many biblical texts, central to them was Jesus' extended teaching on marriage and divorce in Matthew 19. In this chapter, Jesus continues to minister to large crowds and the opposition of the religious leaders to his ministry grows. Pharisees continually try to trap Jesus with their questions. Jesus' thoroughly biblical correction of the Pharisees' question on divorce draws on God's original, creative intent for marriage as expressed in Genesis 2. Thinking that they might have snared Jesus, the Pharisees try to oppose Him by citing Moses in Deuteronomy 24. Jesus' reply draws on the narrative context of the Deuteronomy passage to show that the juxtaposition is not Jesus against Moses, but Moses'

concession due to their unbelief and God's creative intent. Jesus' high view of marriage, in that the vow is only broken through sexual immorality, causes the disciple to wonder if anyone can match this high esteem for marriage. While valuing marriage, Jesus established celibacy as a viable option to marriage, but only if that singleness is ordained for that individual by God.

The reformers highlight three sections of this narrative text in their commentaries. First, the reformers note Jesus' affirmation of the original design for marriage. Second, the reformers explain Jesus' response to the Deuteronomy text and His only stipulation for divorce. Third, the reformers comment on what it means to be an eunuch, and thereby be excluded for the marriage ordinance. In general the reformers indicate that Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce highlights the sanctity of marriage and the stubborn unbelief that is drawn to a casual view of divorce.

Original design for marriage

As the humanism of Erasmus contributed to the growing interest in commenting on the biblical text, other humanists were pointing to the source text in their comments. Jacques Lefevre d'Étaples, the French humanist, extols the divine initiation of marriage in his comments on Matthew 19. In his *Commentary on the Four Gospels* D'Étaples writes:

> Although the Lord knew that the Pharisees had come to Him, not out of a desire to learn, but to tempt and reprehend Him, still He did not refuse them kindness, and instead with all modesty He gave satisfaction to their inquiry, using the example of Genesis chapters one and two, where it is read thus in chapter one: And God created man in His image and likeness; in the image of God He created him, He created them male and female. And in chapter two like this: "And the Lord God fashioned the rib, which He had taken from Adam, into a woman, and He brought her to Adam, and Adam said, 'This now is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh; she will be called woman, since she was taken from a man. Wherefore a man will leave his father and mother and will cling to his wife and the two will be one flesh.'" These words, "Wherefore a man will leave his father," and those

> that follow, the Gospel seems to attribute to God. And rightly so, for, even if in the story of Genesis Adam appears to speak these things, nevertheless he was speaking in the Spirit, and the Spirit of God was saying these things. For, when the mystery of which he spoke happened, he was sleeping. Rightly then these are understood to be words of God, who was proclaiming both what was done and what will happen in the future. From these things the Lord truly gathers that a man and a woman are one flesh, and that the Lord said it and did the joining, and since that is the case, since God joined together the man and woman, it follows that no one should separate them, nor is it permitted to divorce one's wife for any reason. Christ drew this teaching of His from the words of God and from His work. Against that no rationale coming from a human being can prevail. Nevertheless, the Pharisees offer a human rationale, as if Moses counts more than God.[26]

D'Étaples notes that not only the first marriage (Adam and Eve), but also all marriages since are by divine institution. It was God's speaking that set the pattern for all future marriages to be between a male and a female in permanent union.

In his commentary, Calvin recognizes that as the Pharisees attempt to snare Jesus, they actually set the context for Him to unpack His biblical view or "fixed law" that marriage was a "sacred and indissoluble bond." Calvin also comments on how Jesus recognizes the scheming of the Pharisees, but also deftly handles the Law. He writes:

> They ask, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?" If Christ replies in the negative, they will exclaim that he wickedly abolishes the Law; and if in the affirmative, they will give out that he is not a prophet of God, but rather a pander, who lends such countenance to the lust of men. Such were the calculations which they had made in their own minds; but the

---

[26] Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, *Commentarii Initiatorii In Qvatvor Evangelia: In Euangelium secundum Matthaeum, In Euangelium secundum Marcum, In Euangelium secundum Lucam, In Euangelium secundum Ioannem.* Basileae: Cratander, 1523, 84r.

> Son of God, who knew how to *take the wise in their own craftiness*, (Job 5:13) disappointed them, sternly opposing unlawful divorces, and at the same time showing that he brings forward nothing which is inconsistent with the Law. For he includes the whole question under two heads: that the order of creation ought to serve for a law, that the husband should maintain conjugal fidelity during the whole of life; and that *divorces* were *permitted*, not because they were lawful, but because Moses had to deal with a rebellious and intractable nation.

Calvin summarizes the two key elements of this text, with the first being Jesus' appeal to the design of marriage in creation as crucial for understanding marriage's ongoing form. The second element is that divorce reveals a culture's rebellion against God's design.

In his comments on verse 4, Calvin says that Jesus' teaching assumes that His hearers know that since God brought the man and woman together in marriage, to separate them would be as unnatural as self-mutilation. He writes, "Now Christ assumes as an admitted principle, that at the beginning God joined the male to the female, so that the two made an entire man; and therefore he who divorces his wife tears from him, as it were, the half of himself. But nature does not allow any man to tear in pieces his own body."[27]

Calvin also explains that in Jesus' reference to Genesis 2:24, He affirms that the bond between a husband and wife is "more sacred" than the relationship between parents and their children.[28] The sacred bond of marriage means that there is an exclusive relationship between a husband and wife, which has implications for polygamy and divorce. Calvin pairs divorce and polygamy together and says that they are both forbidden by God's original design in marriage. In commenting on how in marriage the husband and wife become one flesh, he says:

> This expression condemns polygamy not less than it condemns unrestrained liberty in divorcing wives; for, if the mutual union

[27] John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, reprinted in *Calvin's Commentaries*, Baker Books (2003), 16:2:378 (volume 16: part 2: page 378).
[28] Calvin, Harmony of the Evangelists, 16:2:378-379.

> of two persons was consecrated by the Lord, the mixture of three or four persons is unauthorized. But Christ, as I stated a little ago, applies it in a different manner to his purpose; namely, to show that whoever divorces his wife tears himself in pieces, because such is the force of holy marriage, that the husband and wife become one man. For it was not the design of Christ to introduce the impure and filthy speculation of Plato, but he spoke with reverence of the order which God has established. Let the husband and wife, therefore, live together in such a manner, that each shall cherish the other in the same manner as if they were the half of themselves. Let the husband rule, so as to be the head, and not the tyrant, of his wife; and let the woman, on the other hand, yield modestly to his commands.[29]

The fashioning of husband and wife into an union not only helps understand marriage, but it also helps explain the prohibition of divorce in Christ's teaching. In noting the impropriety of human's separating what God has joined, Calvin adds:

> By this sentence Christ restrains the caprice of husbands, that they may not, by divorcing their wives, burst asunder the sacred knot. And as he declares that it is not in the power of the husband to dissolve the marriage, so likewise he forbids all others to confirm by their authority unlawful divorces; for the magistrate abuses his power when he grants permission to the husband to divorce his wife. But the object which Christ had directly in view was, that every man should sacredly observe the promise which he has given, and that those who are tempted, by wantonness or wicked dispositions, to divorce, may reflect thus with themselves: "Who, art thou that allowest thyself to *burst asunder what God hath joined*?"[30]

[29] Calvin, Harmony of the Evangelists, 16:2:380.
[30] Calvin, Harmony of the Evangelists, 16:2:380.

Divorce

For the reformers, the positive affirmation of the permanence of marriage in Jesus' teaching also meant that they were critical of divorce as a threat to God's design. Luther encourages gospel preachers to know and handle the Law like Jesus does, when He "clearly expresses what the meaning of the Law is and says that there can be no divorce-with one exception, namely, on account of adultery."[31]

In somewhat similar terms, the Strasbourg reformer, Martin Bucer describes how Jesus is not interested in establishing a legal or social structure for divorce, but in preaching repentance to those whose hardened hearts are exposed by their views on divorce. He writes:

> Our savior came to preach repentance and remission; seeing therefore those who put away their wives without any just cause, were not touch with conscience of the sin, through misunderstanding of the law, he recalled them to a right interpretation, and taught that the woman in the beginning was so joined to the man that there should be a perpetual union both in body and spirit; where this is not, the matrimony is already broke, before there be yet any divorce made or second marriage.[32]

The English Puritan, Richard Taverner adds that the unbelief among Jesus' contemporaries had similarities with the stubbornness that caused Moses to allow divorce certificates in his day. He also indicates that if Moses wanted to provide open and free divorces then he would have granted the same license to the wives. However, the fact that the divorce certificates were only issued by the husbands indicated:

> the hard heart of the Jews, which for every light cause and trifle would put away their wives and for this cause the law of Moses gave commandment, that such stubborn and hard husbands which would needs for such light occasions put away their wives or else do worse and commit further inconvenience, to give them

[31] *LW*, 69:7.
[32] Martin Bucer, *Judgement of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce*, 11.

> the said libel of divorcement for a certain record and witness that she is now free from his yoke and at her liberty.[33]

Erasmus notes that Jesus appeals to the original intent of marriage in order to hearken their minds back to God's creative design for marriage before the depth of sin corrupted human hearts and convoluted their view of marriage. Erasmus summarizes Jesus' words to mean that Moses was pressed by his surroundings:

> He did not permit you this because it was right and good of nature, but knowing the hardness of your heart, he suffered the lesser ill, that you should not commit the greater.... And the book of divorce does not make that the divorce is right and good, but it witnesses your hardness... But from the beginning, whereas the malice of man was not yet increased nor the nature of men was not yet infected with so many vices, because there was not so cruel hatred that poisoning or murder should be feared, there was no license of divorce, and the same law shall not now be loosed and set at liberty, after that the doctrine of the gospel does renew and make perfect the sincerity of the nature. Moses wished the same that I do teach, but your manners bent over much unto murder, put him in fear that he does not require this of you. I who do not abolish the law but make it more perfect plainly say to you that it is unlawful and against the mind of God and against the will of Moses which you do commonly, refusing your wives for every cause.[34]

The early Anabaptist reformer, Michael Sattler says that Jesus does not intend to compensate for the hardened hearts in His teaching on marriage, but allows for divorce in the case of adultery because the marriage vow is already broken. Sattler insists as the mediator of a new covenant, Jesus will not allow the divorce concessions that Moses did (due to Israel's apathy). Sattler explains, with the new covenant, Jesus

---

[33] Richard Taverner, *The Gospels with Brief Sermons*, fol. liiii-lv.
[34] Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrases*, Folio 78v.

> No longer makes concessions to hardness of heart, but rather renews the ordinance of his father, Gen 1 and 2, saying, "From the beginning it was not so." Since then God so created, that there should be one husband and one wife, and what God has united, that let man not separate. Therefore any minor cause—anger, which is hardness of heart; displeasure, contrariety, faith or unbelief—may not separate, but only fornication. He who divorces without fornication, the only reason, and remarries, commits adultery; and he who takes a divorced woman causes her to commit adultery; for Christ says, "These two are one flesh."[35]

In his comments, Calvin asserts that Jesus is calling for a mutual commitment and fidelity in marriage. It must also be observed, that the right belongs equally and mutually to both sides, as there is a mutual and equal obligation to fidelity. For, though in other matters the husband holds the superiority, as to the marriage bed, the wife has an equal right: for he is not the lord of his body; and therefore when, by committing adultery, he has dissolved the marriage, the wife is set at liberty.[36]

When sexual sin breaks the marriage bond, the exception to divorce extends not only to the dissolution of the first marriage but even allows for a limited place for remarriage. Calvin recognizes that his position represents something of a minority view when he speaks of Jesus' comments on the remarriage clause:

> This clause has been very ill explained by many commentators; for they have thought that generally, and without exception, celibacy is enjoined in all cases when a divorce has taken place; and, therefore, if a husband should put away an adulteress, both would be laid under the necessity of remaining unmarried. As if this liberty of divorce meant only not to lie with his wife; and as if Christ did not evidently grant permission in this case to do what the Jews were wont indiscriminately to do at their pleasure. It was therefore a gross error; for, though Christ condemns as an adulterer the man *who shall marry a wife that has been divorced*,

[35] Michael Sattler, "On Divorce," in *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*, 102-03.
[36] Calvin, Harmony of the Evangelists, 16:2:384.

> this is undoubtedly restricted to unlawful and frivolous divorces.[37]

Eunuchs

The third section of Jesus' teaching on marriage in Matthew 19 focuses on eunuchs. The Reformation exegetes would caution against reading too much cultural background into one's understanding of the word "eunuch". The reformers treat the term as those who have vowed to remain single, with its related chastity. The reformers focus on Jesus' comments as pointing to the high standard for the marriage union and for those who commit to celibacy (singleness). Both, though in different ways, recognize God's design for marriage.

The Swiss reformer, Huldrych Zwingli explains Jesus' comments on eunuchs in selections from two different works. In the first selection, Zwingli argues that Jesus releases His disciples from being bound to remain single (or to marry) by not imposing a punishment on those who cannot "receive" the disciples' comment on remaining single. In the second selection, Zwingli emphasizes that only God grants the ability for certain persons to remain single, an ability not given to all.

> For weighing more carefully Christ's words and the custom of our predecessors in this matter, we found that the whole question was far easier than we had thought. For when he says, "All men cannot receive this saying," and again, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it," he prescribes no punishment for them that cannot receive it. Nay, either because of the vastness of the thing which he did not wish enjoined up each and all, or on account of our weakness, which he know better than we ourselves, he did not want this thing laid up against us, and so left it free. Therefore our souls which had been nigh unto despair were mightily refreshed when we learned those who were unable to receive the saying were threatened with no punishment by him who can send both body and soul into hell.[38]

---

[37] Calvin, Harmony of the Evangelists, 16:2:384.

[38] Huldrych Zwingli, *Petition Concerning the Marriage of Priests*, in *The Latin Works and the Correspondence of Huldreich Zwingli*, 1:157.

Also, Zwingli recognizes that Christ promises no punishment to someone who does not choose celibacy, as long as the default is then to marriage. Elsewhere, Zwingli writes:

> Christ speaks again in the same place (Matt 19:12), "whoever can keep chastity, let him keep it." Here he makes it free, since he says, whoever can keep it, let him keep it. Thus, if he can keep it, let him keep it; if he cannot keep it, then let him marry. But now the keeping of it depends not upon our ability, but upon God; else why does he say, He who can keep it, let him keep it? Not that we should understand "ability," as if it came from ourselves, but as given by God, the meaning is, to whom God has given the power to keep it, let him keep it; to whom ability is not given, he is not bound to keep it. How then have men ventured to forbid it since God did not wish to forbid it on account of its difficulty? But he gave it to whom he would. And those to whom he gave it became bound to keep it. He to whom it is given, feels it very well, needs no such subtle question as, "How can I know whether it is given to me or not?" Now the sum of this article or words of Christ is, to whom is given by God the ability to keep it, let him keep it; and those to whom it is not given are not bound by any divine law to keep it.[39]

As Zwingli encourages, Christians can submit to God's design for marriage through an exclusive union between a man and a woman or through celibate singleness, enabled by divine power.

Conclusion

As if written as a blog post for a 21st century audience, John Calvin warns that even if the law of the land changes to accommodate vices that are contrary to the biblical design of marriage, the church gives account for faithfulness to the biblical teaching and not to "tradition" or "civil law".

---

[39] Huldrych Zwingli, *Priests to Preach and to Marry,* in *The Latin Works and the Correspondence of Huldreich Zwingli,* 1:179.

> .... Besides, political and outward order is widely different from spiritual government. What is lawful and proper the Lord has comprehended under the *ten words*. Now as it is possible that many things, for which every man's conscience reproves and charges him, may not be called in question at a human tribunal, it is not wonderful if those things are connived at by political laws.
>
> .... For here the Lord indirectly reproves the Jews for not, reckoning it enough that their stubbornness was allowed to pass unpunished, if they did not implicate God as defending their iniquity. And if the rule of a holy and pious life is not always, or in all places, to be sought from political laws, much less ought we to seek it from custom....[40]

In spite of a culture or legal system that allows otherwise, the church must uphold the biblical view of marriage.

While there is some colorful diversity in the reformers' comments on marriage and divorce in Matthew 19, there is also a notable consistency. The Reformers would affirm that the "biblical view" marriage is that God has designed human beings as male and female for the purpose of intentional union, the blessing of children, and permanent unity as husband and wife. Marriage exists by God's creative design and gracious ordinance. It should not be avoided or corrupted, nor should it be ended by human whim.

[40] Calvin, Harmony of the Evangelists, 16:2:381-382.

Midwestern Journal of Theology 15.1 (2016): 66-83

Bethel: Where is the House of God? Defining Sacred Space in the Bible

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

When we think of a sacred place, we often call to mind an architecturally appealing church building, a mountain, or some ancient monument like Stonehenge. We may even think of something along the lines of the land of Israel, since it is often referred to as "the Holy Land." Yet, modern Christians of the Protestant stripe do not often think of such places as currently sacred, in the sense of somehow being geographically closer to God than any other place on earth. However, the followers of God in the Bible did think of particular places as somehow more closely linked to God than other places. This leaves us with an important question: why don't we?

Many modern Christians will default to New Testament passages such as Romans 16:5, I Corinthians 11:18, or even John 4:21 when faced with this question. The verses from Romans and I Corinthians are just two of many such passages that indicate that the church is comprised of the fellowship of believers, rather than being identified with any given building or structure. In fact, I Corinthians 11:18 specifically identifies the church as separate from the house it was using as a meeting place. Likewise, the Gospel of John records Jesus as saying that the places of Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim were no longer of primary importance for communicating with God because of the work that Jesus was doing. The idea of a sacred place, one which connected heaven with earth in some special way, was fading away because of Jesus' ministry.

The very fact that this represented a change of thinking, however, implies that at some earlier point, certain locations did have importance for communication with God. That point of time is, of course, the period of the Old Testament. This, in turn, begs the question, why should the modern follower of Jesus care? If Jesus changed things, why is it important to understand what role sacred places played in

communication with God before Jesus' earthly ministry? The answer is this: the importance lies in appreciating, understanding, and a developing a greater insight into what we have been given in our current relationship with God. Indeed, as I write this, Good Friday and Easter are just around the corner. Most Christians have some sense of appreciation for the rending of the Temple curtain at the time of Jesus' death (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). There is some realization that this tearing of the curtain was symbolic of a greater access to God than was available before the death of Jesus. Yet, this understanding is limited in scope because most believers do not really understand what communication with God was like before the death of the Christ and just how significant sacred places were for the faithful.

This article represents an effort to understand the role sacred places played prior to the work of Jesus and their significance during Jesus' own ministry by examining one sacred place in particular: Bethel.

The Study of Sacred Space in Religion

Before examining the biblical material on Bethel, we must first note that the idea of the sacred intersecting the regular (or profane) world, is one that that is present in nearly every religion. Therefore, the academic study of sacred space is widespread and we must give a brief mention of these studies. After all, the broader study of sacred space and communication with God in multiple religions impacts our own ideas whether we recognize it or not.

Many of the foundational studies about sacred space in varying religions take an approach that cuts across historical cultures in order to establish the lowest common denominator with respect to the religious idea.[1] One group of studies on the topic, called The History of Religions School, is of particular importance. This group of scholars understands the differences in religious experience to be largely a product of differences in economy, culture and social organization, or in short, history. In other words, they see a fundamental sameness to all religions with respect to core ideas and beliefs. While studies from this viewpoint

[1] A classic example of this approach is G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology* (trans. J. E. Turner; London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1938).

provide crucial insights into the religious psyche of mankind in general, they also bear the weakness of blurring the distinctive ideas of particular religious movements. A few examples will illustrate these strengths and weaknesses.

One of the foundational works for the study of sacred, which must be defined before discussing sacred space, is Rudolph Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*.[2] In this work Otto was interested in the living God as a terrible power manifested in divine wrath rather than God as an abstract notion. Otto felt that the feeling of terror as a response to the divine preceded any idea of sacredness. In his estimation the sacred (or in his terms, numinous) manifests itself as something *wholly other*—a reality of a wholly different order from the natural. In other words, the sacred, for Rudolph Otto, is that which is beyond man's natural experience.

The weakness of Otto's analysis of the holy lies in his focus on the psychological experience of holiness for man. M. Woudstra notes, "By thus internalizing the holiness-concept Otto is unable to do justice to the pronouncedly sensory and external side which this concept possesses in the Old Testament."[3] The sacred then, for Otto, is largely an internal experience that develops over time. The implication is that earlier ideas are primitive and subsequently uninformed while later ideas show more sophistication and therefore are closer to the truth. Otto depends on the Hegelian dialectic and Darwinian evolutionary theory and forces an artificial system on ancient patterns of thought, yielding conclusions that are more revealing of his own context than of the ancient cultures he studies. This evolutionary approach, as seen in the work of Otto, is typical of the History of Religions School and foreign to the Bible.

Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* is a pivotal work that followed and built upon the ideas of R. Otto.[4] Eliade defines the sacred as that which stands in opposition to the profane. His

---

[2] Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational (trans. John W. Harvey; London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

[3] Marten Woudstra, *The Ark of the Covenant from Conquest to Kingship* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1965), p. 53.

[4] See the introduction of *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987) in which he explains the influence of R. Otto on his own work.

book is an effort to further define this contrast between sacred and non-sacred and illustrate it with examples from various religions.

The assumption that underlies this opposition between the sacred and profane is that the natural world is profane.[5] Eliade uses the term *heirophany*[6] to indicate the sacred breaking into the profane world. This irruption of the sacred (heirophany) into the profane world results in detachment of territory from the surrounding landscape. He offers the narrative of the burning bush in which the bush and its environs are sacred as an example of this.[7] For Eliade, a sacred space is not chosen by men, it is only sought. When a tree or a stone is worshipped it is not the actual tree or stone that is worshipped, but it is because they are a form of heirophany. The tree or stone has become wholly other while at the same time remaining true to its own nature and participating in the surrounding environment.

While sacred space is not chosen by mankind, according to Eliade, space can be consecrated by man's activities. To organize a place in any given religion is to repeat the paradigmatic creative activity of the gods. Therefore, to settle a place is, in some fashion or another, to consecrate it. The resulting space is viewed as qualitatively different from other space. This idea helps explain our more mundane concepts of distinctions in space such as "home." Our repeated presence and the special associations we have with a place can consecrate it in a limited sense.[8]

---

[5] Larry E. Shiner takes issue with this polarization, saying it is overdrawn. He feels there is a middle ground between Eliade's two types of spaces, which he terms "human space" or "lived space". See his article, "Sacred Space, Profane Space, Human Space," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40/4 (Dec. 1972), pp. 425-36.

[6] Or "manifestation." It should be noted that for Eliade this is not synonymous with a theophany.

[7] Exodus 3:5.

[8] Indeed, this distinction between consecration and sanctification is evident in the widely-held concept of the center or navel of the world. Eliade noted that holy sites and temples, in most religious systems, are believed to be situated in close proximity to the center point of the earth. Eliade gives the example of the term Dur-an-ki, which was associated with many Babylonian temples (but goes all the way back to Sumeria) as a support for this. He translates this term as "the link between heaven and earth" and notes that such a "link," is what constitutes the center of the world.

Eliade's perspective is, in many ways, more truly in line with biblical ideas than other perspectives within the History of Religions approach. This, as we will see, is due to its emphasis on sanctity originating apart from any activity on the part of mankind. This also demonstrates that there is a uniqueness to the biblical view of sacred spaces that is not universally shared by other religions.

One more example will suffice to show the differences of opinion among scholars studying sacred space. Jonathan Z. Smith offers an alternate view of sacred space within the history of religion approach. His work, *To Take Place*, is meant to be, in part, a corrective to that of Eliade.[9] For Smith, a space became a sacred place when one became familiar with it and was oriented to other things from it.[10] Where Eliade emphasized sacred places as revealed, Smith stressed that they were created through human interpretation and the action of ritual. Smith states, "Ritual is, first and foremost, a mode of paying attention. It is a process for marking interest. It is this characteristic, as well that explains the role of place as a fundamental component of ritual: place directs attention."[11] In other words, sacred places act as a focusing lens for worship rather than some special link between heaven and earth.

Sacred spaces for Smith were the diametric opposite of Eliade's revealed sacred spaces. In Smith's analysis, sacred spaces were invariably situated in a complex cultural context that was replete with political, economic, biological, and numerous other factors of influence.[12] Smith assumes that any attempt to make a place sacred is a way to "take a place" for one's own tribe or culture. In his chapter entitled, "To Replace," Smith cites several examples of how one group makes a site sacred by making it their own. For example, he describes the success of Jerusalem over that

---

[9] Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Interestingly, both Eliade and Smith were professors in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. Smith speaks of his "history of religion" approach and its relationship to archaeology in a more recent article titled, "Religion Up and Down, Out and In," in *Sacred Time, Sacred Space: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (ed. Barry M. Gittlen; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

[10] Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place*, p. 28ff.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

[12] See Jon Pahl, Shopping Malls and Other Sacred Spaces: Putting God in Place. (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003). p. 47.

of Bethel. Where Bethel had archaic sacred institutions associated with it, Jerusalem did not. Therefore, the Temple in Jerusalem, built at the royal prerogative, was guaranteed to bring order for there was nothing to distract from the system.[13] Space became sacred through the actions of those who claimed it as their own.

As apparent from the above, even defining sacred space can be a tricky endeavor. Attempting to define the geography of the sacred by sampling differing religions does show some certain similarities. Yet, the difficulty of settling on one agreed-upon definition illustrates that not all religions are the same. With the risk of being overly general, we can chalk the similarities to what theologians call general revelation. In other words, there are certain basic truths apparent in creation that can be freely recognized by all of humanity. One of these truths is that sacred space is qualitatively different from other places and has an important role in worship. However, special revelation, the Bible, is needed to determine a more exact understanding of sacred places and their function.

Bethel

In order to illustrate biblical ideas about sacred space and compare them to the aforementioned studies, we turn now to the story of how Bethel earned its name and status in Genesis 28:10-22.[14]

---

[13] See Smith's earlier article, "Earth and Gods," *Journal of Religion* 49 (1969), 103-27, for his analysis on some of the classic themes of the History of Religions school such as, the "enclave," and the "center," and their relationship to Jerusalem.

[14] At one point a majority of scholars believed this passage (28:10-22) was the end result of two separate narratives (termed J and E) having been woven together. (E = Jacob's dream and his promise to tithe and build an altar upon his safe return to Bethel; J = the apparition of Yahweh who reaffirms the promise made to Abraham). For an example of this line of reasoning see G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 282-287. The method of identifying separate texts on the basis of divine name usage is now widely called into question. Van Seters has postulated that the work is primarily that of J, formulated somewhere during the exilic period (see "The Pentateuch" in *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). Other scholars such as

Wherever one divides the narrative chronologically, the integrated whole relates some interesting theological ideas. In 28:11 we are told that Jacob came to a place (Heb.: *maqōm*) and camped there simply because the sun had set. The choice of camping place was a matter of need and convenience in the mind of Jacob. However, the author may be giving the reader a hint in his choice of the word *maqōm*. This term, as noted by De Vaux and others, is often used in association with places that are sacred.[15] Therefore, by the repeated use of the word (three times), the narrator may be indicating the sacred nature of the place to the reader even though Jacob has not yet realized it himself. Furthermore, it is curious that the author relates that Jacob uses some of the stones for a head rest. This, too, may be a foreshadowing on the part of the narrator about the nature of the place. De Vaux believes that the Yahweh cult actually ousted a Canaanite cult and took over the location. This is largely based on Jacob's use of "El," the name of the chief deity in the Canaanite pantheon for a time, in the name "Beth-El". There was also a deity known by the name "Bethel." Whatever the case, Sarna is correct

---

Wenham and Blum point out that without the name criteria, the idea that Genesis 28:10-22 is a composite of shattered texts would not have been taken seriously. See G. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50* (vol. 2, Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1994), pp. 219-222. When looked at in its current form (Masoretic Text), the use of different names plays a theological role as the narrator removes any association of Israel's God with the Canaanite god "El" with the introductory comment, "I am YHWH" (v. 19) (See B. Waltke, *Genesis, A Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001. p. 393).

[15] See Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. p. 291). De Vaux understands *maqōm* to mean "a place of worship" and that the author is indicating that Jacob recognized Bethel as such from the very beginning. However, this interpretation does not fit with the level of surprise with which Jacob reacts following his vision. See "Bethel" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) for more on the use of *maqōm*. N. M. Sarna believes the sanctity of the site came through the vision and therefore Bethel would not have been sacred prior to that vision. He states, " . . . the sanctity of the site is understood as deriving solely from the patriarch's theophanic experience." (*Understanding Genesis*, [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966], p. 192.). However, when taken in the context of the biblical corpus, Abraham's act of worship near Bethel may be seen as an indication that the area had a connection with the gods in general. Jacob's vision confirms that the God of Abraham was indeed present at Bethel.

when he states, "The details of the scriptural narrative reveal a subtle and deliberated rejection of pagan notions even as they employ their idiom."[16]

Jacob soon realizes that he has stumbled on a sacred area by virtue of the vision he experiences.[17] The most fascinating aspect of the vision is the connection of the ladder from earth to heaven. It is my contention that this is the essence of what defines a sacred place. It is a particular link between the profane realm of the earth and the heavenly realm of God. To use a modern analogy, a sacred place is a type of phone booth to the divine realm. Similar to a phone booth, calls can both be placed and received at such a location. In our passage Jacob receives an unexpected incoming call that surprises him and opens his eyes to the fact that he has indeed stumbled on a divine phone booth or, more properly stated, a sacred place.[18]

---

[16] Both the use of the word *maqōm* and the inclusion of the detail about the rock may be the narrator's way of alerting the reader to the prior sacred status of the place. The site was close to a Canaanite settlement and therefore may have been the location of Canaanite cultic activity as well.

[17] W. Brueggemann notes that the vision turns a "non-place" into a "crucial place" (*Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982], p. 242). This scene "only superficially resembles the incubation ritual that some have suggested as lying behind it." In contrast to the incubation ritual, God here takes the initiative and the revelation requires no activity on the part of Jacob. (Bruce Waltke, *Genesis, A Commentary*, p. 389).

[18] It is interesting to note the differences in translations as to where God is standing in the vision. The Jewish Publication Society translates the preposition/suffix combination *'alayb* as "beside him" (so N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p. 191). The NIV translates it as "above it." The antecedent of the pronoun is unclear. It could refer to the ladder or stairway if the pronoun is translated as "above" or "upon"—both acceptable options. If the pronoun is translated "beside"—also an acceptable option—then Jacob may be the antecedent (See C. Houtman, "What Did Jacob See at Bethel?" *Vetus Testamentum* 27 [1977] p. 348). The latter is also supported by the use of the verb "said" rather than "called" and Jacob's understanding that the "Lord is in this place." See B. Waltke, *Genesis, A Commentary*, p. 391. J. Walton makes a case for the translation "beside" but understands the antecedent to be the staircase (*The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], p. 571). However, normal spatial relationships may or may not apply to a dream narrative. Either way, the fact that there is a link between this point on the earth and the heavenly realm is clear. Indeed, the point of the stairway is

When Jacob awakens from his dream,[19] his exclamation is telling. He proclaims "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." This statement reveals that Jacob understood certain places to have particular and specific links to the divine.[20] It also reveals that there were no distinguishing marks to indicate to Jacob previously that he was in a sacred place.[21] It was only the revelation from God that indicated to him the holy particularity of the place in which he had chosen to take his respite. At least in this case, the sanctity of Bethel was not dependent on an external marker. The sanctity of the place was completely dependent on the revelation of God. Thus, in the mind of Jacob and the biblical author, the sacredness of the place is determined by the action (here: revelation) of God rather than some identifying marker at the place.

The next statement out of Jacob's mouth is fascinating: "How awesome is this place!"[22] Jacob's immediate reaction is in reference to

---

that "heaven has come to be on earth." (Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, p. 244).

[19] Jacob's experience was truly a dream as he seems to have been passive through the episode and only reacted when he awoke.

[20] G. von Rad notes that this statement is concerned with the objective fact of a correct understanding of the place. "'The Lord is in this place,' here has a very definite and exclusive local meaning." (*Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 285).

[21] Baruch A. Levine notes with regard to this passage that the cult at Bethel is conceived as a human response to the divine presence. He states, "Generally, when sanction is sought for already existing cultic centers, much is made of the fact that the deity manifested his presence at those sites in the distant past." "On the Presence of God in Biblical Religion," *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*. Leiden: Brill, 1968. p. 79.

[22] Jacob's reaction upon awakening is theologically enlightening. His initial emotion is that of fear or in the terminology of Rudolf Otto, Jacob experienced divine terror. This is a common response when a mortal has an encounter with the divine. There is often a natural terror that comes from an interaction with the numinous. Jacob's experience is no different. (Cf. Gen. 3:10; 18:15; Exo. 3:6; 34:30; Num. 12:8; Deut. 5:5). According to Otto this fear or dread is of a different type than the fear one might experience from a terrestrial danger (*The Idea of the Holy*, pp.12ff). In the ancient Near East, a mortal would normally be afraid when exposed to the radiance of something divine. In the biblical literature, the belief is that exposure to God will result in automatic death. Naturally, there is a fearfulness surrounding a divine encounter and a wonder at surviving such an experience.

the *place*. Not the dream. Not the promise. Not even the fact that he was singled out. But rather the place.[23] In the terminology of R. Otto, Jacob experiences divine terror, but focuses on the location! Clearly, his assumption is that there is something special about the place in order for him to have experienced the revelation of God there. Likewise, there is an implication that Jacob does not believe that such a dream-revelation could take place just anywhere. The occurrence of the dream indicates to him that the place on which he had camped was none other than the house of God!

Jacob elaborates on his assessment that he was at the "house of God" with the adjectival parallel, "and this is the gate of heaven."[24] At a basic level, a gate is an access point into an enclosed structure or city, so the gate of heaven would be an access point into the divine realm. If we understand the phrase "and this is the gate of heaven" as a further clarification of the statement "this is none other than the house of God," then we have a greater insight into the nature of a "house of God." As G. von Rad notes, the gate here refers to "that narrow place where according to the ancient world view all intercourse between heaven and earth and the upper divine world took place."[25] There is no mention in the text of a building or structure of any kind in the place where Jacob spent the night,[26] and if Jacob's reaction to his dream is any indicator, then the

---

[23] N. M. Sarna notes that while Abraham and Isaac do not express surprise at the divine revelation, the narrative highlights Jacob's astonished reaction. Even if there had been previous cultic activity there Jacob seems to be unaware of it. "The text is most emphatic about Jacob's ignorance of the holiness of the place. In fact, there was nothing there at all, only stones." (*Understanding Genesis*, p. 193).

[24] The whole phrase is an adjectival parallel to "the house of God." Bruce Waltke speculates that this may be intended as a counterpoint to the etymology of Babylon as the "gate of heaven" (*Genesis, A Commentary*, p. 392.). However, the etymological origins of Babylon are complex and any polemical considerations would likely be aimed at Canaanite mythology rather than Babylonian mythology.

[25] Genesis: A Commentary, p. 284.

[26] Assuming the site of Bethel is the same as modern Beitin, then Bethel shows occupation in the early Bronze Age. However, for whatever reason, Jacob does not seem to have spent the night in the city. See *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (4 vols. ed., M. Avi-Yonah; London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975).

place was fairly nondescript. Therefore, Jacob's declaration of the site as the house of God cannot be a reference to a structure or existing cult material. For Jacob, the house of God is a gate to heaven. It is an *access point* at which communication with the divine realm can be sent and received. There is no concept of God *dwelling* at the site at this point. In fact, God is located on the heavenly side of things in Jacob's dream. The place is a conduit to the heavenly realm. John Walton describes sacred space as a "portal" between the divine and earthly realms. This is the same idea associated with the ziggurats, although the fact that God is standing next to the ladder in heaven sets this vision apart from the ANE idea that the god descends to the earth.[27]

The content of Jacob's dream adds further evidence to the idea that Bethel was an access point to God. Jacob sees a *sullam* ("stairway")[28] touching the earth, presumably near the point where he was lying. On this stairway angels are ascending and descending. In the biblical, ancient near eastern, and, subsequently, rabbinic world-views, angels or divine beings were often thought of as having a territory over which they watched (see, for example, Daniel 10:13). Thus, the angels in Jacob's dream may be understood as reporting to God and then going back out to their assigned territory. Jacob's wonder at having camped at such a place is understandable!

Perhaps another part of Jacob's amazement after waking from his dream is that there is nothing to mark the site as a divine access point.

---

[27] The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis, p. 571.

[28] Translated by various commentators as "ladder, stairway," or "ramp." The image conjured in the modern mind by the word "ladder" doesn't seem aesthetically appropriate here. The angels are coming and going as on a major traffic path. R. de Vaux prefers "stairway" or "ramp" and notes that it has a religious parallel to the ziggurats of Mesopotamia. The ziggurats seem to have had a sanctuary at both the top and bottom of the structure symbolizing a connection between heaven and earth. The sanctuary at the top was either the dwelling place of the god or a resting place, whereas the sanctuary at the bottom was where the god appeared. See *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, pp. 281-2; A. S. Palmer, *Jacob at Bethel: The Vision—The Stone—The Anointing: An Essay in Comparative Religion* (London: David Nutt, 1899), pp 31-38; Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 284. C. Houtman, ("What Did Jacob See in His Dream at Bethel?" *VT* 27 [1977]), posits that Jacob is actually sleeping in the *sullam* and that it represents an area that is neither completely of the earthly realm nor of the heavenly realm.

Indeed, what Jacob does next seems to confirm the lack of significant structure at the site: "Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top" (Genesis 28:18). By setting up the stone as a religious "pillar" and anointing it, Jacob provides a marker for the place. This confirms a lack of any significant religious symbol there prior to Jacob's arrival. Interestingly, Jacob calls the stone pillar he had just erected the "house of God." A literal structure is not meant here; instead, the term refers to the cultic object or the site as a whole.[29] The fact that Jacob anoints the stone is a customary ritual for cultic objects.[30] Wenham believes that this is a show of piety on Jacob's part. However, it is more likely an effort to mark the site as sacred. This would help Jacob find the site again as well as be a marker for others who came that way.[31] In association with the dedication of the pillar, Jacob renames the place as well.[32]

---

[29] While a *maṣṣabah* or "pillar" could have various functions, such as a commemorative stele to an alliance (Gen. 31:45, 51-52; Exo. 24:4; Isa. 19:19-20), or a monument in honor of the dead (Gen. 35:20; 2 Sam. 18:18), it had special significance in relation to the cult. Roland de Vaux states, "As an object of the cult, it recalled a manifestation of a god, and was the sign of the divine presence." *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, p.285

[30] See G. Wenham, Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50, p. 223.

[31] One purpose of theophanic narratives is to memorialize and establish the legitimacy of cultic activities at specific places. See W. Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, p. 247. Sarna sees the whole point of the narrative as "to dissociate, absolutely and unmistakably, the pagan cult of Bethel from the sanctity the place held in Israelite consciousness." Furthermore, he states, "Jacob is actually reversing accepted religious notions. Normally, a stone was holy and an object of worship because it was thought to be the abode of a *numen*. In this case, however, the stone pillar is simply memorializing the scene of the theophany and is accorded no inherent sanctity" (*Understanding Genesis*, p. 194). E. Martens notes, that the setting up of pillars as memorials to Yahweh (28:18; 35:14) or as stones of witness (Gen. 31:45; cf. Exod. 24:4) is one of the uses of "standing stones" that is considered appropriate in the biblical literature (*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995. 3:135).

[32] Jacob was no doubt calling his camp site "Beth-El" and not the city west of the site that carried the name Luz. I am indebted to Dr. Richard Sarason of Hebrew Union College for noting that in Genesis 12:8, the city of Bethel is also west of Abraham's altar. The city of Luz would eventually come to be called Bethel in

The last verses of the story focus on Jacob's vow. The vow serves as a parallel and reinforcement of the promise of God made in the dream. As part of this vow, Jacob indicates that Bethel will be *the* cult site for his worship. Whether he intends to build a more substantial worship structure is unclear. What is clear is that Jacob views Bethel as a significant access point for communication with God.

In Genesis 31:11-13, Jacob relays to Rachel and Leah a dream in which the angel of God tells him to go back to the land of his birth. Verse 13 reads, "I am the God *of* Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth." Two things draw our attention here. First of all, God identifies Himself to Jacob through place association. This is the same God who appeared to Jacob at Bethel. God is identified by His address. God even reminds Jacob of the significant actions he made at the site.

Secondly, there is nothing in the text to indicate that Jacob ascribed any importance to the place where he had the dream he is relaying to his wives. Why? Most likely Jacob considered God to have Bethel as His primary link with the earth, thereby eliminating other sites as sacred. This interpretation makes sense in light of Jacob's dream at Bethel. In that dream, the angels are coming to and going from God on the stairway. Therefore, Jacob may have viewed an angelic messenger as having come from God via Bethel. This is reinforced by the message of the angel who, as the mouthpiece of God,[33] states, "I am the God of Bethel," thereby indicating the spatial priorities.[34]

Further along in the narrative of Jacob's life (Genesis 35),[35] we are told that Jacob is given instructions to relocate, this time to Bethel

---

association with the sacred site near it. Jacob's camping spot does not seem to be near enough to the city to bring him into contact with others during his stay.

[33] There is a certain ambiguity about the speaker in Jacob's dream who is identified as an angel but states, "I am God." See the section on the burning bush above.

[34] My thanks to Dr. Richard Sarason for his helpful comments on this idea.

[35] Genesis 35:1-9 and 14-15 are typically attributed to the "E" document whereas 35:9-15 is considered to be "P". In fact, von Rad states that verses 9-13 contain almost everything that the P document has to say about Jacob. His arguments attributing it to the so-called "P" redaction are not convincing (*Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 338). John Van Seters also views 35:9-15 as being a doublet of the supplementary P editor ("The Pentateuch" in *The Hebrew Bible Today*, p. 43).

proper. Jacob is told to live at Bethel and make an altar there. While Jacob had anointed a stone pillar there previously, an altar was required for proper sacrifices. This is the only place where God directs a patriarch to build an altar. Subsequently, on the journey to Bethel, Jacob instructs all those who are with him to purify themselves and they bury their foreign gods.[36] Thus, Bethel has now become a permanent sacrificial site, one that will be built and maintained by Jacob himself. Such action increases the status of Bethel in that the sacred nature of the place will be maintained and visible by virtue of both a physical structure and regular cultic activity.[37]

Bethel maintained its special status for many years after Jacob's initial experience. The book of Judges describes the Israelites returning to Bethel to weep after a devastating loss in the civil war with Benjamin, the Israelites returned to Bethel and wept. Judges 20:26 states, "Then the Israelites and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept and

---

The idea that this pericope is a duplication of the narrative of Genesis 28:10-22 which comes from a different source is prevalent. However, as Waltke points out, the contexts are very different and must be taken into consideration. While in Gen. 28 Jacob is fleeing, in chapter 35 Jacob is the recipient of blessing (*Genesis, A Commentary*, p. 470).

[36] It is interesting to note that Jacob calls for ritualistic purity from his whole entourage as he prepares to approach the sacred space of Bethel in order to build an altar (35:2). He firmly believes that God's potent presence is at Bethel. See N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p. 194. In fact, he now calls the place "El-Bethel" (35:7) which, is not the name of the deity, but rather a way of placing emphasis on God who revealed himself there rather than on the place itself (See Waltke, *Genesis, A Commentary,* p. 473). Could burial be symbolic of death of the deities? Acknowledging that they were dead to begin with?

[37] According to the biblical accounts, the actual city of Luz/Bethel seems to have remained under Canaanite control until the conquest of the land by the Israelites (specifically the "house of Joseph"). See Joshua 12:16 and Judges 1:22. Jacob and his extended family must have been centered closer to the sacred site. It was not uncommon for a nomadic clan to take up extended residence on the outskirts of a city or town as this was a mutually beneficial relationship for nomad and urbanite in terms of commerce. See Genesis 35:1ff and Glenn M. Schwartz, "Pastoral Nomadism in Ancient Western Asia," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* Jack M. Sasson ed. New York: Scribner and Sons, 1995. pp. 249ff. See also I. J. Gelb, "The Early History of the West Semitic Peoples," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, vol. 15 (1961), pp.27-47.

they sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD." Two parts of this verse capture our interest. First, the clause that the people "remained before the Lord" in a state of mourning is noteworthy. This reaffirms the concept that the Lord was somehow particularly present at the specific site of Bethel. The Israelites came back to Bethel to weep. They did not stay at the battle site or even just move a safe distance away; they went where they were sure God would hear them. This is not to say that the people thought that God could not hear or see them at other places. The idea that God was aware of the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt would belie such an assumption. Rather, the connection to God at a sacred place like Bethel was a concrete and a certain one, whereas the interaction between God and the people at non-sacred, non-cultic sites would fall under the more general category of God's supporting presence, typified by phrases such as "God was with so-and-so."[38]

Second, the clause "and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD" affirms that Bethel had achieved a more formal cultic and institutional nature as an extension of its sacred nature. As noted above, initially Jacob marked the site with a *maṣṣebah* or "pillar" and only much later did he build a formal altar there. While we are not given many details of the sacrificial process here,[39] it is safe to assume that the cultic paraphernalia at Bethel must have increased along with the establishment and growth of the nation of Israel.

Common to both the clauses from this verse is the phrase "before the LORD." This phrase indicates that the person or persons are in the presence of the LORD in a manner distinct from the norm.[40] In other words, the people were certain to have God's full attention by virtue of

[38] This is an issue of degree. Sitting "before God" represents a more localized and more intense idea of holiness and connection, whereas God "going with PN" is an extension of God's presence and favor. It is our contention that these distinctions blur and eventually become null as one progresses in time.

[39] The text does illustrate the fact that two kinds of formal sacrifices are offered: peace offerings and burnt offerings. This may indicate a formalized cult process in operation at Bethel during this period.

[40] The phrase can refer to a special dedication or vow wherein the idea is that the person is held accountable by the LORD. See for example, Gen. 27:7; Ex. 16:33; Deut. 6:25; Joshua 6:26; 1 Sam. 11:15, 23:18, 26:19.

being in a sacred place.[41] God's presence was, for lack of a better term, laser-focused at Bethel. Thus, in the period of the Judges, for the Israelites to be at the sacred cult site of Bethel was to be in the special, particular presence of the LORD.

To summarize, the biblical authors associate Bethel with sacred space from the very beginnings of Israelite history.[42] This sanctity is most clearly expressed in Jacob's dream and subsequent actions there. Ultimately, Bethel continued to be recognized as a sacred site by the tribes of Israel as they sought to understand the will of God in times of trouble. The sacred nature of Bethel seems to derive primarily from two factors. First, God initiated a self-revelation to Jacob at the site. Second, the nature of the revelation depicted God being connected to Bethel by virtue of some type of stairway. Furthermore, it was via that stairway that the messengers of God were proceeding to carry out the divine will. This idea of God's connection to the earth at a particular point is further strengthened by another dream of Jacob in which God identifies himself by association with Bethel.

Two general conclusions about sacred places in the biblical material can be drawn from the above discussion of Bethel. First, of the studies reviewed at the beginning, Eliade's conclusions match best with the picture of Bethel, which attains its sacred status by the revelation of God and not through the decision of mankind. Second, a sacred place is a site at which God is known to be accessible because He has revealed Himself to be present there. Its primary purpose is assured communication with the divine presence. This is an element often missed by many History of Religions studies.

---

[41] Verse 27 states that the Ark was present at Bethel at that time. Bethel had sacred status independent from that bestowed by the presence of the Ark but the presence of such a holy object no doubt increased the belief and awareness of God's accessibility at Bethel.

[42] Of course the patriarchal stories centering on places that would become significant cult sites are usually understood to be *heiroi logoi* or foundational myths that justify the site for Israel's cultic use. Yet this should not automatically diminish the possible historical veracity of the stories. They certainly would have been considered true by the authors. For more on the idea of *heiros logos* see Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament* (trans., G. Buswell; Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1965).

However limited in its scope, the analogy of a phone booth is helpful here. The space which a phone booth occupies does not limit the location of the one we wish to call. Rather it is a means to get in touch with that person. It is reasonable to assume that, while Jacob and his subsequent progeny did not view God as limited to one site or another in relationship to the earth, they did understand God to have a special presence and accessibility at a sacred site such as Bethel. In fact, Jacob viewed Bethel as THE place to have communication with God. By implication, Jacob did not view God as accessible at any time and in any place. In other words, there were limits on where Jacob felt he could interact with God. These beliefs on Jacob's part were inspired by the self-revelation of God at Bethel. God revealed himself there and made promises that were linked with that place. Therefore, Bethel was vitally important for maintaining a working relationship with God.

Eventually, however, the connection between heaven and earth at Bethel would be lost. The establishment of a calf-idol at Bethel by Jeroboam I was a primary cause for this, and the prophets would condemn the once sacred site.[43] The phone line at Bethel was terminated; the phone in the phone booth was no longer in service. With its loss came a real and tangible loss of a point of connection and fellowship with God. For those who sought fellowship with God, the rejection of sacred places by God meant separation from God.

Conclusion

This brings us to the significance of the change brought about by Jesus during His ministry. In John 1:51 we find a strange statement by Jesus to Nathanael, who has just declared his belief in Jesus. The Lord states that Nathanael will see the heavens opened and angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. Without an understanding of Bethel, its significance, and, in particular, the revelation of God to Jacob at Bethel, Jesus' statement makes little sense. However, once the modern

[43] See 1 Kings 12:28-29 for the story in which Jeroboam I sets up the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. Jeroboam's action was meant to stop any desire for reunification of the north and south based on the fact that Jerusalem, the primary place of worship, was in the southern kingdom of Judah. See 1 Kings 13:4, 2 Kings 10:29, and 23:19 for examples of the rejection of Bethel as a place where God was accessible.

reader links John 1:51 with Genesis 28:12-13, it becomes clear what Jesus is claiming: Jesus Himself is the stairway, the sacred space, the means by which the believer has communion with God the Father in heaven. A major transition was underway: instead of being linked to a sacred space, connection with God was now through the person of Christ. A transition was taking place. Indeed, place was shifting to person. Unlike Bethel, however, Jesus could not be desecrated by the sin of the people. Through Jesus, the followers of God would never need worry about being cut off from God again.

And this is why it is so important for us as modern believers to understand the Old Testament idea of sacred space. We often take our access to God for granted, in part because we do not truly understand what we have been given.[44] We do not have to travel to have assured access to God. We do not have to sacrifice an innocent life to interact with Him, nor do we have to worry that we may be cut off from Him. These truths seem so self-evident to us that we hardly think twice about them. But we should. Those who are Christ-followers have an access to God that would cause Jacob to marvel. Because of the work of Jesus, we can worship the Father in spirit and in truth wherever we may find ourselves. This is not a gift to be taken lightly. How marvelous is this Jesus, for he is none other than the Son of God, the gateway to heaven!

[44] These conclusions are, in many ways, but the beginning. My own work has progressed beyond the scope of the paper presented here and will result in a forthcoming larger work.

Midwestern Journal of Theology 15.1 (2016): 84-100

The Divinity of Jesus and the Uniqueness of God: Are they Compatible? A Reflection on High Christology and Monotheism in Mark's Gospel

JOHN J. R. LEE
Assistant Professor of New Testament,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

INTRODUCTION[1]

The issue of whether monotheistic commitment and high Christology[2] are compatible has been approached from different angles with different assumptions.[3] The proposals that are in favor of the compatibility of Jewish monotheism and divine Christology come from Richard Bauckham and Larry Hurtado. Richard Bauckham supports the compatibility of monotheism and high Christology through the notion of divine identity;[4] monotheism is compatible with divine Christology because Jesus is included in the unique and exclusive identity of the God

---

[1] This paper is a revised version of the author's presentation at the 2014 Evangelical Society meeting under the title "Compatibility of High Christology and the Uniqueness of God in Mark's Gospel."

[2] In this article, the term "high"—when it modifies Christology—means something essentially synonymous to "fully divine" or "participating in the unique identity and authority of Israel's God."

[3] For example, see P. Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: J. Clarke/Louisville: WJK, 1991); R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: "God Crucified" and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008); L. Hurtado, *One God One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); idem, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), especially chapter 1; J. McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in Its Jewish Context* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009); J. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (London: SPCK, 2010).

[4] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, chapter 1.

of Israel according to early Christian witnesses in the New Testament.[5] Larry Hurtado, on the other hand, presents the compatibility of monotheism and high Christology in view of the flexibility that he suggests existed within first-century Judaism.[6] According to Hurtado, first-century Jewish religiosity contained a notably high view of some angelic and human figures alongside the biblical deity. However, first-century Jews reserved their cultic veneration only for the God of Israel. These exalted angelic and human figures may be portrayed in (almost) God-like terms and images at times. Nonetheless, they are never a legitimate recipient of worship. According to Hurtado, the respect toward these exalted figures within first-century Judaism prepared a way for the high Christology of early Christians found in the New Testament, yet Christian devotion to Jesus contained reformulations of first-century Judaism in the sense that early followers of Jesus, who were Jews, worshipped Jesus alongside God.[7]

> Both Bauckham's and Hurtado's proposals include stimulating suggestions and deserve closer attention and interaction; however, such go beyond the scope of this study.[8] In the following, I intend to focus on the issue of the compatibility of monotheism and high Christology with special attention to Mark's Gospel, which has not received much focused attention in either Bauckham's or Hurtado's discussion of Christian origins. I will argue that in Mark's Gospel the portrayal of Jesus as a divine figure does not endanger monotheistic devotion;

---

[5] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, chapter 1.

[6] Hurtado, *One God One Lord*; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ*, chapter 1.

[7] Ibid.

[8] For Bauckham's proposal, it would be helpful if he could substantiate his definition of "divine identity" by developing his relatively brief explanation of the term in *Jesus and the God of Israel*, chapter 1, and if he could also show more forcefully that the notion of "divine identity" was indeed understood by New Testament authors in a sufficiently clear manner, thus proving that discussing such a notion is not anachronistic. For Hurtado's proposal, it would be helpful if he could further clarify in what sense the noted "reformulations" are not a form of departure from Second Temple Jewish monotheistic commitment. See Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, chapter 1; Hurtado, *One God One Lord*; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ*, chapter 1.

rather, devotion to Jesus materializes and particularizes the commitment to the uniqueness of God. In order to support my thesis as such, I will (1) point to the concurrence of monotheistic and high-Christological references in Mark's Gospel, (2) elaborate on the relationship between monotheistic and high-Christological emphases in Mark's Gospel, and then (3) discuss briefly the significance of the functional subordination of the Son to the Father in understanding Mark's Christology and monotheism.

Concurrence of Monotheistic and High-Christological References in Mark's Gospel

High Christology in Mark's Gospel

Mark's Gospel includes a number of remarkable passages that present Jesus as a divine figure. Contrary to the common perception that Mark's Christology is essentially lower than that of Matthew, John or Paul, the Second Gospel contains a number of passages that depict Jesus on par with the God of Israel. In other words, a number of pericopes in Mark apply to Jesus divine attributes and prerogatives that are exclusively reserved for the biblical deity—even from the opening verses of the Gospel (Mark 1:2-3).

Following the heading in 1:1 ("The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" [9]), Mark provides a composite citation of Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 and in so doing applies the divine κύριος language of Isa 40:3 (LXX) to his Messiah (Mark 1:3). This κύριος language was used clearly for the God of Israel in the original context of Isaiah but is now appropriated to Jesus by the Evangelist. This appropriation implies Jesus's divinity and, more descriptively, the Evangelist's inclusion of Jesus in the view of the unique and exclusive God of Israel.[10] Such a

[9] Scripture quotations in English are taken from the New American Standard Bible (1977) and those in Greek are taken from Nestle-Aland 27th Edition (1993) for the New Testament and from Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta* (1935) for the LXX.

[10] It is noteworthy that Isa 40:3 (quoted in Mark 1:3) belongs to a section of Isaiah known to be emphatically monotheistic (Isa 40-55). In quoting one of the

notable beginning (1:2-3) is significant because it sets a tone for how the rest of the narrative as well as Mark's Christology and theology proper in it should be appreciated.

The Evangelist's appropriation of the divine κύριος language for Jesus is not coincidental as such appropriating reoccurs in the middle of the Galilean section of the Second Gospel. Namely, Mark 5:19-20 provides another occasion where the divine κύριος language is applied to Jesus:

> He [Jesus] said to him [the person just delivered from massive demon possession], "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord [ὁ κύριος] has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you." And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus [ὁ Ἰησοῦς] had done for him; and everyone marveled.

In 5:19, Jesus commands the former demoniac to share what the Lord (ὁ κύριος)**,** which refers to the God of Israel, has done, but in verse 20 this person instead proclaims what Jesus (ὁ Ἰησοῦς) has done—and there is no hint that Jesus as the main character of the narrative or Mark as the narrator was in any way uneasy with the former demoniac's "disobedient" act of proclamation. The remarkable interchange between the divine Lord (ὁ κύριος) and Jesus (ὁ Ἰησοῦς) in these two verses implies that the identity of God and the identity of Jesus meaningfully overlap with each other in Mark's Gospel.[11]

---

beginning verses of that emphatically monotheistic section of Isaiah, the Evangelist overlaps Jesus with Israel's God by appropriating the divine κύριος language of Isa 40:3 to his Messiah. This observation, however, does not imply a form of modalism as Mark distinguishes Jesus from God (or the Son from the Father) even from the outset of his narrative by portraying the Father as one speaking to the Son: "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way'" (Mark 1:2).

[11] Additionally, see Mark 12:36: εἶπεν κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου· κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν σου (quoting Psalm 110:1). It is noteworthy that both God and the Messiah (that is, Jesus in Mark's Gospel) share the κύριος language. Of course, use of the κύριος language does not guarantee a person's divine status. Nonetheless, if it is noted how the divine κύριος language of Isaiah 40:3 (LXX) was appropriated for Jesus at the very

Mark's high Christology is seen not only in his Christological use of the divine κύριος language (1:3; 5:19-20) but also in a number of other ways. In Mark 2:1-12, Jesus is depicted as one possessing power to forgive sins, which is a divine prerogative according to the Old Testament (e.g., Pss 32:1-5, 51:1-3, 85:2, 103:3, 130:4; 2 Sam 12:13; Isa 44:22; Dan 9:9; Zech 3:4) and Second Temple Judaism (e.g., 1QS 2:8f.; 11:14). Even Mark explicitly supports the understanding that forgiving someone's sins is a divine business at the beginning of the Jerusalem section of the narrative: "… whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father, too, who is in heaven, may forgive you your transgressions" (11:25).

In Mark 4:35-41 and 6:45-52, Jesus appears to have authority to subdue rebellious waters of the sea, which is another divine prerogative according to the Old Testament (e.g., Pss 89:9; 65:7; cf. Ps 104:5-9; Job 26:10-12; 38:8-11). In the latter passage (Mark 6:45-52), in particular, Jesus is portrayed to walk on the sea and present himself to the fear-filled disciples in an epiphanic manner.[12]

Mark's divine Christology is found in later parts of the narrative as well. In 13:27, for instance, Jesus announces that he "will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds…."[13] It is noteworthy that Jesus does not refer to his followers as God's elect but as His own elect. In so doing, Jesus meaningfully overlaps his identity and sovereign authority with God's.[14]

---

beginning of the Gospel (Mark 1:3), the sharing of the κύριος language between God and the Messiah (Jesus) in 12:36 seems to reinforce Jesus's divine status.

[12] It is possible for the two-word expression ἐγώ εἰμι (6:50) to carry a Christological double entendre—especially if the expression is considered against the background of Isaiah (LXX), that is, the biblical book explicitly mentioned at the very beginning of the Gospel (Mark 1:2). In Isaiah 40-55 (LXX), ἐγώ εἰμι is a set reference to Israel's God (41:4; 43:10-11, 13; 46:4; 48:12; 51:12) and Mark's Gospel opens by naming "Isaiah" (Mark 1:2) and quoting a verse from this particular section of Isaiah (i.e., Isa 40:3 quoted in Mark 1:3).

[13] In Mark 13:27, the Greek for "His elect" is τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς [αὐτοῦ]. The textual issue, however, should not affect one's translation because, if the personal pronoun αὐτοῦ is not original, then the definite article functions as a personal pronoun in this construction.

[14] See also Mark 3:13, where Jesus is seen to make a sovereign choice in appointing the Twelve, thus signaling the restoration of Israel: "And He went up

Jesus' trial in 14:61-64 shows another passage that reflects Mark's high Christology in later parts of the narrative. At his trial, Jesus responds to the high priest's question ("Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?" [v. 61]) by applying to himself a composite reference to Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13 and thus portraying himself as a cosmic sovereign who participates in the divine sovereignty of the God of Israel: "… you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).[15] To the high priest, such an answer is undoubtedly blasphemous, as reflected in his charge against Jesus before the Council: "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy…" (vv. 63-64). Other members of the Council confirm the high priest's charge, thus condemning Jesus "to be deserving of death" (v. 64). There is no hint from Mark's narration that the high priest and other members of the Council misunderstood the nature of Jesus' claim in 14:62. Their misunderstanding concerns not the nature of Jesus's bold response in v. 62 but its authenticity.[16]

There are certainly other Markan passages that reflect the high Christology of the Evangelist.[17] Above I have listed several of them in a selective manner, prioritizing the passages where divine Christology is

---

to the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted (οὓς ἤθελεν αὐτός), and they came to Him." Significantly, the scene of Mark 3:13 portrays Jesus not as part of the twelve but as the one sovereignly summoning the twelve. In that sense, 3:13 seems to link implicitly the status of Jesus with that of the God of Israel in the Old Testament.

[15] Here in 14:62, again, the phrase ἐγώ εἰμι possibly contains a Christological double entendre. See my discussion on Mark 6:45-52 and the use of ἐγώ εἰμι in that passage above.

[16] This statement is also applicable to the scribes' response to Jesus with a charge of blasphemy in Mark 2:7. The scribes rightly understood the extremely bold nature of Jesus's claim in verse 5 but rejected the authenticity of the claim that a Galilean rabbi possesses divine authority to forgive sins (v. 7; cf. v. 10). Interestingly enough, 2:7 is the first passage in Mark where the motif of "blasphemy" appears whereas 14:64 is the last passage in the narrative containing that motif.

[17] See, e.g., (1) Mark 1:8 (description of Jesus as one baptizing with the Holy Spirit, i.e., Spirit of God); (2) 1:21-28; 2:28; 5:1-20 (Jesus's unique authority in his exorcism); (3) 6:7 (portrayal of Jesus as one giving his disciples authority for exorcism); and (4) 14:22-25 (depiction of Jesus as one reformulating Israel's foundational meal, i.e., the Passover meal).

relatively self-evident. This brief list, though selective, appears to suffice for establishing the fact that high Christology is a distinctive feature of Mark's Gospel.

Monotheism in Mark's Gospel

Mark's Gospel includes not only remarkable high-Christological passages but also notable monotheistic references especially in three passages (12:28-34 [vv. 29, 32]; 2:1-12 [v. 7]; 10:17-31 [v. 18]). The fact that Mark employs explicit monotheistic references repeatedly in his relatively short account[18] indicates that the Evangelist is substantially interested in the uniqueness of God. In fact, Mark is the only New Testament author who quotes directly the monotheistic call of the Shema in Deut 6:4: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord" (Mark 12:29).[19]

There are other New Testament passages that contain explicit monotheistic rhetoric such as John 17:3, Rom 3:30, 1 Cor 8:4-6, Gal 3:20, Eph 4:6, 1 Tim 1:17, 2:5 and Jas 2:19. However, none of those passages includes the direct quotation of the monotheistic call of Deut 6:4. Matthew and Luke each include a parallel passage to the Love Commandment pericope of Mark 12:28-34, but in referencing Deut 6 both Matthew and Luke quote only Deut 6:5.[20] On the other hand, it has to be noted that Mark does not only quote Deut 6:4 in Mark 12:29 but also includes its paraphrase in v. 32 when the Evangelist reports a scribe's friendly response to Jesus: "Right, Teacher, You have truly stated that <u>He is One</u>; and <u>there is no one else besides Him</u>."

Monotheistic language is found in two other places in Mark's Gospel, namely, 2:7 and 10:18. In Mark 2:7, scribes react to Jesus's claim that the paralytic's sins are forgiven: "He is blaspheming! Who can

---

[18] Mark is by far the shortest Gospel among the canonical Gospels and, particularly, among the Synoptic accounts.

[19] Although the meaning of Deut 6:4 may deserve a further discussion, how Mark the Evangelist understands this Deuteronomic verse seems clear enough, in particular, based upon its paraphrase in Mark 12:32: "... He is One; and there is no one else besides Him." Namely, the exclusive uniqueness of the God of Israel is the essential part in Mark's understanding of Deut 6:4. The exclusive uniqueness of the God of Israel is, of course, the basis of the undivided allegiance to the biblical deity (Deut 6:5 quoted in Mark 12:30).

[20] See Matthew 22:34-40//Luke 10:25-28.

forgive sins but God alone (εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός [which literally means, 'except one, i.e., God'])?"[21] In 10:18, in his dialogue with an interlocutor who has addressed Jesus as "good teacher," Jesus responds with a seemingly hard saying: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone (εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός)."[22] The quotation of the Shema in the Love Commandment passage, in particular, and its paraphrase within the same pericope—together with two other passages that employ monotheistic language—show that monotheistic commitment was an important concern to Mark the Evangelist.

I have so far surveyed high-Christological and monotheistic passages in Mark's Gospel. The fact that both high-Christological and monotheistic references are employed repeatedly within the Gospel of Mark implies that, to the Evangelist, monotheistic and high-Christological emphases are compatible with each other. A contemporary reader of Mark's Gospel may wonder how the two emphases could be compatible. Nevertheless, Mark does not seem to have any problem with their collocation in his account.

Organic Linkage between Monotheism and High Christology in Mark's Gospel

I have shown above that monotheistic and high-Christological concerns are compatible in Mark's Gospel. In the following section, I

---

[21] Mark seems to employ both εἷς and ὁ θεός in 2:7, each of which could individually refer to Israel's God, in order to conform to the language of the Shema (Deut 6:4 LXX). Mark combines εἷς (not μόνος as in Luke 5:21, which is syntactically more natural) with ὁ θεός, corresponding to the phraseology of Deut 6:4 LXX (Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, AB 27 [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 222). The fact that the Evangelist is not strictly bound by the wording of Deut 6.4 LXX in expressing monotheistic concern is seen from the following two factors. Firstly, the friendly scribe paraphrases and does not directly quote the monotheistic call of the Shema (Deut 6:4 quoted in Mark 12:29) in his response to Jesus (12:32). Secondly, the scribe's paraphrase itself (12:32) contains an interchange between two different monotheistic expressions (i.e., εἷς ἐστιν and οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν αὐτοῦ/).

[22] See my further discussion on Mark 2:1-12 below, which addresses other details in the passage and especially how the scribes who are antagonistic characters in the passage serve Mark's narrative and especially Christological purposes.

intend to argue that monotheistic and high-Christological emphases are not only compatible with each other but also connected organically to each other in Mark's narrative. I will pay particular attention to the three explicitly monotheistic passages in Mark (i.e., 2:1-12 [esp. v. 7]; 10:17-31 [esp. v. 18]; 12:28-34 [esp. vv. 29, 32]) and elaborate on the linkage between monotheistic and high-Christological concerns in each of those passages.

Generally speaking, the linkage between monotheistic and high-Christological emphases can be seen from the fact that the Evangelist places three explicit monotheistic references (including the only New Testament quotation of the monotheistic call of the Shema in Mark 12:29) in his Christologically-conditioned narrative—Mark's Gospel is titled as "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus *Christ*, the Son of God" (1:1) and begins Christologically by appropriating the divine κύριος language of Isaiah 40:3 (LXX) to Christ (1:3). Furthermore, the fact that monotheistic and high-Christological emphases both are found not just once but repeatedly in the narrative suggests that their concurrence is not incidental but is a result of the Evangelist's deliberate arrangement.[23] More specifically, however, the following discussion on each of the three explicitly monotheistic passages will show the organic connection between high-Christological and monotheistic concerns in Mark's Gospel.

Mark 2:1-12

In Mark 2:1-12, one finds the first monotheistic reference in Mark's Gospel. This reference is significant for the current discussion because it is the *very first* monotheistic reference and thus provides a frame in which the following Markan passages with the same/similar

[23] Mark is a capable and reliable author who is intentional about what he narrates. Mark's competency is seen from his elaborate use of sandwich constructions (e.g., 3:20–35; 5:21–43; 6:7–30; 11:12–21) and dramatic irony (e.g., 2:7; 15:17-19). The three-fold pattern of (1) Jesus's prediction, (2) disciples' failure and (3) Jesus's corrective teaching on discipleship in the "Journey" section (8:22-10:52), again, reflects Mark's skillfulness as a storyteller. The Evangelist's pervasive use of the passion motif throughout the Second Gospel (see, e.g., 2:7, 19; 3:6; the three-fold passion prediction in chapters 8-10; [and] the passion narrative in chapter 15) has the same significance concerning Mark's competency as an author/narrator.

monotheistic rhetoric should be understood. In Mark 2:5, Jesus announces that the paralytic's sins are forgiven: "My son, your sins are forgiven." Such an announcement provokes the scribes, and as a result they react: "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone (εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός)?" (2:7).

What must be noted concerning the scribes' reaction in v. 7 is that monotheistic language in the scribal reaction is directly linked to a high-Christological emphasis of the Evangelist. While it is true that the scribes are complaining about Jesus with their monotheistic rhetoric in 2:7 ("Who can forgive sins but God alone?"), in Mark's narration, that complaint ironically represents the Evangelist's own Christological agenda that Jesus is a divine figure, and he indeed has the divine authority to forgive sins (cf. v. 10). The scribes are correct that no one is able to forgive sins except the unique God of Israel, but they are utterly mistaken about Jesus's identity in relation to the view of that unique God. According to Mark, Jesus is not a blasphemer, as the scribes think (v. 7), but a unique figure who does only what God can do! A later verse in the same passage, i.e., Mark 2:10, supports this interpretation, where Jesus does not retreat in front of the scribes' reaction but reinforces his earlier assertion in verse 5 by claiming: "The Son of Man [i.e., Jesus himself][24] has authority to forgive sins on earth." Jesus shares the unique authority of Israel's God to absolve sins![25]

In Mark 2:1-12, monotheistic language is not used to separate Jesus's identity from God's identity or Jesus's authority from God's authority, but to overlap them and link them inseparably with each other. In other words, the Evangelist's monotheistic concern is organically and inseparably connected to his high-Christological concern in this pericope.

---

[24] While its historical background is still hotly debated, "the Son of Man (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου)," a phrase appearing only in the Gospels and Acts in the New Testament, is always a reference to Jesus without a single exception and mostly Jesus's self-reference. For the use of this phrase in Mark's Gospel, see 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33-34, 45; 13:26-27; 14:21[2x], 41, 62.

[25] Pss 32:1-5, 51:1-3, 85:2, 103:3, 130:4; 2 Sam 12:13; Isa 44:22; Dan 9:9; Zech 3:4; also, 1QS 2:8f.; 11:14.

Mark 10:17-31

Mark 10:17-31 contains a similar dynamic of integrating monotheistic and high-Christological concerns. To his interlocutor, who bows before him and addresses him as "good teacher" (v. 17), Jesus replies in a seemingly unfriendly way: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone (εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός)" (Mark 10:18).

A superficial reading/hearing of Jesus's response in Mark 10:18 may offer an impression that Jesus was denying his ultimate goodness in contrast to God's perfect goodness, thus qualifying his identity as something less than divine. Nevertheless, a more careful observation on the wording of the verse reveals something profound. In Mark 10:18, the Greek phrase for "but God alone" is εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός (literally, "except one, i.e., God"). This Greek construction is used only in two places throughout Mark's Gospel. One is, of course, here in Mark 10:18 and the other is in Mark 2:7: "Who can forgive sins but God alone (εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός)?" One can say that Mark's audience was not facing the so-called difficult saying of 10:18 in a vacuum. Rather, they were encountering Jesus's saying with a presupposition constructed by 2:1-12 and, in particular, by how the phrase εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός was used in 2:7.

As discussed above, Mark 2:1-12 presents Jesus as one possessing divine authority to forgive sins, and the monotheistic language in 2:7, accordingly, has a high-Christological intent in Mark's narration. Now, in handling the phrase "but God alone" (εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός) in Mark 10:18, facing this phrase for the second time, it would be sensible to remember how that phrase was used in its first and only other occurrence in Mark 2:7 and read 10:18 in light of 2:7. Jesus's words in Mark 10:18 ("No one is good but God alone.") then do not seem to imply any qualifications on Jesus's goodness or his divinity. Rather, those words appear to provide a veiled claim on his deity, offering an invitation for his interlocutor to search and find out the true identity and significance of Jesus, whom he has addressed only as "good teacher" (v. 17)!

The presented high-Christological reading of 10:18 in connection to 2:7 is supported by the fact that (1) Jesus remarkably juxtaposes his command with the Decalogue in the same pericope (vv. 19, 21) and that (2) Jesus presents himself as one guaranteeing eternal life for his followers (vv. 29-30; cf. v. 21), especially after addressing God as the sole source of salvation (v. 27; cf. Rev 7:10)—again in the same

pericope. Moreover, it seems difficult to assume that the Evangelist views Jesus as "holy" (ἅγιος [1:24]) but not "good" (ἀγαθός [10:18]), if one wishes to take 10:18 as Jesus's qualification of his goodness.

The so-called hard saying in Mark 10:18, which employs a monotheistic rhetoric, expresses implicitly something profoundly high-Christological. Through such narration, the Evangelist invites his readers/hearers to reflect on and affirm Jesus's unique identity as a divine figure.

Mark 12:28-34

The last Markan passage with monotheistic rhetoric is the Love Commandment pericope in 12:28-34. Unlike the first two monotheistic passages, this pericope does not seem to contain a Christological force within itself. It could be noted that because the first two monotheistic references in Mark have Christological bearing, one should apply such bearing to the last monotheistic reference. I do not think it necessarily wrong to transfer the Christological concern found in the previous two monotheistic passages (2:1-12 [v. 7]; 10:17-31 [v. 18]) to Mark 12:28-34 since all of these passages hold together as parts of the same narrative.

Nevertheless, there is one thing that more forcefully demands our attention, namely, the juxtaposition of the Love Commandment passage (Mark 12:28-34) and the David's Son pericope (12:35-37). When these two juxtaposed passages are appreciated in light of each other, then (1) the quotation of Deut 6:4 (the monotheistic call of the Shema) and its paraphrase contained in the Love Commandment passage (Mark 12:29 and v. 32) and (2) the quotation of Ps 110:1 in the David's Son pericope (Mark 12:36)[26] are naturally linked with each other, thus integrating their respective monotheistic and high-Christological concerns.

The Old Testament scriptures quoted in each of these juxtaposed passages (i.e., Deut 6:4-5 and Ps 110:1) were critically important in the earliest decades of the Christian movement as seen from the New Testament.[27] In light of their respective importance, it would be

[26] See Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 21-23, which discusses high-Christological significance of the application of Ps 110:1 to Jesus in New Testament.

[27] See the immediately following paragraphs.

reasonable to think that Mark was aware of and deliberate about the juxtaposition of these two key Old Testament passages.

It is a scholarly consensus that Second Temple Jews emphasized exclusive commitment to the God of Israel.[28] Such an emphasis was expressed frequently by the formulae of (1) the Shema of Deuteronomy 6 and (2) the first two commandments of the Decalogue in Deut 5//Exod 20.[29] In light of multiple explicitly monotheistic emphases found in different New Testament books written by various authors, the concern for the uniqueness of God was also important in the first-century Christian circles, in general, and among New Testament authors, in particular.[30] To Mark the Evangelist, monotheistic concern was clearly significant as seen from the fact that he quotes directly the monotheistic call of the Shema in Deut 6:4 (Mark 12:29), paraphrases it (v. 32) and includes two other explicit monotheistic references in the Second Gospel (2:7; 10:18). As already noted, Mark is the only New Testament author who quotes directly the monotheistic call of the Shema in Deut 6:4 (Mark 12:29). On the other hand, Ps 110:1 (109:1 LXX) is the most quoted Old Testament verse in the entire New Testament corpus. Various New Testament authors, including Mark, reference this verse in order to reinforce Jesus's heavenly enthronement and his participation in the divine sovereignty of Israel's unique deity.[31]

In light of the importance of these two Old Testament scriptures that are quoted in the Love Commandment passage and the David's Son periscope among early Christian circles, it seems highly unlikely that the juxtaposition of these two Old Testament passages was incidental—

---

[28] See Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, chapter 1; Hurtado, *One God One Lord*; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ*, chapter 1; J. McGrath, *The Only True God* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), chapter 2.

[29] For brief examples, see (1) the Nash Papyrus (2nd cent. BCE?), which combines the Shema (Deut 6:4-5) and the Ten Commandments—likely for liturgical/catechetical purposes, and (2) the Qumran *tefillin* and *mezuzot* that include passages from Exod and Deut and reflect the literal rendering of the practice prescribed in Deut 6:8-9.

[30] See John 17:3; Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:4-6; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 1:17, 2:5; Jas 2:19; Mark 2:7; 10:18; 12:29, v. 32.

[31] See Matt 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42-43; 22:69; Acts 2:33-35; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20; 2:6; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:1; 1 Pet 3:22.

unnoticed by Mark the Evangelist.[32] It would be far more viable to think that Mark deliberately placed these two passages together and, in so doing, connected Deut 6:4 with Ps 110:1, thus integrating monotheistic and high-Christological concerns once again in his narrative—as the Evangelist did earlier in 2:1-12 and 10:17-31.

The examination of all three monotheistic passages above reveals that Mark's monotheistic concern is inseparable from his high-Christological emphasis. All three monotheistic passages in Mark have high-Christological bearing in one way or another. In other words, whenever Mark employs explicit monotheistic language, he couples it with an interest in Jesus's divine identity and authority. Monotheistic and high-Christological interests are not only concurrent in the Second Gospel but also inseparable from each other. The integration of monotheism and high Christology implies that the Evangelist interprets the traditional Jewish monotheistic commitment with a high-Christological lens and that the exclusive identity of Israel's God is expressed with the unique person and ministry of Jesus in mind.

Nonetheless, what about the Markan passages that portray Jesus (the Son) as submitting himself to the Father? How should one relate such passages to the Evangelist's high Christology that is inseparable from his monotheistic concern? Would the Son's submission to the Father imply something less than divine Christology in Mark's Gospel? The last section of this paper will be devoted to addressing that very issue.

Significance of the functional subordination of the Son to the Father for the discussion of monotheism and Christology in Mark's Gospel

Prior to actual discussion in this last section, I need to clarify my terminology. When I mention "subordination" of the Son to the Father, it does not signify ontological subordination. What I mean by the term "subordination" is rather functional in nature, referring to the Son's

[32] This point can be reinforced further by noting that 12:28-34 and 12:35-37 are not simply juxtaposed but also belong to the same unit of conflict stories that report the controversies between Jesus and the Jewish authorities of his days as located in the temple (11:27-12:44).

submission to the Father in roles. I have shown above that throughout Mark's Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as a divine figure included within the unique and exclusive identity of the God of Israel. In light of such a portrayal, ontological subordination cannot be a real option in accounting for the Markan passages that depict Jesus's (the Son's) submission to the Father. However, one should still not ignore the fact that there are a number of Markan passages that picture the Son as submitting himself to the Father, revering him without any reservations.

Mark's Gospel depicts Jesus as the Son *of God*. The central theme of the Gospel and the core part of Jesus's teaching is the Kingdom *of God* (1:15; 4:1-34; 14:25; 15:43). The Gospel Jesus proclaims is described as "the Gospel *of God*" (1:14). Jesus's divine authority to forgive sins results in the glory *of God* (2:12). Jesus pictures the ultimate glory he will have at the point of consummation as "the glory of *his Father*" (8:38). Constantly in Mark's Gospel, Jesus surrenders himself to God's authority (10:40; 13:32), God's will (14:36) and the Scriptures (14:49). Jesus is seen to be *theo*-centric enough to address his Father repeatedly as "my God" during his crucifixion (15:34; cf. Ps 22:2 [21:2 LXX]). There are certainly other Markan passages that concern Jesus's *theo*-centric devotion and his utter submission to the Father.

However, would the Son's submission to the Father require something less than divine Christology in Mark's Gospel? My answer is, "No, not necessarily." Functional subordination is, in fact, an important and even necessary factor in the integration of high Christology and monotheism mainly because the Divine Son's submission to the Divine Father implies unity between the two persons. The Son's functional subordination to the Father indicates that the Kingdom of God (i.e., the Reign of God) is not divided but singularly unified.[33] Mark the Evangelist does not present two gods nor does he portray Jesus as a second-deity;[34] rather, Mark portrays Jesus as one included within the view of Israel's unique God. In fact, in Mark's Gospel Jesus's authority is overlapped with God's authority (e.g., 2:1-12), and Jesus's cosmic rule with God's own

[33] Cf. 1 Cor 15:28; Zech 14:9.

[34] Jesus is never referred to as θεός in Mark although he is portrayed as one whose identity overlaps the unique identity of Israel's God from the very outset of the Gospel (1:2-3) and across the Gospel (see my discussion on Mark's high Christology above).

reign (e.g., Mark 12:36; 14:62). If so, in Mark, devotion to Jesus or high Christology does not distract nor compromise the commitment to the uniqueness of God but rather particularizes and realizes it in the ultimate sense, and, significantly, such Christological particularization of God's uniqueness is expressed, at least in part, through the language of functional subordination.

Conclusion

In this study, I have shown that high Christology and monotheistic commitment are compatible with and, more importantly, inseparable from each other in Mark's Gospel. I have supported my thesis with three particular points as follows. Firstly, monotheistic and high-Christological emphases are concurrent in Mark's Gospel, and both emphases, respectively, appear repeatedly across Mark's Gospel. In view of such repeated concurrence, monotheistic and high-Christological concerns are compatible to the Second Evangelist. Secondly, all three monotheistic passages in Mark's Gospel are linked with Christological concerns in one way or another, and such linkage implies that Mark's monotheistic and high-Christological emphases are organically linked to each other and inseparable from each other. Thirdly, functional subordination of the Son to the Father is not a reflection of something less than divine Christology but rather an indication of the true unity of God's reign and the Christological particularization of God's uniqueness.[35]

To Mark the Evangelist, high Christology does not threaten commitment to the God of Israel, and monotheism does not eliminate the divinity of Christ—even if unbelieving Jews contemporary to Mark did not necessarily agree with the Evangelist's Christological devotion to the God of Israel.[36] Nevertheless, according to the Evangelist, the

[35] Of course, these three points do not exist in isolation from one another but rather in close linkage with one another. Nevertheless, looking at each of them individually, as I have done in this study, is helpful for appreciating more fully a complicated issue such as the compatibility of monotheism and high Christology.

[36] Cf. Mark 2:1-3:6; 11:27-12:44; 14:61-64; John 5:18; 10.29-33; also, Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, SJLA 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), *passim*.

exclusive identity of God includes Jesus the Messiah, and true commitment to Israel's deity is neither threatened nor compromised but is realized through devotion to Jesus. This Jesus is part of the unique identity of Israel's God who restored his people from Babylon and has done even greater things in and through His Son (cf. Mark 5:19-20).[37] Thus, Mark's Gospel must begin—and this reflection must end—as follows:

> As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way; The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight'" (Mark 1:2-3).

Additional works consulted

Collins, Adela Y. *Mark*. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.
Evans, Craig A. *Mark 8:27-16:20*. WBC. Nashville: Nelson, 2001.
France, R. T. *The Gospel of Mark*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
Lane, William L. *The Gospel according to Mark*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
Stein, Robert H. *Mark*. BECNT. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.

[37] I am here hinting at the New Exodus motif in Mark's Gospel. For the use of that motif in Mark's Gospel, see, e.g., R. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, BSL (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000).

Midwestern Journal of Theology 15.1 (2016): 101-122

More Faithful than an Ox: Paul's use of the Scriptures to objectify his Apostolic Faithfulness in Corinth[1]

TODD R. CHIPMAN
Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Teaching Pastor,
The Master's Community Church (SBC)

> Fruit tastes better that you have picked with your own hands from the mother tree; water is fresher that you draw as it bubbles up from the actual spring; wine drinks better which you have drawn off from the cask in which it was first laid down. In the same way the Scriptures have about them some sort of natural fragrance, they breathe something genuine and peculiarly their own, when read in the language in which they were first written by those, some of whom took them down from those divine and sacred lips, and some bequeathed them to us under the influence of the same Spirit. (Desiderius Erasmus)[2]

An essay on Paul's use of the scriptures rests well in a volume commemorating the 500th anniversary of the first edition of Erasmus' critical Greek New Testament. Erasmus' joy when reading manuscripts for himself Paul experienced some 1,500 years earlier. While Erasmus understood Paul as a writer of scripture, Paul's scriptures were the Law,

---

[1] An excerpt of this paper was presented at the SBL Central States Regional Meeting in St. Louis, 23 March, 2015. I wish to express gratitude for comments received there.

[2] J. K. McConica, R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Volume 3: Letters 298-445, 1514-1516* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 203.

the Prophets and the Writings.[3] And his citations of these betray a high degree of fluency and familiarity with the narrative of Israel's history. For Paul, scripture was personal.

Moisés Silva notes that though deciding what is exactly a quotation and what is only a verbal parallel or loose allusion can be fraught with subjectivity, writing, "there is a certain usefulness and convenience in using explicit citations as a starting point for further study."[4] David L. Baker observes that identifying the citations of the Old Testament in the New Testament is just the starting point; these citations must then be analyzed for correspondence along historical, linguistic, literary, sociological, psychological, ethical, philosophical and other lines.[5] I wish to suggest that in 1-2 Corinthians,[6] a matrix of

---

[3] *Infra* it will be observed that Paul uses predominantly the Greek version of the scriptures. The scope of the present study does not include a thorough linguistic analysis of the traditions Paul quotes in 1-2 Corinthians but gives attention to select instances where he employs the scriptures to justify his apostleship. This study assumes that the Greek tradition Paul employs can be represented in Alfred Rhalfs, ed., *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979). For an analysis of the broader textual traditions available to Paul, see appropriate chapters in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), and Florina Wilk, "Isaiah in 1 and 2 Corinthians," in *Isaiah in the New Testament* (ed. M. J. J. Menken and Steven Moyise; London and New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 133-58.

[4] "Old Testament in Paul," *DPL*, 630.

[5] *Two Testaments, One Bible* (rev. ed.; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 20. Baker is concerned primarily with the theological connection between the Old and the New Testaments (though any one point of contact involves investigating, to some degree at least, the broader matrix Baker sets forth). According to Baker, interpreters should observe the Old Testament's openness to future revelation, and then move on to analyze how the New Testament's authors applied those texts, fulfilling them.

[6] Some commentators do not categorically address the quantity of quotations of the scriptures in 1-2 Corinthians. Gordon D. Fee argues that the number of distinctly Gentile features of 1 Corinthians disqualifies recent proposals that Paul was actually attempting to correct wisdom speculation in Hellenistic Judaism (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1987], 13-14). Yet, if 1 Corinthians is so Gentile-oriented, what would prompt Paul to cite the Hebrew Scriptures so regularly, and freely? Likewise, Murray J. Harris, in his summary of the theology of 2 Corinthians, references Paul's use of the scriptures just twice, under the heading "Salvation," where he cites the

historical, personal and pastoral motivations explain Paul's citations of the Old Testament.[7] Paul employs the scriptures not just because of their authority as God's word,[8] but also because of his faithfulness to God as an apostle of the new covenant—and his desire for the Corinthians to respond in kind. This thesis rests on three observations. In 1-2 Corinthians, Paul understands (1) the eschatological moment the scriptures foreshadowed to have arrived in Christ, addressing concerns of salvation history; (2) the scriptures to provide objective types and anti-types useful for illustrating his apostolic faithfulness,[9] addressing

---

apostle's use of Jeremiah 31 and Exodus 34 in 2 Corinthians 3 (*The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 117). Though Fee and Harris respectively provide lucid analysis of the individual citations of the Old Testament as they occur in 1 and 2 Corinthians, the quantity of Paul's use of the scriptures in 1-2 Corinthians deserves more concentrated attention.

[7] Silva identifies 107 quotations of the scriptures in Paul ("Old Testament in Paul," 631), and Steve Moyise (*Paul and Scripture: Studying the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 3]), identifies 104, noting that thirty-seven (one-third) are in 1-2 Corinthians.

[8] Christopher D. Stanley writes that in an illiterate culture, "a person who could read and quote from the authoritative Scriptures would have been greeted with considerable respect. Paul's facility in interpreting the holy Scriptures would have cast him in the role of a hierophant dispensing the sacred mysteries of God. His numinous pronouncements would have appeared to many as incontrovertible, since they were backed by the authority of the one true God. To people such as these, Paul's quotations from the Jewish Scriptures would have seemed the strongest of all his arguments, the trump card against all merely human argumentation" (*Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetorical Quotations in the Letters of Paul* [New York: T & T Clark International, 2004], 58). Peter Balla notes that "in all the cases when Paul quotes the OT, he does so in order to support what he is saying with an authoritative text…The OT has canonical authority for him, and he expects his readers to acknowledge that high authority" ("2 Corinthians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 753), a statement true of Paul's quotations of the scriptures in 1 Corinthians as well.

[9] Wilk concludes that "in every instance" Paul's use of Isaiah includes the broader literary context of the verse or phrase he writes into 1 and 2 Corinthians ("Isaiah in 1 and 2 Corinthians," 157). *Infra* it is noted that Paul demonstrates the same sensitivity when taking up texts from Jeremiah, Deuteronomy and the Psalms as well. I acknowledge that Paul's first readers in Corinth may not have been so

concerns about his own standing in Corinth; and (3) his response to God's revelation in the new covenant to be a model the Corinthians should follow,[10] addressing concerns for the church's response to God's revelation in Christ and the Spirit. Analyzing Paul's use of the scriptures in four select passages each of 1-2 Corinthians will bear this out.[11]

1 Corinthians
Isaiah 29:14 (LXX) in 1 Corinthians 1:19

The citation from Isa 29:14, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will hide the understanding of the prudent" (ἀπολῶ τὴν σοφίαν τῶν σοφῶν καὶ τὴν σύνεσιν τῶν συνετῶν κρύψω), in 1 Cor 1:19, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will set aside the understanding of the experts" (ἀπολῶ τὴν σοφίαν τῶν σοφῶν καὶ τὴν σύνεσιν τῶν συνετῶν ἀθετήσω),[12] is at one level superfluous. In the

keen to the literary and historical contexts of the Old Testament texts he cites. Nonetheless, with Christopher D. Stanley, "Paul recognized and took seriously the limited biblical literacy of his audiences and framed his arguments in such a way that the illiterate members of his audience could have grasped his essential point without having to rely on others to explain to them how he was interpreting the Jewish Scriptures" ("Why the Audience Matters," in *As it is Written: Studying Paul's use of Scripture* [SBLSymS 50; ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Stanley; Atlanta: Scholars, 2008], 155).

[10] By turning to the old covenant scriptures, "he (Paul) acknowledged the high value of the OT (which was holy Scripture for the Corinthians as well as for himself,) and at the same time he points to the higher glory of the new covenant" (Balla, "2 Corinthians,"). Similarly, Harris writes, "against the backdrop of challenges to his apostolic qualifications, Paul then affirms his God-given commission to be an agent of this new covenant" (*Second Corinthians*, 275).

[11] While the present study is concerned with Paul's use of specific Old Testament texts to defend his faithfulness as an apostle, it is recognized that in several instances Paul's personal defense statements lack reference to the scriptures (1 Cor 3:1-11; 4:1-5, 14-20; 2 Cor 1:12-22; 3:1-18). This study thus seeks to identify Paul's rationale for employing the scriptures at certain points to defend his apostolic ministry—when quotation of them appears materially unnecessary to his argument.

[12] Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of LXX are from NETS, and English translations of NA28, the Greek New Testament text used throughout, are from CSB.

preceding paragraph, Paul already establishes his faithfulness as an apostle vis-à-vis the Corinthians' tendency to posture behind this leader or that one. In 1 Cor 1:13, Paul places himself, perhaps hypothetically, in the mix stating, "Is Christ divided? Was it Paul who was crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul's name?" Paul writes that Christ sent him to preach the gospel (1 Cor 1:17). Clever words were not the basis of his ministry (1 Cor 17); indeed, his detractors thought his message foolishness (1 Cor 1:18). Paul's string of rhetorical questions in 1 Cor 1:20, "Where is the philosopher, where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn't God made the world's wisdom foolish?" follow seamlessly from his statement in 1 Cor 1:18. Why then in 1 Cor 1:19 does Paul quote from the scriptures, if the surrounding context establishes his faithfulness as an apostle?

It may be that Paul sees in Isa 29:14 an objective means of grounding his message, and therefore his apostleship, in reference to the story of Israel.[13] Isaiah challenged Judah's self-sufficiency and willingness to ally themselves with pagan nations in order to thwart the rising Assyrian threat. The inhabitants of Judah thought themselves wise in their crafty plans, but Isaiah considered them foolish. Isaiah said that the LORD would confound the wisdom of the wise in Judah—those who thought it best to make a pact with Assyria, or Egypt, to preserve their national identity.[14] They should rather have cast themselves at the mercy of the LORD, Isaiah notes. Perhaps Paul saw in Isaiah's statement

---

[13] Richard B. Hays argues that Paul's Christological hermeneutic allows the apostle "to read Israel's Scripture as a mysterious prefiguration of the church, a story in which Christ's Gentile adherents can find their own story prewritten" (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 121).

[14] Lindsay Wilson suggests that 'True vs. False Wisdom' provides a frame for understanding the prophet's message, noting Isaiah's frequent contrasting of Yahweh's wisdom and the wisdom of those who considered themselves wise ("Wisdom in Isaiah," in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches* [ed. David G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009], 156). Wilson writes, "Isaiah 29:14 is sometimes used to argue that Isaiah could not be sympathetic to wisdom, as it predicts the end to the wisdom and discernment of the sages. However, this passage is entirely consistent with a high view of wisdom…The rebuke in 29:13-14 is not of all wisdom or all cultic worship; it is a critique of both cult and wisdom gone wrong" (ibid., 157).

a warning also for the Corinthians—who themselves were guilty of seeking significance and security in worldly clout rather than the foolish message of the cross. Citing Isa 29:14 in 1 Cor 1:19, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will set aside the understanding of the experts," Paul heralds Isaiah's message to the Corinthians, defending his faithfulness as an apostle via the objective message of the authoritative scriptures.[15]

Isaiah 52:15 (LXX) and 64:3 (LXX) in 1 Corinthians 2:9

In 1 Cor 2:1-5, Paul describes his apostolic commission, stating that he came to the Corinthians with no other message save Christ crucified. This is the message of the mature, Paul argues, those who have eschatological eyes of devotion to God (1 Cor 2:6-8). In 1 Cor 2:9, Paul advances his faithfulness as an apostle through what may be a conflation of Isa 52:15 (LXX) and 64:3 (LXX).[16]

---

[15] Wilk observes, "the quotation is significant for Paul in that it lends a scriptural basis to his argument: the foolish nature of the Gospel as preached by Paul (1:18), and hence his dispensing with eloquent wisdom and rhetorical skill (1:17), are in accordance with the scriptures" ("Isaiah in 1 and 2 Corinthians," 137). Stanley notes that here Paul grounds his argument in a scripture that has God for its speaker and comments, "for an audience that reveres the God of Israel and his Scriptures, the effect of such a quotation could be profound" (*Arguing with Scripture,* 83).

[16] Fee suggests that "because no exact parallel is to be found in the OT, and because the citation appears to be complete in its present form, several alternative suggestions have been proposed," and concludes that "most likely the 'citation' is an amalgamation of OT texts that had already been joined and reflected on in apocalyptic Judaism, which Paul knew either directly or indirectly" (*First Corinthians*, 108-09). Anthony C. Thiselton notes that Paul may have fused LXX texts of Isa 64:33 and 65:16, but could have had several extrabiblical texts in view (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner; NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 250-52). Hays writes that a number of texts from the latter portions of Isaiah likely came to Paul's mind when writing 1 Corinthians 2 and concludes, "an allusion to this section of Isaiah would fit the general context in 1 Corinthians 2 very well indeed" (*First Corinthians* [Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1997], 44). In *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture in 1 Corinthians* (Studies in Biblical Literature 15; [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005], 54-55), John P. Heil suggests that

In Isa 52:15, the prophet foretold the reaction the rulers of the earth would have on the day when God revealed His servant, "Thus shall many nations wonder at him; and kings shall keep their mouths shut: for they to whom no report was brought concerning him, shall see; and they who have not heard, shall consider" (οὕτως θαυμάσονται ἔθνη πολλὰ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ καὶ συνέξουσιν βασιλεῖς τὸ στόμα αὐτῶν ὅτι οἷς οὐκ ἀνηγγέλη περὶ αὐτοῦ ὄψονται καὶ οἳ οὐκ ἀκηκόασιν συνήσουσιν).[17] The kings, rulers and power-brokers opposing Israel would be surprised at what God would do to vindicate His people, their eyes and ears and minds would not believe it, the prophet writes.

Isaiah 64:3 (LXX; 64:4 [NETS]) is a part of Isaiah's prayer for the restoration and renewal of Israel. The prophet dramatically proclaimed, "From of old we have not heard, neither have our eyes seen a God beside thee, and thy works which thou wilt perform to them that wait for mercy" (ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἠκούσαμεν οὐδὲ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἡμῶν εἶδον θεὸν πλὴν σοῦ καὶ τὰ ἔργα σου ἃ ποιήσεις τοῖς ὑπομένουσιν ἔλεον).[18] according to Isaiah, only the LORD of Israel is known as a God who rescues His people when they go astray; their own eyes and ears and minds have seen the failure of other gods.

Isa 52:15 be included in the discussion of texts Paul has in view in 1 Cor 2:9, but concludes that here Paul "has brought together various formulations and concepts found in a number of different places in the OT" (ibid., 66).

[17] John N. Oswalt notes that in Isa 52:15, the rulers of the nations are said to be surprised at God's intervention on behalf of Israel, left speechless at the greatness of what God had done for His people (*The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans], 380). Heil writes that Paul sees in Christ's crucifixion the fulfillment of Isaiah's suffering servant (*Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 54). These observations underscore Paul's apostolic message: Christ's weakness on the cross, ironically, demonstrates God's power—the very power compelling Paul to be faithful to his apostolic charge.

[18] Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner note that, "Isaiah 64:4 concerns the uniqueness of God's plan of salvation, which remains hidden" ("1 Corinthians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 701). In the context of the quotation of Isa 64:3 (LXX) in 1 Corinthians 2, Paul argues that his apostolic ministry operates in accord with the revelatory work of the Spirit. Paul portrays himself as one faithfully co-operating with the Spirit in revealing what had been hidden, namely, God's plan of salvation through the foolish message of Christ crucified.

It may be that in 1 Cor 2:9, "What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and what has never come into a man's heart, is what God has prepared for those who love Him" (ἃ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν καὶ οὖς οὐκ ἤκουσεν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη, ἃ ἡτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν), Paul has both prophetic contexts in view. Paul employs specifically the (1) sensory-perception, and (2) temporal imagery of phrases in Isa 52:15 (LXX) and 64:3 (LXX) to express God's eschatological revelation of Christ and the Spirit. In the context of Isa 52:15, the prophet noted that the rulers of Israel's enemies would experience the eye-opening, enlightening intervention of God's servant on behalf of His people. Paul takes up this context in 1 Cor 2:6-8 noting that "the rulers of this age" (1 Cor 2:8)—both those responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus and the influential in Corinth—did not know the gospel of Christ, the message Paul faithfully proclaims by the Spirit. Likewise, Paul proposes 1 Cor 2:9b that "what God has prepared to show to those who love Him" (ἃ ἡτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν)—viz. eschatological salvation revealed via the cross and the Spirit—interprets the concluding, future-oriented phrase of Isa 64:4 (NETS; 64:3 (LXX), "thy works which thou wilt perform to them that wait for mercy" (τὰ ἔργα σου ἃ ποιήσεις τοῖς ὑπομένουσιν ἔλεον). Why did Paul refrain from lofty rhetorical practices adored in Corinth? He had no need of them. *Elocutio* could add little to God's revelation in Christ and the Spirit—the new covenant message to which Paul faithfully labored.

In a culture concerned with knowledge and power, Paul notes that his persuasive skills were simply at the beck-and-call of the God's new covenant revelation in Christ and the Spirit. Paul challenges the Corinthians to evaluate his apostleship accordingly, recognizing that he was only able to speak "spiritual things to spiritual people" (1 Cor 2:13). The age of the Spirit, Paul notes in 2 Corinthians 3, follows and exceeds the ministry of the old covenant. By employing the scriptures to defend his faithfulness as an apostle, Paul both reinforces the fulfillment of the old covenant in Christ, and establishes a model for how the Corinthians should respond to God's revelation in the new covenant.

Deuteronomy 25:4 (LXX) in 1 Corinthians 9:9

Paul begins his argument in 1 Corinthians 9 by listing the Corinthians themselves as Exhibit A of his apostolic faithfulness (vv. 1-

2).[19] In 1 Cor 9:3-7, he contends that as a legitimate apostle he has full rights of apostleship, including compensation of food and drink, and freedom to enjoy family life. Paul then raises the stakes of his argument. He notes that not only human logic but also Holy Scripture bears witness to the fact that a faithful worker expects to be remunerated from the profits of his labor. Paul cites Deut 25:4, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn" (οὐ φιμώσεις βοῦν ἀλοῶντα),[20] as the specific scriptural warrant he has in view, writing in 1 Cor 9:9, "do not muzzle and ox while it treads out the grain" (οὐ κημώσεις βοῦν ἀλοῶντα).

Deuteronomy 23-25 emphasizes that Israel's success and vitality in Canaan depended in large measure upon their commitment to national purity. Perhaps nowhere would this be more prominent than in establishing strict boundary markers for entering the LORD's assembly (Deut 23:1-8). Even common bodily functions needed to be dealt with in light of national purity (Deut 23:9-14). The pursuit of national purity unified all of Israelite life (Deut 23:15-25:19) and was to be demonstrated in just relations even to the degree that oxen were to be fed from the very grain they threshed (Deut 25:4).[21]

---

[19] Stanley observes that by the time the audience would have heard/read 1 Corinthians 9, "(they) would have already encountered several passages in which Paul bluntly asserts his authority over the church at Corinth (3:1-3, 4:18-21, 5:3-5)" (*Arguing with Scripture*, 84).

[20] Duane L. Christensen notes that, technically speaking, if oxen are not muzzled while threshing, they tend to be less productive because they often stop threshing in order to eat; the abundant supply of food distracts the animal from its duty (*Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, WBC 6B [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002], 602). Nonetheless, it is likely that Paul has the broader scope of work and nourishment in view: the oxen that did the threshing should partake (though perhaps later) of the produce of their labor. "Presumably the prohibition against muzzling the ox was in order that it could eat from time to time; the animal should not be grudged sustenance when it was working on behalf of man" (Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976, 313).

[21] Ciampa and Rosner suggest that since Deut 24:10-25:3 addresses care for the poor, with Deut 24:19-22 concerned specifically with care for sojourners, widows and orphans, the command to deal justly with an ox while it treads grain (Deut 25:4) has a higher level of contextual synthesis than might be recognized if it is viewed in isolation ("1 Corinthians," 719-21). Alternatively, Hays points out that Deuteronomy 24-25 emphasizes the theme of justice in human

The command of Deut 25:4 provides Paul a special case via which he might objectify his faithfulness as an apostle of the new covenant. In 1 Cor 9:9 Paul notes the validity of Moses' command, but presents himself as one free from applying its benefits to his own situation. Although as an apostle Paul was justified in receiving compensation from his work, he tells the Corinthians that he would not use this authority if it inhibited his faithfulness as an apostle (1 Cor 9:12). Although the law of Moses commanded that an animal must be fed from the produce of its labor, "if the ox refuses to eat even though faithful in treading the grain for his master, so be it," summarizes Paul's use of the scripture.

I suggest that at one level Paul's citation of Deut 25:4 in 1 Cor 9:9 is unessential to his argument. Not only on the logical grounds just noted, but also in light of the fact that the principle of Deut 25:4 (one who works should be compensated from their work, at a time proximate to their labor) is established already through a series of rhetorical questions written previously in 1 Cor 9:7, "Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who shepherds a flock and does not drink the milk from the flock?"[22] In 1 Cor 9:9, Paul thus goes out of his way to use the scriptures, employing Deut 25:4 as an objective standard by which the Corinthians might judge his faithfulness as an apostle. Among the Corinthians, Paul was faithful even to the degree that he was willing to relinquish apostolic rights. And all of this was for their good, Paul goes on to make clear in 1 Cor 9:12-27. Ultimately, the use of Deut 25:4 in 1 Cor 9:9 establishes Paul as a model for how the Corinthians should behave as a church.

Isaiah 22:13 (LXX) in 1 Corinthians 15:32

Isaiah's Woe Oracles in Isaiah 13-23 underscore God's jealousy for the trust of His people. The prophet presented God's yearnings for

---

relationships, and notes that the command to deal justly toward a work animal in Deut 25:4, "sits oddly in this context" (*First Corinthians*, 151). He suggests that Paul may have taken up the peculiar literary placement of the oxen command, seeing in the scripture something beyond (merely) a stipulation to care for work animals.

[22] "Paul bolsters his apostolic right to receive food to eat from his Corinthian audience with a triplet of gnomic maxims in the form of rhetorical questions, each expecting a negative answer" (Heil, *Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 138).

His people to repent and rely upon Him alone for deliverance. Like a disobedient child, Israel did just the opposite. Isaiah wrote, "on that day the Lord GOD of Hosts called for weeping, for wailing, for shaven heads, and for wearing of sackcloth. But look: joy and gladness, butchering of cattle, slaughtering of sheep, eating of meat, and drinking of wine—'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!'" (Isa 22:12-13).[23] In light of the judgment to come, God's people should have resisted such a worldly, natural, comfortable posture and turned to God for mercy and rescue.[24] Israel's celebration of the hear-and-now demonstrated obduracy of heart.

Paul labels a phrase of Isa 22:13, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" (φάγωμεν καὶ πίωμεν αὔριον γὰρ ἀποθνήσκομεν)[25] as

---

[23] Indeed, as Mariusz Rosik [In Christ All Will Be Made Alive (1 Cor 15:12-58): The Role of the Old Testament Quotations in the Pauline Argumentation for the Resurrection (European Studies in Theology, Philosophy and History of Religions 6; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013), 169] notes, "the phrase 'slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep' is double in nature: the first act indicates the intemperance of the people of Jerusalem. The mention of the other is ironic in its character. The customary diet did not contain much meat. The reason was simple. First off, the storing conditions were difficult, and secondly; the oxen were too valuable to easily decide on killing them. In the mention of killing sheep, the irony lies in the fact that in the face of the impending siege, the inhabitants of the capital should be aware that each dose of meat will be needed; meanwhile, they consume large quantities of food in a fun atmosphere." John D. W. Watts observes that the celebration was fueled not because of past success, hope of victory or purity of faith, but just the opposite. Feasting, revelry and drunkenness characterized a celebration "all the more precious because it was not likely to last" (Isaiah 1-33, WBC 24 [Nashville: Thomas Nelson], 286).

[24] Rosik comments that "(Isaiah's) call to repentance and trust in God remained unanswered. Instead, the people have turned to sort of an anti-answer" (*In Christ All Will Be Made Alive*, 169). Paul saw in Isaiah's portrayal of the hopelessness in Jerusalem a foil of his apostolic faithfulness, his robust new covenant ministry fueled by the resurrection of Jesus.

[25] Thiselton writes that in 1 Cor 15:32, "Paul now quotes words of despair about a life with nothing beyond the dissolution of personal existence as the end," but goes on to propose that here Paul may cite an Epicurean (or hyperbolic anti-Epicurean) statement (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1252). Wilk observes the possibility that Paul cited a Hellenistic slogan, but noting contextual links between Isa 22:11-14 and 1 Cor 15:29-34, concludes that Paul likely had in mind Isa 22:13 (LXX) in 1 Cor 15:32 ("Isaiah in 1 and 2 Corinthians," 145). Rosik notes that though the idea of feasting and revelry before certain death, which Paul

an objective antithesis of his apostolic faithfulness. Godless eating, drinking and comfort were inconsistent with his commission as a messenger of the new covenant—and the concomitant persecutions, sufferings and resurrection hope. In Paul's view, the resurrection of Jesus is to be understood as the eschatological reversal of the death of Adam, the ultimate display of God's deliverance (1 Cor 15:20-22; cf. Rom 5:12-21). Countering skepticism about the bodily resurrection of believers, Paul employs Isa 22:13 in 1 Cor 15:32 writing that if the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (φάγωμεν καὶ πίωμεν, αὔριον γὰρ ἀποθνήσκομεν).[26] Because of his personal confidence in the resurrection, Paul was enabled to live faithfully as an apostle—beyond the natural, comfort-seeking ways of those who would feast at the table while God's word of judgment knocked upon the door.

Ciampa and Rosner observe, consistent with the findings of the present study, that "in one sense, Paul's use of the OT here (Isa 22:13 in 1 Cor 15:32) is not critical, since the sentiment is widespread—note the words of the rich fool in Luke 12:19."[27] Paul's use of Isaiah 22:13 in 1 Cor 15:32 concludes the brief analysis of Paul's use of the scriptures to defend his apostleship in 1 Corinthians. Here, as with Isa 29:14 in 1 Cor 1:19, Isa 52:15 and 64:4 in 1 Cor 2:9; and Deut 25:4 in 1 Cor 9:9, Paul at times goes out of his way to issue the scriptures as an objective witness to his faithfulness as an apostle of the new covenant. His methodology both reinforces the eschatological fulfillment of the old in Christ (an historical purpose) and provides the Corinthians a model for responding to God's revelation to them (a pastoral motivation).

---

cites specifically from Isa 22:13, may have been a popular saying in Corinth (*In Christ All Will Be Made Alive*, 183), in light of the fact that "Paul's version perfectly agrees with the LXX, and the latter is also a very accurate translation from the Hebrew text (ibid., 155), Paul employs Isa 22:13 to counter Corinthian heresy via his apostolic ministry. Fee observes the same and comments, "this is a verbatim citation of Isa. 22:13, and is surely intended as the logical alternative to his own kind of 'daily dying.' If there is no resurrection, he has argued, such a 'death-facing' life is without gain" (*First Corinthians*, 772).

[26] For various views about Paul's understanding of a bodily resurrection, see the recent survey of positions in James Ware, "Paul's Understanding of the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:36-54," *JBL* 133.4 (2014), 809-35.

[27] "1 Corinthians," 746.

2 Corinthians
Psalm 115:1 (LXX) in 2 Corinthians 4:13

To a city enamored with power,[28] Paul makes clear in 2 Corinthians 2-4 that his apostolic ministry in the new covenant was not of himself. He writes, "now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us…We always carry the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body" (2 Cor 4:7, 10). For Paul, hope in the resurrection compels faithful apostolic speech, even when forced to confront errors in the church. He argues in 2 Cor 3:3-16 that since in the old covenant era Moses was afforded a measure of boldness in directing the moral compass of God's people, then he has no less as an apostle of Christ. Paul cites the giving of the law on Mount Sinai in Exodus 34 as precedence for a spiritual leader directing the ethical choices of those under his charge.[29] Ministering in the superior era of the Spirit, Paul presents himself as one having no less authority than Moses.

But because Paul suffered at seemingly every turn, his opponents in Corinth questioned his faithfulness as an apostle. "Would not God deliver more consistently one who was faithful in their charge?" they asked. To counter their indictment, Paul quotes from Ps 115:1 (LXX; 116:10 [NETS]) "I believed, wherefore I have spoken," (αλληλουια ἐπίστευσα διὸ ἐλάλησα) in 2 Cor 4:13, "As we have the same spirit of faith in accordance with what is written, 'I believed, therefore I spoke,' we also believe, and therefore speak," (Ἔχοντες δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πίστεως κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον· ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα, καὶ ἡμεῖς

[28] See Timothy B. Savage, 'Power through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians' (SNTSMS 86; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[29] A broad analysis of Paul's pejorative description of Moses' old covenant ministry in 2 Corinthians 3 remains outside the limitations of the present study, but certainly has points of relation with it. Balla suggests that some in the Corinthian church may have thought Moses a greater minister of God's will than Paul, the apostle of the new covenant inferior to Moses the leader of Israel in the old ("2 Corinthians," 754). For a fuller survey, see Lind L. Belleville, *Reflections of glory: Paul's Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3.1-18* (JSNTSup 52; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

πιστεύομεν, διὸ καὶ λαλοῦμεν).[30] Paul recognizes the psalmist as a companion of faithfulness, one whose ministry of bold speech established a precedent for the manner of his apostleship in the new covenant. Margaret Thrall, noting that Psalm 114 is a report of the psalmist's faith and plea to God for deliverance, suggests, "he (Paul) could have seen it also as a prefigurement of his own *proclamation* of the death and resurrection of Christ, more especially because this very proclamation was visually portrayed in his own experience of suffering and deliverance" (italics original).[31]

Stanley observes that though Paul's life situation reflects that of the psalmist expressed in the literary context of Ps 115:1 (LXX), the citation of the scripture phrase in 2 Cor 4:13, "does not serve as a 'proof' for a specific argument; in fact, its link to the preceding verses is so loose that the audience would likely have been puzzled by its appearance."[32] At one level, then, Paul did not need to quote the verse of scripture; though it provided a general reminder of salvation history established in the old covenant, Ps 115:1 (LXX) adds little materially to the logic of Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 4. The present study observes that in 1 Corinthians, Paul goes out of his way to quote from the scriptures. Why? I argue that Paul does so (1) to show the historical fulfillment that has arrived in the new covenant, (2) to provide objective categories for

[30] Psalm 113 LXX is Psalms 114-115 in most English translations. Psalms 114-15 LXX represent Psalm 116 MT and the same in most English translations. Moyise offers three possible scenarios that might account for Paul's use of Ps 115:1 (LXX), in light of the broader context of the entire Psalm and especially the LXX's divergence from the Hebrew text: "first, the background was important for Paul but it is not why he is quoting the text; second, the background was important for Paul and he hoped that the Corinthians would perceive it; third, the background was not important for Paul since he has not made it explicit for the Corinthians" (Moyise, *Paul and Scripture*, 107). With Wilk ("Isaiah in 1 and 2 Corinthians," 157) and Stanley ("Why the Audience Matters," 155) noted *supra*, though Paul's first readers may not have known the literary background of Ps 115:1 (LXX), I suggest that Paul does, and that that context influenced his citation of it in 2 Cor 4:13.

[31] Margaret Thrall, *II Corinthians I-VII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 341. Similarly, Harris suggests that, "if Paul knew the Greek text in this form (Psalms 114-15 LXX as Psalm 116 MT), the three words he quotes stand thematically at the head of the psalm" (*Second Corinthians*, 352).

[32] "Paul's 'Use' of Scripture," 147.

demonstrating his apostolic faithfulness in it, and (3) ultimately, to provide the Corinthians an example for Christian living. Paul's use of Ps 115:1 LXX in 2 Cor 4:13 follows the same pattern.

Isaiah 49:8 (LXX) in 2 Corinthians 6:2

Isaiah 49-55 is a poetic, hopeful expression of God's jealousy for His people (noted *supra* in the analysis of Isa 52:15 in 1 Cor 2:9). During the days of Isaiah's ministry, and after, God's people felt like a wife that had been released by her husband (Isa 54:6). While the LORD was legitimately angry with Israel and sent her into captivity in Babylon, the prophet announced that the LORD would come to redeem them "with great compassion" (Isa 54:7). Determining the identity of the servant of the LORD in Isaiah 49 proves to be a difficult task. Whoever the exact referent, the text describes Isaiah himself as one who endured difficulty because of his faithful labor (v. 4) but also enjoyed promise of the LORD's faithfulness to him (vv. 5-6).[33] In Isa 49:8, the prophet announced the LORD's response to his difficulty writing, "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I succored thee" (καιρῷ δεκτῷ ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι).

In the background of Paul's thought in 2 Cor 6:2 is the fact that Isaiah's faithfulness did not lead to a life of ease. Rather, during his

[33] Blenkinsopp, suggests that Isa 49:1-6, 50:4-9 and 52:13-5:12 provide a sketch of the prophetic office and read like a "prophetic martyr biography" (*Isaiah 40-55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 19A, [New York: Doubleday, 2002], 118). Blenkinsopp's profile of the prophetic office reads like a biography of Paul, underscoring why Paul would have turned to Isa 49:8 as a basis for defending his apostolic ministry. Blenkinsopp writes, "the prophet is predestined for a mission before birth (49:1), lives his early life under the providence of God (53:2a), is equipped for a mission involving prophetic speech and instruction away from the public eye (49:2; 50:4a), and receives divinely revealed knowledge and guidance (50:4b). The mission is directed first to Israel (49:5-6a; 50:4a) and then to foreign peoples (49:6b). The sense of inadequacy and discouragement in the face of opposition (49:4a) gives way to the assurance of ultimate vindication (49:4b; 50:7-9). Opposition escalates into open abuse (50:6; 53:3), leading eventually to a violent death (53:7-12) (ibid., 118-19)."

prophetic suffering, the LORD demonstrated His faithfulness to Isaiah.[34] Paul's citation of Isa 49:8 (LXX) in 2 Cor 6:2, "in an acceptable time, I heard you, and in the day of salvation, I helped you" (καιρῷ δεκτῷ ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι), thus coheres with the prophet's original life situation.[35] Wilk's comment that, "Paul has read Isa. 49:8 as a prophecy of his calling by God, understood as an act of mercy (2 Cor. 4:1) and grace (1 Cor. 3:10; 15:10 *et al.*) towards himself…Thus, Paul saw his own ministry as ambassador for Christ foretold in Isa. 49:4-8,"[36] captures the broader findings of the present study. Paul employs the scriptures of the old covenant to defend his apostleship, portraying his sufferings, like those of Isaiah, as marks of faithfulness. In so doing, Paul reinforces the historical fulfillment of old covenant in the new, and provides the Corinthians a model for 'taking up their own cross, as it were, following Paul's example of faithfulness even at personal expense.

Jeremiah 9:23 (LXX) in 2 Corinthians 10:17

Paul's firm demeanor toward the Corinthians placed him squarely in line with the prophet Jeremiah. Among other prophetic figures, Jeremiah especially challenged the false security of Judah. The

---

[34] Stanley writes that, "Paul's argument (if they accepted it) would have conditioned them to hear the voice of God not only in the text of Scripture, but also in the interpretive comments that surround it, since they were spoken by 'God's ambassador' (5:20)," (*Arguing with Scripture*, 104).

[35] Hays writes, "this passage (Isa 49:8 in 2 Cor 6:2) nicely illustrates the way in which Paul's apostolic self-understanding as Christ's ambassador (2 Cor 5.20) is woven together with an eschatological hermeneutic to produce startling new readings of Israel's Scripture…Paul understood himself as a Jew sent by the God of Israel to the world of Gentile 'outsiders' for the purpose of declaring to them the message of eschatological salvation promised in Israel's scriptures" ("The Conversion of the Imagination," 394). Moyise comments that Paul sees himself "in partnership with God, urging the Corinthians not to reject the ministry of reconciliation with which he is charged to preach" (*Paul and Scripture*, 95). Scott J. Hafemann labels Paul's use of Isa 49:8 in 2 Cor 6:2 "one of Paul's greatest assertions of his apostolic authority" ("Paul's Use of the Old Testament in 2 Corinthians," *Int* 52:3 [July, 1998], 252).

[36] "Isaiah in 1 and 2 Corinthians," 152.

people of Judah thought the temple a spiritual fortress, surety that they could embrace pagan idolatry without serious threat of retribution from the LORD. Jeremiah interrogated the people of Judah with the word of the LORD saying: "do you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and follow other gods that you have not known? Then do you come and stand before Me in this house called by My name and insist: 'We are safe?'" (Jer 7:9-10). Jeremiah provided the LORD's response to his rhetorical question: "I am about to refine them and test them, for what else can I do because of my dear people? Their tongues are deadly arrows—they speak deception. With his mouth a man speaks peaceably with his friend, but inwardly he sets up an ambush. Should I not punish them for these things?" (Jer 9:7-8). In Jeremiah's view of the situation, Judah committed idolatry and exalted in falsehood because they had forsaken the knowledge of God. In Jer 9:23 (LXX; 9:24 [NETS]) the prophet announced the jealousy of the LORD saying, "but let him that boasts boast in this, the understanding and knowing that I am the Lord that exercise mercy, and judgment, and righteousness, upon the earth; for in these things is my pleasure, saith the Lord," ἀλλ᾽ ἢ ἐν τούτῳ καυχάσθω ὁ καυχώμενος συνίειν καὶ γινώσκειν ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι κύριος ποιῶν ἔλεος καὶ κρίμα καὶ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὅτι ἐν τούτοις τὸ θέλημά μου λέγει κύριος).[37]

In 2 Cor 10:1-18, Paul presents his apostolic authority as the basis for disarming spiritual adversaries with the gospel of Christ. Some in Corinth had charged Paul of being a coward in person, but mighty when taking up his pen. Since he was planning to visit soon, he said, "I beg you that when I am present I will not need to be bold with the confidence by which I plan to challenge certain people who think we are walking in a fleshly way" (2 Cor 10:2). Paul's demeanor among the Corinthians would be determined by their behavior, and the apostle hoped that in fact their every thought would be brought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5). In any case, to the one accusing Paul of

[37] In light of Jer 9:25-26, it may be that Judah boasted in circumcision, though uncircumcised in heart (John Bright, *Jeremiah,* AB 21 [Garden City: Doubleday, 1965], 78-80). James A. Thompson notes similarly that, "such a ritual performance could not deliver them (the people of Judah) from a divine visitation upon them for their evil deeds" (*The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 322).

doing ministry in a fleshly manner, he writes: "such a person should consider this: what we are in the words of our letters when absent, we will be in actions when present" (2 Cor 10:11). Paul was concerned that the Corinthians were yet too consumed with their place in the world, not their place in Christ. This caused them to overlook the contours of his apostolic faithfulness.[38]

As he had in 1 Cor 1:31, in 2 Cor 10:17 Paul again calls the Corinthians' attention to Jer 9:23, writing "the one who boasts must boast in the Lord" (Ὁ δὲ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω). Harris notes the differing contexts in which Paul quotes the warning from Jeremiah in 1 and 2 Corinthians, observing that the former counters boasting in human wisdom, while in 2 Cor 10:17, "its (the quotation of Jer 9:23 [LXX]) function is to counteract prideful boasting about someone else's successful ministry."[39] Paul would not boast in the ministry of another; he had no need for such artificial exaltation. In 2 Cor 10:12-16, Paul calls the Corinthians themselves and the Lord as witnesses of his faithfulness as an apostle, and employs Jer 9:23 in 2 Cor 10:17 to objectify his self-defense in the scriptures.

Deuteronomy 19:15 (LXX) in 2 Corinthians 13:1

In the final section of 2 Corinthians, Paul yet turns to the scriptures to defend his faithfulness as an apostle. Setting forth his plan to visit the Corinthians, he writes that upon his arrival he hopes to see them living in submission to Christ, and would ready to confront any rebellious among them (2 Cor 12:14-13:10). Paul's apostolic demeanor would not be lenient but firm—fully identifying with Christ—when he arrived to see if the Corinthians had met the demands that accord the

[38] David A. Garland notes that Paul emphasizes God's faithfulness writing, "Paul boasts in the Lord, whose commendation is the only one that counts. This boast in the Lord has nothing to do with Paul's own pedigree or prowess. It has to do with what the Lord has accomplished through him. Artificial comparisons with others based on human criteria hardly compare with the work that Christ has done in and through him" (*2 Corinthians*, NAC 29 [Nashville: Broadman & Holman], 457). Nonetheless, in 2 Cor 10:12-18 cites his faithfulness to the Lord in the area of ministry the Lord assigned to him (v. 13) and the hope of future labor (v. 16) as defense of his apostleship.

[39] Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 725.

gospel. Paul's process for evaluating the Corinthians would not deviate from the precedent of judicial fairness established in Deuteronomy. Thus in 2 Cor 13:1, Paul writes that "On the testimony of two or three witnesses every word will be confirmed" (ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ τριῶν σταθήσεται πᾶν ῥῆμα), citing Deut 19:15, "by the mouth of two witnesses, or by the mouth of three witness shall every word be established" (ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ ἐπὶ στόματος τριῶν μαρτύρων σταθήσεται πᾶν ῥῆμα).[40]

In Deuteronomy 16-20, Moses emphasized that Israel was to be governed by justice.[41] Moses told the people that judges were appointed so that Israel would "pursue justice and justice alone," live and possess the land the LORD was giving them (Deut 16:20). The judges' work included both sentencing any prone to idolatry (Deut 16:21-17:7) and executing those who would rebel against a verdict (Deut 17:8-13). Under the rule of the judiciary, Moses forbade the people from taking vengeance arbitrarily—a principle underlying the establishment of cities of refuge (Deut 19:1-15) and various courtroom procedures (Deut 19:15-21).

While Paul's ultimate concern was not defending himself against the charges of the Corinthians—although that he did (2 Cor 2:14-7:1)—but building them up (2 Cor 12:19), he nonetheless first needed to tear down their misconceptions about his apostleship. As he prepared for his third visit, he wrote, "I fear that perhaps when I come I will not find you to be what I want, and I may not be found by you to be what you want" (2 Cor 12:20). Paul's language casts his apostolic ministry in the guise of a trial lawyer, one ready to prosecute any who had not repented of their "uncleanness, sexual immorality, and promiscuity" (2 Cor 12:21). Paul's citation of scripture objectifies his judicial apostolic endeavors within the confines of redemptive history.[42] Paul thus quotes Moses' command of

---

[40] Harris comments that while Paul's citation is essentially the same as Deut 19:15 LXX, it bears close resemblance to Jesus' statement in Matt 18:16b, ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων ἢ τριῶν σταθῇ πᾶν ῥῆμα (*Second Corinthians*, 906-07).

[41] J. G. McConville's observation that Deuteronomy presents a theology of mercy "for a people it knows to be already rebellious" ("Deuteronomy, Book of" in *DOTP*, 191), offers a rationale for Paul's citation of Deut 19:15 in writing to the church at Corinth.

[42] "Paul is applying the Deuteronomistic legal principle in a way that was typical of contemporary Judaism—to forewarn those suspected of an offense that they were liable to punishment. Paul is saying in effect, 'Sufficient and statutory

Deut 19:15 in order to substantiate via the scriptures his faithfulness in holding the Corinthians accountable for living in accord with the apostolic message he had proclaimed to them, and modeled for them.

Conclusion

Moisés Silva writes that, "Paul must have seen his own ministry as integrally related to the work of the OT prophets, and in some sense even as its culmination."[43] Analyzing Paul's use of the scriptures in Romans 9-11, Ross J. Wagner suggests that Paul saw himself in concert with especially Isaiah, writing "faced with new opportunities for the Gentile mission and wrestling with the apparent inertia of the mission to Israel, Paul turns to scripture—notably Isaiah—in an attempt to make sense of this paradoxical situation."[44] The present study suggests that Paul did the same in response to his paradoxical relationship with the Corinthians. To address their lack of adherence to the message he preached among them, Paul turns to the scriptures, finding fellowship with accounts of faithful men and beasts not only in the prophecy of Isaiah, but texts in Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and the Psalms as well. The fact that Paul at times goes out of his way to quote the scriptures when defending his apostolic faithfulness against Corinthian' skepticism suggests that Paul views himself as an authoritative spokesman of God's work in history, faithful as a prophetic apostle of the new covenant.[45]

---

warning has been given to you Corinthians; punitive action is imminent'" (Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 908).

[43] "Galatians" in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the OT* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 786-87.

[44] Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul 'in Concert' in the Letter to the Romans (NovTSup 101: Leiden: Brill, 2002) 4.

[45] "Willk concludes that "the Isaianic references in his first and second letters to the Corinthians form an interpretative network that centers on Isaiah's prophecy of Christ but is based on the prophecy of Paul's calling" ("Isaiah in 1 and 2 Corinthians," 158). Balla writes, "from Paul's perspective, the OT law and the old covenant in Moses, their minister, were a prophetic foreshadowing of the new covenant and of Paul, a minister of the new covenant" ("2 Corinthians," 760). Moyise "it would appear that Paul sees his own vocation as similar to the prophet of old, and perhaps also the servant of God in Isaiah 49" (96)

Paul would thus be free to cite the scriptures for a variety of reasons. I suggest that in 1-2 Corinthians Paul has historical, personal and pastoral concerns—and the personal form a bridge between the other two. Citing scripture provides Paul an objective basis for defending his faithfulness to God as an apostle of the new covenant. And in so doing, he assists the Corinthians in grasping (1) their eschatological situation, and (2) the manner in which they should respond to God's revelation in the new covenant. Because Paul had been faithful to his commission as an apostle of God's revelation in the new covenant, to speak of himself was to also reinforce God's work in redemption history and set a pattern of devotion to God that he hoped the Corinthians would follow. It is not an overstatement that if the Corinthians reject Paul's apostleship, they reject God. The findings of this study therefore rest comfortably in that happy tension of Biblical intertextuality.

First, Paul presents the eschatological, prophetic character of the Old Testament as having been fulfilled in Christ. Hays argues that Paul employs the scriptures to synthesize the apocalyptic eschatological moment of the church within the broader story of Israel, concluding that "if God was authoring the sacred story, then all the story's narrative patters must foreshadow the experience of the community that has now encountered the apocalypse of God's grace."[46] As an apostle of the new covenant, Paul has a unique perspective on God's eschatological work; in Christ the ends of the ages had come upon the Corinthians (1 Cor 10:11) and upon him. If the Corinthians were to enjoy spiritual renewal and hope, they would have to square their beliefs and practices exclusively with the new covenant he preached to them.

Second, to a church needing an example of faithful response to God, Paul's apostleship in the new covenant provides just such a model.[47]

---

[46] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 105. Moyise writes similarly, "not only does Paul see the prophets as predicting such things as the inclusion of the Gentiles, Israel's unbelief and future salvation, he also believes that they speak to particular issues in the life of the Church…Paul's interpretation is driven by the belief that God's plan to redeem humanity is being realized in the church, a community of both Jews and Gentiles. It is his belief that God's *telos* is being realized here and now that characterizes his scriptural interpretations" (*Paul and Scripture*, 96).

[47] Stanley writes that, "The decision to include a quotation from the Jewish Scriptures seems to have been motivated in every case by the rhetorical needs of the developing argument" (*Arguing with Scripture,* 78).

Moyise observes that in the prophets specifically, Paul finds texts of scripture which help him to illustrate "the pattern of life God expects of the Christian community," and continues, "this (Paul's use of the scriptures for hortatory purposes) is most clearly seen in the Corinthian letters, where the focus is rather more on practical living than the intricate doctrinal debates of Romans and Galatians."[48] References of hard-working oxen and quotations from the Prophets and the Psalms, provide Paul objective types and anti-types via which he demonstrates for the Corinthians his apostolic faithfulness in the new covenant, bidding the Corinthians to join him at the threshing floor.

[48] *Paul and Scripture*, 86. Hetty Lalleman notes that in both 2 Corinthians and Galatians, Paul defends his ministry and casts himself as one in line with Jeremiah. ("Paul's Self-Understanding in the Light of Jeremiah: A Case Study into the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," in *A God of Faithfulness: Essays in Honour of J. Gordon McConville on His 60th Birthday* [Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 538; London: T & T Clark, 2001], 111).

***Born This Way? Homosexuality, Science, and the Scriptures.* By J. Alan Branch. Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2016. 224 pp. $14.25, Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1941337509.**

Over the past couple of decades, no facet of American society has experienced more upheaval than issues related to human sexuality. What was inconceivable less than a generation ago is now nearly complete in its social acceptance—the redefinition of marriage, gender and sexuality. For Christians, this is quintessentially calling good evil and evil good.

The drive to detach gender, sexuality and marriage from biblical and traditional categories of moral evaluation has been central to this transformation. For homosexual activists, asserting that one is "born gay" has been vital to their argument and has helped to galvanize broader public acceptance for the homosexual lifestyle and same-sex marriage. But are people "born gay?"

For most Christians, that question is a troubling. Confusion abounds, and the mounting cultural-pressure to accept the gay lifestyle makes the topic daunting. That is precisely why I am so thankful for Alan Branch's new book, *Born this Way?* Branch serves as professor of Christian Ethics at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and as a research fellow in Christian Ethics for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In *Born this Way?* Branch engages the most recent scientific research, deconstructs the overreaches of the born-this-way movement, engages these matters from a robustly biblical worldview, and applies all of it in a pastorally-sensitive way.

First, Branch charts the history of the homosexual movement. These chapters provide rich background about how the homosexual rights movement, and the general drive for sexual liberation, took shape. For those unfamiliar with the homosexual movement, the first three chapters are worth the price of the book.

Branch introduces infamous figures like Sigmund Freud, Alfred Kinsey, and the specious aspects of their research. Additionally, Branch helpfully engages brain plasticity, and how new neuron paths form in the brain—in part due to human stimuli, like pornography. Additionally, he documents the successful political effort within the American Psychiatric Association to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder.

In dealing specifically with the possibility of a "gay gene," Branch argues:

> What if some future study proves incontrovertibly that a specific gene or cluster of genes acts in such a way that every person with these markers is born with a homosexual orientation? Does this mean that we must then surrender Scripture teaching concerning the sinful nature of homosexual acts? No, we should not. One of the major flaws in born-this-way arguments is that advocates seem to want to affirm the basic idea of Genesis 1:26-28 (humans are made in the image of God), while rejecting the equally important fact of Genesis 3 (all humans have been negatively affected by a historic, space-time Fall). As a result, every human being is born with a natural tendency to rebel against God and sin. It is not inconsistent with Christian anthropology to suggest the effects of sin reach even to the level of how our genetic code influences the way we respond to certain stimuli and our desires be distorted (107).

In *Born this Way?* Branch is an honest broker, and throughout the book, he is appropriately nuanced. He engages the topic biblically, scientifically, sociologically, and pastorally. Branch points out the spuriousness of born-this-way argumentation, but also deals honestly with the far-from-uniform results of reparative therapy and other ex-gay initiatives. Branch writes:

> We must face the current data with honesty, but also with discernment. Movement on a continuum of orientation change is possible for some, but is not as easy or as frequent as many of us as evangelicals would wish....In this light, pastors and therapists should be cautious in assertions made to people struggling with same-sex attraction (132).

Branch also engages the nomenclature itself, counseling,

> Christians do not hyphenate their identity: their identity is found in Christ alone....Our primary identity is not found in our sexuality; our primary identity is found in our redemption and

> relationship with Jesus Christ. When a person insists on calling himself a gay-Christian, he has made an idol of his sexual desires (148-149).

In summary, the presupposition of homosexual activists is that if a genetic causation for homosexuality is found, then the case is closed against biblical standards of sexuality, as well as the possibility of change. Many Christians buy this argument and categorically refute any scientific linkage to causation—or even correlation. On the other hand, they live in fear that if a linkage is found, then we will have no basis to label unbiblical sexual activity as sin. Genetic causation—or even correlation—appears to be the coup de grace.

Branch proves that the evidence for genetic causation of homosexuality is far from settled. And, in either case, Christians should not fear where scientific research might lead us. God's Word, biblical theology, and the gospel of Jesus Christ give us sufficient ground to stand on—to articulate the Christian worldview, to offer hope to those mired in sexual sin, and to offer a clear and certain word to God's goodness in marriage and human sexuality.

Jason K. Allen
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***1-3 John: Fellowship in God's Family*. By David L. Allen. (Preaching the Word commentary series), edited by R. Kent Hughes. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 334 pp. Hardback, $32.99. ISBN-13: 978-1433502859.**

The Preaching the Word series is a commentary specifically designed for expository preachers. This volume is written by one of the strongest advocates and practitioners of expository preaching, Dr. David Allen, Dean of the School of Theology and Director of the Southwestern Center for Expository Preaching. The series presupposes the inerrancy of Scripture, and that preaching is best done with paragraph by paragraph exposition of Scripture. Allen describes this work as a "sermontary," in

that it has some sermonic elements like exposition, application, and illustration, but also affords greater in-depth exposition more typical of a commentary.

1-3 John is a commentary that focuses on the meaning and proper interpretation of the text. It does not, however, lose the forest for the trees by pursuing arcane issues which make no real difference for the expositor, as do some overly technical commentaries. Although space in this review does not permit going into detail about interpretations of individual texts, the commentary consistently amplifies the grammatical clues and word meanings that illumine and clarify the proper interpretation of the text. Allen also provides rich illustrative material and application which are helpful in sermon preparation.

Some of the richest in-depth exposition may be easily overlooked because it is hidden in endnotes at the end of the book. There are over 450 endnotes, most of them with meaty content, single spaced in 45 endnote pages. Some of these single-spaced notes are the equivalent of two or more pages of regular text. These endnotes go into greater detail pursuing various theological, grammatical, and hermeneutical issues, and also provide an outstanding bibliographical resource. Since these careful expositional notes are not placed as footnotes on the same page as the material being referenced, they are easily missed by the casual reader. It is rather inconvenient and cumbersome for the scholarly reader to literally flip back and forth 450 times as one is attempting to read the book. However, for the more devotional reader, the placement of this more scholarly content in the endnotes allows the text to be uncluttered by these more technical issues. Happily, the book does have excellent indexes of Scripture references, topics, and sermon illustrations.

This commentary is a remarkably helpful resource for expositional preachers or Bible study teachers. In fact, it would also be excellent as a Bible study for a small group, affording much meatier content than many Bible study materials. For this reason, the book is highly recommended.

Steve W. Lemke
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

***One Nation Under God: A Christian Hope For American Politics*. By Bruce Ashford and Chris Pappalardo. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. 160 pp. Hardcover, $14.99. ISBN: 978-1-4336-9069-3.**

The Supreme Court's 2015 *Obergefell* v. *Hodges* decision mandating the acceptance of same-sex marriage in all fifty states is seen by many as the end of the so-called "culture war," with the end being a victory for the secular children of the sexual revolution. Many younger evangelicals are now wondering how they should interact in a political process which seems openly hostile to their convictions. In *One Nation Under God: Christian Hope For American Politics*, Bruce Ashford of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Chris Pappalardo of The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham area offer a helpful paradigm of engagement. Their overall presentation rightly calls for a helpful blend of doctrinal and ethical conviction, cultural awareness, and civility in engagement.

The authors strongly emphasize the compelling truth of the Biblical narrative as the starting point for Christian political engagement. Focusing on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they emphasize that our worldview is fundamentally at odds with the regnant secularism of American public discourse and say, "The gospel story is deeply at odds with modern political narratives because each looks to a different place for history's true meaning. Christians look to the event of the resurrection while modern thinkers look to scientific and democratic strategies and methods" (32). The authors leverage the resurrection of Christ into a helpful critique of John Rawl's "veil of ignorance," insisting the Lordship of Christ "precludes us from abandoning our religious commitments just because we are acting publicly" (49). Indeed, Ashford and Pappalardo recognize that secularists would like to exterminate Christianity, but if that is not possible, then to shut Christians in a ghetto of "private faith" with no public dimension. This "ghettoization" of the church seems to be reflected in the *Obergefell* decision where Justice Kennedy discusses freedom of worship while remaining ominously silent about the free exercise of religion.

Ashford and Pappalardo urge Christians to engage non-Christians at both a personal and private level, developing a keen sense

of awareness regarding the culture's beliefs. In particular, the authors suggest Augustine's *The City of God* as a helpful example of successfully engaging a culture unhappy with Christians. They point out that Augustine was intimately aware of the pagan narrative regarding the Roman Empire, and it was his familiarity with their arguments which enabled him to develop a robust answer to diatribes against Christianity.

One Nation Under God also urges Christians to maintain a firm and courteous civility in public dialogue. The authors seem somewhat displeased with a great deal of the "culture war" language and the militant stance of the previous generation of culture warrior fundamentalists. They state, "If we aim to win a culture war, we will likely only be disappointed and disillusioned" (23). The authors ask for Christians to engage in public politeness. Expressing frustration with the charged climate of contemporary politics, they say, "But we find this incivility distasteful and insist that it is possible . . . for our public lives to be marked by both conviction and civility" (58). In the latter half of the book, Ashford and Pappalardo argue for positions on the sanctity of life, sexuality, marriage, racial reconciliation, immigration, and war and peace which are quite consistent with stances held by previous generations of culture warriors, but do so with a strong eye towards civility and graciousness in presentation.

The authors urge Christians to focus on the fulfillment of God's kingdom which will be consummated at Christ's return, and rightly so. Our ultimate hope is certainly not in politics, but in the imminent return of Jesus Christ. But in the authors' discussions of eschatology, it would have been helpful to see them interact with the concept of the Antichrist. For many Evangelicals, and Southern Baptists in particular, it is the eschatological concept of the Antichrist—the Beast of Revelation 13 and the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2—which forms the way they view much involvement with politics. The Bible's vision of a coming tyrannical ruler bent on the destruction of God's people infuses many Southern Baptists with a fundamental distrust of big government. It would be fascinating to see how Ashford and Pappalardo think through this Biblical theme as part of their larger analysis.

I confess that I am not afraid of using "culture war" language regarding events over the last fifty years in American public discourse and politics. It is from this perspective that I find this book most interesting. Specifically, Ashford and Pappalardo often cite Richard

Mouw, former president of Fuller Seminary, as a source for their analysis and a model for engagement and I find most all of their references to Mouw helpful. But what is missing is reference to people of an earlier generation that Southern Baptists found informative for cultural engagement—Jerry Falwell, D. James Kennedy, James Dobson, and Adrian Rogers. I am not trying to give a blanket endorsement for every stance advocated by these men. But in response to the sexual revolution and legalized abortion, they crafted a strategy in the late 1970s in attempt reign in a tyrannical Supreme Court: Elect a conservative President who will appoint conservative Supreme Court justices. If Robert Bork had been approved by the Senate in 1987, *Roe* would most certainly have been overturned. As it is, we instead have Justice Kennedy, the swing vote in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* and the author of *Obergefell.* We must certainly acknowledge that the culture warrior fundamentalists of that era were aware of what was at stake. Perhaps *One Nation Under God* could have included a brief section analyzing what the previous generation got right as well as areas where they could have improved.

Ashford and Pappalardo provide a helpful book for political engagement in a progressively post-Christian America. *One Nation Under God* is a good first-read for younger Evangelicals and Baptists with an interest in political engagement.

J. Alan Branch
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, 2nd ed. Edited by John Mark Terry. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015, 583 pp. $54.99, paperback, ISBN: 978-1-4336-8151-4.**

Seventeen years after the first edition appeared in 1998, John Mark Terry has completed a thorough revision of *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*. Designed as a textbook on missions primarily for graduate schools and

seminaries, *Missiology* thoroughly and expertly covers the major doctrines and practices of this academic discipline. John Mark Terry is well qualified to edit this work, as he ministered as a missionary in the Philippines, achieving emeritus status with the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention. Terry also served as the Professor of Missions at the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and currently is the Professor of Missions at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Cordova, Tennessee.

Fifty percent of the content of *Missiology* embraces new material. Some of the article titles from the older edition are repeated but different authors were solicited to rewrite the chapters. Some of the chapters are repeated *verbatim* from the first edition. A number of the new chapters cover completely different topics. Both editions feature forty-two chapters but the second edition organizes them in a more readable way. The new edition divides the book into five sections. These include (1) Introduction to missions (2) The Biblical basis of missions (3) The theology of missions (4) The history of missions and (5) Applied Missiology. The first four sections together comprise only fifteen chapters. The last section is by far the largest, numbering twenty-seven chapters, a full sixty-five percent of the book. In my opinion, the last section on Applied Missiology could have been further subdivided under headings, such as culture, contextualization, world religions and strategies, to name just a few. Nonetheless, the new divisions represent an improvement over the first edition, which included no separations between chapters at all.

Missiology boasts thirty-nine different contributors, mostly from the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Such homogeneity represents both a strength and weakness. The denominational background of the contributors insures the doctrinal integrity and uniformity of the book. Furthermore, a multiplicity of authors allows for a more detailed examination of specialized subjects. For instance, there are chapters on women in mission and the missionary family. On the other hand, a multitude of authors often leads to some repetition and *Missiology* is no exception. Several topics are treated more than once in different chapters. Also, a book with forty-two chapters by almost as many authors on almost every conceivable missions subject lacks a clear focus. This disadvantage is more than offset, however, by the thoroughness of the text as it reaches back into the many tributaries of missions thought.

Missiology unveils entirely new chapters on the subjects of Business as Mission and Urban Missions, important new emphases in missions strategy. IMB President David Platt has recently announced renewed initiatives on both fronts. In the future, the IMB will focus on strategic world-class cities, sending teams of missionaries to reach them. In addition, Platt desires to deploy hundreds of thousands of Southern Baptist businesspeople, teachers, aid workers, and retirees to exponentially multiply the IMB's force of overseas missionaries.

When the first edition of *Missiology* was being edited in 1997, the extent of the Christian movement in China was just becoming known to the outside world. Now there are major lessons to be learned from the phenomenon. The chapter on missions in China captures this well and draws lessons that can be applied to other parts of the globe.

Thom Rainer's well-written first edition chapter on "Strategies for Church Growth" should have been retained in the second edition but instead was omitted. I feel the church growth paradigm still has merit and should be studied by the current generation. In addition, Bob Reccord's important chapter describing the SBC Cooperative Program (CP) did not pass muster for the second edition. This is unfortunate in these days of declining or plateauing CP giving. Although the second edition of *Missiology* attempts to appeal to a broader audience than Southern Baptists, dropping the CP element weakens its value to SBC seminaries.

Particular attention should be given to the last two chapters in the second edition of *Missiology*. Keith Eitel pens an excellent article about "World Christianity." Here he explains how former mission fields have become new mission forces in their own right. Churches from countries such as China, South Korea, Brazil and South Africa are sending their own missionaries, founding their own seminaries and composing indigenous theologies. Eitel explores the extensive future implications.

Perhaps the major difference between the first and second editions of *Missiology* lies in the opposing thrusts of the respective final chapters. In the first edition, the late Avery T. Willis, Jr., (and my former direct supervisor) wrote a chapter entitled, "The Unfinished Task." At the time, Willis was the Sr. Vice President of the Office of Overseas Operations for the IMB. In this capacity he controlled the strategy and supervised 5,000 missionaries. Willis' chapter reflects the IMB's emphasis on penetrating the final frontier of missions that was just

beginning to hit stride in 1998. Since then, most IMB missionaries have been redeployed through retirement, attrition, or redeployment toward the least reached parts of the world. Willis (and his successors) prioritized SBC missions resources toward reaching the remaining people groups of the world, arguing the task of world evangelization could be finished. Most mission agencies adopted the IMB's philosophy and leadership on this issue.

Jeffrey Brawner's final chapter in the second edition of *Missiology,* however, stands in remarkable contrast to Willis' article in the first edition. Brawner, a young missiologist who served as one of my missionaries in Brazil when I supervised IMB work there, entitled his article, "Finishing the Task: A Balanced Approach." Here Brawner argues for a dual mandate for reaping and discipling the harvest countries where the lost are responding while simultaneously evangelizing unreached peoples in the world's last frontier. Since most mission groups, including the IMB, are pursuing more of a "one track" strategy tilted in favor of unreached peoples, Brawner's chapter ends the book on a refreshing note.

Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions constitutes an excellent introductory missions text for seminaries and graduate schools. I have chosen it as the principle required book for Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's (MBTS) on-line introduction to missions course. I highly recommend *Missiology* for use by students, scholars and vocational ministers.

Robin Dale Hadaway
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Unfinished Church: God's Broken and Redeemed Work-In-Progress.* By Rob Bentz. Wheaton: Crossway, 2014. 172 pp. $14.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4335-41066-6.**

Rob Bentz in his book *The Unfinished Church* issues a call to those who are within the church and disenchanted with it, to not abandon the church, but to remain in it to be a catalyst for its completion. Bentz takes

his idea of the unfinished church from a half constructed church building in Bermuda where he briefly lived. This unfinished building, with its beauty and pathos, caught and held his attention, becoming for him a metaphor for the state of the North American evangelical suburban church. Bentz does not single out the church he is discussing as the North American suburban evangelical church, which is a weakness of the book if you are not within the demographic audience, but there are enough contextual clues to let the reader know that he is not discussing the church in general, but instead a very specific manifestation of the church. With that said, his recommendations for how the church should be constructed are still applicable across cultures.

The book is structured around three main sections with an introduction. The introduction gives the author's backstory and reveals the image of the unfinished church to the reader. An image that will carry forward throughout the book in the clarion call to finish the building. After the introduction, the book moves through three major sections; from the foundation of the church, to the construction of the church, and ending with the completion of the church.

Before a church can begin construction it must have a proper foundation, and this foundation is discussed in the first major section. Bentz lays out his argument for the foundation of the church in two chapters entitled "God's Called Out Community" and "God's Redeemed Community". The core thought of these two chapters is that God has not called out and redeemed His people for them to become a holier-than-thou, self-serving club, but instead for the church to expend itself in the service of others. Redemption cost God something on the cross and therefore believers' service to Him and the world should be a sacrifice. Bentz connects the New Testament church with Israel in a way that is both helpful and less than satisfying. He is helpful in that he acknowledges the connection between the people of God in the Old Testament and the people of God in the New Testament. He is less than helpful though, in explaining the nuances of this connection. This can be forgiven, however, in that his book does not purport to be an in-depth systematic treatment of the relation between Israel and the church, but instead a call to action to God's people to be faithful to God's call.

The heart of the book is in the section in which Bentz deals with the church's construction: Both its material and its builders. The first chapter of this section seeks to show how a church that is built around

one's own desires and preferences is not a true reflection of the church. The church should reflect the community in which it is located, with all its diversity. There is no room in the church for an exclusiveness built around ethnic or cultural barriers. The book is to be rightly commended for this emphasis, but with that said, Bentz does not address the very real difficulty of creating a multi-cultural church. It is impossible to represent equally the various musical, preaching, architectural, and design styles of every culture in a church. While no person should be excluded based on culture or race every church will have a distinct culture that is more reflective of one of the cultures in the community. It would help for Bentz to acknowledge this in the chapter, but instead he leaves the reader hoping for a church that is like a tie-dyed shirt of cultures. If all the cultures are blended into a new multicultural culture, then none of the cultures are truly represented. Nonetheless, Bentz does offer a helpful call for the unity of the church to be built upon our unity in Christ and not a unity built upon other things.

In the remaining four chapters in the section on construction, the book aims to highlight how those within the church should live so as to complete the church. First, we are to love each other. This is a love that finds its source in God's love for us and overflows into our love for each other. It is also not just a sentimental feeling for others, but is manifested in the actions we take to sacrificially serve those both inside and outside the church. Without this love, there is no hope of the church being finished. Second, we are to encourage each other. Playing off of the characters in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* the reader is encouraged to find his own Evangelist, Interpreter, Christian, and Faithful characters. We all need to have people in our life who encourage us, but we also need to be doing the same in the life of others. On this long journey to finish the church, we need to support each other. The third thing we are to do is to serve each other. Again, like with love, we serve others because Christ was a servant to us. While the church can meet your needs, you also need to be meeting the needs of the church, and we do this through serving others for their sake and for their benefit. Bentz encourages every Christian to engage the spiritual gifts God has given him and to strengthen the church through service. Finally, we are to dwell in unity. This can a difficult thing given the people we encounter in church and the various issues, such as worship styles that arise, but nevertheless, we are called to unity as followers of Christ. This is a unity that we are given

by the Spirit, but which we must work and struggle to maintain. We must learn to forgive and to be forgiven. We must commit ourselves to each other through both the good and bad times, and in so doing, the church can move forward in its project and not be left unfinished.

The final section of the book is entitled "The Completion" with the one chapter in it entitled "Jesus Finishes His Building Project." This chapter is given over to a discussion of the work of sanctification in the believer and how one day God will complete the work that he has begun, both in individuals and in His church. While the church is unfinished today, its completion is guaranteed in the resurrection and return of Christ. Jesus will complete the work He has begun. With this assurance each follower of Christ is to move forward in his own sanctification and work towards the completion of the unfinished church. All-in-all, Bentz has offered the church a good reminder of the need to be working to transformed into the image of Christ. In so doing, Bentz will hopefully recall some people from the mistaken belief that you can love Jesus, but hate his church. Instead, he challenges each of us to roll up our sleeves and help the church look more like Jesus.

Rustin J. Umstattd
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Heaven.* (Theology in Community Series). Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. 287 pp. $18.99 paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1433527814.**

The subject of heaven can quickly become a mess. Just attend your average funeral to see for yourself where heaven becomes the place where the departed become angels or spend their days enjoying pristine golf courses or look wistfully down at us. Heaven hardly fares much better in many pulpits either. It's either presented as the great escape for the Christian to get out of this hopeless world, or it's ignored by preachers who want their congregants invested in the solutions to the problems of the world. Admit it, you either love the hymn "I'll Fly Away"

or it makes you cringe. It is this plague of misinformation and biblical imbalances that the present volume seeks to remedy by setting forth a robust, biblical, and multidisciplinary treatise on the doctrine of heaven and its relevance to the daily life of every believer.

Heaven is the sixth volume of the Theology in Community series edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson. (Other volumes include: *The Kingdom of God, The Deity of Christ, Suffering and the Goodness of God,* and *Fallen: A Theology of Sin*). These volumes investigate their titular doctrine utilizing several highly respected and evangelical scholars who present the doctrine from several angles, including biblical theology, systematic theology, history, culture, and pastoral theology. The objective of this communal approach is to "provide for pastors, leaders, and laypeople an up-to-date resource for exploring both theology and practice with accessible depth" (back cover). Thus, just to name a couple examples, in the present volume the reader gets a chapter from Andreas Köstenberger, a pre-eminent scholar on Johannine literature, addressing heaven in John's Gospel and Revelation and an excellent treatment of suffering and heaven from Ajith Fernando, who knows firsthand the relevance of this subject as the leader of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka. The chapters, though scholarly, always keep the pastor's questions and concerns in mind. For example, the first chapter, while providing a fittingly broad and historical introduction to the study of heaven, includes a very helpful section in which the most frequently asked questions about heaven are given succinct biblical answers (pp. 29-40). Indeed, the pastor should familiarize himself with this brief section of FAQs as he will likely encounter these questions often in his ministry.

The book is well organized. After an introduction, there are five biblical theology chapters. There is a chapter given to heaven in the Old Testament, the synoptic gospels, Paul's letters, the general epistles, and John's gospel and revelation. After these are five chapters that take up the subject more systematically from the perspectives of biblical themes, history, suffering, angelic beings, and the Christian's hope. The book also has three indexes: author, subject, and Scripture, which allow it to remain useful as a helpful reference.

Within these chapters, all of the expected topics get addressed, including the meaning of heaven as both a place and as a reference to God's abode, the subject of the intermediate state, rewards, the new heavens and the new earth, and the resurrection. Each chapter is

grounded in redemptive history and is centered in the gospel. Indeed, Raymond Ortlund Jr. articulates this shared viewpoint aptly: "The whole Bible is the story of heaven above coming down to earth, deity coming down to humanity, grace coming down to the underserving, to lift them up" (43).

It is a testimony to the editors that this volume shows so much continuity and agreement amongst the various contributors. Each author stresses the hope of heaven being much less about a place that we depart too, but a reality that is invading the earth. This, of course, does not happen all at once. Pennington, for example, shows that "Jesus' mission is to announce, and through his death and resurrection, effect the coming reign of God" (82), i.e. heaven on earth. Wellum, who addresses Paul's theology, shows how, in the light of Christ, the hope of heaven carries with it the tension of being both already and not yet. We are already citizens of heaven and receive many of the heavenly blessings, however the full reality is still future, awaiting Christ's return (93-94). As such, the biblical vision of heaven is indissolubly connected to the doctrine of the resurrection and of new creation. Köstenberger lays this whole thought out in succinct fashion: "Christian's hope for heaven is rather for resurrection and eternal life in God's new creation, where heaven and earth are joined and God dwells fully in the midst of his creation and his people. This implies both continuity and discontinuity with our present experience of what it means to be human and to live in the world" (145).

The recognition of the continuity/discontinuity in the Bible's hope of heaven, as being both already present in Christ to believers but also awaiting its full consummation in the future, greatly expands the relevance of the doctrine of heaven to the believer's daily life. Jon Laansma brings this out in his discussion on the epistle of James, a book not often thought of as being about heaven. However, Laansma shows that heaven greatly informs the teaching of this little letter. He states, "in brief, James contains the idea of heaven as both present and future . . . with its attention given primarily to the 'wisdom that [already] comes down from above' (3:15), to heaven's imminent justice, and to how these enable believers to navigate the economic and social realities of their present world" (118). In short, James is teaching believers how to live under the rule of heaven in the present as they wait patiently for God to bring heaven to earth in its fullness (120).

The doctrine of heaven is also critical for making sense of suffering and persecution in the believer's life as Ajith Fernando demonstrates in his chapter. Fernando shows that the New Testament is replete with promises and encouragements to those suffering for Christ of the reward of heaven. He notes that "the Bible considers persecution to be a basic aspect of discipleship" (223). He is careful to clarify that the reward of heaven is not spoken of in the Bible as the result of suffering, but that our sufferings, "are necessary experiences that those destined for glory experience" (225). In other words, heaven is not given to the sufferer because they have suffered, rather heaven is the reward that makes present suffering worthwhile. For a life of facing persecution, the reward of heaven is a great source of strength and encouragement. Fernando considers the possibility that much of the modern church's weakness is due to such an avoidance of this in its preaching.

> In light of this neglect of such a major portion of God's revelation, we should not be surprised that many Christians make choices that tend to avoid the way of the cross . . . We should not be surprised at the lack of a sharp moral edge among Christians, or by the church's inability to motivate people to costly commitment and service. In place of a message of radical obedience motivated by the hope of glorious future reward in heaven, we seem to have chosen to entertain our flock with pleasing programs that meet their perceived wants in the present. (231-232)

The biblical doctrine of heaven, then, rather than being a cause for Christian disengagement is one of the best motivations the church has to encourage self-sacrifice and radical obedience.

I only have two criticisms of this book. First of all, I wish the editors had given more than one chapter to the Old Testament and had given the Book of Revelation a chapter to itself. The current arrangement causes both of these sections of Scripture to get less treatment than they deserve. For example, except for the Book of Job, the wisdom literature gets no attention. I would have liked to have seen Proverbs addressed, especially with the claim that Bruce Waltke makes that the expectations contained in many Proverbs points the faithful to a hope beyond the present life. Likewise, Ecclesiastes with its refrain "under the sun" and the futility of a life that does not look to heaven would have enriched the book's thesis even further.

My other criticism is the book lacks a chapter on heaven and cosmology, both ancient and modern. The work never addresses the issue of the biblical conception of the cosmos as a three-tiered universe, where heaven is not just metaphorically, but literally, above the earth. This is an important topic in the realm of apologetics and arises in the tension that many Christians feel between science and faith. Granted, Pennington attempts to address this topic in his discussion of the effect our modern worldview has on our ability to think biblically about heaven. He discusses the ancient architecture in an oblique fashion when he insists that this language is primarily ethical rather than scientific (81). However, his handling of the subject really leaves the question begged, "how do we know they weren't teaching both?" We need a better justification for why the interpreter is supposed to accept the ethical meaning of the biblical cosmology, but is free to disregard the scientific meaning. Simply saying that the former gets more emphasis than the latter is insufficient.

In conclusion, this is a great book to have for any pastor or lay person needing a better grasp on the biblical doctrine of heaven. This book makes a strong case that we need to spend more time thinking about heaven. After reading this book, I couldn't agree more.

Nathan B. Edwards
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Can These Bones Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization*. By Bill Henard. Nashville: B&H Books, 2015. xiv + 242 pp. $14.99, Paperback. ISBN-13 978-1433683978.**

Churches in North America are dying at an exponential rate. In my own denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, approximately 70-75 percent of churches are plateaued or declining. An additional 10-15 percent are at serious risk of dying and will likely do so in the next five to seven years.[1] Every year, nearly one thousand SBC churches close their doors permanently. For Christians, these are not just statistics. These are

[1] North American Mission Board, "Replant," http://www.namb.net/replant/.

congregations no longer able to display the transforming power of the gospel or reach their communities with the good news.

In an effort to reverse these catastrophic numbers, Bill Henard has written a very helpful resource, *Can These Bones Live?: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization*, to assist pastors in revitalizing dying churches. Henard serves as a consultant for churches in need of revitalization and teaches courses on this same topic at Southern Seminary. He has compiled statistical research with his many years of experience in assisting struggling churches to produce an accessible and useful volume.

The book is divided into fourteen chapters, in addition to an introduction, a conclusion, and seven appendices. In the introduction, Henard offers a needed caveat to all preparing to revitalize. There is no formula, method, or program that will guarantee success. Only God can initiate revitalization. There are particular steps a pastor should take, but ultimately change results from the work of the Spirit.

In the first chapter, Henard explains the desperate need for revitalization in America. He cites several statistics that show churches' startling rate of death and decline. He follows these statistics with the basic presuppositions that undergird church revitalization. These assumptions need to be held in order for a pastor to lead a congregation toward health and growth.

The second chapter alone is worth the price of the book because it equips the pastor to accurately assess the spiritual condition and cultural climate of a potential congregation. It is vital to ask the right questions about a church before accepting a call to be their pastor. The unfortunate truth is that some churches, though faced with likelihood of death, are unwilling to change. An accurate assessment is able to save the revitalizer time, discouragement, and frustration.

The next eleven chapters address various obstacles that prevent church growth and practical suggestions on how to overcome them. The barriers are myriad. Some involve the differing personalities of churches, others the physical limitations of church property, and still others congregations' decision-making process. For each hurdle, Henard prescribes a feasible solution.

The final chapter, entitled "The Change Matrix," provides a strategy for implementing a systemic change within the church without destroying it in the process. Henard presents a four-step strategic plan

that enables a congregation to develop and carry out God's unique vision for their church.

Can These Bones Live? has many strengths. Henard understands that church revitalization is not an entrepreneurial enterprise, but ultimately a spiritual endeavor. "A fatal flaw that pastors make" explains Henard, "is to major on the physical and only give the occasional glance at the spiritual" (43). While most of this book focuses on resolving the physical problems of a church, a necessary and proper qualification is given to acknowledge the spiritual aspect involved.

Additionally, Henard is no novice when it comes to revitalizing churches. His many years of experience are evident throughout the book, which is full of little gems of wisdom and practical advice that will greatly benefit the revitalizer.

Over the last few decades, evangelicals have emphasized the necessity of planting new churches. This is an important undertaking that must continue. However, evangelicals must also address the decline of established churches. Henard brings to light this legitimate concern, while providing a practical resource for reversing this trend.

While there is much to commend in this book, a couple of criticisms are in order. As stated above, Henard correctly recognizes that church revitalization is primarily a call to spiritual transformation. However, the content of the book does not match this. The title, which is taken from Ezekiel's vision in the valley of the dry bones, does not seem to accurately reflect the book's content. If revitalization is solely dependent on the preaching of the Word and the necessity of prayer then why is no practical wisdom given for how to preach or cultivate prayer?

Furthermore, the titles of the chapters do not consistently coordinate with their content. For example, chapter one is entitled "Why Church Revitalization?" but only the first section discusses the reason churches need to be revitalized. After this very brief section, the rest of the chapter explains the character and the qualifications required for those revitalizing.

In conclusion, *Can These Dry Bones Live?* will serve those, who are called to revitalize dying churches by assisting them with much practical wisdom and insight.

This book will prove beneficial for those with minimal experience in church revitalization. It could even assist the veteran pastor who

knows his church needs help but is unsure of how to implement the necessary changes.

Nathan Rose
Liberty Baptist Church

***A Theology of Matthew: Jesus Revealed as Deliverer, King, and Incarnate Creator* (Explorations in Biblical Theology). By Charles L. Quarles. Edited by Robert A. Peterson. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2013. xviii + 220 pages. Softcover, $17.99. ISBN-13: 978-1596381674.**

With the Bible as his compass and Matthew 13:52 as his hermeneutical guide, Quarles, in his succinct yet satisfying, five-part work, *A Theology of Matthew*, embarks with his readers on an exploration of Matthew's integrative approach to Christology. For Quarles, Matthew's approach is integrative in that numerous other themes "are so tightly integrated with Matthew's Christology that separating them is practically impossible" (16). In this work, Quarles explores the exegetical and theological significance of Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as *Deliverer, King, and Incarnate Creator*.

In his introduction, Quarles exhibits a pastor's heart in lamenting the "doctrinal anemia of the contemporary church." Quarles presents sobering data evincing the sad state of affairs within the church as many "disciples" do not understand the core tenets of the Christian faith (1–2). Admirably, Quarles hopes that this monograph will help the church recover a biblical (rather than cultural) Christology (2).

At the beginning of Part 1 (Foundations for a Theology of Matthew), Quarles explains his purpose for writing: "the book intends to summarize and describe the theology of an individual by a particular name who served as the author of this gospel" (5). Essentially, Part 1 serves a prolegomena to Matthean studies. Introductory matters such as authorship, dating, provenance, audience, structure, and purpose are succinctly surveyed, and Quarles proffers a fair and balanced approach while elucidating his own position on these topics. As a Markan prioritist,

Quarles rejects both Bacon's (five-part) and Kingsbury's (two-part) structural schemas, opting rather to see Matthew's structure as a "chronological and geographical progression of Mark's gospel" (14). Quarles also presents a well-argued case for a Christocentric, rather than an ecclesiocentric reading (so Gundry) of Matthew's gospel. Germane to Quarles's thesis is Matthew 13:52 and Quarles's concept of Matthew as "kingdom scribe":

> When Matthew wrote his gospel, he sought to fulfill the role of scribe of the kingdom. He pointed to old treasures in the Hebrew Scriptures, new treasures in the life and teaching of Jesus, and the amazing correspondence between the two. . . . Jesus is the new Moses who corresponds in many ways to the Moses of the Old Testament; he is the new David who corresponds in many ways to the David of the Old Testament; and so forth (30).

In Part 2 (The New Moses: Jesus as Savior), Quarles explores how Matthew portrays Jesus as a new Moses through his infancy, teaching ministry, fasting, miracles, and transfiguration. Quarles explains that Matthew did not fabricate these connections, and "one must not drive a wedge between Matthew's theological purpose and his historical reliability" (44). A synopsis reveals that these Mosaic connections make up the warp and woof of the canonical Gospels (44–45).

Part 3 (The New David: Jesus Our King) highlights Jesus's parallels with David through his genealogy, title, birth, fulfillment of prophecy, and actions. This is the shortest of Quarles's five parts, and perhaps, the most underdeveloped. There also seems to be redundancy between this section and Part 5 (see e.g., 89–91 and 134–38; 96, 102–04 and 150; 93–95 and 172).

Methodologically, in Part 4 (The New Abraham: Jesus Our Founder) Quarles seems inconsistent in not listing the specific parallels between the patriarch and Jesus (as in Parts 2–3), opting rather to discuss their relationship with the nation of Israel. For Quarles, Matthew portrays Jesus as the "new Abraham" who "serves as the founder of a new Israel" (107).

Lastly, Part 5 (The New Creator: Jesus, Our God) marks the largest section of Quarles's book and synthesizes much of the content in Parts 2–4. Part 5 explores the titles of deity ascribed to Jesus by Matthew

("Son of Man," "Wisdom," "Lord," "Son of God," and "Immanuel") and Quarles rightly notes that these titles reveal Jesus's divinity and oneness with YHWH (133).

The chief strength of this work is Quarles's ability to compress vast amounts of data into manageable and easily understandable chunks. Quarles's magisterial survey of the debates surrounding Matthew's gospel in Part 1 is worth the price of this book alone. Furthermore, Quarles's synthetic approach in surveying the exegetical and theological significance of Matthew's portrait of Jesus helps to bridge the superfluous gap between the academy and the church. Another valuable insight is Quarles's concept of reading the gospels *vertically* (reading the gospel from start to finish in a single sitting) as well as *horizontally* (as a synopsis/harmony). Such a holistic reading of Matthew elucidates the writer's "movement, flow, and major emphases," and helps uncover "new and important details of Matthew's theology" (23–25).

In sum, *A Theology of Matthew*, is an exciting exploration of what may be the most important document in church history. Quarles's erudition and pastoral heart shine brightly through in rediscovering much of Matthew's integrative Christology that has, apparently (given Quarles's statistics on pages 1–2), been hidden in plain sight. While not without its faults (no book is), *A Theology of Matthew* is a first-rate page turner that deserves a spot on the shelf of any Christian seeking to better understand Matthew, his Christology, and his immaculate display of storeroom treasures—*both old and new* (30).

Gregory E. Lamb
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Books Received

Dever, Mark and Jonathan Leeman, eds. *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age.* Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015

DeYoung, Kevin. *Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What It Means for You and Me.* Wheaton: Crossway, 2014.

Elliezrie, David. *The Secret of Chabad: Inside the World's Most Successful Jewish Movement.* New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2015.

Holy Bible. Modern English Version. Lake Mary, FL: Passio, 2014.

Leeman, Jonathan. *Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism.* Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016.

Lipsey, Roger. *Make Peace before the Sun Goes Down: The Long Encounter of Thomas Merton and His Abbot, James Fox.* Boston: Shambhala, 2015.

Miller, Thomas A. *Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead? A Surgeon Scientist Examines the Evidence.* Wheaton: Crossway, 2013.

Welch, Edward T. *Side by Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love.* Wheaton: Crossway, 2015.

Wright, Shawn D. *Theodore Beza: The Man and the Myth.* Fear, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015.

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

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